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# **THE GENESIS OF JATIO SANGSAD BHABAN AT SHER-E-BANGLA NAGAR, DHAKA**



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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement  
for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning  
The University of Sydney



2015



# **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any other university or institution of tertiary education. Information derived from published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references has been attached.

Bayezid I. Choudhury



If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.

Albert Einstein

## **Abstract**

The thesis 'The Genesis of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban at Shere-Bangla-Nagar, Dhaka' is an attempt to unravel the socio-political, cultural and spatial components of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban (JSB), the National Assembly Building of Bangladesh. Commissioned in 1962 by Pakistani military dictator Ayub Khan and designed by world renowned architect Louis I. Kahn. This building represents an epic saga that encompasses the rich and dramatic history of Bangladesh. Built as an element of the dictatorial apparatus by the West Pakistani government to placate the nationalist movement of East Pakistan, it symbolises the national identity of an independent nation, Bangladesh.

Initiated in the early 1960s during the cold war period, the creation of the JSB is characterised by the political context of the time. With its dominating physical presence, surrounded by space in an overcrowded city, the building serves as a constant reminder of both the nationalist movement that led to the war of independence of Bangladesh and the global political order under which it was created.

This thesis explores these themes to understand the JSB as a nationalist product. The two constructs of nationalism, political and cultural, are seen as the main defining features of the thesis — through these lenses the thesis explores the socio-political construction of space that revolves around the building. The theory of architectural critic Lawrence Vale, who incorporates the political and cultural context in his study of symbolic buildings, is used to inform the thesis.

The thesis evolved from articles in refereed journals and conference proceedings publications. The articles aimed to shed light on the hidden and less known phenomenon of this iconic building and its place within architectural historiography. Unfolding the subjective meaning of this building, rather than simply describing its physical attributes, evokes a new understanding and knowledge that can be applied to other iconic and symbolic structures.

## Prologue

This research *The Genesis of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla-Nagar, Dhaka* tells the little known political, cultural and spatial story of the Jatio Sangsad Bhaban (JSB), the National Assembly Building in Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup> The JSB was initially intended to be the National Assembly Building of Pakistan, for both East and West. It was envisioned by the Pakistani Military Dictator, President Ayub Khan in 1962, who commissioned the world renowned American architect, Louis I. Kahn.

After many twists and turns of history and a bloody struggle, East Pakistan gained independence in 1971. Overnight, the iconic JSB became the symbol of hope and aspiration for the people of Bangladesh (the former East Pakistan). After a period of 21 years since its commissioning, the building was finally completed in 1983 — both the length of its development and its iconic status are shared with India's Taj Mahal.<sup>2</sup> Apart from its symbolic significance, the dominating physical presence (610 acres) of this building in relation to the spatial planning of Dhaka, demonstrates the socio-political influences under which it was developed.<sup>3</sup>

Ayub Khan was from West Pakistan and his aim in commissioning the JSB was to appease the people of East Pakistan, who had been disadvantaged in the governance of the newly created post-partition Islamic country Pakistan. Thus the very birth of the JSB was paradoxical . Moreover, the commissioning of an Estonian born Jewish American architect in a Muslim country in the cold war era, in a period when America was making use of cultural weapons like art and architecture to buy influence in developing countries to stem the growth of communism, contributes to the further question of its association as a symbol of a Muslim dominated independent country. It is inherently a paradox, like Bangladeshi nationalism itself. This research is an attempt to unravel the complex strands of local cultural issues, global and local politics, and the socio-political spatial aspect that finally shaped the present status of the JSB as a symbol of national identity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Jatio* (national) *Sangsad* (Assembly) *Bhaban* (Building) is located at Shere(Tiger)-e (of)-Bangla (Bengal) Nagar(city) in Dhaka. Shere-e-Bangla is the title of one of the veteran politicians in the nationalist movement of Bengal. Before the independence of Bangladesh the area was known as Ayub Nagar after President Ayub Khan.

<sup>2</sup> The Taj Mahal is a mausoleum built by emperor Shahjahan to commemorate the death of his beloved wife Nurjahan in 17<sup>th</sup> century India. It is widely known that it took 22,000 labourers to make this iconic building over 21 years.

<sup>3</sup> According to archival records, initially 200 acres of land were earmarked for the development of the complex. Considering future expansion in line with the proposed Masterplan by Kahn 1000 acres of land were later allocated (file no-w-cap-58/ace collection no-10, year-1968). Reliable published documents suggest that at present the JSB complex occupies 610 acres of land.



At the outset this thesis sheds light on the discourse of nationalism as a key element in relation to the essence of the building. The concept of the JSB as a nationalist product is created in light of its history, evolution and development. Nationally important, it also transcends this national impact — in part because of its design by a renowned American architect — to reach global status. Further, the JSB needs to be understood from the aspect of geopolitics, relevant to Vale's theory on symbolic buildings.<sup>4</sup> The American influence on Pakistan and its neighbouring region is the backdrop to the creation of the JSB during the cold war era before the independence of Bangladesh. Discussion of the cold war and its influence on politics and society after the independence of Bangladesh is essential to this thesis. Finally, the JSB, as an outcome of socio-political construction of urban space, is considered in the thesis through the lens of both American neo-colonial resource control, and the legacy of the British colonial power structure. The socio-political construction of this urban focal point of Dhaka is also discussed. By addressing the socio-political construction of space, the research concurs with Vale's theory,<sup>5</sup> which looks at the spatial aspect of symbolic buildings in terms of their political and cultural aspects. Vale's understanding of the metaphysical aspect revolves around the issue of nationalism and state formation (mainly local politics), global politics and socio-political construction of urban space.<sup>6</sup>

Scholarly research on this building to date mostly focuses on its architectural attributes. However, the purpose of this research is to explore previously unknown territory, overlooked in the 50 years since the commissioning of this building. For this research, the controversial duality of the JSB — both as a symbol of oppression in the pre-independence period of Bangladesh and a symbol of national identity in the post-independence period — makes the building's iconic status a particularly interesting study of architecture as a socio-political discipline. Undoubtedly an architectural masterpiece of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the JSB is more than just its architectural features and attempting to place it in its socio-political context this research confronts some prevailing assumptions.<sup>7</sup> However, the fact is, the success of this research will be judged not in

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> As the JSB emerged as a response to the nationalist movement discussion of the symbolic building should address the issue of nationalism, which is a combination of the political and cultural construct, and conforms and aligns with Vale's theory on symbolic buildings.

<sup>7</sup> Prevailing assumption about Kahn's this architectural masterpiece is very much rosy. All the critics highly acclaimed all aspects of this controversial icon.

terms of appreciation but by the extent to which it generates controversy among scholars and questions the conventional way of thinking in regard to this masterpiece .

This research has been particularly challenging because it breaks new ground. Prior research has focused on the building's architecture, with little previous research contemplating responsive and subjective meanings.<sup>8</sup> Even the socio-political construction of space, which has been significantly shaped by the urban aspect of this building, has not been addressed to date.

The thesis has evolved from a number of published refereed research articles and one editor reviewed article for which the researcher was lead author. The published papers are the building blocks of the thesis and constitute the contents of each chapter. Ideally this thesis can be regarded as 'Thesis by Publication'. The first published article, 'Engagement of Kahn and Khan in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban', in a widely circulated Indian architectural journal (ERA ranked journal), addresses issues related to local politics and the engagement of Louis I. Kahn. The article disputes conventional wisdom on Louis I. Kahn as a great philosopher and questions his self interest in the commissioning process.<sup>9</sup> The second article 'Monument and Architecture in Shaping Bangladeshi Identity' (published in a UK based ERA ranked peer review publication) mainly portrays the prominent position of the JSB as a component of independent Bangladeshi identity along with four other architectural traditions, styles and monuments. The third paper 'JSB: A Product of American Cultural Imperialism or a Legacy of British Urban Development' (accepted in a UK based, ERA Ranked peer review publication) contends that the JSB is more associated with British colonial urban issues of development than with American political and cultural influences. The fourth paper 'JSB: An Emblem of Duality of Nationalism', addresses issues including nationalism and identifies JSB as a nationalist product. This paper outlines how the many dual aspects of nationalism, oppression, emancipation, danger and opportunity are expressed through different dimensions of the JSB. The paper was presented at an ICERIE conference and published in peer reviewed proceedings in Bangladesh.<sup>10</sup> An extended and modified version of the paper was later published in an international indexed journal. The fifth paper 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War

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<sup>8</sup> It refers to meaning, not associated to the architecture directly.

<sup>9</sup> It was published in a journal *Architecture plus Design* after editorial review. The journal is highly regarded in Asia and has a circulation of around 50,000 copies. It is ranked in the Excellence of Research in Australia journal rankings.

<sup>10</sup> The conference was held at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, a leading university. The paper was peer reviewed and published in the conference proceedings.

Era' discusses American involvement in the building through the *Smith-Mundt Act* during the cold war era. The paper was presented at a conference in Singapore and published in the refereed conference proceedings, followed by international refereed journal publication of a modified version.<sup>11</sup> The sixth paper 'JSB: Divulging Responsive Meaning', which summarises the societal aspects of JSB from the existing published literature, is under review. All of these papers relate to the political and cultural aspects of JSB.

Related to the socio-political influence on the spatial aspects of the development of Dhaka, the paper 'Why Geddes Plan did not Materialize: Planning for Planning's Sake' has been published in a peer reviewed conference proceedings in Australia. The paper investigates the political aspect of planning in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Dhaka, which influenced the formation of Dhaka University occupying a substantial part of middle Dhaka, a precursor for the development of modern Dhaka and the JSB. Another published paper relates to the spatial aspect 'JSB: An Urban Focus and Democratic Emblem: The Imagined Social Construction of Space' and connects the central physical presence of the JSB as the city grew around it with that of the present democratic status of Bangladesh after a long period of upheaval and struggle. The paper was presented at the ICESS conference in Bangkok and published in the refereed conference proceedings. Later it was published in an international indexed journal.<sup>12</sup> The final paper 'Jatio Sangsad Complex: The Emergence of Neocolonial Capitalist Planning in Dhaka as a Sequel' provides insight related to Dhaka's evolution that culminated in the development of JSB on the northern part of the urban area of Dhaka. This paper sheds light on the impact of the capitalist form of JSB on the urban landscape of Dhaka, in the way that it overshadows and marginalises the poor. The paper has been published in an international indexed journal.<sup>13</sup>

My aim for both the thesis and the papers publishing my research is to generate new insights into looking at architecture critically, combining critical examination of the historic record, accurate interpretation of current interpretive concepts and convincing and logical analysis of available data sources.

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<sup>11</sup> The paper was presented at the ACE (Architecture and Civil Engineering Conference) Conference held in Singapore. The conference was attended by scholars from universities such as Harvard, UCLA, McGill, The University of Sydney, the University of Texas and many others from around the world. Out of almost 90 papers presented at the conference the paper was shortlisted and considered for journal publication. After review of the modified version, the paper was published in the *Journal of Engineering and Technology*.

<sup>12</sup> The paper was published in the *International Journal of social and Development Science*, which is an international indexed journal.

<sup>13</sup> The paper was published in *GSTF International journal of Engineering and Technology*, which is an international indexed journal.

As a Bangladeshi and as an academic in architecture my aim has been to capture and analyse the spirit and sense of Bangladeshi nationalism and its interpretation in the realm of architecture. I started this journey with many uncertainties. My Master of Urban Planning from Sydney University helped me tremendously to overcome these uncertainties and find my focus. My career as an academic (Assistant Professor) at the University of Bangladesh also helped me in this research undertaking.

Australian has become my second country. It is an obvious choice for my research, avoiding the colonial and neo-colonial attachments of the United States and England. Australia has helped me to capture the tripartite complex association of the US, England and Bangladesh from a neutral strategic ground.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the co-authors of my papers, Graham Bell, Peter Armstrong and Paul Jones, for their significant contribution. All co-authors of my papers not only contributed to the quality of the papers, but enriched my research experience. Special thanks to Dr Jones, who not only helped me in my scholarly endeavors but provided invaluable encouragement. Also thanks to Professor Glen Hill and Jennifer Gamble for their support and assistance. Special thanks to Ajman, who introduced me to a book in my formative period of candidature, *Writing a Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, which helped me with the practical issues of shaping and articulating my research into publishable work.

I am indebted to my parents for their infinite blessings on me, specially to my late father Ajmal Hussain Choudhury, who encouraged me throughout his life in my academic endeavors. At this hour I also recall my mother Farida Choudhury's undaunted moral support during my Ph.D candidature. I am also grateful to all my brothers and sisters for their generous support during my difficult period of candidature. A special thanks to my younger sister Hafsa for her moral and financial support. I also think at this time of my American daughter, Afrida, who I wish some day will read my thesis.

I express my gratitude to the University of Sydney for providing me with so much support during my candidature. The University of Sydney Post Graduate Award helped me to carry out this research. Two PRSS (Post Graduate Research Scholarship Scheme) grants assisted with my

travel to Kahn's archive at the University of Pennsylvania and the Public Works Department in Bangladesh to collect archival records and to attend the conferences in Bangladesh and Singapore. A Higher Degree Research Scheme Award supported my attendance at the Bangkok Conference. I recall the help of William Marten, Associate Dean of Research for his kind support. The experience at UPEN as research scholar was rewarding and enjoyable and I will cherish that throughout my life. I would like to thank Bill Whitaker, the curator of Kahn's archive and Architect A.S.M Ismail for their very generous support in my archival search.

I also express my thanks to all three referees: Martin Payne of the University of Sydney, Dr Krishna Shreshtha of the University of New South Wales and Professor Azizul Mowla, head of the Architecture Department, BUET, for their generous support during my admission as a PhD candidate. I acknowledge sincere support from other PhD colleagues at Sydney University: Sally Lewis, Catherine Gilbert, Ninik, Penny Andrew, Peter Murlis and Ingrid from the Research Office. I also want to thank Tigger Wise for proofreading my thesis and special thanks to Fiona Crawford for her final review.

I want to thank especially former Professor Sirajul Islam Choudhury of Dhaka University and former Professor Shirin Osmany, who have kindly consented to be associated with my research. Both have published books on *Bengali Nationalism* and *Bangladeshi Nationalism* respectively.

Finally I would like to express my whole hearted gratitude to my supervisor Dr Peter Armstrong, who endured the pain and celebrated the joy of my PhD journey with me. He has the ability to bring out the best from his students, always composed, dignified and supportive. I recall his contribution not only in my scholarly research, but also supporting me morally and psychologically. His exposure to cross culture helped him to understand the difficulty of researching in a different cultural setting. His recollections of experiences with his Japanese supervisor were a solace for me in my difficult journey in a foreign land. I have developed the highest regard for his passion for knowledge and commitment to work. It is simply inspirational.

I want to dedicate my research to all the working class Bangladeshi at home and abroad, the foreign remittance senders, the peasants who toil hard to keep the pulse of Bangladesh running, who are regarded as the life line of Bangladesh. I understand this research will carry no

significance for them just as the iconic JSB, emblem of national identity, carries little or no importance in their onerous lives.

### **Publications and Conferences and Student Journal Award**

My journal and conference proceedings publications are the building blocks of this thesis. The published articles are designed so that they correspond to each chapter of the thesis.

I presented papers at the International Urban Design Conference, held in Melbourne in 2012, ICERIE conference held in Bangladesh in 2013, ACE conference held in Singapore in 2013 and ICESS conference held in Bangkok. All are international conferences attended by a cross section of scholars from all over the world. In the Melbourne conference my status was upgraded to presenter after receiving excellent peer review. The conference in Bangladesh was highly significant as the conference gave me the opportunity to disseminate my findings to Bangladeshi scholars. Due to the merit of the paper at the ACE Conference, our paper was one of the few papers out of almost 90 papers selected for journal publication. Due to its merit, the ICESS paper has also been published in a journal. I received valuable feedback from reviewers across the world, which I have tried to incorporate in writing my thesis.

As a PhD Candidate I was awarded several student journal writing awards for publishing articles as first author in HERDC approved journals. These journal prizes not only inspired me in my endeavor but relieved financial pressure in the progress of my research. Thanks to all my co-authors for helping me receive those awards.

### **Future Publications, Archive Documents and Interview**

Although the majority of the thesis content is derived from refereed published material, there is scope to publish further articles from this thesis, particularly from chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3 and chapter 4. Untapped archival materials may also be used as a source for future publication.

## **Publication Details**

## Papers Published in Peer Reviewed/HERDC Approved International Journals from this Research

1. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture in Shaping National Identity'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*. 2012, pp. 45-67, UK, ISSN 1474-6832  
<http://blogs.edgehill.ac.uk/gber/files/2011/12/8.1-Article-3-Monument-and-Architecture-in-Shaping-Bangladeshi-National-Identity-Bayezid-Ismail-Choudhury-and-Peter-Armstrong1.pdf>
2. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & P. Armstrong, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism?'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3), (2013), 22-55  
<http://www.globalbuiltenvironmentreview.co.uk/Documents/8.3%20Article%202%20Bayezid%20Choudhary.pdf>
3. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB: The Emergence of NeoColonial Capitalist Planning as a Sequel'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(2), (2013), ISSN 2251-3701.  
<http://dl4.globalstf.org/?wpsc-product=jatio-sangsad-bhaban-complex-the-emergence-of-neocolonial-capitalist-planning-in-dhaka-as-a-sequel>
4. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(6), 294-302, (2013), ISSN 2221-1152.  
<http://www.ifrnd.org/Research%20Papers/S64.pdf>
5. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Geopolitics of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban in the Cold War Era'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(1). ISSN 2251-3701.  
<http://dl4.globalstf.org/?wpsc-product=the-geopolitics-of-jatio-sangsad-bhaban-in-the-cold-war-era>
6. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(9), ISSN 2221-1152.  
[http://ifrnd.org/Research%20Papers/S4\(9\)3.pdf](http://ifrnd.org/Research%20Papers/S4(9)3.pdf)
7. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Graham Bell, 'Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban'. Published in *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4), 104-111 (2011). ISSN 0970-2369.



8. Bayezid Choudhury, Dr Paul Jones & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Failure of the 1917 Geddes Master Plan and 1959 Minoprio, Spencely, Macfarlane Master Plans: Some Reflections'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(10), 449-460 (2013).  
[http://ifrnd.org/Research%20Papers/S4\(10\)2.pdf](http://ifrnd.org/Research%20Papers/S4(10)2.pdf)

### **Paper Published in Peer Reviewed International Conference Proceedings from this Research**

1. Bayezid Choudhury, Dr Paul Jones & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did Not Materialize, Planning for Planning's Sake in the Case of Dhaka'. Published in proceedings of International Urban Design Conference, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 36-45, ISBN 978-0-9808147-7-4
2. Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism'. Published in the proceedings of ICERIE, Sylhet, Bangladesh, 2013, pp. 40-46.
3. Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'JSB and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War Era'. Published in the proceedings of ACE (Architecture and Civil Engineering Conference), Singapore, 2013, pp. 149-156, ISSN 2301-394X.
4. Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in the proceedings of ICESS, Bangkok Thailand, 2013, pp. 264-27, ISSN: 2307-7549.

Other publications of the author cited in this thesis:

1. Bayezid Choudhury, A. M. 'Policy Response to Wicked Problem: The Paradigm of Slum and Squatter in Dhaka', *Journal of Administrative Studies* 4: 59-64, 2011.
2. Bayezid Choudhury & Paul Jones, 'Adaptive Measure to Reduce Climate Induced Urban Migration to Dhaka, Insights from Bangladesh', VDM Publishers, 2011.

3. Bayezid Choudhury, A. M, 'Climate Change and Climate Refugee Nexus in Bangladesh Context', Proceedings of the Conference on Engineering Research, Innovation and Education (CERIE) 2011, Vol.1, pp. 95-100, 2011.

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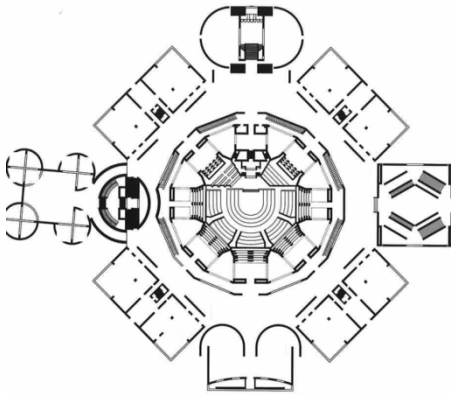
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**Appendix**

Appendix 1 Research Design

## Chapter 1

### Introduction to this Research



**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture in Shaping National Identity'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*, 45-67 (2012).

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(6), 294-302, (2013)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

*This chapter sets the scene of the research depicting the history of Bangladesh and its culture. In outlining this background and context, the chapter connects the Jatio Sangsad Bhaban(JSB), the National Assembly Building, to its main sources of inspiration and reference. It provides the rationale for this case-study focused dissertation and discusses the issue of nationalism as the main discourse of the research. It also unfolds the narrative of the commissioning of JSB and the involvement of client Ayub Khan and architect Louis I. Kahn.*

### **1.1 JSB and the People, Land, Water and Built Forms of Bangladesh**

It is impossible to understand the iconic JSB, without also understanding the context in which it is built. The history of the Bangladeshi people is one of struggle and upheaval from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It is this history that serves as the backdrop to the JSB, the National Assembly Building of Bangladesh, and its symbolism of Bangladeshi identity.<sup>1</sup> Ideally this dissertation tells the story of the origin of the people of Bengal, unravelling the many strands that are its growth, evolution, values, ethos and lifestyle. Bangladesh's chequered, multidimensional, multilayered socio-political cultural history, along with its fertile chemistry of land and water and the myriad of traditional and modern built forms, seemingly and symbolically culminate in the JSB — a complex, paradoxical, awe inspiring architectural marvel. The physical presence of the JSB imparts a huge influence on the overall planning of the city; it symbolises not only the end of an historic process but also a means to a new history as it represents the heart of Bangladesh 'the holy constitution'.<sup>2</sup>

Bangladesh is an independent country comprising 57,000 square miles with a population of 16 million. It is surrounded by India on three sides, bordering Burma on the south-east. This deltaic plain is located at the base of the Himalayas. This riverine and riparian plain is enriched by the confluence of three mighty river systems, Ganga, Padma and Brahmaputra, streaming down from the great Himalayas. These rivers have influenced the landscape of the JSB, which is surrounded by water. They contribute rich alluvial soil making a fertile and lush environment for hard

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<sup>1</sup> B.I.Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture Shaping Bangladeshi Identity', *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3) (2012), 45-67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

working peasants, who are the core of Bengali life.<sup>3</sup>The landscape of this fertile delta, its ethos and mythos, is an inseparable part of Bengali identity.<sup>4</sup> This rich flux of land and water generates an inexhaustible quantity of crops to support the toiling masses, creating a strong connection between the landscape of Bengal and the hopes, emotions, aspirations, life and sense of belonging of the people. This connection is also visualised in the setting and in the essence of the JSB. Perhaps the richness of this natural setting was an inspiration for architect Louis I. Kahn, who consciously encapsulated the spirit and atmosphere of rural Bangla in the JSB.<sup>5</sup>The structure of the JSB itself can be seen as a metaphor for the rural hut, along side the artificial lake representing the Bengal delta. Louis I. Kahn wrote:

*I've chosen to distinguish [the National Assembly] from its surroundings by the introduction of a lake. Because it's a delta country, and all important buildings [especially rural huts] are on mounds.*<sup>6</sup>

Ashraf visualised Kahn's understanding of Bengal beauty thus:

*when Kahn visited Dhaka for the Capital Complex project, and was taken around in the deltaic countryside, he was greatly transfixed by the landscape, especially the immensity of water, and the fluidity of land in the precarious deltaic hydrology.*<sup>7</sup>

Bengal has a variable climate with six distinct seasons: summer (grishma), monsoon (barsha), autumn(sharat), late autumn (hemonto), winter(shit) and spring (bashanto). The lush green landscape, with its dense foliage and thick carpet of grass exudes constant state of flux aseach new season sets in. This changing pattern of seasons significantly influenced Louis I. Kahn in his design of the JSB as '*inherently a landscape event*'.<sup>8</sup>The strong presence of natural elements as well as the lush green grass landscape of Bengal had a profound impression in articulating the landscape of JSB.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>D. Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*, Cambridge" Cambridge University Press, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>K.K. Ashraf, 'Louis I. Kahn: National Capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Global Architecture*, 72 (1994), 1-47; K. K. Ashraf, 'Land, Water, and Man in Bengal: Themes for a Deltaic Architecture'. In F. Amin (ed.) *Contemporary in Architecture and City Form*, Mumbai: Marg, 1997.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>S. W. Ksiazek, 'Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and The National Assembly', *Society of Architectural Historians*, 52(4) (1993), 416-435, 432

<sup>7</sup>K.K.Ashraf, 'Taking Place: Landscape in the Architecture of Louis Kahn', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61(2), 48-58 (2007), 54-55.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

The birth of the JSB has its root in the discord between East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) and West Pakistan. Bangladesh was carved out from greater Pakistan in 1971 after a bloody war of nine months in 1971. Before independence Bangladesh was ruled by Pakistan for 23 years, since the partition of India in 1947.<sup>10</sup> The genesis of the JSB was embedded deeply even before the emergence of Pakistan. The 200 years of British colonial rule, which influenced the psyche of the Pakistani ruler who initiated the process of the creation of the JSB, came to an end in 1947 creating India and Pakistan on the basis of religious disposition.<sup>11</sup> The British division of India is a physical manifestation of the underlying opposing streams that are inherent in the 1.2 billion people of the Indian subcontinent. East Pakistan as a Muslim majority area was administered by West Pakistan until it emerged as an independent nation in 1971. Before the British rule (1757–1947) the area of Bengal was administered by the Mughals from 1610 A.D till 1757. Mughal Muslim rulers assumed power as a consequence of the stream of migration of Muslim sufis, saints and warriors from Persia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Turkey and Ethiopia by sea in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and via land in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> With the inception of Bakhtiar Khilzi's rule in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the foundation of Muslim rule in the area of Bengal was established.<sup>13</sup> Under the independent Ilias Shahi rule [Muslim ruler] in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century Bengal was unified and it was during this rule that the name Bangla was coined for the entire country.<sup>14</sup> The inflow of Muslims contributed significantly to the emergence of Muslim nationalism in Bengal, a quintessential part of the strength and character of the Sangsad (National Assembly or Parliament).

The genesis of the JSB is not just in the built form and landscape but in the history of Bangladesh. The genesis of the epistemological term 'Bengal' generated from the term 'Vanga' a prehistoric tribe. The first generation of Bengal people, in prehistoric times, were descendants of the Indo-Aryan and Mongol peoples who settled in the region of the lower Ganges and Brahmaputra. The clans of people during this period can be identified as Rarh, Pundra, Varendri, Gaur, Vanga and Harikela, mainly descendents of Aryans and Dravidians.<sup>15</sup> The earliest

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<sup>10</sup>W.V. Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>11</sup>B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, JatioSangsadBhaban : A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism? *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3)(2013) 22-55.

<sup>12</sup>W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10).

<sup>13</sup>S.M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

<sup>14</sup>M. Muhit, *Bangladesh : Emergence of a Nation*, Dacca : Bangladesh Book International Limited, 1978.

<sup>15</sup>W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10); D.Lewis, *op. cit.* (3); C. Baxter, *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.



evidence of civilisation can be traced back from the Murya dynasty in 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. during the rule of Hindu and Jains. During the rule of Murya, Buddhism flourished. The Sunga and Gupta Dynasties ruled the area of Bengal from 170 B.C till 510 A.D. A Khatria tribe Pala dynasty commenced their rule in 750 A.D and continued till 1159. During the Pala period Bengal was united. The Buddhist Palas were taken over by orthodox Hindu Sena and Sena ruled the area of Bengal till the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the emergence of Muslim ruler IkhtiarKhilzi.<sup>16</sup> From this time the influence of Buddhist and Hindu dynasties waned; this is evident in the very limited representation of these groups in the overall composition of the membership of the contemporary Parliament.

Mughal Muslim rulers assumed power as a consequence of the stream of migration of Muslim sufis, saints and warriors from Persia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Afganistan, Turkey and Ethiopia by sea in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and via land in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Under Bakhtiar Khilzi's rule in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslim rule in the area of Bengal was established.<sup>18</sup> Under the independent Muslim ruler Ilias Shahi, Bengal was unified in the mid14<sup>th</sup> century, and it was during this rule that the name Bangla was coined for the entire country.<sup>19</sup> The inflow of Muslims contributed significantly to the emergence of Muslim cultural forces and Muslim nationalism in Bengal, an influence that remains as a quintessential part of the strength and character of today's Parliament.

This succession of diverse rulers added richness to Bengal civilisation and ultimately contributed to the diversity of the iconic JSB, intangible, spiritual and emotional terms. The Murya, Sunga, Gupta, Pala, Sena, the Mughals and the British and Pakistani rulers not only enriched its cultural context but also promoted and nurtured a wide range of religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other sects.<sup>20</sup> Although the Parliament represents the 85% Muslim population of Bangladesh, constitutionally it is a secular nation. The majority of the Muslim population is converted Hindus who embraced Islam in order to receive emancipation from the oppression of Hindu Brahmins.<sup>21</sup> The present JSB is ideally perceived as a space imbued with the spirit of emancipatory zeal of those socially downcast people in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. The

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<sup>16</sup>C. Baxter, *op. cit.*(15);W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10); D.Lewis, *op. cit.* (3); M. Muhit, *op. cit.* (14).

<sup>17</sup>W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10).

<sup>18</sup> S.M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

<sup>19</sup>M. Muhit, *op. cit.* (14).

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (15); Bayezid Choudhury, P. Jones and P. Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did not Materialize, Planning for Planning Sake in the Case of Dhaka', *Proceedings of International Urban Design Conference*, Melbourne (2012), 36-45.

conversion of the excommunicated people of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was facilitated by Muslim sufis and saints who came to Bengal from Persia and the Middle East after the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Later a stream of Europeans — British, Portuguese, a small segment of Arakanese and French — came to this part of India for trade and Christianity flourished. Christianity reached its peak under British rule with the introduction of Christian missionaries.<sup>22</sup>In terms of religious representation, it is ironic that Bangladesh has no Jewish history, yet the JSB was designed by an Estonian born American Jewish architect.

The term Jatio (National) Sangsad (Assembly) Bhaban (Building) has its etymological root in the Sanskrit language. The unique ‘Bangla Bhasha’ (Bangla Language) is derived from Sanskrit and can be traced back to the Charyapada in 10<sup>th</sup> century, which emanated from Sanskrit initiated by Aryans.<sup>23</sup>The Bangla language through the course of time has been enriched by other foreign languages, such as Persian and English; similarly the architecture of the JSB has been enriched by diverse sources. Today it is the seventh most spoken language in the world.<sup>24</sup>The first manifestation of a nationalist movement of Bengal during the Pakistan regime emerged in the language movement of 1952; this unique movement positioned the Bangla language as of central importance to national identity, its importance recognised by UNESCO. This international recognition of the Bangla language aptly parallels the international recognition of the iconic status of the JSB.

In terms of function, the central feature of the JSB is the Parliament or Sangsad, in line with the 1972 Constitution. It is a ‘unicameral’ parliamentary system, which follows the British Westminster tradition.<sup>25</sup> It also partially resembles the Indian system. The prime minister of Bangladesh holds the supreme executive authority and the president is elected by each

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<sup>22</sup>D.Lewis, *op. cit.* (3); W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10); B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (1)

<sup>23</sup>D.Lewis, *op. cit.* (3); W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (10); B.Choudhury, P.Jones and P.Armstrong, *op. cit.* (21)

<sup>24</sup>H. Thompson, *Bangladesh. Language and National Identity in Asia*. A. Simpson(eds) Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> The effort to formulate a Constitution was undertaken on 23 March 1972, through an order, ‘Bangladesh constituent assembly order’ (p.o. no. 22). On 4 November 1972, after 325 days of independence, the Parliament of Bangladesh produced a complete draft Constitution. Several factors contributed in speeding up of the draft of the Constitution: (1) the nation’s uniform mosaic in language, culture, traditions and history; (2) structure of single chamber legislature; (3) the parliamentary democracy structure; (4) holding absolute power by one political party. With the promulgation of the ‘Bangladesh constituent assembly order’ the preparation of the Constitution making was undertaken on 23 March 1972 (p.o. no. 22). The members were mainly drawn from the members of the Pakistan National Assembly and the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly from the elections of 1970 and 1971. A 34-member Constitution drafting committee was formulated headed by Dr Kamal Hossain, a British trained barrister and the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs as its head. Only one member was selected from the opposition in the committee. In total 74 drafting committee meetings took place. On 12 October 1972, after 300 hours of work, the Minister introduced the Constitution Bill. There was discontent from the opposition political parties, claiming the Constitution lacked diversity and it of all cross-sections of society. However ‘a bad Constitution is better than no Constitution’. A total of 163 amendments - 139 on the main body and 24 on the schedules and preamble - were proposed. The final draft of the Constitution was presented on 4 November 1972 and, surprisingly, with less than two hours of debate the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was approved without any objections. The Constitution consisted of 72 printed pages, with 153 articles divided into 11 parts and four appended schedules. It provided for supremacy of Sangsad, and came into effect from 16 December 1972. J. Choudhury, *Bangladesh-Failure of A Parliamentary Government*, London: Jamshed Foundation, 2008.

Parliament, which has a tenure of five years. The president has the vested power to appoint the chief executive of government, the prime minister. The president can be removed if two thirds of the Parliament agreed to removal. The number of members of Parliament totals 300, with 30 seats reserved for women.<sup>26</sup>

The building incorporates the traditional architectural vocabulary of Bengal, which has its roots in the ancient Buddhist monasteries, the Hindu temples of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Mughal Muslim structures of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Ksiazek states, '*if Kahn did not always comprehend the climate of the subcontinent, he consciously adopted its architectural tradition*'.<sup>27</sup> Kahn reinterpreted the local architectural spirit and styles in Western language. Connection can be drawn between Kahn's JSB and the geometric order (central cruciform shape) of Buddhist Viharas (monasteries) like the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Mahastangarh, 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Paharpur (Shomapura Vihara), and the 8–12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Maynamoti (Shalbon Bihar). The monumentality of these Buddhist structures may have significantly influenced Kahn in designing the capital complex. The exquisite traditional Hindu Kantajir temple of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with its picturesque brick terracotta surface, may also have been a source of inspiration for Kahn in the creation of the subsidiary brick structure of the JSB complex. The sultanate mosques of Muslims (1576–1757), which symbolise emancipation from the clutch of Hindu Brahmin oppression in corporeal terms, can be connected to Khan's notion of the JSB as a temple of democracy.<sup>28</sup> Mughal structures like Lalbagh Fort (1644) and Bara Khatra (1644) were indeed a source of inspiration in terms of the geometry and space for the JSB. Thus the physical and symbolic spiritual qualities of the major religions of Bangladesh were entrenched in the very existence of the JSB.

In spatial terms the spatial quality of the JSB complex is characterised by its varied surface quality with water bodies, grass carpet, horticulture, concrete and brick surfaces, flat and elevated surfaces (plinth), creating a physical manifestation of the multiplicity of religions, plurality of political visions, and multi-layered social structure of Bangladesh. The idea of unity in diversity in the Bengal culture has been rendered carefully through the building's spatial presence. The resemblance to a Mughal garden is a physical representation of its inseparable

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<sup>26</sup> Z. R. Khan, 'Bangladesh's Experiments with Parliamentary Democracy'. *Asian Survey*, 37(6) (1997), 575-589.

<sup>27</sup> S.W. Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (6), p. 432.

<sup>28</sup> B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (1).

connection to tradition. Thus its 610 acres of land represent a miniature Bangladesh, with its richness of multi-faceted society and culture expressed through a myriad of physical articulations.<sup>29</sup>

Kahn's inspiration derived from Bengal tradition in JSB's architectural and spatial qualities is best documented through Wiseman's writing:<sup>30</sup>

*Khan made his first trip to Pakistan in late January of 1963, staying for six days. While there, he met with Islam, who, like Doshi, set about introducing Kahn to the local conditions. Travelling by jeep, boat and occasionally by helicopter, they crisscrossed the country, Islam making sure that Kahn was immersed in the Bengali building and cultural traditions. Together they toured major architectural sites, including Dhaka's venerable Lalhbagh Fort, a walled complex with a mausoleum at its core. Travelling or not, Islam and Kahn met almost daily for tea in Islam's leafy garden in the heart of Dhaka, where they would discuss culture, history and the progress of the design.*

Khan developed several master plans for the site. The first was devised in 1965 comprising 'Citadel of Assembly' and 'Citadel of Institution'. The second master plan, in 1973 comprised 'Citadel of Assembly', 'Secretarial Sector' and 'Civic sector'. Finally the 'Citadel of Assembly' was built, which consisted of a Ministers' hostel, Members of Parliament residence and the Assembly Building.<sup>31</sup>

The idea of the Citadel of Assembly and the Citadel of Institution is a Roman concept that Kahn derived from the Bauhaus Art tradition of grand municipal monuments.<sup>32</sup> According to Ashraf 'if he is a Roman he is Mughal too'.<sup>33</sup> He borrowed the idea of monumentality from both streams and combined them in his artistic creation of the JSB. However, the extant literature also suggests he was instructed by the West Pakistan government to impose monumentality to demonstrate the power and authority of West Pakistan over East Pakistan. Wiseman writes:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> According to archival record of public works department, in Dhaka initially 1000 acres of land was provided, later around 610 acres were allocated for the JSB Complex. File no-W-CAP-58/ACE, Collection no-10, year -1968.

<sup>30</sup> C. Wiseman, *Louis I. Kahn: Beyond Time and Style*, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007, p.152; Mazharul Islam is a local architect who was trained in the US and Britain. He was instrumental in the commissioning of architect Louis I. Kahn.

<sup>31</sup> L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> C. Wiseman, *op. cit.* (30).

<sup>33</sup> K. Ashraf, Louis I. Kahn: National Capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1962-83. *Global Architecture*, 72, 1-47, 1994.

<sup>34</sup> C. Wiseman, *op. cit.* (30), p.154.

*The Ayub government must have communicated the message clearly to the architect to do everything at monumental scale, as an eyewash. The scale was conceived to impress the people of Eastern Pakistan that the big brothers of the West care and have great plans for them.*

This contradicts Khan's understanding of local culture and tradition. It suggests that Khan struggled to maintain a balance of all elements and address all forces in his design of, and philosophical approach to, the JSB. Thus, the JSB can be conceived of as fusing the idea of East and West, ruler and ruled, not only in terms of scale, but also through space, volume, landscape elements, material and finally through symbolic expression.<sup>35</sup>

The octagonal main JSB building is comprised of nine blocks with the assembly chamber at the centre. The blocks are arranged symmetrically on both sides of the central chamber and named according to their geographic disposition, that is, north block, south block, east block, west block etc.<sup>36</sup> Metaphorically, the central block represents the heart of Sangsad, 'the Constitution'. And the bi-polar disposition of the blocks represents the two nationalist forces, Bengali nationalism and Bangladeshi nationalism.<sup>37</sup>

The British colonial period (1757–1947) cast a long shadow on the socio-political, cultural and the built environment of Bengal. The Indo-Sarcenic style, which is an amalgamation of British and Indian style, reflected through large scale public structures like the High Court, Supreme Court, Curzon Hall, Chammery House and the Chief Justice Residence, demonstrate the British presence as a colonial power, a predecessor of the American neo-colonial period.<sup>38</sup>

The JSB also made a lasting impression in the subsequent development of the architectural landscape of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Following in the footsteps of Khan, American architects Paul Rudolf, Richard Neutra, Stanley Tigerman, Daniel Dunham, Richard Vrooman were engaged in different projects in the mid and late 1960s. In 1966, after the commissioning of

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<sup>35</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of fusing local and western approaches is its construction method and construction material. The imported concept of prestressed concrete was cast using the local scaffolding system of bamboo.

<sup>36</sup> The Assembly block consists of 581 seats, of which 354 seats are allocated for Members of Parliament, 41 seats are allocated for president, speaker and guests. For special guests 56 seats are allocated, 70 seats are reserved for journalists. For bureaucrats and government employees 60 seats are allocated. The ground floor occupies an area of 1,50,000 square feet. Total floor area is 8,32,000 square feet. The Presidential Plaza located on the north comprises an area of 65,000 square feet. The height of the central chamber is JSB is 155'8" and the heights of peripheral blocks are 110'. It has 10 levels. The height of the Assembly Hall is 112'. The thickness of the walls differs from 12'-24". It has 400 rooms and 50 stairs. All parliamentary functions including the Parliament Secretariat are located in this block. Public Works Department Archive, Dhaka. M.M. Ali, *Shomotote Sangsad*, Dhaka: Intercon Associates, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> As the human brain has two cortex, so it can be said that the two mainstream nationalist forces, the Awami League and the BNP, symbolically represent two sides of the central axis of the JSB.

<sup>38</sup> After Dhaka was established as provincial capital of Bengal a series of architectural developments took place.

Kahn in 1964, Paul Rudolf designed some magnificent buildings in the Agriculture University of Bangladesh. Richard Neutra designed the library building of the same university. The statement of the design was mostly Western. In the late 1960s Stanley Tigerman was commissioned to design five polytechnic institutes across the country. Daniel Dunham of Berger Engineers designed several projects, including the V.C's residence and Guest House at Mymanshing Agriculture University and the Rajshahi University Campus Complex and Student Housing. Robert Bouigh of Berger Engineers designed the Kamalapur Railway Station, Notre Dame College, Brothers Hostel, and St. Joseph's school.<sup>39</sup> Richard Vrooman designed the Architecture building of the first architectural school in Bangladesh. He is regarded as the 'father of architectural education' in Bangladesh.<sup>40</sup> Muzharul Islam, a pioneering foreign-trained local architect, played a vital role in realising projects by these architects.<sup>41</sup> His work is pivotal in the architectural development of Bangladesh, with his architecture realised amalgamation of western and local architectural vocabulary. The works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Paul Rudolf and Louis Kahn had a profound influence on Islam's architecture.<sup>42</sup>

Although significant for its architectural merit, the JSB is equally remarkable as a socio-political construct.<sup>43</sup> The emergence of the JSB, its development as a national identity and its symbolic connections arose from its significance as a socio-political product. Thus this study revolves around the story of nationalism and state formation as a component of the JSB's socio-political construct.

Architectural icons, especially symbolic buildings like the JSB, are usually interpreted as embodiments of political and cultural constructs. In short, they express the politics of power and the paradigm of culture.<sup>44</sup> As the JSB is a seemingly nationalist product, the issue of nationalism has constituted a significant part of the research. 'Nationalism' as a cultural and political product and 'Formation of State' as a political process of bringing into being a state will be used to address the political and cultural aspects of the JSB. This non-empirical research considers the

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<sup>39</sup>M.Rahman, *City of an Architect*, Dhaka, DelVistaa Foundation, 2011.

<sup>40</sup>R. Islam, The Pioneering Contribution of Richard E. Vrooman to Architectural Education in Bangladesh, Proceedings of International Seminar on *Architecture : Education. Practice and Research 2012*, 2012, Dhaka.

<sup>41</sup> C.A.Doxiades, a Greek Architect-Planner designed several institutional projects in Dhaka, prior to Kahn's commission. Robert Bouighy an American architect also designed the central station of Dhaka before Kahn was invited to design the JSB. The author of this thesis has a refereed conference publication on Doxiades work in Dhaka. ('C.A.Doxiades and his Philosophy: Divulging a Global Architecture', proceedings of the conference, *Architecture: Overcoming Constraints*, 2003, Dhaka).

<sup>42</sup>F. Mallik and Z.Ali, *Muzharul Islam Architect*, Dhaka, BRAC University Press, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P.Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focal Point: The Imagined Socio-Political Construction of Space', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4,6 (2013), 294-302.

<sup>44</sup> L.Findley, *Architecture, Politics and Cultural Agency*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

underlying political and cultural issues in local, global and historic contexts that shaped the creation of this masterpiece. The research also explores the spatial development of Dhaka as the backdrop to the JSB.

This research focuses mainly on two themes —‘political’ and ‘cultural’ —that have not been adequately addressed in the prior literature analysing this building.<sup>45</sup>The general myopic vision in relation to architecture (as the art and science of building) does not consider a broader framework incorporating ‘power’ and ‘social significance’.<sup>46</sup>I argue that, the JSB, like all great architectural commissions, is a creation of its political environment, as much as its natural one.<sup>47</sup>

The study attempts to reveal the politics of power in depth. The discipline of architecture often serves to fulfil the desire and whim of those who possess power; great architecture can be regarded as a vehicle for demonstrating power.<sup>48</sup>Thus architects provide services to mostly the affluent and privileged in society. Moreover, colonialism has cast its far-flung influence through the introduction of spatial and architectural practice to many colonies.<sup>49</sup> This research investigates the global and local power struggles that have been reflected in the commissioning of this building.

Additionally, such a symbolic building also should be seen as a cultural product. Architecture as a cultural institution incorporates a range of socio-cultural factors.<sup>50</sup>Roth states:<sup>51</sup>

*Architecture, then, is like written history and literature—a record of the people who produced it — and it can be “read” in much the same way. Architecture is a nonverbal form of communication, a mute record of the culture that produced it.*

Symbolic buildings throughout history are arte facts.<sup>52</sup> The term ‘culture’ should be considered in the broadest sense. It incorporates values, ethos, religion, way of life and social and political order. In its broader sense it reflects the notion of nationalism. It can also transcend the ‘local’ boundary and relate to global culture. The JSB indicates a colonial mentality where a notion of greater power is imposed on a weaker one, raising questions as to whether it is, in fact, an

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> P. Hurst, *Space and Power: Politics, War and Architecture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> L. Vale, *op. cit.* (31).

<sup>48</sup> L. Findley, *op. cit.* (40)

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> A. Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, London: Prentice Hall, 1969.

<sup>51</sup> L.M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture*, Boulder: West View Press, 1998, p.3.

<sup>52</sup> H. Davis, *The Culture of Building*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

example of American post war cultural imperialism.<sup>53</sup> It is these issues that this research attempts to understand.

Nationalism is inherently a cultural phenomenon, although with a political underpinning.<sup>54</sup> It is therefore imperative to highlight the issue of nationalism when discussing the JSB, as it incorporates culture and politics that shaped its commissioning and very existence. The JSB emerged from a nationalist movement so should be understood from the point of view of nationalism. This research seeks to draw together this theme, considering the historic, contemporary and future context.

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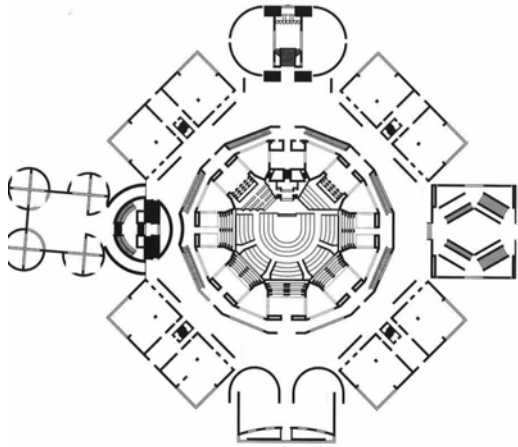
<sup>53</sup>Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (6)

<sup>54</sup>E. Kamenka, *Nationalism*. Sydney: Southwest Press Limited, 1973.



## Chapter 2

### Research Rationale



## Chapter 2: Research Rationale

*This chapter explains the basis of, and justification for undertaking, this research. It outlines the themes to be explored in relation to the JSB: nationalism; and the political and cultural context. These themes are explored in relation to the spatial dimension of the JSB. The chapter also provides an overview of the theoretical framework and chapters of the thesis.*

### 2.1 Research Rationale

The intrinsic and extrinsic meanings of buildings are diametrically opposite, with intrinsic meanings revealed in their spatial and visible forms and extrinsic meaning through their ‘tradition and social use’.<sup>1</sup> This study of the JSB mainly focuses on extrinsic meanings, evolved from politics and culture. While the building itself has been extensively studied, research focusing on the extrinsic meaning of the JSB has not been attempted before. Vale states, ‘*Notwithstanding the extensive discussion it has received, Kahn’s work [Jatio Sangsad Bhaban] has too rarely been seen in the light of the political history of this part of Bangal*’.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the proposed research represents an original contribution to political history by incorporating the notions of nationalism, and symbolic appearance.

Stea writes ‘*architecture as production allows us to penetrate beneath the physical attributes of built form to reveal its substantial characteristics included in the broader processes that are involved in its production*’.<sup>3</sup> This research has attempted to penetrate beyond our view of the physical form of the JSB to reveal the politics, culture, nationalism, state formation and socio-political spatial planning of Dhaka. The research underscores that the comprehension of architecture goes beyond building, with its multiple meanings. Hershberger’s theory on ‘responsive’ meaning supports the approach of this research that transcends the physical dimension of a building. In his article

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<sup>1</sup> H. Conway, *Understanding Architecture*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. p.281.

<sup>3</sup> D. Stea, *Placemaking*, Sydney: Avebury, 1993, p.9.

‘Architecture and Meaning’ Hershberger contended there are two streams of theories of architectural meaning: the ‘representational’ and ‘responsive’. The representational aspect mainly addresses the objective character of architecture, such as shape, texture, colour, signs and so on.<sup>4</sup> The responsive meaning, which is the focus of this research, has three distinct types: affective, evaluative, and perspective. These are in the realm of the subjective, as opposed to objective, meaning and address issues like ‘ideas’, ‘concepts’, ‘thoughts’, ‘feelings’ and ‘emotions’, which shape the social aspect of architecture.<sup>5</sup> Exploring meanings other than architectural and structural aspects, this research has attempted to transcend the traditional concept of architecture as mere structure.<sup>6</sup> This kind of alternative meaning of architecture elevates the concept of architecture and connects it with the larger social fabric.<sup>7</sup> Goodman writes:

*‘A building, more than most works, alters our environment physically; but moreover, as a work of art it may, through various avenues of meaning, inform and recognise our entire experience. Like other works of art-and like scientific theories, too-it can give new insight, advance understanding, participate in our continual remaking of a world’.*<sup>8</sup>

This research carries special significance in terms of architectural history and historiography. As Leach indicates, architectural history serves to articulate and define the historic context of contemporary architecture.<sup>9</sup> The notion of historiography broadens and articulates the understanding of architecture. Through historic analysis in terms of ‘nationalism’ and ‘socio-political construction of space’ this research will try to provide a new dimension, mainly in relation to political and cultural aspects. Similar historic research titled, ‘Nationalism and its Expression in Architecture: The Czech National Theatre and its Legacy’ was carried out in the Department of Architecture at the

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<sup>4</sup> R. G.Hershberger, ‘Architecture and Meaning’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 4(4) (1970), 37-55.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> W. Whyte, ‘How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture’, *History and Theory* 45(2) (2006), 153-177.

<sup>7</sup> D. Upton, ‘Architecture in Everyday Life’, *New Literary History*, 33(4) (2002), 707-723.

<sup>8</sup> N. Goodman, ‘How Buildings Mean’, *Critical Inquiry*, 11(4) (1985), 642-653, p. 652.

<sup>9</sup> A. Leach, *What is Architectural History*, U.K: Polity Press, 2010.

University of California, Berkeley in 1993. That research reveals Czech history and culture through the nationalist symbol, the Czech National Theatre.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 Nationalism as the Discourse of The Research

Nationalism is both a cultural and political construct.<sup>11</sup> Moreover Snyder suggests that nationalism can be reinterpreted as ‘unity of culture’ and also involves political and historic processes.<sup>12</sup> Thus, this thesis assumes that nationalism addresses both the cultural and political aspects of a nation. The power of nationalism revolves around the unity and solidarity of a like-minded group of people and can be represented by a symbol like the JSB. According to Guibernau:

*The power of nationalism emanates from its ability to engender sentiments of belonging to a particular community. Symbols and rituals play a major role in the cultivation of a sense of solidarity among the members of the group.*<sup>13</sup>

The JSB, interpreted as a national symbol and identity,<sup>14</sup> can be represented as an object that denotes ‘solidarity’ and ‘unity’ evolving out of the power of nationalism. In order to explore the underlying issues related to the nationalism that shaped the JSB, historical and cultural precedence will be discussed.

As Anderson argues:

*nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which — as well as against which — it came into being.*<sup>15</sup>

Bangladesh came into being as a product of a deep-rooted cultural system. This research attempts to explore all related political ideas and developments of this cultural system that generated the spirit of nationalism, culminating in the commissioning of the JSB.

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<sup>10</sup> O. A. McCord, , ‘Nationalism and its Expression in Architecture: The Czech National Theatre and its Legacy’, Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of California,1993.

<sup>11</sup> E. Kamenka, *Nationalism*, Sydney: Southwest Press Limited, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> L.L.Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism*, New Jersey: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1954.

<sup>13</sup> M. Guibernau i Berdún, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: UK, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G. Bell, ‘The Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban’, *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4) (2011), 104-111.

<sup>15</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London; New York: Verso, 1983. p.12.

Thus, the JSB will be examined as a symbolic representation of nationalism and state formation. The ‘state’, which is the political institution of government, and ‘nationalism’, which is primarily a cultural phenomenon, will be central to adequately addressing the political and cultural aspects of the JSB.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 Political Aspects of the Research — Local and Global

The JSB was commissioned by Military Dictator President Mohammad Ayub Khan of Pakistan in 1962. Ayub Khan’s basic idea for commissioning this building was to demonstrate his commitment to democracy.<sup>17</sup> He told the US congress in 1961 ‘*our aim always was and always has been and always shall be to have representative institutions.*’<sup>18</sup> In particular, he wanted to make the people of Bangladesh (then, East Pakistan) believe that he was concerned about the welfare of Bangladesh.<sup>19</sup> As Ksiazek states ‘*Ayub Khan commissioned the complex to deflect criticism that his government is favouring West Pakistan over East.*’<sup>20</sup>

The JSB is an outcome of Ayub Khan’s 1962 authoritarian Constitution and should be perceived in a broader political setting.<sup>21</sup> Schendel states that in 1962 Ayub Khan promulgated a Constitution mainly to fulfil his political ambition for long term rule. He envisaged Dhaka as a seat of national assembly and Islamabad to be the seat of national government.<sup>22</sup>

*The military regime saw itself [Jatio Sangsad Bhaban] as stern, fair, constructive, efficient and avuncular. Most East Pakistanis, however saw it as autocratic, imperialist, violent and geared to perpetuating the vice-regal power of Ayub Khan.*<sup>23</sup>

The building was commissioned during the early stages of the cold war, in which the world was polarised. Pakistan became a close friend of the US, a relationship that in the

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<sup>16</sup> L.Krader, *Formation of the State*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968.

<sup>17</sup> B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op cit.* (16).

<sup>18</sup> S. W. Ksiazek, ‘Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and The National Assembly’, *Society of Architectural Historians*, 52(4) (1993), 416-435, p.428.

<sup>19</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (18), B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op cit.* (14).

<sup>20</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (18), p.428.

<sup>21</sup> L.J. Vale, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>22</sup> W.V. Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.120.

early years of the cold war hinged on mutual interdependence. America supported Pakistan financially in exchange for Pakistan promising to support the US in the region in its opposition to communism.<sup>24</sup> It can be assumed, therefore, that post world war architecture under American hegemony was more political than artistic. Thus architecture, during the early cold war era under the patronage of the US, can be seen as a product of ‘geopolitics’.<sup>25</sup> It is also assumed that in the post-war period that modernist architecture and urban design carried political meanings wherever they were transposed, including the notion of control and imperialism.<sup>26</sup> It is within this context of the global politics of polarity that the commissioning of US architect Louis I. Kahn in Bangladesh needs to be understood.

#### **2.4 Cultural Issues — National Identity and Product or Process?**

Despite its controversial beginning, interestingly the JSB now stands as a symbol of unity and democracy to the people of Bangladesh.<sup>27</sup> It symbolises the values and way of life of the Bangladeshi people. The buildings suggest the cultural and traditional perceptions of the people. It can be understood as the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through the practice of symbolic representation.<sup>28</sup> Architect Louis I. Kahn consciously adopted the architectural tradition and culture of the local people in his design.<sup>29</sup> Hubert notes, *‘[the] Capital complex has also come to signify the country’s desire for social and technological progress, and cultural integrity. It has become a component of culture’*.<sup>30</sup>

This is also evident in Kahn’s vision, drawing attention to the connection of his masterpiece with that of the local setting, *‘I’ve chosen to distinguish it from its*

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<sup>24</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (18).

<sup>25</sup> J.D. Lieber, ‘Pervasive Beauty: Modern Architecture and Mass Democracy at Mid-Century’. Department of History, Michigan, University of Michigan. PhD, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> A. Kusno, *Behind the Post-Colonial Architecture, Urban Space and Political Culture in Indonesia*. London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op. cit.* (14).

<sup>28</sup> J. Tomlinson, *Globalisation and Culture*, UK: Polity Press, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (18).

<sup>30</sup> B.J. Hubert, ‘Kahn’s Epilogue’, *Progressive Architecture*, 65 (1984), 56-67, p. 66.

*surroundings by the introduction of the lake. Because it is delta country and all important building are on mounds*'.<sup>31</sup>

In regard to cultural imperialism, this research examines the idea that the JSB is a product transported from one part of the world to another to promote the ideas and philosophy of a different culture. This will be examined against the backdrop of the wider view of foreign influence on architecture in this region, where, since time immemorial, the architecture of the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) has borne the testimony of different cultures, which have blended gradually with the local culture. For instance, with the arrival of Alexander the Great (326 B.C) in the north western part of India, this sub-continent came under the rule of the Greeks and the strong western influence of a mature classical architectural style (Greco-Bactrian style, named after a fusion of Greek and local style) appeared in the Indian sub-continent.<sup>32</sup> In 1200 A.D., with the arrivals of Muslims from the West, the architecture of the sub-continent including Bangladesh was further enriched by a hybrid 'Indo-Islamic' style.<sup>33</sup> The colonial influence of the British over 200 years also contributed significantly to the local architecture, with a hybrid architectural language emerging.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the foreign influence of the Greeks, Persians and British all contributed to determining the architectural character of the Indian sub-continent (including Bangladesh) whilst having regard to the local culture, climate and technology. After the British colonial period, during the Pakistan period when architect Louis I. Kahn was commissioned, the architecture of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) entered into the realm of international architecture, apparently disregarding local context and setting. It could be considered that during this post-colonial period building was developed in America and literally transposed to other areas of the international market as a product.<sup>35</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, some existing literature suggests that the building evolved considering local architectural tradition and culture as a process, thus generating the question: is it product or process?

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<sup>31</sup> L.I. Kahn, 'Yale Speech for Perspecta', *Perspecta* 9, 10 (1965), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> F. Allchin and Ancient India and Iran Trust, *Gandharan Art in Context: East-West Exchanges at the Crossroads of Asia*. New Delhi: Regency Publications, 1997.

<sup>33</sup> P. Brown, *Indian Architecture*, Bombay: Taraporevala, 1964

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> W.J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1987.

## 2.5 Socio-political Spatial Construct of the JSB

In spatial terms, the JSB remains as a pivotal point in the history and future of the physical development of Dhaka. The development of the JSB as an urban anchor for the city is not an isolated phenomenon.<sup>36</sup> The spatial aspect of the JSB has a political and cultural underpinning that supports the central theme of this dissertation. Dhaka has undergone successive layers of development from its inception as a capital city in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, from the pre-Mughal period, then later through the Mughal and British colonial periods. The spatial development of the JSB also has its connection with the 1917 plan initiated by Patrick Geddes, following the Garden City theme by Minoprio Spencely and Macfarlane in 1959.<sup>37</sup> With the idea of commissioning a second capital in Dhaka, the northern part of old Dhaka (which was mostly farmland) received a new lease of life.

*In the second half of the 1960s the decision to have a second capital in Dhaka led to the development of the area to the west of Tejgaon farm and the Airport (now known as Shere-Bangla-Nagar).*<sup>38</sup>

This development, while on the one hand representing a unifying element for urban Dhaka, on the other hand, represents an undemocratic coercion of neo-colonial space in the scarce land of Dhaka because in reality it marginalised many low income people.<sup>39</sup> The area earmarked as high density housing in the 1959 Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane plan was gradually engulfed by the JSB.<sup>40</sup> This then raises the questions: can the JSB be perceived as a unifying symbol of the spatial growth of Dhaka or, paradoxically, did the inception of this American product divide the existing mosaic of society by patronising the growing burgeoning capitalist society?

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<sup>36</sup> K.K. Ashraf, Many Dhakas, 2003, Retrieved 15-09-2010 from <http://www.the%20daily%20star.net/2003/12/08/d312081502121.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: The Emergence of Neocolonial Planning as a Sequel, *Journal of Engineering and Technology* 2, 2 (2013).

<sup>38</sup> A.M, S. F. Chowdhury, *Physical Growth of Dhaka City*. S. U. Ahmed (ed). Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2009, p. 72.

<sup>39</sup> Bayezid Choudhury, P. Armstrong and Paul Jones, *op cit.* (37).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



## 2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

This thesis revolves around a deductive theory, propagated by architectural and planning scholar Lawrence Vale.<sup>41</sup> He theorised, '*Grand symbolic building should be understood in terms of political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*'. Vale proposed this theory of 'conjecture' or 'deduction' in his book *Architecture, Power and National Identity*. The book sheds light on some grand symbolic buildings around the world, including Louis Kahn's JSB.

Theory plays a central role in both the qualitative and quantitative research cycle.<sup>42</sup> '*Theory is a logical framework which attempts to organise and explain a variety of specific facts. Theory could also be viewed as well established assumption and an approach for making systematic deduction*'.<sup>43</sup> Vale's 'theory' or 'established assumption' sets the ground for this research, where 'politics' and 'culture', two variable concepts, are combined to form a new idea about grand symbolic buildings, forming a basis 'systematic deduction'. These two interconnected ideas are expected to help generate and organise new streams of knowledge about the JSB. Based on the notion that '*Theories are logically consistent*'<sup>44</sup> Vale's theoretical framework is a robust basis on which to establish this research.

## 2.7 Summary of Chapters

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the background and rationale for the research. Chapter 3 discusses the discourse of nationalism as a prime constituent that is attached to the very meaning of the JSB. The JSB, seemingly a product evolved from the nationalist movement of Bangladesh, evokes emotive understanding in connection with the issue of nationalism. The history, evolution, duality of nationalism and Bangladeshi nationalism are discussed in this chapter to confirm the connection between nationalism and the

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<sup>41</sup> L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. p.3.

Vale took his graduate studies in architecture at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and started his academic career as a lecturer in Architecture at MIT. He is acclaimed for his book *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, which received the Spiro Kostov book award for architecture and urbanism. L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Chava Frankfort and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, New York: St. Martin Press, 1996.

<sup>43</sup> S. Aminuzzaman, *Introduction to Social Research*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Publisher, 1991.

<sup>44</sup> W.L. Newman, *Social Research Method*, Delhi: Pearson Education Inc, 2006.

building. The chapter also sheds light on the birth, growth and constant state of vicissitude of nationalism in the landscape of Bangladesh.

Chapter 4 depicts the post-independence state of Bangaldeshi nationalism and its growth. In a constant flux of societal change, the notion of Bangladeshi nationalism took on a dual disposition, with increasing polarity. Both local politics and cultural aspects of the history of Bangladesh are discussed.

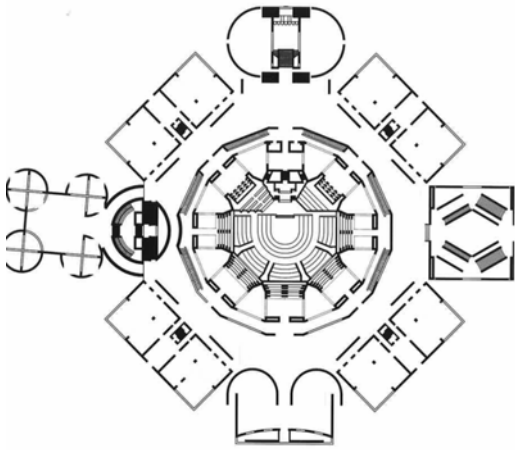
Chapter 5 outlines the crucial role of global politics in the cold war era in articulating and shaping the notion of nationalism in developing countries. During this period the US engaged in transferring its values and ethos to Pakistan, given its strategic location, to promote its capitalist vision as a counter to communism. The flow of aid from the US during the cold war era reconfigured the political landscape of Pakistan. This chapter looks at the JSB as a product of the cold war era. It sheds light on American influence in local politics in Bangladesh as a backdrop to the JSB.

Chapter 6 discusses how the spatial development of a city inherently evolves from the dynamics of local and global politics and basically is a product of constant interplay of power structures. The idea of social construction and political construction of space is a widely accepted phenomenon in the discourse of urban planning. Thus relevant discussion on urban issues in connection with the JSB is applicable in this dissertation, which mainly addresses issues of politics and culture in the urban setting of JSB. This chapter provides commentary on the gradual change of Dhaka and discloses a range of political issues pertaining to the JSB.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, summarising the analysis and synthesising the findings.

## Chapter 3

### Nationalism and Emergence of Bangladeshi Nationalism



**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture in Shaping National Identity'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*. 2012, pp. 45-67

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & P. Armstrong, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism?'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3), (2013), 22-55

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(6), 294-302, (2013)

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(9), ISSN 2221-1152.

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Graham Bell, 'Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban'. Published in *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4), 104-111 (2011).

Bayezid Choudhury, Dr Paul Jones & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did Not Materialize, Planning for Planning's Sake in the Case of Dhaka'. Published in proceedings of International Urban Design Conference, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 36-45

Bayezid Choudhury, Dr Paul Jones & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Failure of the 1917 Geddes Master Plan and 1959 Minoprio, Spencely, Macfarlane Master Plans: Some Reflections'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(10), 449-460 (2013).

Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism'. Published in the proceedings of ICERIE, Sylhet, Bangladesh, 2013, pp. 40-46.

### **Chapter 3: Nationalism and the Emergence of Bangladeshi Nationalism**

*This chapter discusses the discourse of nationalism in relation to the meaning of the JSB. Kahn's building, which evolved from the nationalist movement of Bangladesh, evokes an emotive response in its connection with the issue of nationalism. This chapter provides the history, evolution and growth of Bangladeshi independence to establish the connection between the notion of nationalism and the JSB.*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The National Assembly Building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, is considered a landmark work in modern world architecture. Its creation came out of much turmoil, from its commissioning in 1962 by Pakistan President Ayub Khan to placate the people of East Pakistan in response to national uprising, until it finally emerged as a symbol of national identity for the independent and democratic nation of Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup>

The JSB is seemingly a nationalist entity. After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the East Pakistani people were deeply discontented as a result of economic and social disparity. Pakistan, as an independent nation created by the hasty British partition of India, had inherent structural problems.<sup>2</sup> For the majority of East Pakistanis it was not the homeland they wanted.<sup>3</sup> East Pakistan was subject to repression by West Pakistan, economically and culturally, and through foreign policy and participation in public service and defence.<sup>4</sup> It was against this political setting that Ayub Khan envisioned the creation of a building for a national assembly in Dhaka with the aim of gaining the hearts and minds of the breakaway nationalist movement.<sup>5</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong argue:

*Thus the JSB came into being as a response to the nationalist movement of East Pakistan. However Ayub Khan had misread the pulse of the people of Bengal and his tactic failed*

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<sup>1</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G.Bell, 'The Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban', *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4) (2011), 104-111.

<sup>2</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism', *JCERIE: Sylhet*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> C. Baxter, *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G.Bell, *op. cit.* (1).

to appease them. Far from placating the Bengalis the National Assembly Building paradoxically became to them a symbol of an autocratic regime.<sup>6</sup>

What began as a symbol of power transformed into a symbol of nationalism, after a bloody nine month war of independence against West Pakistan saw East Pakistan emerge as the newly independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971. After independence, construction of the JSB continued, albeit under a new identity.<sup>7</sup> Almost overnight its status was changed into a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh, re-established by a new agreement between the American consultant and sovereign Bangladesh.

### 3.2 The Notion of Nationalism

In the modern world the idea of nationalism is a much debated issue.<sup>8</sup> Anderson argues, 'Nation, Nationality, Nationalism — all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze'.<sup>9</sup> Alter argues that academics are still grappling with an appropriate definition of 'nationalism', 'nationality' and 'national identity'. In general 'nationalism' denotes the philosophical and ideal aspects that bind together like-minded people with similar political and cultural groundings. 'Nationality' implies one's right to belong within a geographic boundary based on nationalism, and 'national identity' denotes characteristics that shape one's national character. Complex political settings around the world make the discussion of nationalism difficult<sup>10</sup> and inform continuing debate amongst scholars, political scientists, politicians, government policy makers and, above all, the elites of society.<sup>11</sup> Of 70 distinct nation states existing today, 35 are located in Europe. The largest of all such nationalist states is Russia.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2), p.40.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> P. Alter, *Nationalism*, London: E. Arnold, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, New York: Verso, 2006, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> P. Alter, *op. cit.* (8).

<sup>11</sup> T.H. Eriksen, 'Ethnicity Versus Nationalism', *Journal of Peace Research* 28, 3(1991), 263-278. E. Gellner, *Nationalism*, London: Phoenix, 1998. U. Özkırmlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, England, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. L. Kramer, *Nationalism Political Cultures in Europe and America, 1775-1865*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998. J. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. A.D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006. J. Hutchinson, *Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>12</sup> S.G. Lowrie, 'Nationalism', *International Journal of Ethics*, 41(1) (1930), 35-49. B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2).

Nationalism is a diverse concept<sup>13</sup> with different viewpoints related to the emergence of nationalism. Most Marxists perceive it as very much a modern discourse in connection with the development of capitalism. However, the notion of nationalism as a theme and ideological movement can be traced back to the relatively recent American and French revolutions.<sup>14</sup> Gellner, a leading scholar on nationalism, contends that it is a consequence of the industrial and development society that existed in parts of Europe at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in almost all parts of the world.<sup>15</sup> After World War I the notion of nationalism grew in popularity. At the 1919 Paris conference after the War the League of Nations was formed to foster and promote the sovereignty of independent nations. Thus the idea of nationalism received global recognition. The conference was spearheaded by the 'Big Four' representing four heads of states of the US, Great Britain, France and Italy. Although the idea of nationalism was reinforced by the conference, Woodrow Wilson's thought provoking declaration of the equality of mankind did not gain currency.<sup>16</sup>

German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder in 1774 devised the first theoretical basis of nationalism arguing it as inherently a state of mind, a collective consciousness of self-identity generated, constituted and constructed through memory, fantasy, whim, narrative and myth.<sup>17</sup> The very idea of nationalism harbours emotional issues, cultural issues, and political and religious ideologies.<sup>18</sup> Hans Kohn argues, '*Nationalism is first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness, which since the French Revolution has become more common to mankind*'.<sup>19</sup>

Eriksen argues that '*Nationalism entails the ideological justification of a state, actual or potential*'.<sup>20</sup> The three components of nationalism are autonomy, unity and identity. All three factors contribute significantly to the spirit of nationalist pride and entity.<sup>21</sup> Of the diverse elements that are central to the spirit of nationalism, religion and language are

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<sup>13</sup> R. Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. A. Smith, *Nationalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> J.G. Kellas, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>16</sup> S. Ahmed, *Bengali Nationalism and Emergence of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: UPL, 2000. J.G. Kellas, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>17</sup> P. Alter, *op. cit.* (8). L. Kramer, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>18</sup> P. Alter, *op. cit.* (8).

<sup>19</sup> H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York: The McMillan Company, 1960, p. 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> T.H. Eriksen, *op. cit.* (11), p.265.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

two determining factors shaping the structure of nationalism.<sup>22</sup> These elements were highly instrumental in articulating and shaping the character of Bangladeshi nationalism.<sup>23</sup> East Pakistan was created from the idea of a Muslim state while Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation because of its people's need to protect and maintain their cultural inheritance. Inheritance is an essential component in articulating the notion of nationalism and territoriality is the primary source.<sup>24</sup> Nationalism is a reflexive phenomenon as it shapes itself and others.<sup>25</sup> In summary:

*nationalism is an ongoing process, a derivative of sentiment or identity, an expression of political and cultural rhetoric, an ideology, a range of principles, and a conceptualisation of a social-political movement.*<sup>26</sup>

The essence of nationalism lies in the generation of a nationalist movement. The movement takes two forms: the political, which is 'rational', and the cultural, which is 'mystical'.<sup>27</sup> The idea of political nationalism appeared first in the Western world in countries such as, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, the US and the UK. The emergence of Western nationalism aimed to alter the prevailing 'top down' state into a state of the mass of people.<sup>28</sup> Thus all nationalistic movements in the West are regarded as remedial steps for institutional and constitutional structures. The urban elites and middle classes transformed nationalism to an institutional form.<sup>29</sup>

The emergence of cultural nationalism movements in the Eastern world is a different story as middle class elites were non-existent. The nationalist movement in the East was propelled by predominantly agrarian and peasant classes who shared common myths, historical memories and unique cultural attributes.<sup>30</sup> People tend to share and adhere to their culture and preserve it through cultural nationalism. The institutional framework

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<sup>22</sup> L. Kramer, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>23</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>24</sup> S. Ahmed, *op. cit.* (16).

<sup>25</sup> Samaddar, *Paradoxes of Nationalist Time*, Dhaka, UPL, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>27</sup> H. Kohn, *op. cit.* (19).

<sup>28</sup> J. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



makes less impact in the formation and preservation of these nationalist movements.<sup>31</sup>The nationalist movement in Bangladesh its firmly in the realm of cultural nationalism.

Benedict Anderson propagated the idea of cultural nationalism.<sup>32</sup>As the advocate of this form of nationalism he under scored the import of its psychological appeal.<sup>33</sup>His idea of 'imagined communities' stirred the scholarly world and generated an enthusiastic response in the Eastern world. Anderson visualised a nation as a 'distinctive modern construction' evolved from having imaginative and metaphysical ties, with closely knit psychic and mental associations spread across the globe. The idea of 'imagined communities' brings together disjointed and dispersed populations in a common and shared identity. Under the rubrics of 'imagined communities' the formation of a nation is an imaginative and symbolic process. Anderson's notion of the imagined community generated currency in the perception of the structure of nationalism.<sup>34</sup>However, Anderson's perception of nationalism of the colonial state, which he envisioned in the context of European dynastic rule of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only partly resulted from the imagined community notion of colonial states. In fact, the three institutions of colonial power — the map, the census and the museum — are the defining elements in shaping the nationalism of a colonial state.<sup>35</sup>

According to Snyder, nationalism belongs to geographical denominations: 'Europe-fissiparous nationalism', 'Africa-black nationalism', 'Middle East politico-religious nationalism', 'Asia-anti-colonial nationalism', 'Latin America-populist nationalism', 'United States-melting pot nationalism' and 'Soviet Union-messianic nationalism'. The rapid rise of ultra-nationalism, neo-nationalism, and anti-Semitism in both Western and Eastern European states demonstrates that nationalism can take an extremist standpoint.<sup>36</sup>

Historically, in most cases the nationalist movement originated among elites and gradually filtered down to the working class.<sup>37</sup>The Japanese and German nationalist

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<sup>31</sup>Kohn cited in J. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>32</sup>B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>33</sup>U. Özk\*r\*ml\*, *op. cit.* (12); J.G. Kellas, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>34</sup>L. Kramer, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>35</sup>B. Anderson, *op. cit.* (9).

<sup>36</sup>U. Özk\*r\*ml\*, *op. cit.* (11); J.G. Kellas, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>37</sup>J. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* (11).

movements may be considered 'top down'.<sup>38</sup> The form of nationalist movement, be it suppressive movement (in an authoritarian state) or expressive movement (in a democratic state), hinges on the components of state and place.<sup>39</sup>

There are three different kinds of nationalism, namely ethnic, social and patriotic nationalism. The first, ethnic nationalism, signifies a common ethnic descent among groups, such as Kurds, Latvians and Tamils.<sup>40</sup> The people of Bangladesh with common descent belong to this category. The ethnic origin of Bangladeshi people is rooted in the Indo-Aryan, Mongol and Dravidian races thousands of years ago. This melded race gave rise to the Sanskrit culture.<sup>41</sup> A second, more liberal and advanced form of nationalism, based on a common national culture but independent of ethnic descent, is known as 'social nationalism'. In this category anyone who shares the cultural values of a territory can become a member of this nationalist group irrespective of different ethnicities. People such as Scots, Ukrainians and Catalans belong to this category. The third category, official nationalism, hinges on the perception of patriotism, with no relationship to ethnic or cultural criteria. This kind of nationalism incorporates all, irrespective of their creed, religion, ethnicity, national identity and culture: for example the UK, the US and Australia.<sup>42</sup>

Nationalism is a complex notion that underwent change in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through a unification movement, the central state (e.g., the kingdoms of Prussia in Germany and Sardinia in Italy) devours and occupies neighboring states and subjugates them. This type of nationalism is also called 'Risorgimento' nationalism.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, national secession movements result in disintegration of existing states. This was apparent in the nationalist movements in Greece, Poland, Ireland, and Serbia, which achieved independence respectively from the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, Britain, and the Austrian Empire.<sup>44</sup> The emergence of Pakistan and India from British rule in 1947, and

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> J.G. Kellas, *op cit.* (11).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> W.V. Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> J.G. Kellas, *op cit.* (11).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

the emergence of Bangladesh from Pakistan rule in 1971, are good examples of a national secession movement.<sup>45</sup>

Kellas also identified four other kinds of nationalism. The first is reform nationalism, empowered and driven by a ruling class, as opposed to an anti-establishment group. Japan in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and Turkey in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are good examples of this. The second type is integral nationalism. Integral nationalism demonstrates its power and thrust through totalitarian movements such as Fascism and Nazism to express its superiority over all other structures of government. Examples are Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and Franco's Spain.<sup>46</sup> The third is colonial nationalism, a form of nationalism as a means of emancipation from colonial empires (especially those of the British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French), which expedited the process of independence of colonies from the mother countries. The American Revolution can be presented as an example of colonial nationalism. Other examples include British colonies in North America in 1776, followed by the Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the most pertinent to this research is another kind of nationalism, anti-colonial nationalism, which emerged as a response to 'national liberation' and 'anti colonial movements' in the European colonial empires in a similar process to the nationalist movement in Europe.<sup>47</sup> The independence of Bangladesh from the colonial oppression and subjugation of the British, and subsequently Pakistan is an appropriate example of anti-colonial nationalism. The JSB is the product of such anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>48</sup>

There are, of course, disadvantages and negative impacts from nationalism. Critics argue that it fosters an insular and inward looking view, generating a divide between 'us' and 'them'. According to the Marxist view it fabricates ideas and is prone to religious fanaticism.<sup>49</sup> However, these views are contested by Anthony Smith and Benedict Anderson, two proponents and advocates of nationalism, who argue in support of nationalism. Smith harbours the idea of nationalism in connection with the continuity of

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<sup>45</sup> S. Ahmed, *Itihash, Oitigho, Jatiotabad, Ganatahtra*, Dhaka, Prathama Prakashan, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4 (9) (2013), 414-424.

<sup>49</sup> U. Özk\*ml\*, *op cit.* (11).

the past and Anderson considers the idea of the creation of imagined community in line with the vision of nationalism.<sup>50</sup>

Nationalism can have a devastating effect. It disintegrates traditional values and engenders restless, ruthless, provoking issues in the race for power.<sup>51</sup> The idea of nationalism evokes passionate debate about its place as a basic constituent of the human spirit in all socio-political and scientific discourses like anthropology, political science, sociology, social psychology, linguistics, international relations, geography, philosophy and international law.<sup>52</sup>

This research takes these ideas of nationalism, as outlined above, and uses them to unfold the narrative of nationalism in Bangladesh. It uses a symbolic building to explore the context of the third world and a developing nation. The notion of third world nationalism is inherently different from that of the West.<sup>53</sup> Third world nationalism flourished in a diametrically opposite situation, where the ruler and ruled had different notions of nationalism.<sup>54</sup> Nationalism emerged as a strong and forceful power in the post-war epoch in the former colonies of Asia and Africa. The newly independent countries regained new impetus after their liberation from colonial occupation.<sup>55</sup> With regard to third world nationalism in former European colonies, Sathyamurthy argues that:

*Autonomy and independence have also been viewed in much more radical terms by national liberation movements which shape their struggles in such a way as to combine the aim of eradicating colonialism and imperialism with the goal of restructuring the society.*<sup>56</sup>

### **3.3 The Emergence of Bangladeshi Nationalism: Prehistory to Independence**

The story of Bangladeshi cultural consciousness and its evolution into nationalism is long and encompasses the life and struggle of the Bengal people to achieve freedom and dignity. Osmany argues, '*Bangladeshi nationalism, like all nationalism, is a product of the*

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<sup>50</sup>B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48).

<sup>51</sup>J. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>'Third World Nationalism' refers to nationalism of previously colonised countries.

<sup>54</sup>P. Alter, *op. cit.* (9).

<sup>55</sup>T. V. Sathyamurthy, *Nationalism in the Contemporary World*, New Jersey, Allanheld, Osman Publishers, 1983

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p.1.

*history of the people, their physical and cultural environment and above all of their hopes and aspirations*'.<sup>57</sup> It dates back thousands of years when people of this delta were united under the 'Vanga' tribe. Osmany writes, '*The history of Bangladesh nationalism begins where all histories begin*'.<sup>58</sup> That settlement was the first association of Bengal people mainly descendents of Indo Aryan and Mongols of this region under the umbrella of common myth, memory, fantasy and whim. These groups of people known as Rarh, Pundra, Varendri, Gaur, Vanga and Harikela during the formative stage of the ethnic identity of this region nurtured, fostered and generated an idea of commonality, which became a forerunner of Bengal nationalism.<sup>59</sup> The first instance of a common bond in the name of nationalism was visible in the Murya dynasty in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. During this period the nationalism of this region was spearheaded by Hindu and Jain. During the rule of Murya nationalism Buddhist nationalism grew, evident in the Sunga and Gupta dynasty from 170 B. till 510 A.D.<sup>60</sup> However, Bengal nationalism in totality did not flourish until the Pala dynasty, when for the first time Bengal was really unified under the Palas in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, mostly under Buddhist rulers.<sup>61</sup> Despite Buddhist rule, the liberal and neutral attitude of Buddhist rulers meant that religion did not penetrate Bengal nationalism. With the decline of the Palas, Orthodox Hindu Senas carried the torch of Bengal nationalism till the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Brahmin Hindu ideology has remained deep seated in Bengal nationalism, although today it is Muslim ideology that dominates.<sup>62</sup> In the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during the rule of Muslim ruler Ikhtiar Khilji, Bengal nationalism fused with Islamic fervor and started to gain momentum.

*Under the independent Illias Shahi rule [Muslim ruler] in mid fourteenth century again Bengal was properly unified and it was during this rule that the name Bangala was coined for the entire country.*<sup>63</sup>

Muslim migrants started to arrive in the coastal region of Bengal by sea in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. With the arrival of Muslims, local people were influenced by Muslim liberating

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<sup>57</sup> S. Osmany, *Bangladeshi Nationalism, History of Dialectics and Dimensions*, Dhaka: UPL, 1992., p.1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op cit.* (41). D. Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. C. Baxter, *op cit* (3).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> M. Muhit, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation*, Dacca: Bangladesh Book International Limited, 1978, p.2.

<sup>62</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41). M. Muhit, *op. cit.* (60).

<sup>63</sup> M. Muhit, *op. cit.* (60), p.2.

ideology and philosophy.<sup>64</sup>With the mass migration of Islamic Sufis and saints by land in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the excommunicated and socially outcast lower caste Hindus started to embrace Islam during the rule of Hindu Brahmins under the Sena dynasty. The Brahmin rulers of Sena had introduced the caste system, generating widespread anger and dissatisfaction within the lower castes.<sup>65</sup>The emancipator philosophy of Islam propagated by these foreign missionaries radically changed the mindset of underprivileged Hindus.<sup>66</sup>This conversion imbued them with the spirit of emancipation from the Hindu Brahmins.<sup>67</sup>This Islamic identity of the Bengal people emerged subsequently as a strong force in the spirit of Muslim-dominated nationalism in Bangladesh.<sup>68</sup>

During Mughal rule from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bengal nationalism flourished under the Muslim rulers from Central Asia. Although originating from different areas these Mughal rulers settled in the region of Bengal and embraced Bengal as their home land.<sup>69</sup>They were dedicated to the well being of the land and the people of Bengal. During Mughal rule the notion of locally developed Bengal nationalism intermingled with the thoughts, visions, ideas, and philosophy of different cultures. The conventional ethnic nationalist view of Bengal during this period altered to social nationalism, integrating all people from different backgrounds under the umbrella of one nation state.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41):D. Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*, Cambridge” Cambridge University Press, 2011.Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>65</sup> Bayezid Choudhury, P. Jones and P. Armstrong, ‘Why Geddes Plan Did not Materialize, Planning for Planning Sake in the Case of Dhaka’, *Proceedings of International Urban Design Conference*, Melbourne (2012), 36-45,

<sup>66</sup> S.M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2006. Z. R. Khan, ‘Islam and Bengali Nationalism’, *Asian Survey*, 25(8) (1985), 834-851.

<sup>67</sup> The first instance of Hindu Muslim conflict was in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal and other parts of India. The discord between Hindus and Muslims started to gain momentum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the creation of the Muslim state of Pakistan (East and West) in 1947 based on the ‘Two Nation Theory’. Jinnah, the president of the Muslim League and the father of Pakistani nationalism envisioned the two nation theory at the all India Muslim League Conference in 1940. Jinnah declared ‘The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literatures. They neither intermarry, nor dine together, and they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions’ (Jamil-ud-din Ahmed, *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom* (Lahore, 1970, p. 380).The long standing conflict between Hindus and Muslims originally stemmed from Hindu subjugation and dominance over the Muslim peasantry in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The two streams of Muslim movement of Ferazee and Wahabi by the Muslims peasants was a response to their inhumane treatment by Hindu landlords.D. K. Chattopadhyay, *The Ferazee and Wahabi Movements of Bengal. Social Scientist*, 6(2) (1977), 42-51.

<sup>68</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Jones and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (64).

<sup>69</sup>The Mughals are Muslim warriors from Central Asia who assumed the power of India after defeating Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 .The Mughal captured Dhaka in 1610 and renamed Dhaka as Jahangirnagar after the Mughal ruler Jahangir. Dhaka was made provincial capital at that time . Later in 1715 the capital was shifted to Murshidabad . After the defeat in the battle of Polashi in 1757 Mughal rule ended in Bengal with the defeat of Nawab Siraj-udidoula. The British took over Bengal following the battle of Polashi .C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).W.V. Schendel, *op cit* (41).

<sup>70</sup> S. M. Uddin, *op. cit.* (65).Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

With the first European settlement in Bengal in 1520 due to the arrival of European traders the local people started to assimilate with Western culture and a new version of nationalist impetus started to formulate.<sup>71</sup> As the local people had accepted Muslim migrants and rulers from Central Asia and the Middle East, thus they were ready to accept the European settlers, albeit with their different culture and social norms.<sup>72</sup> With the East Indian Company's inception of Bengal rule after the battle of Pallassey, the strong social bond of Hindu-Muslim in Bengali nationalism started to disintegrate.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the Mughal rulers who merged and assimilated the mosaic of Indian and Bengal culture, the intent of British invasion was limited to procuring raw materials at first and later to exercising power.<sup>74</sup> During the British East India rule, India became a country of constant famine. The Indian nationalism movement gained momentum after the Government of Britain took over power from the East India company.<sup>75</sup> The British concept of divide and rule tore apart the social fabric.<sup>76</sup> During British rule, the Hindus resurfaced as a powerful force, leading to disintegration of the perception of Bengal nationalism.<sup>77</sup>

The division of Hindu and Muslim in forging a united Bengali nationalism was visible first through the establishment of Hindu Mela in 1867 and the establishment of the Mohammedan literary society in 1863.<sup>78</sup> Both the Hindus and Muslims thus institutionalised the notion of Hindu and Muslim nationalism as opposed to Bengali nationalism and a scholarly tradition arose around the different movements, with scholars of Hindu nationalism including Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay and Bankim Chandra, while Muslim nationalist scholars included Mir Mosharaf Hussain, Syed Nawab Ali. During this conflict, a few scholars proposed Bengali secular nationalism; they were Chittoranjn Das, Raja Rammohan Roy, Dr. M Shahidullah, Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam.<sup>79</sup> Chittoranjn wrote in favor of Benglai nationalism in place of Hindu or Muslim

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism?', *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3) (2013), 22-55.

<sup>74</sup> B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture Shaping Bangladeshi Identity', *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3) (2012), 45-67.

<sup>75</sup> B.Umar, *Bharatio Jatio Andolon*, Dhaka, KothaProkash, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> S. M. Uddin, *op. cit.* (65). Z.R. Khan, *op. cit.* (65).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> S.I. Choudhury, *Bangalir Jatiotabad*, Dhaka : UPL, 2011.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

nationalism, '*Bangali is Bengali, above he is Hindu or Muslim*'.<sup>80</sup> Despite the effort of unification by many scholars this schism of Hindu and Muslim imparted a deep impact even on the present form of nationalism in the Muslim dominated independent Bangladesh.

Muslims remained marginalized in Bengal during British rule. Khan asserts:

*Because of the comparatively early establishment of British rule in Bengal, and because Hindus took to British ways far more willingly than Muslims in these early years, an overwhelmingly Hindu elite directed the socio-economic, political, and administrative affairs for the majority of Bengali Muslims at the turn of the twentieth century.*<sup>81</sup>

From 1859–1893, in 36 years of university education under British India, of 15,627 Hindu-Muslim graduates, only 546 graduates were Muslim. Of a total 2,141 employees of the British in 1871, only 92 were Muslims, while Hindu outnumbered Muslims by 711.<sup>82</sup> According to Ray, '*In Bengal, in 1901, only 22 out of every 10,000 Muslims knew English compared to 114 out of 10,000 Hindus*'.<sup>83</sup> They held only 41 of the 'high appointments' under the government while the Hindus, who were less than half as numerous as the Muslims held 1,235.<sup>84</sup> The Hindu Muslim discord gradually led to the partition of Bengal, which led to a surge in Muslim nationalism.<sup>85</sup>

The partition of Bengal in 1905 generated a new lease of life for the people of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and the benefits of partition were visible in all sectors, especially education, administration and architecture.<sup>86</sup> Chakravarti writes, '*As the capital*

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<sup>80</sup> Chattarajan in S.I. Choudhury, *op. cit.* (76), p.317.

<sup>81</sup> Z. R. Khan, *Islam and Bengali Nationalism*, Asian Survey 25(8) (1985) 834-851, p. 842.

<sup>82</sup> T. Maniruzzaman, *The All India Muslim League-A Social Analysis (1906-1946)*, Dhaka, Shucheepratna, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> A. B. Ray, 'Communal Attitudes to British Policy: The Case of the Partition of Bengal 190'5, *Social Scientist*, 6(5) (1977), 34-46, p.43

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> In February 1904 Curzon visited eastern Bengal. He was briefed about Muslim grievances and the run down administrative structure and lack of proper infrastructure in Dhaka.<sup>85</sup> According to Ray, 'all this could happen, because 'the old government was engrossed' with Calcutta and the surrounding areas where they were spending practically the whole revenues of Bengal' A. B. Ray, *op.cit.* (80), p 34.

Lord Curzon responded by creating a new province of eastern Bengal and Assam by dividing the greater Bengal. On 16<sup>th</sup> October 1905, Dhaka became the capital of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Due to Lord Curzon's unyielding support for the Muslims, despite Hindu dissatisfaction and the majority view of the British, the partition was established. A. B. Ray, *op.cit.* (80)

<sup>86</sup> Governor's Residence and Curzon Hall are two architectural examples from this period.



*of the Eastern Bengal and Assam, Dhaka regained its dignity and many of the government offices with all their paraphernalia were established in the city’.*<sup>87</sup>

The partition of Bengal with Dhaka as capital contributed significantly to the idea of Muslim nationalism. In 1906 the ‘All India Muslim League’ was born at Dhaka.<sup>88</sup> Islam writes, ‘*the birth of the Muslim league undoubtedly strengthened the solidarity of the Muslims on the one hand, while on the other, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims became strained*’.<sup>89</sup>

Finally in the face of Hindu resistance, King George V annulled the partition of Bengal on 12 December 1911, which stalled the development of the region.<sup>90</sup> However, the creation of the political party, the Muslim League, can be regarded as a contributing factor in the new wave of Muslim nationalism that later led to the creation of Pakistan and eventually that of Bangladesh.<sup>91</sup>

### **3.4 Emergence of Bengali Nationalism During the Pakistani Regime**

Bengali nationalism really came to the fore after the partition of India. Before the partition of India, during British rule, the nationalist movement of Bangladesh was driven by two successive waves. The first was to liberate India from the British and the second was to create a homeland for Muslims in India, mostly propelled by the Muslim League. After

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<sup>87</sup>R. Chakravarti, ‘Role of Dhaka after Annulment of Partition’, In S. Ahmed (Ed.) *Dhaka: Past, Present and Future*. Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2009, p. 252.

Muslim leaders in Dhaka continued their political activities to stop the annulment decision but failed. They were in part appeased when finally Lord Harding, the viceroy of British India in his sojourn in Dhaka recommended the secretary of state to India to establish the University of Dhaka. On 2 February 1912, the government of India decided in principle to establish the University of Dhaka and formed a commission named ‘Calcutta University Commission’ to look after the matter (Islam, 2009). Thus the Hindu governed commission assumed authority and interfered in this decision. They ensured as much delay as possible to establish the University of Dhaka (Biswas, 1995). Geddes’ plan included much discussion about the University.

<sup>88</sup> W. V. Schendel, *op cit* (41). M.N. Islam, ‘The Political Role of Dhaka’, In S.Ahmed (Ed.) *Dhaka: Past, Present and Future*. Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2009.

<sup>89</sup>M.N. Islam, *op. cit* .(85), p.223.

<sup>90</sup>With the annulment of partition Dhaka was stripped of its capital status. Chakravarti, a Hindu scholar argued, ‘The annulment of the partition of Bengal virtually reduced the status of Dhaka almost to that of the earlier time. R. Chakravarti, ‘Role of Dhaka After Annulment of Partition, Dhaka: Past Present Future’, In S. Ahmed (Ed.), *Dhaka: Past, Present and Future*. Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2009, p.252.

<sup>91</sup> Muslim nationalist leaders in Dhaka exerted political pressure to stop the annulment decision but failed. They accepted the decision when finally Lord Harding, the viceroy of British India agreed to establish the University of Dhaka. On 2 February 1912, the Government of India decided in principle to establish the University of Dhaka. The decision to set up Dhaka university could be regarded as the first victory under the umbrella of the Muslim nationalist force in Bengal. M.N. Islam, *op. cit* .(85).

achieving both these objectives the people of Bengal, then East Pakistan, sought self-determination, after discord with West Pakistan.<sup>92</sup>

After 1947, Pakistan was divided into West and East, situated 1500 km apart.<sup>93</sup> East Pakistan was mainly a riverine province with fertile land, mostly inhabited by Muslims. West Pakistan was a comparatively arid and dry area populated by descendants of Aryans. The East had the larger proportion of the population. Of 78 million people in Pakistan in 1951, 44 million (55%) lived in East Pakistan. Dhaka was regarded as the second capital of Pakistan.<sup>94</sup> Although Pakistan was independent, to most East Pakistanis and the Dhaka based politically conscious elite, it was not the emancipation they sought.<sup>95</sup> As Baxter states, '*But to the majority of East Pakistanis this would not prove to be the independence they desired*'.<sup>96</sup>

As previously outlined, East and West were separated in all aspects of life apart from religion. West Pakistan was a heterogeneous state with five major languages and diverse dialects and a caste system. East Pakistan was mostly linguistically and culturally homogeneous.<sup>97</sup> Religion was the only common factor but not enough to unite them. East Pakistanis were dissatisfied due to several factors, including the Constitution, language, disparity in economic development, infrastructure and education, uneven administrative structure and participation in the military.<sup>98</sup>

The first manifestation of a nationalist movement of Bengal during the Pakistan regime emerged in the language movement of 1952, and its uprising in the streets of Dhaka. This language issue generated two separate episodes of resistance — one in 1948 and another in 1952. The latter resistance '*Bhasha Andolon*' is famous for its five language martyrs.<sup>99</sup> When Jinnah visited East Pakistan in September 1948, he declared, '*Let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no*

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<sup>92</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41). D. Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>95</sup> Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>97</sup> Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>98</sup> R. Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>99</sup> H.R. Thompson, 'Bangladesh. Language and National Identity in Asia' in A. Simpson (ed.), *Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press*, 2007. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

*other language*'.<sup>100</sup> The people of Dhaka and East Bengal rejected this declaration. In 1952, in a meeting in Dhaka, Prime Minister Nizamuddin, a Bengali, declared that Urdu was to be the only state language of Pakistan.<sup>101</sup> This declaration sparked a movement in the streets of Dhaka. An attempt was made to suppress the movement by the provincial government, leading to the death of five students during a protest march. This language movement was the forerunner of a subsequent movement that led to the war of independence in 1971.<sup>102</sup> As a consequence of these protests, the Pakistani authorities agreed to accept Bangla as one of the state languages and the 1956 Constitution recognised both Urdu and Bangla as the state language of Pakistan.<sup>103</sup> Despite the formal recognition of Bangla in 1956, attempts by the government to 'Islamicise' the language to align it with Urdu continued, contributing to ongoing conflict between Muslims of East and West Pakistan.<sup>104</sup> The bitterness of this relationship was evident prior to the 1954 provincial election in which the Muslim League, a party mainly based in West Pakistan, was defeated, while the United Front Party, a Bengali nationalist party based in Dhaka opposed to Muslim nationalism, emerged victorious.<sup>105</sup> A new era of Bengali government was born.<sup>106</sup> According to Maron '*Fazlul Haque, a veteran Bengali politician, organised the new government and immediately begun to demand freedom from the domination and exploitation by Karachi*'.<sup>107</sup> Haque's

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<sup>100</sup> Jinnah was regarded as the Father of Pakistan and the Founding President of the Pakistan Muslim League. D. Lewis, *op cit* (89), p. 63.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> H.R Thompson, *op. cit.* (96).

<sup>103</sup> The language movement by University students, professors, journalists, writers and artists ignited a spark in the Bengali culture that led to subsequent movement. The spirited nationalist Bangla slogan of 'Jai Bangla' that inspired people of Bangladesh during the war of independence emerged from the other slogan '*Rashtra Bhasha Bangle Chai*' during the language movement in 1952. H.R Thompson, *op. cit.* (96). G. P. Bhattacharjee, *Renaissance and Freedom Movement in Bangladesh*. Calcutta, Mivera Associates, 1973.

At that time there were dozens of languages all over Pakistan and 'Urdu' was spoken by only 3% of all Pakistanis. Bangla on the other hand was spoken by 56% of the overall population of Pakistan. W.V. Schendel, *op cit* (41).

<sup>104</sup> N. Islam, 'Islam and National Identity: The Case of Pakistan and Bangladesh', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13(1) (1981), 55-72.

<sup>105</sup> The All India Muslim League was founded in Dhaka in 1906. The Muslim League is a party constituted by Muslims in response to the Hindu dominated congress in India. The Muslim League was instrumental in the creation of Pakistan. Jinnah from West Pakistan was president of this party. The people of Bengal were the fervent supporters of the Muslim League in the struggle for independence of Pakistan. S. Maron, 'The Problem of East Pakistan', *Pacific Affairs*, 28(2) (1955), 132-144.

The United front party was a coalition of many small and large parties. The Awame League was one of the largest parties of the United Front bagging 46% of the seats. The United Front manifesto revolved around 21 points. Four addressed recurring language issues, and the rest addressed issues like autonomy, people's rights and economic emancipation. W.V. Schendel, *op cit* (41).

<sup>106</sup> N. Islam, *op. cit.* (101).

<sup>107</sup> S. Maron, *op. cit.* (102), p. 134.

assumption of power as chief minister brought new hope to the Bengali people and was regarded as an initial victory of the nationalist force.<sup>108</sup> Schendel asserts:

*The elections of 1954, however gave them renewed hope of a real partnership. This hope was soon tempered, however, when the new government was summarily (and undemocratically) dismissed, initiating a four year period of political confusion and instability.*<sup>109</sup>

This perceived injustice had far reaching effects for the people of Bangladesh. One such impact was economic disparity, which became a basis for nationalism in the period 1947–1971.<sup>110</sup> Sobhan states:

*It may be argued that a sense of relative economic deprivation lay at the root of the Bengali nationalist movement. The struggle for autonomy of eastern Bengal was predicated on the belief that the relative deprivation of the region derived from the fact that the Bengalis were denied the political power to forge their own economic destiny.*<sup>111</sup>

The economic gap between East and West Pakistan, existing since independence, had increased substantially by 1958. Per capita income rose from Rs.330 in 1949–50 to Rs 373 in 1959–60 in West Pakistan, but declined from Rs 373 to Rs 288 in East Pakistan.<sup>112</sup> The economic disparity was also visible in financial assistance, capital expenditure, grants, foreign aid allocations, defence expenditure and foreign trade for the period 1947–1955.<sup>113</sup>

There was also disparity in terms of education and infrastructure. While enrolment of primary school students rose 163% in West Pakistan, in the East it rose only 38% in the 1947–58 period. Enrolment in secondary schools rose to 64% in the West but only 6.6% in the East. University enrolment increased by 38% in West Pakistan and by 11.2% in

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<sup>108</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41)

<sup>109</sup> However, amid this political turmoil the leading political party, the Awami Muslim League from East Pakistan, renamed itself the Awami League to assume a secular character. The Awami League made its presence felt by protesting against Pakistan's first constitution that ignored the demands of the party. W.V. Schendel, *op cit* (41).

<sup>110</sup> R. Sobhan, 'Economic Basis of Bengali Nationalism', In S. Islam (eds) *History of Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p.590.

<sup>112</sup> R. Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.

<sup>113</sup> R.D. Lambert, 'Factors in Bengali Regionalism', *Far Eastern Survey* 28(4) (1959), 49-58, p.53.

East Pakistan over the same period.<sup>114</sup> Jahan compares transport and infrastructure during this period, with Dhaka and East Pakistan generally behind in the physical aspects of urban planning.<sup>115</sup> In terms of administration and representation in the defence service, East Pakistan's foreign policy and constitutional policy also ignited dissatisfaction for the people of East Pakistan. The foreign policy of Pakistan during this period was regarded as the foreign policy of the West, with the benefits flowing to West Pakistan.<sup>116</sup>

During the 1950s, the new national Constitution of Pakistan was being created. As Baxter points out, *'The eventual formula adopted in the 1956 constitution provided for one house with equal membership from each wing, thus under representing the East wing'*.<sup>117</sup>

Against this setting of discrimination against East Pakistanis, in 1958, the Pakistan army took control of Pakistan, rejected the constitution and exercised martial rule.<sup>118</sup> Ayub Khan, a Sandhurst trained military dictator, took control of Pakistan assuming the role of commander-in-chief of the armed forces, with a significant negative impact on the people of East Pakistan.<sup>119</sup> As Schendel states:

*Here military rule meant the power was now even more decisively in the hands of non locals. East Pakistan's elite had wielded power mainly through political mobilization, not through the army or the Bureaucracy.*<sup>120</sup>

The people of East Pakistan were further marginalised and fear of new repression on the nationalist force was looming. *'Bureaucracy and Army became the symbols of western domination over the East'*.<sup>121</sup>

The contrast between East and West Pakistan rose distinctly in all aspects of life except religion.<sup>122</sup> West Pakistan subjugated the East, based on four premises: undermining the people's voice in the decision-making mechanism; disregarding and failing to

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109).

<sup>116</sup> S. Maron, *op. cit.* (102).

<sup>117</sup> Baxter, *op. cit.* (3), p.69.

<sup>118</sup> This coup by Ayub Khan was endorsed by top bureaucrats and powerful business interests in order to withhold power from inept and corrupt politicians. Parliamentary democracy was brought to an end, the press was controlled by the civil service. W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>119</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>120</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41), p.118.

<sup>121</sup> N. Islam, *op. cit.* (101), p.61.

<sup>122</sup> A. Mascarenhas, *The Rape of Bangla Desh*. Delhi: Vikas, 1971.

acknowledge Bangla as the national language [of East Bangladesh];disrespecting Muslims of the East as socially downcast; and extreme economic disparity.<sup>123</sup> Despite contributing a huge amount of revenue to the nation, the differences between West and East Pakistan were entrenched and injustice strongly felt.<sup>124</sup>

Ayub Khan initiated several measures to reduce disparity between East and West remained skeptical about Pakistan's unity.<sup>125</sup> Ahmad contends:

*He would emphatically say that it was impossible for any country to subjugate East Pakistan. It was further speculated that infiltration was possible; but to subjugate the Province [the East] was impossible.*<sup>126</sup>

In order to gain support Ayub Khan decided to commission the JSB.<sup>127</sup> Thus his intention for commissioning the JSB was to demonstrate his (public) eagerness and concern for the people of East Pakistan, which was evident from his speech to the US Congress in 1961 prior to the commissioning of the building. Khan states, '*our aim always was and always has been and always shall be to have a representative institution*'.<sup>128</sup> Khan's ulterior motive was to suppress the desire for independence of the people of East Pakistan, to appease them by providing an understanding that he was conscious of their welfare, and to deflect criticism that the government favoured West Pakistan over East.<sup>129</sup> After an historic conference of governors, held at Nathiagali on June 12 and 13 1959, the idea of establishing the JSB in East Pakistan was proposed.<sup>130</sup> Although initially the decision was not welcomed by the people of East Pakistan in the long run the decision could be regarded as a momentous victory for the nationalist movement of Bangladesh, with the

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<sup>123</sup> Mascarenhas, *op. cit.* (119).

<sup>124</sup> H. Schuman, 'A Note on the Rapid Rise of Mass Bengali Nationalism in East Pakistan'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(2)(1972), 290-298.

<sup>125</sup> I. Talbot, I, *Pakistan: A Modern History*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

<sup>126</sup> M. Ahmad, *My Chief*. Lahore, Pakistan: Longmans, Green, 1960, p.16.

<sup>127</sup> Ksiazek, S.W. *Changing Symbol in Public Life: Louis Kahn's Religious and Civic Projects 1944-1966 and Architectural Culture at the End of the Modern Movement*. Unpublished PhD, Department of Architecture and Planning, New York: Columbia University, 1995.

<sup>128</sup> Ayub Khan quoted in S.W. Ksiazek, 'Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and the National Assembly Complex in Dhaka', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 52 (4) (1993), 416-435, p. 428.

<sup>129</sup> B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op cit.* (1).

<sup>130</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focal Point: The Imagined Socio-Political Construction of Space', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4(6) (2013), 294-302.

JSB emerging as a national symbol for independent Bangladesh after independence in 1971.<sup>131</sup>

Ayub Khan decided that the Parliament would meet twice a year in Dhaka instead of Islamabad.<sup>132</sup> As architectural historian Ksiazek points out:

*Ayub Khan decided to build a grand governmental complex, assuming that if East Pakistan saw that a considerable sum of money was being spent on a large project and knowing that the gesture was from him [Khan], they [the people of East Pakistan] would respond with their vote.*<sup>133</sup>

Although the creation of the JSB was included in the outline of 1962 Constitution, according to the East Pakistani leaders, the 1962 Constitution was inherently flawed and undemocratic. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (who later became first Prime Minister of Bangladesh) and nine other Bangladeshi leaders issued a statement on 24 June 1962 regarding the authenticity of the Constitution.<sup>134</sup> Thus the birth of JSB was shrouded in controversy.

Jahan argues in relation to the all encompassing power exercised by Ayub Khan, '*All power was more personal than institutional*'.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, she argues that, although the regime undertook an elaborate program of political institution building, Ayub's refusal to share and transfer power to the institution transformed the institution into a mere object.<sup>136</sup>

After the decision was finalized to commission the JSB, a local architect Muzharul Islam, who trained as an architect in England and the US, was summoned to suggest names of some foreign architects. His prior connection with Louis I. Kahn in America persuaded him to suggest his name along with French architect Le Corbusier and Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. Finally Louis I. Kahn was commissioned.<sup>137</sup> It has been widely speculated that Muzharul Islam was commissioned at first as the architect of the project but no

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<sup>131</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op cit.* (2).

<sup>132</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (125).

<sup>133</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (125), p.337.

<sup>134</sup> A. Gauhar, 'Pakistan: Ayub Khan's Abdication'. *Third World Quarterly*, 7(1) (1985), 102-131.

<sup>135</sup> R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109), p.26.

<sup>136</sup> R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109); Baxter, *op cit* (3).

<sup>137</sup> B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op. cit.* (1).

documents supporting this claim have been found in the Public Works Department or in architect Khan's archive at the University of Pennsylvania. In an interview with engineer Shahidullah, former working partner of Muzharul Islam and with A.S.M Ismail, former Chief Architect of Public Works Department, both refuted all such claims. The Public Works Department archive suggested that:

*The Central Ministry of Works chose 3 eminent Architects, namely Le- Corbusier of France, Prof. Alvar Aalto of Finland and Prof. Louis I. Kahn of United States, to consider one of them as the Architect of the Second Capital. These Architects are leaders of architectural thought and are respectful of the traditions of Architecture and its principles and have by their works shown to be capable of expressing a way of life. Conditions and circumstances favoured the selection of Prof Louis I Kahn.*<sup>138</sup>

Lagueux asserts, '*Ethics as well as aesthetics are integral to architecture*'.<sup>139</sup> Both client Ayub Khan and architect Louis I. Kahn acted in self interest in this project.<sup>140</sup> Ayub Khan's intention was to buy off the people of East Pakistan instead of producing an architectural masterpiece. His lack of regard for the iconic building was such that he did not write a single word about it or master architect Louis I. Kahn in his autobiography *Friends not Masters*.<sup>141</sup> Louis I. Kahn's interest was in showcasing his creativity and he did not pause to question the motive of Ayub Khan or reflect on the meaning of the building to the people of East Pakistan.<sup>142</sup> Thus Kahn deviated from his own dictum in connection to this building which was supposed to demonstrate the essence of democracy. Ksiazek's view '*That the National Assembly Building was intended to embody democratic ideals is everywhere apparent in Kahn's statement about the project*'<sup>143</sup> is perhaps an overstatement. Collier's argument on virtue in architectural practice as social and philosophical wellbeing is worth mentioning in this regard.<sup>144</sup> Kahn's participation reflects that his definition of practice as virtue relates to

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<sup>138</sup> Pakistan Public Works Department Report 1964, p.4. The author also contacted members of Muzharul Islam's family, and they could not provide any such document to substantiate the claim of the appointment of Muzharul Islam as an architect prior to the commissioning of Louis I. Kahn.

<sup>139</sup> M. Lagueux, 'Ethics versus Aesthetics in Architecture', *The Philosophical Forum*, 35(2) (2004), 117-133, p.133.

<sup>140</sup> B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Ksiazek, *op. cit.* (125), p.428.

<sup>144</sup> J. Collier, 'The Art of Moral Imagination: Ethics in the Practice of Architecture'. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 66(2), (2006), 307-317.



personal professional success, fame and money, but that other components of the practice of virtue — trust, integrity, and concern for others — are missing.<sup>145</sup> Thus the nationalist forces of Bangladesh viewed this commission with suspicion.<sup>146</sup>

Similarly, during Ayub's rule another basic institution, the Constitution was co-opted as a showpiece of dictator Ayub's benevolent authoritative caprice. Likewise, another institution to show his political chivalry was his creation of 'basic democrats'.<sup>147</sup> Basic democrats was organised to raise his credibility and support. It was a democratically elected cluster in which rural participation as opposed to urban was encouraged and promoted.<sup>148</sup> The aim of this initiative was to hinder the nationalist movement of Bengal in the initial periods of his rule.<sup>149</sup> According to the *Pakistan Observer*:

*While vigorous anti-regime activities were carried on by the politicians, the intellectuals and students became very vocal in their demand for restoration of parliamentary democracy. Student demonstrations and strikes became a regular phenomenon. Ayub even dismissed Governor General Azam Khan in 1962 for his sympathy for the students. During Ayub's visit to East Pakistan in 1962 there were serious confrontations between the students and authorities.*<sup>150</sup>

Against the backdrop of this mounting pressure from nationalist forces, Ayub Khan introduced an electoral reform bill in March 1964 after he became the president of the Pakistan Muslim League. His initiation of political dialogue rekindled the hope of the political parties of East Pakistan to be able to voice their demand through election.<sup>151</sup>

The presidential election took place in 1965 and the mandate showed a strong rejection of Ayub's regime, especially in East Pakistan; 47 % of East Pakistanis and 26% of West Pakistanis expressed their dissatisfaction with Ayub. This can be regarded as the first official expression of the nationalist movement of the people of East Pakistan in order to achieve independence.<sup>152</sup> This event is a milestone in setting a new direction for Pakistani

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<sup>145</sup>B. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op cit.* (1).

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109),

<sup>148</sup>R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109); Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>149</sup>E. Rahim, 'Prelude to War of Liberation'. S. Islam (ed.), *History of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2007.

<sup>150</sup>*Pakistan Observer*, 17, 22, 23 December, 1962, Cited in Rahim, *op cit.* (205), p. 477.

<sup>151</sup>Rahim, *op cit.* (146), p. 477

<sup>152</sup>Rahim, *op cit.* (146)

nationalism, forging a new path for the people of East Pakistan seeking their political destiny and planting the seed of independence.<sup>153</sup>

The election was followed by the India Pakistan war. At this time leaders and students from both wings of Pakistan convened a meeting in Lahore in 1966 to express their dissatisfaction with Ayub's regime. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from East Pakistan led the 21 member group and put forward a six point program, mainly geared towards the autonomy of East Pakistan.<sup>154</sup> *'Mujib's proposal had no chance of acceptance at Lahore but it certainly provided him with an opportunity to openly lay down the plank for East Pakistan's autonomy'*.<sup>155</sup>

The points included: a federal parliamentary system of government elected by direct universal adult suffrage with legislative representation on the basis of population; the federal government to be responsible only for foreign affairs and defence; freely convertible separate currencies for each wing; power of taxation and revenue collection to be vested in the provinces with guarantees of adequate funding for the federal government; separate foreign exchange accounts for each wing; each wing to raise and maintain militia.<sup>156</sup> Rahim argues, *'The six point formula was not a listing of Bengali grievances, it was a manifestation of their determination to take charge of their affairs by themselves'*.<sup>157</sup>

The six point program became pivotal in the nationalist movement of Bengal and sparked a current of nationalist fervour in the wider spectrum of society. Political leaders from different streams joined the six point movement and endorsed their support for Mujibur Rahman, who was placed under detention in May 1966. Rahim argues, *'Ayub went to the extent of stating that he would use language of weapons' and extreme terrorist methods against the autonomist Bengali nationalist force'*.<sup>158</sup>

Despite resistance from the Ayub Khan regime, the autonomy movement gained momentum. The nationalist movement of Bengal received attention globally and the *New*

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<sup>153</sup>*Ibid*, p. 479.

<sup>154</sup>Rahim, *op. cit.* (146); Baxter, *op cit* (3).

<sup>155</sup>Rahim, *op. cit.* (146), p.480.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>157</sup>*ibid*, p. 481.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid*. p.482.

*York Times*, the *London Observer*, and the *The Times of London* in April–May 1966 highlighted the issue.<sup>159</sup> Ayub Khan's government attempted to suppress the movement by restricting the flow of news, banning national newspapers like *Ittifaq*, *Azad* and the *Dhaka Times* and ceased government advertisements in newspapers sympathetic to autonomy.<sup>160</sup>

At the same time another parallel movement came to light. An alliance comprising the Awame League, Nizam -i-Islami party, Jammat-i-Islami, the Pakistan council, the Muslim League, and the national democratic front adopted an eight point program in May 1967. The program did not get widespread support due to conflict within the parties.<sup>161</sup>

It was becoming increasingly clear that anti-establishment forces were mobilising against Ayub's regime. The Pakistani Democratic Movement began a series of protests and demonstrations in West Pakistan in 1969. At the same time, because most politicians were incarcerated, students took the lead in the mass nationalist movement, formulating an 11 point program in January 1969, which incorporated the original six point program. The additional program included demand for reform of the education system, adequate wages for the working class, reduction of land taxes for the peasantry, withdrawal of the Agartala conspiracy case and release of Sheikh Mujib and other political prisoners. The student-led nationalist movement received widespread support from across the community and the machinery of government ground to a halt.<sup>162</sup>

In such a situation Ayub invited Shekh Mujibur Rahman from East Pakistan and members of the democratic movement from West Pakistan for a round table conference in Rawalpindi on 20 March 1969. The conference was an attempt to showcase his awareness of the demands of the opposition but not aimed at genuine change, a similar technique to that he used in commissioning the JSB.<sup>163</sup> Rahim argues, '*Ayub tried unsuccessfully to intimidate and outmanoeuvre the opposition*'.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.485.

Despite these efforts, unrest continued. On 25 March 1969 Ayub Khan relinquished his position and handed power to the defence force.<sup>165</sup> Despite some significant contributions to the national economy and his attempts to create a veneer of democracy — for example, in commissioning the JSB — Ayub Khan failed to hold onto power.<sup>166</sup> Parkinson's view seems apposite in arguing that, according to natural law, a Machiavellian is ultimately bound to fail as political dishonesty is never practical in the long term.<sup>167</sup> It is a self-destructive process.<sup>168</sup> Rahim argues:

*Ayub's vaunted 'decade of development (1958–1968) in reality had destroyed the very fabric of the nation and hastened the process of East Pakistani's separation which, of course, was destined to take place, given the susceptibilities and the aspiration of the people of the province.'*<sup>169</sup>

The commissioning of the JSB was no exception from Ayub's destructive ambition.

Following Ayub Khan, Chief Martial Law Administrator General Yahia Khan declared himself the president of the state. Like his predecessor, he expressed his political awareness and promised early elections. On 30 March Yahia promulgated a legal framework that provided a method for the transfer of power to the elected government.<sup>170</sup>

Amid plans for the transfer of power in January 1970, a devastating cyclone took place on 15 November 1969 and washed away a huge area of the Bengal coastal belt with a total loss of 350,000 lives. The West Pakistan government's response was one of neglect.<sup>171</sup> Mujib, the leader of the nationalist force described the failure to respond adequately as a human rights crisis:

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> During Ayub's regime economic indicators showed positive signs. Per capita gross income rose from Rupees 311 in 1949-1950 to Rupees 312 in 1959-1960 and to Rupees 311 in 1965-1966. The manufacturing sector also performed remarkably. It rose from 5.9% in 1949-1950 to 9.3% in 1958-59 and to 11% in 1965-1966. The annual growth rate increased from 0.5% during 1949-1950 to 3.5% during 1959-1960. In the export sector earnings increased from 717 million Rupees in 1947-1948 to 1325 million Rupees in 1958-1959.

<sup>167</sup> According to Smith there are three different kinds of actions motivated by entirely self interest, prudent self interest (a better version of self interest and superior prudence (devoid of self interest). B.I. Choudhury and G. Bell, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>168</sup> G.H.R. Parkinson, 'Ethics and Politics' in Machiavelli, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 5 (18) (1955) 37-44.

<sup>169</sup> Rahim, *op. cit.* (146), p.485

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

*The feeling now pervades in every village, home and slum that we must rule ourselves. We must make decisions that matter. We shall no longer suffer arbitrary rule by bureaucrats, capitalists and feudal interest in West Pakistan.*<sup>172</sup>

Disregarding the cyclone and its devastating effects, the government went ahead with the scheduled election on 7 December. The people of East Pakistan supported the nationalist force under the Awami League in almost all constituencies. Of 169 seats in East Pakistan the Awami League won 167 and in the National Assembly the Awami League won 167 of 313 seats,<sup>173</sup> giving the Awami League an absolute majority to form a provincial government.<sup>174</sup> With the landslide victory of the Awami League Mujib emerged as the leader of the Bengali people, to carry their hopes and aspirations for self determination.<sup>175</sup>

The election result was not welcomed by the Yahya government and the Pakistan's People's Party led by Bhutto, which had won 81 of 138 seats. According to the legal framework it was imperative to draft the Constitution within 120 days. After accepting Mujib's victory, Yahya convened the Parliament in Dhaka in a separate modern setting, as the JSB was undergoing construction. Mujib was eager to draft the Constitution in line with the six point demand but Bhutto was reluctant to join the assembly and to admit Mujib as the leader of the Parliament.<sup>176</sup>

*Although not in command of the parliament, nonetheless it appeared that he held all the trump cards. By threatening to boycott the assembly, Bhutto could make it unworkable. The tactical advantage rested with Bhutto; his power lay outside and not inside the assembly.*<sup>177</sup>

Yahya was procrastinating regarding convening the Parliament in order to sabotage the process. Finally on 1 March, Yahya Khan, acting on the advice of generals, postponed convening the Parliament and the Bhutto- Yahya axis was able to prevent Mujib from

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<sup>172</sup>Mujib cited in Rahim, *op. cit.* (146), p.488.

<sup>173</sup>R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (109). Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup>Rahim, *op. cit.* (109),

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup>*Ibid.*, p 489.

becoming leader of both East and West Pakistan.<sup>178</sup> This news caused an uprising of the of East Pakistan, which was swiftly followed by a military response.<sup>179</sup> Troops from West Pakistan were sent into East Pakistan disguised as civilians.<sup>180</sup> Mujib tried to avoid confrontation, preferring a non-violent resolution.<sup>181</sup>

Yahia, Bhutto and the Awame League leaders met in East Pakistan in March 1971 to try to reach consensus.<sup>182</sup> According to Schendel, Yahia was in favour of providing autonomy to East Pakistan in line with the six point demand and was in favour of Mujib taking up the position of Prime Minister of Pakistan; Bhutto, however, was incensed.<sup>183</sup> The meeting ended in a stalemate. The Awame League presented a draft to Yahia highlighting the six point demand and warned Yahia to move quickly to implement it to avoid a war of independence. Yahia's government, responded with military action, which on 25 March 1971, resulted in the mass murder<sup>184</sup> of East Pakistani civilians. Yahia's action ignited the war of independence.<sup>185</sup>

The war of independence was declared on 26 March 1971.

*In Chittagong , Bengali troops of the east Bengal regiment, hearing about the events in Dhaka [25<sup>th</sup> March]killed their Pakistani officers, moved out of town and put up resistance. It was from a small radio station in Chittagong on 26and 27 March that one of these ex-officers, Ziaur Rahman , broadcast a call to the people of Bangladesh to resist the attacking army.*<sup>186</sup>

This event is regarded as the declaration of independence of Bangladesh. The war spread across the country. The Awame League leadership, with the help of the Indian government, regrouped in neighbouring India and formed a Bangladesh government in exile.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Rahim, *op cit.* (146),

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* p.129

<sup>184</sup> Rahim, *op. cit.* (146); W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41),

<sup>185</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op cit* (41), p.129

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* p.163

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

*Whereas instead of fulfilling their promise and while still conferring with the representatives of the people of Bangladesh, Pakistan authorities declared an unjust and treacherous war, and where as in the conduct of the ruthless and savage war the Pakistani authorities committed and are still continuously committing numerous acts of genocide and unprecedented tortures, amongst other son the civilian and unarmed people of Bangladesh, we the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice, declare and constitute Bangladesh to be a sovereign People's republic.*<sup>188</sup>

With help from India the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) attacked the well trained Pakistani forces. The people of East Pakistan supported the Mukti Bahini by supplying food and other logistics.<sup>189</sup> The Mukti Bahini was organised under eleven geographically arranged 'sectors' under the leadership of General Osmany. Gradually the freedom fight received widespread recognition from other countries, particularly so after the 'Concert for Bangladesh' performed by George Harrison, Bob Dylan and Ravi Shankar.<sup>190</sup> After a long struggle of almost nine months. on 16 December 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent country. Four distinct influences contributed to the disintegration of Greater Pakistan: (1) British divide and rule; (2) economic deprivation; (3) conflict in the elite class; (4) national leaders failure to create a cohesive nation.<sup>191</sup>

However, despite their victory, the people of Bangladesh were seriously and negatively affected by the war, with millions of displaced, between 2 and 3 million fatalities and the rape of countless women. Anti-nationalist Bangaleshi forces, who supported the Pakistani army retained some power, even in modern Bangladesh, including holding seats in the Parliament. Independence came at great cost.<sup>192</sup>

However, with independence, the unfinished JSB, commissioned by Ayub Khan, overnight changed from an anti nationalist symbol to one of national identity.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>191</sup> A. A. Khan, *Discovery of Bangladesh*, Dhaka, UPL, 2012.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>193</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48).

### 3.5 Duality of Nationalism

The duality of nationalism, like the duality of human nature, is a widely accepted phenomenon by Eastern and Western political science scholars. Scholars' interpretation of the duality of nationalism reflects the human characteristics of rational and irrational, angel and beast, passion and reason. Physiologically, this duality is visible in the human brain.<sup>194</sup>

The duality of nationalism is pertinent to this thesis and its discussion of the history and transformation of post-independence Bangladeshi nationalism. Bangladeshi nationalism is divided into two streams, namely Bengali nationalism, where the identity as Bengali comes first and religious inclination is secondary, and Bangladesh nationalism, where identity as Muslim comes first, followed by the identity as Bengali.<sup>195</sup>

The duality of nationalism, which articulates the opposite aspects of nationalism, has been discussed in the writings of Sathyamurthy, Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Osmany and Alter. Alter argues:

*It is clear that nationalism, so convenient a label and justification for many developments, conceals within itself extreme opposites and contradictions. It can mean emancipation, and it can mean oppression: nationalism, it seems is a repository of dangers as well as opportunities.*<sup>196</sup>

Alter's perception of the duality of nationalism aptly reflects the dual status of the JSB, evident from the anti-nationalist element in the East Pakistan period to the nationalist product after independence. In transforming from a symbol of the autocratic regime of West Pakistan to an emblem of national identity of independent Bangladesh in the post-independence period, the JSB articulates the dual character of nationalism.<sup>197</sup> Moreover, the components mentioned above are also evident as traits of the JSB in the present context.

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<sup>194</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48).

<sup>195</sup> T.N. Madan, 'Two Faces of Bengali Ethnicity: Muslim Bengali or Bengali Muslim', *The Developing Economies*, 10(1) (1972), 74-85

<sup>196</sup> P. Alter, *op. cit.* (8), p.2.

<sup>197</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48).



This duality of nationalism is reiterated in the writings of Nobel laureate Tagore who had suggested that the Japanese are inspired by Western culture. Grounded in their own deeply embedded cultural roots, Tagore perceived a similar duality in Indian nationalism arguing:

*When our nationalists talk about ideals they [political leaders] forget that the basis of nationalism is wanting. The very people who are upholding these ideals are themselves the most conservative in their social practice.*<sup>198</sup>

The national poet of Bangladesh, Nazrul Islam, also perceived this duality in the liberating ideologies of Hindus and Muslims vis-à-vis the orthodoxy of their thought.<sup>199</sup> The subject of this research, the JSB, resonates with the duality of nation perceived by these two great poets and philosophers of Bengal.

In geopolitical terms nationalism is a complex dual force. It has a two dimensional facet: on the one hand it is 'aggressive and a tool of expansionism', and on the other it represents 'a truly peace-keeping and culturally integrating force' within a nation's geography.<sup>200</sup> The dual character of nationalism can imply that it has an emancipator vocabulary of humanity on the one hand, on the other it is utterly authoritative and dictatorial in connection to citizens' rights and disregards the basic human attributes.<sup>201</sup> He states, '*Depending on the social context, then, nationalism may have socio-culturally integrating as well as disintegrating effects*'.<sup>202</sup>

According to the geographical disposition of the people, the duality and diversity of nationalism varies. The 'Western', which is ethnically 'inclusive' emphasises the cultural homogeneity of states that brings together multiple ethnic groups. All citizens within the boundary of the state are valued as members of the 'nation-state'. On the other hand, 'Eastern' nationalism is perceived to be 'ethnically exclusive' in regard to common descent. This nationalism only includes members of the same ethnic origin in a she-nation 'nation-state'. Many Asian countries and some Eastern European countries fall

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<sup>198</sup>R. Tagore, R. *Nationalism*, London, Papermac, 1991, p.94.

<sup>199</sup> P.K.Mitra, *The Dissent of Nazrul Islam*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>200</sup> T. H. Eriksen, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p.266.

into this category.<sup>203</sup> Kellas defined this duality as the inclusive nationalism that denotes liberal and emancipator traits of nationalism, and exclusive nationalism, the dominant nature of which leads to dictatorship. Irish, Scottish, Catalan and Norwegian nationalisms belongs to the former category, and of the latter, Bulgarian, Turkish, Serb, Tamil and Sikh nationalisms.<sup>204</sup> According to Ozkirimli's dual notion of nationalism, the Western version operates through public understanding and consensus while the non-Western one is more irrational and authoritarian.<sup>205</sup>

Social structure also determines and confers this dual character of nationalism. The two prongs of nationalism involve a proletariat and an intelligentsia.<sup>206</sup> The emergence of both the notions of nationalism-imperialism and of anti-imperialism is due to both kinds of nationalism. Both propel nationalist movements for social, economic, cultural and political emancipation.<sup>207</sup> Satyamurti argues:

*While in one sense 'nationalism' appears at this stage as an anti-imperialist ideology, in another sense it provides the opportunity for the nascent national bourgeoisie to embark upon a process of accumulation of capital in the indigenous society.*<sup>208</sup>

The history of Bangladesh is in line with Satyamurti's theory. Finally, the duality of nationalism is understood from Kramer's statement that:

*Nationalisms are given their historical meaning through oppositions such as western/eastern, political/cultural, old/new, liberal/conservative, and civic/ethnic. These oppositional categories help historians compare and identify various phases of nationalism, but they also tend to convey a strong ethical distinction between good and bad.*<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> J.G. Kellas, *op. cit.* (11).

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> U. Özkirimli, *op. cit.* (11)

<sup>206</sup> L. Kramer, *op. cit.* (11), U. Özkirimli, *op. cit.* (11),

<sup>207</sup> P. Alter, *op. cit.* (8).

<sup>208</sup> T.V. Satyamurti, *op. cit.*(54),p. 6.

<sup>209</sup> L. Kramer, *op. cit.* (11), p.14.

### 3.6 The JSB: Symbol of Duality of Nationalism

The JSB can be represented as having two opposite traits of nationalism as postulated by Peter Alter — oppression, emancipation, repository of danger and opportunity.<sup>210</sup> As the JSB was commissioned by Ayub Khan during the pre-independence of Bangladesh with the aim of oppressing the wishes and rights of the people of East Pakistan, it denotes a symbol of oppression. However, as a place in which emancipatory parliamentary practices are undertaken and where pro-democracy constitutional issues have been established it can also be seen as a symbol of emancipation.<sup>211</sup> Most importantly, in the first year of Bangladesh's independence, the JSB was the scene of the creation of the Constitution. Another important emancipatory action undertaken at the JSB was the repeal of the Indemnity Bill.<sup>212</sup> In November 1996, 20 years after the introduction of the Indemnity Bill it was repealed in November 1996.<sup>213</sup> Finally the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the nationalist independence force, were tried and executed on 28 January 2010.<sup>214</sup> The introduction of a neutral caretaker government to administer free and impartial elections in 1991 was another landmark step taken at the JSB. Similarly, the return to a parliamentary system of government in 1991 was a significant landmark emancipatory measure at the JSB, after a presidential form of government has been introduced by the Awame League in 1974. This was considered a moral victory for the masses.<sup>215</sup> Choudhury argues in this regard:

*Thus Bangladesh again bounced back and reintroduced parliamentary democracy in February 1991. The resilience and determination of ordinary people expressed through*

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<sup>210</sup> Peter Alter is a Professor of Modern History at the University of Cologne.

<sup>211</sup> The JSB was completed in 1983. However its presence as an icon of democracy was embedded in the mind of the people just after the liberation of Bangladesh. Although parliamentary functions were not carried out in the JSB until 1983, psychologically, for the people of Bangladesh, the JSB was and is the home of democracy.

<sup>212</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48). After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then President of Bangladesh and regarded as the father of the nation, was assassinated in 1975 by a small clique of disaffected army officers, his successor Khondokar Mushtaq promulgated the Indemnity Ordinance, 1975, quarantining the killers from any punishment. This is regarded as a reprehensible act by most Bangladeshis, especially by the Awame League Party. W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41). D. Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>213</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2)

<sup>214</sup> The five killers are Colonel Faruque Rahman, Colonel Shahriar Rashid, Major Bazlul Huda, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Mohiuddind Ahmed. All of them were hanged after their review petition and mercy petition were rejected. Others accused of Sheikh Mujub's killing absconded out of Bangladesh. Daily Star Archive. Retrieved from <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=123827>.

<sup>215</sup> M.A.Hakim, *The Changing Forms of Government in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Parliamentary Studies, 2000.

*their political parties won a victory over the military regime with the installation of a caretaker government, which was unique to the political system of Bangladesh.*<sup>216</sup>

Democratic practice is continuously improving in Bangladesh, with the JSB at the heart of legislative government.<sup>217</sup>

In terms of nationalism being a repository of danger, the issues revolve around partisan interests, corrupt parliamentarians, lack of strong opposition in parliament, corrupt electioneering or electoral fraud, oppressive laws and confrontational politics.<sup>218</sup>

Partisan politics is an undemocratic practice in which the party in power resorts to unfair tactics to hinder the healthy functioning of parliament. Such acts lead to opposition actions like the boycott of parliamentary functions, and sometimes force resignations *en masse*.<sup>219</sup> Thus in the absence of participation of opposition members the functioning of parliament is impaired and a stalemate situation develops.<sup>220</sup> Even in the presence of both parties the parliament can become a battlefield or ‘monkey house’.<sup>221</sup> Rather than playing a pro-people role both parties may prefer to engage in reactive roles.<sup>222</sup> Ahmed claims that the JSB has transformed into a ‘*staging ground for bitter partisan struggle*’ instead of a forum of conflict resolution.<sup>223</sup>

The most serious danger facing any parliament is that it becomes a coterie of advantage seekers. Ahmed points out that:

*The criminalization of politics poses a serious blow to the natural growth of representative institutions. Anyone with muscle and money can now hope to ‘buy’ a nomination with the major parties, and can even get elected to the parliament.*<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>216</sup>J. Choudhury, *Bangladesh-Failure of A Parliamentary Government*, London, Jamshed Foundation, 2008, p.217.

<sup>217</sup>B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (48).

<sup>218</sup>B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>219</sup>All of the first four parliaments collapsed earlier than the normal tenure. Military intervention led to the suspension of the first two parliaments. The third and fourth succumbed to people's movements against their perceived illegitimacy (Hakim,2000). One of the longest boycotts by the Opposition took place in 2003-2004: after eleven months, the opposition Awame League joined parliament in June 2004 and began to participate in the parliamentary standing committees of various ministries 14 months after their inception. J. Choudhury, *op.cit.* (212).

<sup>220</sup>R. Jahan, ‘Bangladesh in 2002: Imperiled Democracy’, *Asian Survey*,43,1(2003), 222-229.

<sup>221</sup>J. Ferdouse, *Bangladesher Shangharshik Rajniti ebong Parliament*, Dhaka, Mowla Brothers, 2015

<sup>222</sup>B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op cit.* (2).

<sup>223</sup>N. Ahmed, ‘From Monopoly to Competition: Party Politics in the Bangladesh Parliament (1973-2001)’, *Pacific Affairs*, 76, 1(2003), 55-77.

<sup>224</sup>*Ibid*, p.73.

Rather than resolving the issue in the Parliament, the opposition may resort to street violence or ‘Hartal’ (strike).

*Hartal, a vehicle of opposition empowerment and the embodiment of Bangladesh politics, has polarized opinion and defied institutional norms and constitutional practices. No matter who was in power, no matter how fair was the poll, and no matter what form of constitution defined the authority, a determined opposition riding the crest of billowing Hartals could bring down a government.*<sup>225</sup>

Another component of danger, unfair electioneering practice, also poses a threat to the JSB. A transparent and accountable electoral process can be brought down by morally corrupt those courting power for self-interest. Hakim states in connection to the electoral malpractice:

*The first JS elections held in 1973 witnessed the first display of electoral irregularities. In the second JS elections held in 1979 the degree of rigging was intensified, and the electoral process was simply reduced to a farce in the third and fourth JS elections held in 1986 and 1988 respectively. Stuffing the ballot boxes with false votes, massive violence in and around the polling centres, driving the genuine voters out of the polling centres by the government sponsored musclemen, and manipulation of election results by surreptitious counting became a part of the electoral game’.*<sup>226</sup>

The Parliament has also been threatened by the amendment of the Constitution by political parties for their own benefit. A total of 15 amendments has been carried out including the controversial fourth, fifth and eighth amendments. The fourth amendment introduced a dictatorial presidential system that promoted one party rule. Under this amendment it was impossible for any person to create or join any party other than the government party.<sup>227</sup> The fifth amendment introduced Koranic verses, removing the secular nature of the Constitution.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>M. Rashiduzzaman, ‘Political Unrest and Democracy in Bangladesh’. *Asian Survey*,37(3) (1997), 254-268,p.255.

<sup>226</sup>A. Hakim, *The Changing Forms of Government in Bangladesh*, Dhaka:Bangladesh Institute of Parliamentary Studies, 2000,p.101.

<sup>227</sup> The process of constitutional amendment was shady like the inherent idea of the bill. Instead of serving a notice for seven days the bill was introduced just after the arrival of the members allowing almost no time to review the bill. Thus the disastrous impact of the bill remained unnoticed by the majority of members. The bill was passed by 290-0 vote and the vote took only 30 minutes.

<sup>228</sup> Z.R. Khan, ‘Bangladesh’s Experiments with Parliamentary Democracy’, *Asian Survey*,37,6(1997), 575-589.

The Parliament approved several acts that reflected poorly on its democratic image. The *Special Power Act 1974*, is one such act,<sup>229</sup> providing full authority to the party in power to suppress all liberty and freedom of the press; it remains as an instrument to overpower political dissidents.<sup>230</sup>

Parliamentary sessions held during dictator General Ershad's regime expose the dangers of nationalism. Describing the parliamentary session of 9 July 1986:<sup>231</sup>

*It was paradoxical that such an undemocratic atmosphere should have reigned in an institution aspiring to be an emblem of democracy in the very first session after its construction. That architect Kahn's democratic icon was commissioned under the military dictator Ayub Khan in the period before independence and hosted its first session under another military dictator, General Ershad, in the first bloom of Bangladesh's independence, was a notable contradiction of its intended purpose.*<sup>232</sup>

The double standard of the lawmakers cast a deep shadow on the democratic standing of JSB.

*The opposition found itself in an odd position. It had declared the parliament elected in February to be 'illegal', but this 'illegal' parliament had passed an act that conformed to the opposition's demands. An act passed by an 'illegal' Parliament became in the eyes of the opposition a legal action, and the opposition prepared to contest the new election.*<sup>233</sup>

Boycotts of parliamentary functions, and sometimes mass resignations, pose a serious threat to the fledgling democracy of Bangladesh. The absence of an opposition has paved the way for the treasury to run the Parliament in a dictatorial manner paradoxical to the spirit of democracy. Many important issues of national importance remain undisclosed

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<sup>229</sup> J. Choudhury, *op. cit.* (212).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> The first four parliaments failed to perform their normal tenure due to military intervention. The third and fourth under the military rule succumbed to people's movements against their perceived illegitimacy. General Ershad assumed power after a bloodless coup in 1982. On March 24 he promulgated martial law and started a decade of dictatorial rule. After a fake election in mid-October 1986, in the face of boycotts and general strikes called by opposition political parties, Ershad won the election.

<sup>232</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2), p. 44.

Kahn envisioned that the democratic spirit embodied by his building might actually transcend its architectural merit. Anderson points out 'Kahn's search was not primarily for physical, built institutions, but rather for what underlies or motivates these associations' S. Anderson, Public Institutions: Louis I. Kahn's Reading of Volume Zero. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49 (1)(1995), 10-21.

<sup>233</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (3), p.126.

and unresolved. The longest boycott of the Parliament by the opposition is 11 months in 2003–2004. Even in the presence of both parties the Parliament sometimes becomes a platform for kurukhetra (battlefield). ‘Rather than contributing to the resolution of conflicts, the JS itself actually became the staging ground for bitter partisan struggle’.<sup>234</sup>

Contrary to the danger of nationalism mentioned by Alter is opportunity. The JSB symbolizes the opportunity for democratic government, realized via its architectural merit and its status as an icon of national identity.<sup>235</sup>

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has established the meaning of the concept of nationalism, including the idea of duality of nationalism. The history of Bangladesh prior to independence is outlined, from a perspective of nationalism. By describing the evolution of Bangladeshi nationalism, borne out of long struggle for those of shared ethnicity and culture, it sets the context for the understanding of the JSB, as a symbolic building, examining it in line with Vale’s theory that ‘*Grand symbolic state buildings need to be understood in terms of the political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*’.<sup>236</sup> The duality of nationalism is particularly pertinent to the JSB, the creation of which stems from both oppression and opportunity. The following chapter explores the state and dynamics of Bangladeshi nationalism after independence.

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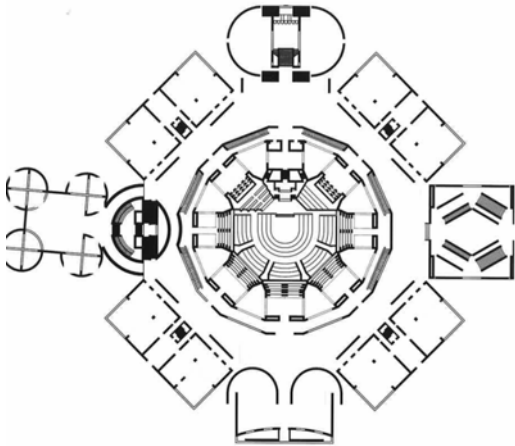
<sup>234</sup> N. Ahmed, *op. cit.* (218), p.71.

<sup>235</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (2), p. 44.

<sup>236</sup> L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. p.3.

## Chapter 4

### Post-independence Bangladeshi Nationalism and Dimensions of Bangladeshi Nationalism





**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture in Shaping National Identity'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*. 2012, pp. 45-67

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(6), 294-302, (2013)

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(9), ISSN 2221-1152.

Bayezid Choudhury, Dr Paul Jones & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did Not Materialize, Planning for Planning's Sake in the Case of Dhaka'. Published in proceedings of International Urban Design Conference, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 36-45

Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism'. Published in the proceedings of ICERIE, Sylhet, Bangladesh, 2013, pp. 40-46.

## Chapter 4: Dimensions of Post-independence Bangladeshi Nationalism

*This chapter reflects on the issue of nationalism in the post-independence period of Bangladesh. It focuses on different aspects and dimensions of Bangladeshi nationalism as an integral part of its identity.*

### 4.1 Post-independence State of Bangladeshi Nationalism

‘In Bangladesh we are all nationalist. We emerged after a nationalist movement’.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 also saw the emergence of the nationalist forces into a new role – that of government. Their transition to power has been described by Hussain:

*the young activists, who had formed the hard core of freedom fighters, emerged as the most powerful pressure group[nationalist force]. They were a force to be reckoned with because of their contribution to the liberation struggle and also because many of them still bore arms.*<sup>2</sup>

Thus the government of the fledgling independent nation, under the leadership of the political party Awame League, was one of enthusiasm and youthful vigour. Idealism succeeded over rationalism and the only landmark achievement in the first year of independence was the drafting of a Constitution based on four tenets: nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. According to Osmany, ‘*Secular Characteristics of Bengali Nationalism were stressed*’.<sup>3</sup> According to the amendment on paragraph 9 of the Constitution, ‘The national symbol and unifying element of Bengali nation will forge Bengali nationalism hinging on singular element of language and culture’.<sup>4</sup> After the independence, the idea of nationalism was promoted by Mujibbad and the Awame League,<sup>5</sup> and the post-independence government was dictatorial in its approach:

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<sup>1</sup> S. Haque, *Shreshtha Probondho*, Dhaka: Kotha Prokash, 2013, p.47.

<sup>2</sup> K. Hussain, *Bangladesh, Quest for Freedom and Justice*, Dhaka: UPL, 2013, p.123.

<sup>3</sup> S. Osmany, *Bangladeshi Nationalism, History of Dialectics and Dimensions*, Dhaka: UPL, 1992, p.122.

<sup>4</sup> N. Kolimullah and M. Hasan, *Ganotantra, Nirbachan o Sthanio Sarkar*, Dhaka, Janaprio Prakashani, 2012, p.59

<sup>5</sup> B.K. Jahangir, *Nationalism, Fundamentalism and Democracy in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: ICBS, 2002.

*This history of Bangladesh Nationalism in the post-independence period thus reflects another binary positioning of its elements, namely post-colonial state formation and the weakening of the left and most importantly of the democratic element.*<sup>6</sup>

The Awame League's policy makers mostly hailed from the Jotdar (rural ruling class) class. They obstructed progressive reform related to land and land development and nationalised almost all industries owned independently.<sup>7</sup> In the process 86% of all industries came under the management of the national government compared to 35% previously.<sup>8</sup> This process of nationalisation promoted corruption among policy makers and bureaucrats and resulted in widespread mismanagement in the industrial sector.<sup>9</sup> Corruption was condoned in the name of the progress of nationalisation and nationalism. The introduction of a paramilitary force 'Rakshi Bahini' or 'National Security Force' to counter the threat from the military and secure the nationalist force raised questions amongst those supporting democracy.<sup>10</sup> Concern escalated after a secret agreement was made between the Bangladeshi nationalist force and India, raising fears that Bangladesh would become a puppet of India.<sup>11</sup>

According to Rahim:

*The Awame league became an impediment to social change and industrial production; and it had serious repercussions on Bangladesh's fragile economy creating an inflationary pressure which culminated in severe famine in 1974.*<sup>12</sup>

Against this backdrop a second memorandum of agreement between the Bangladesh Government and architect Louis I. Kahn was signed at the end of 1973 for the JSB project, which was still under construction.<sup>13</sup> Since independence the JSB was elevated in Bangladesh as symbolic of its newly formed nation.<sup>14</sup> Until its completion parliamentary

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<sup>6</sup> R. Samaddar, *Paradoxes of Nationalist Time*, Dhaka: UPL, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> A. Rahim, *Politics and National Formation in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: UPL, 1997

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> A. Rahim, *op cit.* (5), p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> The first memorandum of agreement between the Government of Pakistan and Louis I. Kahn was signed on January 9, 1964. (file no W-CAP-58/ACE, Collection no -3: Public Works Department, Dhaka, 1966.) and the second at the end of 1973. (File No-W-CAP-16(1) ACE, Collection No-X1, Public Works Department: Dhaka, 1973-74).

<sup>14</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism', *ICERIE*: Sylhet, 2012.

sessions took place in a building developed as the provincial parliament during the period of united Pakistan and which now functions as the Prime Ministerial Secretariat's building .

The path to democracy was proving to be a troubled one, with an amendment to the Constitution on 25 January 1975, giving Mujib, the leader of the nationalist force of the independence movement in 1971, supreme power as the head of the party BKSAL (Bangladesh Krishok Smramik Awame League) and banning all other political parties.

*According to the amendment no legal action can be constituted in any court of law against the president. And no court can issue any warrant of arrest or detention order against the president. No citizen is allowed to form any political party or join in any political activities other than the national party. The president will also be the commander in chief of the armed forces.*<sup>15</sup>

According to many constitutional experts this action can be compared to a coup because it made Sheikh Mujibur Rahman a supreme authority to exercise his dictatorial power.<sup>16</sup> The bill amending the Constitution did not follow the usual rule of informing members seven days prior so that proper scrutiny of the bill was avoided. The bill was passed within three minutes of its introduction and the vote in favour was unanimous.<sup>17</sup>

During this Awame regime, the Parliament passed several other acts that were detrimental to democratic practice. Infamous among these was the *Special Power Act 1974*, introduced in February under article 33 of the Constitution. Choudhury points out that under the auspices of this law:

*Individual liberty, and freedom of press and association, were all brought under the purview of this law. In its application it was found that the law was more used against the political dissidents than so-called anti-social elements. Although adequate measures were taken to handle the offences, they were violated at every opportunity.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> S.M. Hussain, *Bangladesh 1975-1981 Transition From Autocracy to MultiParty Democracy*, Dhaka: Meem Printers, 2001, p.45.

<sup>16</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4 (9) (2013), 414-424.

<sup>17</sup> J. Choudhury, *Bangladesh - Failure of a Parliamentary Government*, London: Jamshed Foundation, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p.155.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's reign came to an end after a military coup in 1975.<sup>19</sup> His period of leadership witnessed the rise and fall of the nationalist force aptly reflecting the duality of nationalism — oppression, emancipation, repository of danger and opportunity — discussed in chapter 3. While Mujib's nationalist force during the struggle for independence represented a sense of emancipation and ushered in a period of new hope and opportunity through the Constitution, it also was suppressive and undemocratic in nature, exposing Bangladesh to the oppression and danger that come with the dark side of nationalism.

After Sheikh Mujib's assassination on 15 August 1975, there was a period of turmoil in which the military revolted and took charge, installing Ziaur Rahman, a soldier-turned-politician, as leader on 7 November 1975. He commissioned A.M.Sayem as the puppet ruler and in November 1976 assumed the role of chief martial law administrator. After Ziaur Rahman became the president in 1977, he amended the Constitution and incorporated Islamic values and ideas as the basis of the Constitution.<sup>20</sup> He added 'Bimillahir-Rahmanur-Rahim' (in the name of Allah, the beneficial the merciful) to the preamble to the Constitution.<sup>21</sup> The proclamation (article 8, clause 1) moreover stated that:

*The principles of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice ...shall constitute the fundamental principles of state policy. Nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice...shall constitute the fundamental principles of state policy .Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis of all actions.*<sup>22</sup>

Thus the inherently secular nature of nationalism initiated by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was replaced by Ziaur Rahman's Islamic values and ideals.<sup>23</sup> Osmany states, 'With Sheikh Mujib's death in August 1975, secularism took a back seat and the Islamic element of Bangladeshi nationalism came to the forefront'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> C. Baxter, *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> R. Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2005

<sup>21</sup> S. Osmany, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p.129.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p.128.

Ziaur Rahman's promotion of Islam divided the nation into two<sup>25</sup> and earned him support from Islamic countries. He initiated a nationalist movement hinging on the development of the village, promoting the village as the foundation for development in line with Ayub Khan's basic democrats.<sup>26</sup> He also started a political party called the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

After a short period of civil rule during Ziaur Rahman's reign, General Ershad, the chief of army staff, staged a bloodless coup and took power on 24 March 1982, and abrogated the Constitution.<sup>27</sup> General Ershad followed General Ziaur Rahman, integrating Islam as the main element of Bangladeshi nationalism. He stated, '*Islam is our ideal and it is the only way to our emancipation*'.<sup>28</sup> He initiated a party called the Bangladesh Jatio Party, which resembles Ziaur Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party with Islam central to its philosophy. Osmany writes:

*The re-emergence of Islamic forces eroded the political base of the Awame League and helped the growth of Islamic nationalist forces which first gathered under the banner of the BNP of President Zia and later under the Jatio Party of Ershad.*<sup>29</sup>

During this period of upheaval the JSB was under construction. Given its symbolic meaning as the home of democracy and national identity, it is paradoxical that it bore witness to unlawful parliamentary sessions under Ershad's illegitimate government.<sup>30</sup>

After almost a decade of dictatorial rule General Ershad was ousted on 4 December 1990, after growing opposition from students and political parties.<sup>31</sup> With the end of Ershad's reign, a new era of democracy for Bangladesh was ushered in. Now the true democratic identity of the JSB emerged and the wishes of both streams of nationalist forces realised.<sup>32</sup> Jahan wrote:

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<sup>25</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (17).

<sup>26</sup> A. Rahim, *op. cit.* (5).

<sup>27</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (17)

<sup>28</sup> Ershad stated in S. Osmany, *op. cit.* (2), p.130.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.132.

<sup>30</sup> B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (14)

<sup>31</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (18)

<sup>32</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P.Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focal Point: The Imagined Socio-Political Construction of Space', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4(6) (2013), 294-302.

*Ershad's resignation in the face of nearly eight years of continuous political movement against military rule marked a watershed in Bangladesh's political history. It was perceived as a victory for democracy and constitutional rule.*<sup>33</sup>

The first democratic session of the JSB took place in 1991 after a free and fair election under a caretaker government on 27 February 1991.<sup>34</sup> According to Choudhury et al.:

*From then on JSB was regarded as an emblem of the national identity of Bangladesh and the democratic expression of the Bengali people. Thus after a long political and social upheaval, beginning with independence in 1971, from 1991 on JSB can be seen as a democratic emblem that evolved out of a socio-political construct.*<sup>35</sup>

#### **4.2 State of Duality of Bangladeshi Nationalism**

Bangladeshi nationalism today has two distinct and opposite streams, identified as 'Bengali nationalism' and 'Bangladeshi nationalism'. Madan views these two opposite faces of Bengali nationalism as 'Bengali-Muslim' and 'Muslim-Bengali', in which segregation of the ethno-religious and the religious-ethnic is ingrained in the present mosaic of the highly homogeneous Bengal people.<sup>36</sup>

The many complex forces that have given rise to these two divided streams can also be categorised under the general scope of secular and non-secular nationalism.<sup>37</sup> The root of this division can be found in the ethnic origins and transformation of the Bengali people. As outlined in chapter 3, there was a shift from the deeply unpopular caste system introduced by the Brahmin Hindus to Islam, introduced by waves of Muslim migration.<sup>38</sup> In this way, Islam was inextricably connected to emancipation and thus the identity of the Muslim majority of Bengal.<sup>39</sup> It was the beginning of the story of Muslim nationalism,

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<sup>33</sup> R. Jahan, *op. cit.* (19), p.285.

<sup>34</sup> In 1991 Bangladesh arranged a non-party, neutral caretaker system, responsible for supervising a fair and neutral election in an aim to foster and nurture the true spirit of democracy.

<sup>35</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, P. Jones, *op. cit.* (30), p.297.

<sup>36</sup> T.N. Madan, 'Two Faces of Bengali Ethnicity: Muslim Bengali or Bengali Muslim', *The Developing Economies*, 10(1) (1972), 74-85.

<sup>37</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (14). Z. R. Khan, 'Islam and Bengali Nationalism', *Asian Survey*, 25(8) (1985), 834-851.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Hindu Sanskrit culture played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Bengali Muslim culture. Khan argues that the psychological background of the converted Muslims remained more Hindu than Muslim. The converted Muslims maintained their participation in Hindu rituals immediately following their conversion. Gradually this practice died down. Understanding the deep-rooted impact of Hindu culture on the lifestyle of converted Muslims, Muslim missionaries and preachers preferred to adopt Bengali culture and language to preach Islam. Z. R. Khan *op. cit.* (35).

which later led to the emergence of the Muslim majority state of Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> The Bengali converted Muslims from East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) maintained solidarity with West Pakistani people despite their cultural difference.<sup>41</sup> Madan argues in this regard,

*Bengali Muslims had chosen to ignore their racial, linguistic, and cultural distinctiveness and to identify themselves with other Muslim communities of India, because it suited their economic and political interests to do so. It is clear that religion was being used by them as a 'sign' as a 'mask', to safeguard and promote their interests. This was the fatal flaw in the edifice of Pakistan.*<sup>42</sup>

Prior to 1947, the people of East Pakistan were mostly concerned about the idea of religion rather than region. After the birth of Pakistan in 1947 the Bengali people felt the inherent difference between East and West Pakistan and it was this that led to the formation of the Awame League in 1949.<sup>43</sup> Bengali politicians under the banner of the Awame Muslim League fostered the spirit of Muslim nationalism in order to achieve their goal in their political struggle against the West Pakistani people. After the language movement, ethnicity overtook religion as the driving force of nationalism and the secular identity of the Bengal people came to the forefront.<sup>44</sup> As Schendel points out:

*In 1955 the Awame Muslim League renamed itself Awame League in order to stress its non-sectarian character. The party carried its reformist and secular message to a wide readership through its daily newspaper Ittefaq.*<sup>45</sup>

Subsequently the language movement, which was the precursor of the war of independence of Bangladesh, took an essential role in promoting the notion of Bengali nationalism in the post 1947 period. Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the political party from East Pakistan, identified the spirit of Bengali nationalism as a mixture of Bengali

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<sup>40</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century Muslim nationalism in Bengal led to the birth of the Muslim League party in 1906 in Dhaka, Jinnah, the father of Pakistani nationalism, propagated the two nation theory at the all-India Muslim League Conference in 1940, which led to the birth of the two nations, Pakistan and India, based on religious disposition, after the partition of India by the British in 1947 see Z. R. Khan, 'Islam and Bengali Nationalism', *Asian Survey*, 25(8) (1985), 834-851.

<sup>41</sup> N. Islam, 'Islam and National Identity: The Case of Pakistan and Bangladesh', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13(1) (1981), 55-72.

<sup>42</sup> T.N. Madan, *op. cit.* (34), p.79.

<sup>43</sup> W.V. Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> The language movement, or 'Vasha Andolon' was a movement by political conscious students and elites in response to the West Pakistani-dominated government's plot to impose Urdu (their language) as the state language of both East and West Pakistan. At that time there were dozens of languages spoken all over Pakistan and Urdu was spoken by only 3% of all Pakistanis. Bangla on the other hand was spoken by 56% of the overall population. W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>45</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41), p.117.



culture, language, folklore and mores.<sup>46</sup> After the independence of Bangladesh, the Awame League realised the essence of Bengali nationalism in the Constitution by focusing on four aspects: secularism, nationalism, socialism, and democracy. No religious component was included.<sup>47</sup>

The idea of Bengali nationalism, which was officially initiated after the Awame League's six-point program in 1965, dominated till the downfall of the Awame League in 1975.<sup>48</sup> Under the leadership of President Ziaur Rahman a new narrative of nationalism resurfaced, which emphasised the Muslim identity rather than the secular identity of the people — the Bangladeshi rather than the Bengali.<sup>49</sup> This Bangladeshi nationalism is the revival of Bhashani's Awame Muslim League, in which Islamic values are predominant overshadowing the Sanskrit Hindu origins. To institutionalise the idea of Bangladeshi nationalism Ziaur Rahman included a clause 'faith in the almighty Allah' in the Constitution in 1977.<sup>50</sup>

At present, Khalida Zia, wife of deceased president Ziaur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina, daughter of deceased Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, together bear the torch of Bangladeshi nationalism and Bengali nationalism representing respectively the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awame League. After the ousting of General Ershad in 1990 the two streams have dominated the Parliament in a democratic manner. Each party assumes control of the Parliament alternatively, thus apparently fostering and nurturing a true sense of democratic practice. The extreme opposing viewpoints of the two parties, however, remain as the main obstacles to the proper functioning of Parliament. In these circumstances, the JSB becomes a token of democracy. Schendel argues:

*It is through these two women that a crucial set of unresolved tensions in Bangladesh's political system has taken shape. This is the wrangle over the identity of the nation and the correct national ideology. It gave a new twist to the long history of dual Bengali – Islamic identities in the Bengal delta.*<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Z.R. Khan, *op cit.* (35)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Z.R. Khan, *op. cit.* (35)

<sup>51</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41), p.201.

Apart from the parliamentary conflict of two streams of nationalism, this duality of nationalism causes street violence and *hartals* or strikes. *Hartals*, or street politics, has become a major impediment to the healthy progress of government and the overall development of the nation.<sup>52</sup> The slogan initiated by the non-secular Bangladesh Nationalist Party ‘Bangladesh Jindabad’ (‘Long Live Bangladesh’) contains an Islamic word, while the secular Bengali Nationalist slogan, ‘Joy Bangla’ (‘Victory of Bangladesh’) is derived from words of entirely Sanskrit origin. Both are inflammatory in the context of street demonstrations.<sup>53</sup>

### **4.3 The Anti-nationalist Force in the Landscape of Bangladesh**

Despite the antagonistic presence of two streams of nationalism in Bangladesh, both streams express their solidarity and support for the independent entity of Bangladesh and thus remain a pro-independence force. Unfortunately, in present day Bangladesh, the revival of the anti-nationalist force has brought a serious threat to the nationalist spirit. One such anti-nationalist force, Jamate Islami, was widely known for its anti-independence stand during the independence war in 1971.<sup>54</sup> Osmany writes:

*Led by Mowlana AbulAla Moudoodi the Jamaat-e-Islami was a strong Islamic Party, prior to 1971 it actively supported the unity of Pakistan and was against Bangladeshi nationalism.*<sup>55</sup>

Immediately after independence this party went underground and resurfaced during Ziaur Rahman’s regime. This anti-nationalist force has managed to make alliances with both leading political parties and increased their activities over the period since the independence of Bangladesh. It has grown from a membership of 40,000 in 1968–69 to 100,000 members by 1980.<sup>56</sup>

This ongoing conflict means that the JSB has not been able to achieve the same level of excellence in its symbolic role as the home of democracy as it has achieved as an architectural masterpiece. The existing standing and image of the JSB stands in stark

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op cit.* (41)

<sup>54</sup> S. Osmany, *op. cit.* (2).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130-131.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

contrast to Kahn's vision for it as a democratic institution. Anderson writes '*Kahn's search was not primarily for physical, built institutions, but rather for what underlies or motivates these associations*'.<sup>57</sup>

#### **4.4 The Nationalist Force of Ethnic Minorities**

One of the darker side of nationalism in Bangladesh is the lack of recognition of ethnic minorities or tribal groups. The tribal people, adivasis or indigenous people, constitute a small fraction of the population of Bangladesh. There are approximately 45 indigenous communities, including the Khasia, Garo, Santal, Murong, Tripura and Manipuri. Most of them inhabit the Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Dinajpur regions. Their participation in the nationalist movement was significant but the Jatio Sangsad mechanism failed to integrate them into the mainstream of parliament in any meaningful way.<sup>58</sup>

#### **4.5 Dimensions of Bangladeshi Nationalism**

The dimensions of Bangladeshi nationalism revolve around five aspects under which the themes of psychological, cultural, historical, territorial , and political can be grouped. These five aspects can be represented respectively through a sense of independence, language, religion, landscape and the Constitution.<sup>59</sup> All five aspects of nationalism, when brought together, constitute a united picture of Bangladeshi nationalism that distinguishes the characteristics of Bangladeshi nationalism from the rest of the world.

##### **4.5.1 Psychological: A Sense of Independence**

Guibernau argues that the psychological aspect of nationalism or national identity is evoked from an understanding of the group based consciousness of those who have encountered and confronted an external force to retain their culture, sovereignty and territoriality.<sup>60</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong argue:

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<sup>57</sup> S. Anderson, 'Public Institutions: Louis I. Kahn's Reading of Volume Zero', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49 (1) (1995), 10-21, p.10.

<sup>58</sup> T. Bleie, *Tribal Peoples, Nationalism and the Human Rights Challenge-The Adivasis of Bangladesh*, Dhaka, UPL, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture Shaping Bangladeshi Identity', *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3) (2012), 45-67.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

*This psychological dimension as such could be reinterpreted as a sense of independence or an independent mindset of a people, a nation. People of Bangladesh, who endured and outstood long history struggle against colonial subjugation is an emblematic of such kind of mind-set.*<sup>61</sup>

The psychological dimension of nationalism is involved when people tend to share and adhere to their cultural belongings. Anderson, as a proponent of nationalism, visualised this psychological appeal, which is also apparent in his concept of ‘imagined communities’. His perception of nation as a ‘modern construct’ evolved from imagined psychological association.<sup>62</sup>

Baxter writes that the people of Bangladesh earned independence twice. In 1947 it became independent as a part of Pakistan after 200 years of British subjugation and finally emerged as an independent nation from 23 years of colonial oppression from Pakistan in 1971.<sup>63</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong argue, ‘*the “sense of independence” is very much rooted in the mind of Bangladeshi people*’.<sup>64</sup> The ‘sense of independence’ is a distinct characteristic that shapes the structure of Bangladeshi nationalism.

#### **4.5.2 Cultural: Language**

The cultural dimension of nationalism includes customs, conventions, values, beliefs, habits, languages and so on.<sup>65</sup> Some elements of the cultural dimensions of Bangladesh are equally shared by the people of India, especially the people of West Bengal. As Thompson states, there are some strong similarities between the cultural dimensions of the two Bengals, especially in terms of ethnic and cultural issues, making it quite difficult to set them apart.<sup>66</sup> The author also argues:

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.49.

<sup>62</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (14).

<sup>63</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (17)

<sup>64</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* p.50.

<sup>65</sup> M. Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

<sup>66</sup> H.R. Thompson, ‘Bangladesh. Language and National Identity’ in A. Simpson (ed.), Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

*If one ignores the historical reasons underlying the separation of Bengal, it is difficult for outsiders to understand why there should be this decisive division between two parts of Bengal, as they appear to have so much in common.*<sup>67</sup>

The people of East Bengal (Bangladesh) and West Bengal had almost similar nationalist views until the resurgence of the Hindu nationalist movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the partition of Bengal in 1905. After the partition of India in 1947, East Bengal became East Pakistan and the people of East Pakistan united under a different form of nationalism, Muslim nationalism.

However, the common force of nationalism for East and West Bengal is language. The Bangla language is a thousand years old, of Indo-Aryan descent from Sanskrit. It originated in West Bengal as a dialect of the Kolkata upper class. It is the seventh most spoken language in the world.<sup>68</sup> It distinguishes Bangladesh from Pakistan, the national language of which is Urdu. Therefore, the Bangla language became a symbol of struggle and oppression in Bangladesh after 1947. As Uddin argues, 'pride' in language is the main determinant of Bengali nationalism.<sup>69</sup>

The language movement in 1952 was the forerunner of the subsequent fight against Pakistan occupation.<sup>70</sup> The language movement sparked resistance in 1948 and again in 1952. After the death of five students in the 1952 language resistance, the Pakistan Government recognised Bangla as the state language of Bangladesh in the 1956 Constitution.<sup>71</sup> The language movement forged a new identity of secular nationalism as opposed to one based on Islamic principles.<sup>72</sup> The slogan 'Joy Bangla', which was inspirational in the fight for freedom of the people of Bangladesh sprung from the spirit of the language movement.<sup>73</sup> UNESCO created the International Mother Language Day, held annually on 21 February, in recognition of the language movement of Bangladesh.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.51.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> S.M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op cit.* (56)

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>72</sup> G.P. Bhattacharjee, *Renaissance and Freedom Movement in Bangladesh*, Calcutta: Mivra Associates, 1973.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>74</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op cit.* (41)

Language, as a cultural component, is an outcome of socio-political forces that stem from the nationalist movement. This cultural force forged subsequent Bengali's progress in fields like Bengali literature, drama, cinema, journalism and across both the academic and non-academic arenas. Bengali language has enriched the Bengali culture and culture encompasses both lifestyle and environment.<sup>75</sup> Thus language not only contributed to the independence movement but also helped to shape a vibrant and culturally rich Bangladesh.

#### 4.5.3 Historical: The Islamic Antecedents of Bengal

Guibernau argues that the collective memory of history shapes the national psyche and moulds the concept of nationalism of a nation.<sup>76</sup> She argues:

*History makes us closer to our ancestors, and strengthens the subjective belief of being part of an extended family. It is through identification with our ancestors that we rejoice in their victories and feel for the suffering and humiliations throughout history.*<sup>77</sup>

The emergence of Islamic nationalism in Bangladesh provided a new means of emancipation for the socially downcast people of the 13<sup>th</sup> century against the oppression of Brahmin rule.<sup>78</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong argue, '*By embracing Islam people of historic Bengal elevated and bolstered their self-esteem*'.<sup>79</sup> This conversion is a unique phenomenon in the history of this region. The growth in the number of Muslims in this part of Bengal is a milestone event that led to Muslim nationalism, not visible in other parts of India.<sup>80</sup>

This religious conversion phenomenon and the particular historical Islamic antecedents of Bengal Muslims was instrumental in shaping the cultural, political and social factors that led to the independence of Bangladesh.<sup>81</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong write:

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<sup>75</sup> A.K. Fazlul Haque and Mizan Rahman, *Bangalir Shangskritik Chinta*, Dhaka, Katha Prakash,2012.

<sup>76</sup> M.M.Guibernau, *op cit.* (62)

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

<sup>78</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Jones and. P. Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did not Materialize, Planning for Planning Sake in the Case of Dhaka', *Pocceedings of International Urban Design Conference*, Melbourne (2012), 36-45.

<sup>79</sup> B. Choudhury and P.Armstrong, *op cit.* (56), p.53.

<sup>80</sup> W.V. Schendel, *op. cit.* (41).

<sup>81</sup> Z.R. Khan, *op. cit.* (35).

*Later East Pakistan, which emerged as Bangladesh can be argued as fruit of such Islamic antecedent history. As such this Islamic antecedent can be regarded as an historic dimension of Bangladeshi nationality.*<sup>82</sup>

#### **4.5.4 Territorial: The Landscape of the Bengal Delta**

According to Guibernau, the physical and geographical attributes of a country, such as the villages, cities and landscape are a source of inspiration to nationalism. She argues, ‘*When turned into landscape, territory achieves a completely different meaning for those who belong*’.<sup>83</sup> The import of landscape as an inseparable part of the national territorial dimension is also illustrated by Nogué and Vicente:

*The national territory is, therefore, the geographical space occupied by a nation onto which a relationship of territory is established, while the national landscape can be defined as the landscape or set of landscapes that represent and identify the values and essence of the nation in the collective imagination. In this sense, the landscape constitutes the soul of the territory.*<sup>84</sup>

Thus the landscape of a nation can articulate the notion of nationalism as a source of collective belonging and imagination. The landscape of the Bengal delta, which is the soul of the territory of Bangladesh, can be regarded as a dimension that constitutes the idea of Bengali or Bangladeshi nationalism.

Nogué and Vicente also argue that landscape modulates and represents the cultural aspect of life in abstract terms and evokes thoughts, ideas, emotions, passions and a sense of belonging thus contributing to nationalism.<sup>85</sup>

The landscape of the Bengal delta — the Eastern matrix, a matrix of rice-culture — denotes a collective association of *ethos* and *mythos*, signifies *self consciousness and individual identity* and to the mass identity of rural people is a perennial expression of Bengal nationalism.<sup>86</sup> The landscape of the Bengal delta is quite distinct in regard to

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<sup>82</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (56), p.54.

<sup>83</sup> M. M. Guibernau, *op. cit.* (62), p.23.

<sup>84</sup> J. Nogué, J. and J. Vicente, ‘Landscape and national identity in Catalonia’, *Political Geography* 23(2) (2004), 113-132, p.117.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> K.K. Ashraf, ‘Land, Water, and Man in Bengal: Themes for a Deltaic Architecture’, in F Amin (ed.) *Contemporary Architecture and City Form*, Mumbai: Marg, 1997.

culture and geography from neighboring countries like India and Myanmar.<sup>87</sup> This could also be regarded as part of cultural nationalism, constituted of both the mystical and the corporeal.

#### **4.5.6 Political: The Constitution**

While the ‘mystical’ aspects of nationalism have been discussed above, the ‘rational’ aspect lies in the political. Political nationalism was initiated first in countries like the Netherlands, Switzerland, England, France, the US and the UK.<sup>88</sup> Western nationalism has more of an institutional structure and endorses political association. In the Western model of patriotic nationalism, the constitution is the key binding factor that incorporates all people under the umbrella of a nation irrespective of creed, culture, religion, race.<sup>89</sup> Countries like Bangladesh, for which nationalism has a more ethnic basis, also rely on their Constitution as a political element that binds nationalist forces. Jacobson argues that the Constitution is the pivotal component of nationalism that confers democratic value.<sup>90</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong argue that the Constitution of Bangladesh represents the democratic values expressed through the JSB by American architect Louis I. Kahn as a nationalist symbol.<sup>91</sup> In Bangladesh’s case, through Kahn’s engagement with the political dimension, nationalism is symbolically associated with global politics, evident in most developing newly independent countries in the cold war and post cold war era. As a symbolic vehicle for the Constitution, the JSB represents the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh. The JSB, through its significant presence in the heart of the capital Dhaka, constructs an image that represents democratic value and their connection with the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has further explored the concept of nationalism in Bangladesh, focusing on the post-independence period. This enables the examination of the JSB as symbol and facilitates exploration of its meaning, both extrinsic and intrinsic, in line with Vale’s

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<sup>87</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (56).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

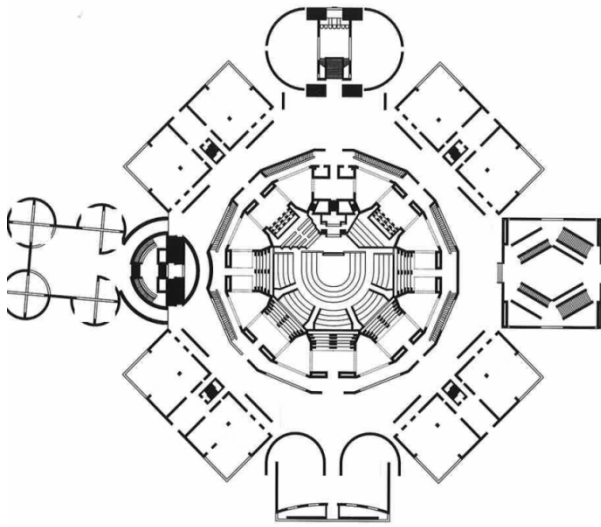
<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



theory that '*Grand symbolic state buildings need to be understood in terms of the political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*'. The dimensions of nationalism are considered. The convergence of the national psyche, language, history, landscape and politics are realised in the JSB, given that the building is only really understood in context. The global political context of the JSB will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Political Context at the Global Level in the Backdrop of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban



**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB: The Emergence of NeoColonial Capitalist Planning as a Sequel'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(2).(2013)

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Geopolitics of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban in the Cold War Era'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(1)

Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism'. Published in the proceedings of ICERIE, Sylhet, Bangladesh, 2013, pp. 40-46.

Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'JSB and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War Era'. Published in the proceedings of ACE (Architecture and Civil Engineering Conference), Singapre, 2013, pp. 149-156

## Chapter 5: The Global Political Context of the JSB

*Global politics, especially American influence, played a crucial role in articulating and shaping the notion of nationalism and the political terrain in developing countries, including Bangladesh, in the cold war and the post cold war eras. During the cold war era, the US engaged in a transfer of their values, ethos and lifestyle to Pakistan and other developing countries as a strategy to counter communism. The flow of aid from the US during the cold war era reconfigured the political terrain of Pakistan, which was particularly singled out because of its location. This chapter investigates to what extent the JSB can be considered a product of the cold war era. It also investigates the undercurrent of American influence in local politics in Bangladesh and how this influenced the commissioning and construction of the JSB.*

### 5.1 The Geopolitics of the JSB in the Cold War Era

The JSB was commissioned during a period when global politics was in considerable turmoil because of the cold war. During this period Pakistan and many other developing countries were regarded by the US as strategically significant to stalling the growth of Russian led communism.<sup>1</sup> These countries were provided with funding, both through aid and cultural programs, in which artefacts were transposed as a vehicle of US political and cultural hegemony.<sup>2</sup> It was in this setting that American architect Louis I. Kahn was commissioned to design the JSB. The JSB can therefore be considered as a part of the cultural apparatus employed in the cold war era by the US.<sup>3</sup>

Saunders defines the cold war ‘as a ‘battle of men’s minds’<sup>4</sup>. He writes that the US ‘... stockpiled a vast arsenal of cultural weapons: journals, books, conferences, seminars, art exhibitions, concerts, awards’.<sup>5</sup> This form of cultural imperialism was in addition to promoting a US model capitalist economy in developing countries and extraction of capital from those countries.<sup>6</sup> It can be regarded as an alternative form of colonialism or a form of neo-colonialism

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. McMahon, ‘United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan, 1947-1954’, *The Journal of American History*, 75(3) (1988), 812-840.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, ‘The Geopolitics of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban in the Cold War Era’, *Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(1) (2013).

<sup>4</sup> F.S. Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, New York: The New Press, 2000, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> M.V.U.S. Elteren, ‘Cultural Imperialism: Today: Only a Chimera’, *SAIS Review*, XXIII (2) (2003), 169-188.

evident during the 1950s and 60s.<sup>7</sup> The cultural form of this neo-colonialism was subject to extreme competition between the capitalist US and the communist USSR. Beyond the struggle to dominate through technological and military might,<sup>8</sup> cultural territory emerged as important in the political landscape.<sup>9</sup>

The notion of cultural imperialism mainly concerns the American influence of American culture on developing countries by means of artifacts and mass media.<sup>10</sup> Tunstall argues that cultural imperialism denotes destruction and obliteration of the local, traditional and authentic substituting these with foreign elements especially from the US and the Western world.<sup>11</sup> It can be considered as the dissemination of foreign values through media, and commercial and cultural products in place of the local cultural values and taste.<sup>12</sup> In this regard Dunch argues:

*certain cultural products [for example, socially-acceptable beliefs, ideologies, entertainment commodities, artifacts etc] have attained a position of dominance in a foreign culture through a process of coercive imposition, usually through their ties to political or economic power...*<sup>13</sup>

Edward Said defines cultural imperialism as the Western domination of culture over Eastern culture in his ground breaking treatise *Orientalism*.<sup>14</sup> The JSB can be considered to be a product of cultural imperialism, based on these definitions, because of US control and domination during the cold war era.

The notion of the cultural cold war came into being in 1948, articulated by Senator Alexander Smith and Congressman Karl Mundt after a post-war reconstruction visit to Europe.<sup>15</sup> They realised cultural media like art and architecture could be instrumental to counter communist influence. The US Congress endorsed their vision and proposed the *US Information and Educational Exchange Act (1948)*, also known as the *Smith-Mundt Act*.<sup>16</sup> The US Government allocated funds mainly for exhibitions, publications, media propaganda, and, particularly, for

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> J.S. Masey and C. M. Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and Their Role in the Cultural Cold War*, New York and London: Lars Muller Publishers, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> M.V. Elteren, *op cit* (6).

<sup>11</sup> J. Tunstall, *The Media are American*, London: Constable, 1977.

<sup>12</sup> A.S. Bullock, *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, London: Fontana Books, 1977.

<sup>13</sup> R. Dunch, Beyond cultural imperialism: Cultural theory, Christian missions, and global modernity, *History and Theory*, 41,3 (2002) 301-325, p.302.

<sup>14</sup> E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> J.M. Masey, and C. M. Morgan, *op cit.*(8)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural exchange programs. These programs encouraged and promoted educated local elites to undertake further study in the US.<sup>17</sup>

The model for what was to come later was initially developed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which carried out a covert cultural war through propaganda and mass media in Western Europe in the early 1950s.<sup>18</sup> The CIA in order to exercise their covert operation used many creative minds from creative fields in the cultural cold war.<sup>19</sup> Saunders writes:

*the result was a remarkably tight network of people who worked alongside the agency [CIA] to promote an idea: that the world needed a Pax America, a new age of enlightenment, and it would be called the American century.*<sup>20</sup>

‘Architecture’ has been traditionally used as an element to demonstrate power, politics and cultural imperialism.<sup>21</sup> Mayo writes, ‘*Architectural practice, which helps produce the built environment, can’t be separated from political ideology*’.<sup>22</sup> There is a clear connection between architecture and power, with architecture catering to the need for powerful forces through large scale symbolic architecture.<sup>23</sup> Findley argues spatial practice and architecture are two most important components that serve the function of the coloniser in the casting of a long colonial shadow.<sup>24</sup> This connection between power and politics with architecture is historical and evident from Nazi structures during the second world war.<sup>25</sup> It was Fascist cultural policy to engage artists and architects in the cultural mission of showcasing power and strength.<sup>26</sup> However, Ward argues that architecture commissioned in Nazi Germany was liberating rather than oppressive.<sup>27</sup> In regard to the connection between power and architecture, ‘*The relationship of power and architecture is multi-faceted*’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> F.S. Saunders, *op. cit.* (4), J.M. Masey, and C. M. Morgan, *op. cit.*(8).

<sup>19</sup> F.S. Saunders, *op. cit.* (4)

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>22</sup> J.M. Mayo, ‘Political Avoidance in Architecture’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 38(2) (1985), 18-25, p.18,

<sup>23</sup> L. Findley, *Architecture, Politics and Cultural Agency* New York: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> D. Ghirardo, ‘Architects, Exhibitions, and the Politics of Culture in Fascist Italy’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 45(2) (1984), 67-75

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> T. Ward, ‘Totalitarianism, Architecture and Conscience’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 24, 4 (1970). 35-49.

<sup>28</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, ‘Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War Era’. *Architecture and Civil Engineering* (ACE2013), Singapore, Global Science & Technology Forum, 2013, p.151.

Architecture was significant in the cultural cold war, used along with other cultural elements in the power struggle between the US and the USSR.<sup>29</sup> Skyscrapers were symbols of strength and superiority, surpassing the military might.<sup>30</sup> Crowley and Pavitt argue:

*By planting a flag on the moon, by constructing the world's tallest building or quite simply by ensuring the supply of shining white refrigerators for ordinary homes, the super powers sought to demonstrate the pre-eminence of their science, their industry, their organization, their design.*<sup>31</sup>

In his article 'Abstract expression: Weapon of the cold war' Cockroft propounds the idea that abstract expression in art and architecture was indicative of propagating American values and ideas in developing countries in the early cold war years.<sup>32</sup> With the growing use of creative media like architecture and the arts in the cold war era the two super powers were locked in a cultural battle.<sup>33</sup> *'Design was not the marginal aspect of the cold war but central – both materially and rhetorically – to the competition over the future'*.<sup>34</sup> During this cold war period architecture and design were incorporated in the built structure for exposition and world fairs.<sup>35</sup> The first such fair was organized in 1958 in Brussels exhibiting the national strength and power of two super powers.<sup>36</sup>

Considering the relationship between power and architecture, and taking into consideration the geopolitical situation in the cold war era, Ksiazek questions whether the JSB could be a geopolitical product of American cultural imperialism.<sup>37</sup> She states:

*Clearly, in the case of the complex at Dhaka (JSB), this dynamic indicates a colonial mentality, in which the ideals of a greater power are transposed onto one unlikely to resist. Does this make Sher-e-bangla Nagar an example of American Cultural Imperialism.*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> D. Crowley and J. Pavitt (Eds), *Cold War Modern Design 1945-1970*, London: V and A Publishing, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>32</sup> J.M. Masey, and C. M. Morgan, *op cit.*(8).

<sup>33</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>34</sup> D. Crowley and J. Pavitt (Eds), *op cit* (29), p.14

<sup>35</sup> D. Crowley and J. Pavitt (Eds), *op. cit.* (29).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Sarah William Ksiazek's thesis on Louis I Kahn is titled, *Changing Symbol in Public Life: Louis Kahn's Religious and Civic Projects 1944-1966 and Architectural Culture at the End of the Modern Movement.*

<sup>38</sup> S. W. Ksiazek, 'Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and The National Assembly'. *Society of Architectural Historians*, 52,4(1993), 416-435, p. 435.

Using foreign aid to wage the cold war, the US sponsored a series of exhibitions in Europe under Yale trained architect Peter G. Harden under the auspices of the Marshall Plan.<sup>39</sup> A cultural campaign under the Marshall Plan was sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art's 'good design show' in European cities such as Amsterdam, Paris, London, and Milan, Stuttgart, Berlin, Munich.<sup>40</sup>

Because of Pakistan's strategic significance, foreign aid was channelled there in the early cold war era.<sup>41</sup> Pakistan's location in the centre of Asia, its status as the largest Muslim nation and its strong defence force was understood to be a force that encouraged the US to consider Pakistan the most sought after nation for America in 1949.<sup>42</sup>

Pakistan's policy makers were aware of their strategic importance and expected support from the US.<sup>43</sup> Pakistan's leaders repeatedly sought American assistance in all forms.<sup>44</sup> The father of Pakistan, Governor General Mohammad Ali Jinnah expected a loan of approximately US\$2 billion in the pretext of fighting communism after independence.<sup>45</sup> '*Jinnah was in effect offering a quid pro quo: alignment with the United States in return for an American commitment to underwrite Pakistan's economy and guarantee its security*'.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1950s, Pakistan's development was funded by US direct aid and financial support. Pakistan received a huge amount of military assistance from US\$1.2 to US\$1.5 billion between 1954 and 1965 and economic assistance of almost US\$3 billion in the form of technical and agricultural grants.<sup>47</sup> Lerski argues:

*One wonders whether Pakistan's first two five year plans would ever have become such striking success without American financed aid and technical assistance. Indeed, the United States can take much of the credit for Pakistan's having become, under the benevolent*

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<sup>39</sup> G. Castello, *Cold War on the Home Front. Minneapolis:* University of Minnesota Press, 2010. J.M. Masey, and C. M. Morgan, *op cit.*(7)

<sup>40</sup> J.M. Masey, and C. M. Morgan, *op. cit.*(8)

<sup>41</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit* (3),

<sup>42</sup> J.R. McMahon, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 818

<sup>47</sup> G.J. Lerski, The Pakistan-American alliance: A reevaluation of the past decade, *Asian Survey*,8,5(1968) 400-415.



*dictatorship of president Ayub, an Asian showpiece of economic development and political stability.*<sup>48</sup>

During this period Pakistan was regarded as a satellite of the US so close did it become to the US and its efforts to counter communism in Asia.<sup>49</sup> In December 1962, prior to the commissioning of Louis I. Kahn, US president John F. Kennedy formed a commission to look into the matter of foreign assistance under the guidance of General Clay. The Clay Commission took the view that the US position on foreign assistance hinged absolutely on its geopolitical interest.<sup>50</sup> It suggested ‘... *US should not extend aid which is inconsistent with our beliefs, democratic traditions and knowledge of economic organization and consequence*’.<sup>51</sup> It was in this geopolitical environment that the agreement was signed between the Pakistani Government and architect Louis I. Kahn on 9 January 1964.<sup>52</sup>

The circumstances under which the agreement was signed have been questioned by academics and historians. Ksiazek asks whether the commissioning of the American architect Louis I. Kahn was part of the American policy of cultural imperialism under the rubrics of a cultural cold war.<sup>53</sup> Bangladeshi Professor Mir Mobasher Ali raised the same question about the relationship between America’s cold war policy and this architectural icon.<sup>54</sup> However, Choudhury and Armstrong demonstrate that Louis I. Kahn’s involvement is not associated with direct foreign aid, rather it is an outcome of the *Smith-Mundt Act*.<sup>55</sup>

In order to understand the cultural cold war strategy surrounding the JSB, Choudhury and Armstrong argue that, although America and Pakistan agreed to support each other, strategically there was insufficient commonality between the two countries to prompt Pakistan to abide by any conditions during the commissioning of the JSB.<sup>56</sup> There is greater complexity in the political scenario, which needs to be explained further in order to understand the circumstances of the commission.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>49</sup> U. Mahajani, ‘Kennedy and the Strategy of Aid’, *The Western Political Quarterly*, 18,3 (1965), 656-668.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 666.

<sup>52</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

During the commissioning of the JSB Communist China was not Pakistan's enemy, but was regarded as a great enemy by the US.<sup>57</sup> A complex relationship existed between the US, China, Pakistan and India, contributing to the complexity of political maneuverings in this region.<sup>58</sup> Despite a substantial flow of assistance from the US to Pakistan in the late 1950s the US-Pakistan relationship soured due to the attitude of Washington policy makers towards India. It was thought that India would better serve US interests because of India's poor relationship with China.<sup>59</sup> India had a good diplomatic relationship with both the US and the USSR as a member of the non aligned countries.<sup>60</sup>

India received assistance from the US of US\$93 million in 1956, which was increased to US\$365 million in 1957 and US\$822 million in 1960. During Kennedy's presidency India received additional aid from the US as a result of the deteriorating relationship with China, of up to US\$500 million for economic aid, while Pakistan received US\$150 million during this period.<sup>61</sup> According to Lerski, '*Washington had decided to make India the dominant power in South Asia, disregarding the threat which India would become to Pakistan*'.<sup>62</sup>

Against such a complex regional setting, war broke out between India and China after border tension rose on 20 October 1962.<sup>63</sup> These hostilities between India and China ushered in a new positive relationship between India and the US and the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru turned to the US for its support. As a result, on 28 October 1962 President Kennedy offered US assistance to India. Pakistan President Ayub Khan wrote:

*President Kennedy wrote me a letter on 28 October 1962. He expressed alarm at the situation which had arisen as a result of the Sino-Indian conflict and informed me that the US intended to give India what help they could for India's immediate needs, and to ensure that whatever help they gave to India would be used only against the Chinese.*<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> G. I. Lerski, *op. cit.* (47). E. Brodtkin 'United States Aid to India and Pakistan: The Attitudes of the Fifties', *Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944*, 43,4 (1967), 664-677.

<sup>58</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op. cit.* (3).

<sup>59</sup> A. Gauhar, *Ayub Khan*, Oxford, New York and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>60</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op. cit.* (3)

<sup>61</sup> A. Sattar, *Foreign Policy: Relations with the West, China and the Middle East Pakistan*, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> G.J. Lerski, *op. cit.* (47), p.410.

<sup>63</sup> A. Gauhar, *op. cit.* (59)

<sup>64</sup> M.A. Khan, *Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967, p.14.

The US decision to provide aid to India came as a surprise to Ayub who considered it a breach of Pakistan's agreement with the US. On 5 November 1962, Ayub wrote to Kennedy,

*Our object is to have peace, and specially with our neighbors. I am very grateful for the assurance you have given that the arms you are now supplying to India will not be used against us. This is very generous of you, but knowing the sort of people you are dealing with, whose history is a continuous tale of broken pledges, I would not ask a friend like you to place yourself in an embarrassing situation.*<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, in retaliation, Pakistan resolved its border dispute with China; in turn China gave 600 square miles of disputed Kashmir land to Pakistan. China also offered a US\$60 million interest free loan in 1964 to purchase machinery and equipment.<sup>66</sup> The Chinese premier Zhou En Lai was invited by Ayub to visit Pakistan and an agreement was made between Pakistan and China on 5 January 1963 on trade, aviation, borders and cultural exchange.<sup>67</sup> America was incensed and cancelled its US\$4.3 million loan to Pakistan for the improvement of Dhaka airport.<sup>68</sup> Lerski writes that the Chinese–Pakistan relationship became closer, while the US and Pakistan relationship gradually soured.<sup>69</sup> According to Gauhar, Pakistan was regarded as a 'tiresome' and 'unhelpful' friend during the early 1960s.<sup>70</sup>

In light of this deteriorating relationship, President Kennedy appointed Under-Secretary of State George Ball to find a way to improve the relationship.<sup>71</sup> McMahon writes:

*... the Ball mission revealed with disturbing clarity that the US and Pakistan were embarked on a collision course. Kennedy's final month in office provided no respite from the 'corrosive' trends in Pakistan–American relations.*<sup>72</sup>

Kennedy believed that with appropriate measures and tact, the relationship could be restored.<sup>73</sup> McConaughy writes:

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p.143.

<sup>66</sup> A. Gauhar, *op cit* (59).

<sup>67</sup> J.R. McMahon, *Changing Sides in South Asia* in T. G. Paterson(eds), New York and Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1989. McMahon, *op cit* (1).

<sup>68</sup> G. I. Lerski, *op. cit.* (47).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armsrong, *op cit* (3).

<sup>71</sup> J.R. McMahon *op. cit.* (67)

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*. p.221.

*When President Kennedy was assassinated a year later [22 November 1963], President Ayub expressed his condolence in sympathetic ways. But when Mr Robert Kennedy was assembling eulogies to the memory of the deceased President in 1964 from various heads of friendly governments, President Ayub did not contribute. I received indirect word from him that a certain circumstance placed a constraint on him.*<sup>74</sup>

After Kennedy's death the relationship between Pakistan and United States remained poor.<sup>75</sup> Considering the bitter relationship, a group of Pakistani intellectuals agitated for an independent economic and political policy for Pakistan free from Western clutches.<sup>76</sup>

This situation clearly suggests a lack of US influence or intervention in the commissioning process for the JSB.<sup>77</sup> However, a link can be drawn from the *Smith-Mundt Act* or the US Information and Cultural Exchange program, where local elites were encouraged to take up higher studies in the US.<sup>78</sup> Choudhury and Armstrong write:

*Prior to the commissioning of Louis I Khan for the JSB, the central public works department in West Pakistan summoned a Bengali (East Pakistani) architect, Muzharul Islam, who was educated in England and the US, to suggest potential architects. His prior connection with Louis I Kahn at Yale persuaded him to suggest his name, along with Alvar Aalto (Finland) and Le Corbusier (France/Switzerland). Islam became instrumental in the appointment of Louis I Kahn. His promotion of these three prominent European or US architects suggests a form of indirect cultural imperialism, reflecting his own post-colonial elite education in foreign countries.*<sup>79</sup>

Curtis' opinion in relation to American influence on foreign trained local elites supports Choudhury and Armstrong's claim. Curtis argued that modern architecture in the developing world has been a product of the coloniasation of the mind as a result of 'brainwashing of post

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<sup>73</sup> Kennedy cited in McMahon, *op. cit.* (67), p.216.

<sup>74</sup> M.S. James, *Pakistan Chronicle*, Hong Kong: St Martin's Press, 1993, p.82.

<sup>75</sup> D. Lord (Eds), *John F. Kennedy*, New York: Library of Congress, 1977.

<sup>76</sup> K.B. Sayeed, 'Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Pakistani Fears and Interests', *Asian Survey* 4,3(1964), 746-756.

<sup>77</sup> B. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (3)

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War Era. *Architecture and Civil Engineering* (ACE2013), Singapore, Global Science & Technology Forum, 2013, p.153.

colonial elites'.<sup>80</sup> Elteren visualizes this form of imperialism where local elites, after adapting and attuning to Western values and culture, promote Western values in their native land.<sup>81</sup>

## **5.2 Geopolitics in the New Era**

Geopolitics in the post-independence period had a major influence on the political orientation and internal political dynamics of Bangladesh. This in turn affected the functioning of the Parliament, raising questions about its independence and power. The geopolitical issues in this context mainly hinge on the American power play and its attitude towards the newly independent country. US policy and its recognition of Bangladesh as an independent country was instrumental in the agreement between architect Louis I. Kahn and the Bangladesh Government after independence.

### **5.2.1 American Policy and Geopolitics During the War for Independence of Bangladesh**

During the commissioning of the JSB, the US president John F. Kennedy opposed Pakistani President Ayub Khan. However, the opposite situation arose during the war for independence of Bangladesh, with the US Government strongly siding with Pakistan.

When Republican Richard Nixon won the US presidency he also supported Pakistan in the war for independence in Bangladesh.<sup>82</sup> President Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, along with policy makers in Washington, considered the commotion in Pakistan in 1971 an internal affair and remained indifferent to reports of brutality and atrocities committed by the West Pakistani army against the civilians of East Pakistan.<sup>83</sup> The US was party to the 1969 US-Pakistan agreement to support Pakistan<sup>84</sup> and was also concerned about Sino-US relations.<sup>85</sup> Both of these factors, amongst others, are reasons for US indifference to the struggles in Bangladesh.

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<sup>80</sup> W.J.R. Curtis, W. J. R, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996.

<sup>81</sup> M.V. Elteren, *op. cit.* (6).

<sup>82</sup> S. Sharma, *US Bangladesh Relations: A Critique*, Dhaka, University Press Limited, 2001.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p.35

Sharma argues:

*...while the administration[Nixon] was busy in its pursuit of China policy, Pakistan military under the leadership of General Yahia Kahn committed unprecedented atrocities-rapes, killing and butchery of the civilian Bangladeshi population resulting into mass exodus of about 10 million Bangladeshi refugees to India.*<sup>86</sup>

The US stance during the war for independence of Bangladesh did not please China. China was expecting the US to openly condemn the war. It was due to internal pressure that the Nixon Government remained relatively quiet on the war for independence issue. On the one hand Pakistan was a long term strategic ally and a link to China, on the other hand the US media and concerned Americans were critical of atrocities perpetrated by Pakistan on Bangladeshi citizens.<sup>87</sup> Edward Kennedy argued:

*..it is our military hardware, our guns, tanks and aircrafts which are contributing to the sufferings and this is being done in violation of negotiated agreement on use of American military aid.*<sup>88</sup>

*Time* magazine, reporting on 23 August 1971 on the 25 March killing prior to the war for independence said:

*... after the shooting started last March, US consul general in Dacca, Archer K. Blood, asked Washington for a quick, forthright condemnation of the central government brutal crackdown. But Joseph S. Farland, the US ambassador to Pakistan and a Nixon political appointee, argued that the US should do nothing to displease Yahia and thereby drive him into Peking's arm. In Washington, Farland's pleas for 'quiet diplomacy' won over. The official policy was deliberately ambiguous. There was no condemnation, no reproach, only a promise to stop military sales and hold economic aid in abeyance for fiscal year 1972(the house rejected the administration's \$132 million Pakistan aid request outright and the Senate is expected to follow suit).Blood was transferred to the state department's personnel office in Washington. Soon word went out that*

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<sup>86</sup> S. Sharma *op. cit.* (82), p.16.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>88</sup> Kennedy in S. Sharma *op. cit.* (82), p.8.

*the policy of not being beastly to Yahya had been personally endorsed by President Nixon. In India's view, US diplomacy was quiet but downright deceitful.*<sup>89</sup>

In the long freedom fight from March to December 1971, the war for independence of Bangladesh involved three super powers — the US, China and the USSR. China supported Pakistan and influenced the US to support Pakistan as well.<sup>90</sup>

The war for independence of Bangladesh emerged as a pressing issue in the United Nations in late 1971. On 4 December 1971 the US put forward a resolution calling for an immediate halt of what they termed 'Indian Hostilities' and the withdrawal of troops. The USSR did not support the resolution, vetoing it. Thus India was free to support the independence of Bangladesh.<sup>91</sup> China brought another resolution 'to support the Pakistani people in their just struggle to resist Indian aggression' again vetoed by Russia.<sup>92</sup>

Amid the stalemate a resolution was again put forward to stop Indian interference into Pakistan's internal affairs and was supported by Pakistan. Nine communist countries, including Bhutan and India, opposed the resolution. George Bush, the US representative to the UN, brought a resolution on 12 December calling for India to abide by the resolution, which was again vetoed by the USSR. Finally Pakistan troops surrendered on 16 December 1971.<sup>93</sup> Bangladesh was an independent nation.

Despite the US inclination to side with Pakistan, it did support some actions in favour of the spirit of Bangladesh. The US clearly indicated that Pakistan would be in a difficult situation if Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Bangladeshi nationalist independence force, was given a death sentence.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the US mounted a relief operation and provided funds for Bangladeshi refugees in India.<sup>95</sup>

Amongst these shows of partisan support for and against Bangladesh, Louis I. Khan remained neutral. He never questioned or supported one side over the other in the war for independence in Bangladesh, in contrast to another American architect, Stanley Tigerman, who in support of

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p.9.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

Bangladesh stopped all his projects there until Bangladesh became independent.<sup>96</sup> Probably Kahn was aware of the US Government's stand on the war for independence of Bangladesh and followed the US policy of indifference.

### 5.3 US Involvement in Independent Bangladesh

The independence of Bangladesh geopolitically marked the victory of the India–Soviet axis over the Pakistan–China axis, while the role of the US can be considered as rather passive.<sup>97</sup> In regard to American policy Haque argues, ‘...*Principal mission of the US was not to foil the independence movement of Bangladesh but to establish Washington’s credibility to Islamabad*’.<sup>98</sup> The US mission after independence reflected its interest in embarking on a relationship with Bangladesh.<sup>99</sup> However, Bangladeshi leaders did not forget the reality of US indifference to the war for independence and Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, on 9 January 1972, underscored the need for Bangladesh–USSR ties, while ignoring any relationship with the US.<sup>100</sup> Sharma argues, ‘...*In such an environment which was prevailing in the region, US–Bangladesh relations started on a somber mood*’.<sup>101</sup>

After Russia’s recognition of Bangladesh on 24 January 1972, the US was seriously contemplating providing recognition to Bangladesh but only after Nixon’s visit to China.<sup>102</sup> Two issues in particular were most pressing at this time: the granting of recognition and direct American aid to Bangladesh. But the presence of Indian troops remained a hurdle.<sup>103</sup> During this time Nixon changed from his previous position and termed Pakistan’s actions during the war for independence butchery.<sup>104</sup> He stated on 10 February 1972:

*...With regard to the political side, we have under study our whole relationship with the subcontinent and as a part of that relationship, of course, the 70 million people in Bangladesh*

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<sup>96</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G. Bell, ‘The Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban’, *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4), (2011), 104-111.

<sup>97</sup> cited in S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82).

<sup>98</sup> E. Haque, *Bangladesh and The United States: Dimensions of Evolving Relationship. Bangladesh. Internal Dynamics and External Linkage in A. Kalam (eds) Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1996, p.228.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> S. Sharma *op cit.* (82), p.30.

<sup>102</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98)

<sup>103</sup> S. Sharma *op. cit.*(82),

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



are involved. We have not made a decision with regard to recognition, and you should not expect a decision prior to the time I return from China.<sup>105</sup>

In February, Senator Edward Kennedy said in a speech '*the people of the world would recognize you[Bangladesh] even if the United States government does not*'.<sup>106</sup>

In March 1972 the US Senate unanimously issued a resolution for quick and early US recognition of Bangladesh. The resolution was approved by the foreign relations committee and endorsed by the Senate vote unanimously.<sup>107</sup> Finally, after the return to Bangladesh of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on 4 April 1972, the Secretary of State William Rogers, announced the recognition of Bangladesh.<sup>108</sup> He mentioned, '*intention to develop friendly bilateral relations and to be helpful as Bangladesh faces its immense task of relief and rehabilitation*'.<sup>109</sup> In a letter to Mujib on 4 April Nixon mentioned that the connection between Bangladesh and the US is embedded on mutual trust. The US has maintained an official mission in Dhaka since 1949 and over the years many Americans, both in private and official capacities, have worked side by side with Bengali people.<sup>110</sup> Sheikh Mujib welcomed the decision and hoped for a better future for both countries.<sup>111</sup>

During this period, due to devastating economic conditions, Sheikh Mujib welcomed any foreign assistance and support from all across the world. In response the Nixon administration offered US\$130 million and the Congress authorized another US\$200 million aid to Bangladesh. Prior to 17 April 1972, the US was the second largest donor after India in the reconstruction work of Bangladesh.<sup>112</sup> In May a bilateral agreement was signed between Bangladesh and the US and Bangladesh received US\$90 million. Thus a new era of warm relations was ushered in and enhanced in June 1972 by the signing of another agreement.<sup>113</sup> By June 1973 Bangladesh

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* E. Haque, *op. cit* (98)

<sup>109</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82), p.37.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *The New York Times*, 6 April 1972.

received funds amounting to US\$443 million from the US, one third of all foreign grants received since independence.<sup>114</sup>

American recognition helped Bangladesh not only through economic assistance but also in securing a position on the UN, with quick and early repatriation of Bengalis stranded in Pakistan, and expediting the process of membership in UN specialized agencies like the International Monetary Fund, International Labor Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO). American recognition put Bangladesh on the wider global map.<sup>115</sup>

In this setting of mutual co-operation, the Government of Bangladesh and Louis I. Kahn renewed the agreement to continue work on the JSB in 1973. This second agreement<sup>116</sup> followed the first memorandum of agreement made between the Government of Pakistan and Louis I. Kahn on 9 January 1964.<sup>117</sup> Kahn's appointment after independence came at an auspicious moment in Bangladesh's history. Kahn's agreement can be regarded as symbolic of US involvement and interference, which was starting to creep into the architectonic and policy affairs of the JSB.

During this post-independence period, three factors were instrumental in the growth of American influence in Bangladesh. First, was the gradual decline of India and the USSR. Second, was the rising pressure from pro-Chinese forces within the country. Third, the rise of Muslim fundamentalist and Pakistani forces.<sup>118</sup> US interest was further reinforced by concern that instability in Bangladesh could destabilize the local balance of power. In addition, the US ostensibly was sympathetic to the devastating economic and humanitarian issues in the war ravaged country. In particular, the US responded to the crisis that was the 1974 famine. After the destruction of one million tons of rice after sudden floods in July 1974, Bangladesh appealed for assistance from Washington. This urgent need for supplies of food was delayed deliberately due to Bangladesh's jute trade with Cuba.<sup>119</sup> Kamal Hussain states, '*Under threat of famine, Bangladesh gave an undertaking not to engage such trade*'.<sup>120</sup> He also states, '*By the time*

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<sup>114</sup> United States Assistance to Bangladesh from its Independence to 30 June 1973 (Dhaka: US Office of the Coordinator of relief and rehabilitation, 1973).

<sup>115</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98).

<sup>116</sup> File No-W-CAP-16(1) ACE, Collection No-X1, Public Works Department, Dhaka, 1973.

<sup>117</sup> File no W-CAP-58/ACE, Collection no -3, Public Works Department: Bangladesh, 1966.

<sup>118</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98).

<sup>119</sup> K. Hussain, *Bangladesh, Quest for Freedom and Justice*, Dhaka: UPL, 2013,

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.178.

*American food arrived in Bangladesh, the autumn famine was over*'.<sup>121</sup> Also important to the US was the strategic position of Bangladesh because of its proximity to the Indian Ocean.<sup>122</sup>

#### **5.4 American Involvement in the Post-Mujib Era**

On August 15 1975 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the nationalist independence force was assassinated after a military coup. The US reacted cautiously and refrained from strongly condemning the killing. Sharman writes:

*...Though the US state department expressed regret over Mujib's brutal assassination in a coup staged on August 15, 1975 it simultaneously made it clear that the change in government in Bangladesh would not impair Dhaka-Washington ties.*<sup>123</sup>

Many political analysts thought the assassination was part of a US plan to remove a once close ally of the India–Russia axis. The French daily *L'Huantic* commented that the new president of Bangladesh, Khandoker Mushtaq Ahmed, was '*one of the surest friends Washington could find in Bangladesh*'.<sup>124</sup> The US promised 'substantial help to the new regime'.<sup>125</sup>

Amid the political chaos after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib, power was siezed by Lt. General Ziaur Rahman on 7 November 1975; this act was not condemned by Washington, which instead increased economic aid increased during Zia's (as he was commonly known) regime.<sup>126</sup> During Zia's rule the US became the top provider of foreign assistance replacing India.<sup>127</sup> Although Ziaur Rahman was rhetorical regarding non-alignment, inherently he relied upon the support of the US on many occasions.<sup>128</sup> While US–Pakistan relations deteriorated after Pakistan refused to accept US\$400 million in economic aid, terming it 'peanuts', Bangladesh expressed its endorsement of the US in relation to a nuclear non-proliferation treaty on 27 September 1979, disregarding the fact both Pakistan and India refused to do so. As a gesture of goodwill, the US wished to establish a research reactor at Savar near Dhaka.<sup>129</sup> Ziaur Rahman had a close

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98), S. Sharma, *op. cit.*(82),

<sup>123</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82), p.234.

<sup>124</sup> It was published in *The Hindu* (Madras), August 18, 1975

<sup>125</sup> *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), 20 August 1975.

<sup>126</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82)

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

relationship with President Carter. He met President Carter several times and received support from him regarding the growth and prosperity of Bangladesh.<sup>130</sup>

As Bangladesh became increasingly aligned with the US, the leftist parties became enraged. During this time several coup attempts took place. Ziaur Rahman hanged more than 200 army personnel associated with these failed coups.<sup>131</sup> In a broadcast on 14 October 1977 he blamed communist countries stating they ‘*undermine the independence and sovereignty of the country*’.<sup>132</sup> In response he banned the pro-Moscow Bangladesh communist party and incarcerated its president Moni Shing, and General Secretary Mohammed Farhad.<sup>133</sup> Thus his strong connection with the US resulted in a serious threat to democracy and the constitutional rights of political parties. This is in contradiction to Louis I. Kahn’s perceived and imagined democratic values and norms for the JSB, being constructed at this time.

## **5.5 The Politics of Killing**

Ziaur Rahman was assassinated by a group of army personnel on 30 May 1981 and, unlike the Mujib killing, this episode was entirely orchestrated by internal forces.<sup>134</sup> After Zia’s death General Ershad took power after a bloodless coup in 1982 removing President Sattar of the BNP. On 24 March he declared martial law. Ershad’s unlawful takeover did not cast any shadow on the US–Bangladesh relationship, with the US eagerly supporting the new regime. Ershad stated that he wanted to rule the country according to capitalist ideology and in line with a Western-style economy. He proposed a number of reforms including liberalisation of trade and promotion of private investment, denationalization and privatization of any government corporations and improvement of domestic financial resource mobilization. These moves were pleasing to the US and he was formally invited in October 1983 to visit the US by President Reagan. He was the first Bangladeshi head of state to receive such an invitation. Reagan valued Ershad’s promotion of private enterprise and compliance with the World Bank’s prescription for privatization.<sup>135</sup> Moreover his stand on the USSR, in which he termed the Soviet Union a ‘dangerous ally’ was very pleasing to the US. He ordered closure of the Soviet Cultural Centre and expelled Soviet

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<sup>130</sup> USA Government of, Department of State Bulletin, December 1980, pp.72-73.

<sup>131</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98). S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82),

<sup>132</sup> *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 15 October 1977.

<sup>133</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82),

<sup>134</sup> C. Baxter, *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

diplomats from Bangladesh.<sup>136</sup> He also opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea.<sup>137</sup>

However, the US also realised it had an obligation to persuade Ershad to adopt democratic practice and accordingly Reagan advised Ershad to restore democratic institutions. America's contradictory stand on the issue of supporting an undemocratic regime and prescribing democratic practice under that regime resonates with Huntington:

*The pattern of American involvement in world affairs has often been interpreted as the outcome of these conflicting pulls of national interest and power on the one hand and political morality and principles on the other. Various scholars have phrased the dichotomy in various ways: self interest versus ideals, power versus morality, realism versus nepotism, pragmatism versus principle, historic realism versus rationalist idealism, Washington versus Wilson.*<sup>138</sup>

Following Reagan's advice Ershad announced a schedule of presidential and parliamentary elections in 1984.<sup>139</sup> Both American paternalism and Ershad's unwillingness to adopt democratic measures were an ominous sign for an independent country's political environment.

After an electoral whitewash in mid-October 1986, in the face of boycotts and general strikes called by his opponents, Ershad was victorious.<sup>140</sup> In 1986 the first parliamentary session took place since the completion of the JSB in 1983. It is indeed a contradiction that the first session in this supposed symbol of democracy was under the leadership of an autocratic regime. Many critics regarded it as a political travesty considering the absence of opposition participation in the Parliament.<sup>141</sup>

The US attempted to put pressure on the Government to restore true democracy and Congress representative Stephen Solartz shouldered the responsibility to persuade the Government to integrate mainstream opposition into the parliamentary process.<sup>142</sup> He introduced an amendment to the *Foreign Assistance Act* and suggested genuine democracy should be a prerequisite for

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<sup>136</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98). S. Sharma, *op. cit.*(82),

<sup>137</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.*(82),

<sup>138</sup> S.P. Huntington and S. P. *American Ideals Versus American Institutions*, American foreign policy: theoretical essays, G. J. Ikenberry (eds). New York, Pearson/Longman, 2005, p 237

<sup>139</sup> S. Sharma, *op. cit.* (82),

<sup>140</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98)

<sup>141</sup> Bayezid Choudhury and P. Armstrong, JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism, ICERIE: Sylhet,2012.

<sup>142</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98)

foreign assistance. These prerequisites were: a credible electoral process reflecting the people's will; an effective parliament in which both government and opposition could contribute; a free press; effective elected government at local levels; and an independent judiciary. The amendment was not approved by the Congress or the House of Representatives and the US Foreign Office decided against setting up such conditions, arguing that its mission was to assist in strengthening the economy of the country and improve the conditions of the people. Several Bangladeshi politicians visited the US to lobby in favor of the Solartz amendment.<sup>143</sup> Haque states:

*..... together with Bangladeshi politicians and academia supported the concepts in Solarz amendment relating to the economic assistance. Thus for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, the political opposition internationalized domestic politics by attempting to influence the executive and legislative branches of the US.*

...

*This phenomenon of foreign reliance exposed Bangladeshi policy makers post colonial mindset of dependence on US arbitration. 'The US was virtually invited to play the role of intermediary between the ruling authority and the opposition parties.'*<sup>144</sup>

While the JSB's physical existence was shaped by an American architect, the internal mechanism of the JSB was, at the same time, indirectly articulated and manipulated by US policy makers.

The JSB's character and strength as a parliament of an independent nation was diminished by foreign interference in local politics. While the US publicly took a neutral standpoint, claiming all issues as internal affairs of the country,<sup>145</sup> behind the scenes it supported Ershad's puppet regime. Ershad's subservient attitude to the US was so great that he even inaugurated the new American Embassy in 1989, an unusual practice for the head of government of a sovereign nation.<sup>146</sup>

In 1989, prior to the fall of Ershad in 1990, the world witnessed the end of the cold war. It was expected that American attention would turn to internal and domestic policy. However, there was

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.241.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

relatively no shift in the US foreign policy of intervention.<sup>147</sup> Tucker asserts in this connection, ‘*The end of the cold war prompted the conclusion by many observers that the world was a now much less dangerous place. The conclusion was not universally shared*’.<sup>148</sup> Thus, even after the end of the cold war, the US intervention policy towards Bangladesh remained unchanged. Bangladesh remained a strategic partner of the United States. During the 1990s Bangladesh supported the US in backing the UN sanction on Iraq. Despite a large guest worker population in Iraq and loss of jobs, Bangladesh sided with the US and contributed forces to the US led Multinational Forces (MNF) against Iraq.<sup>149</sup>

Bangladesh went through a landmark transition to democracy after the fall of the Ershad Government in 1991. The BNP Government assumed power after an unprecedented neutral election under a caretaker government.<sup>150</sup> The US extended its fully fledged support to the first truly democratic government since independence in 1971. Evera writes, ‘*United States has a national interest in promoting a more democratic Third World, on the grounds that democratic states are more peaceful and less expansionist*’.<sup>151</sup>

The first true democratic session of the JSB was convened in 1992 after almost 20 years of independence. During this 20 year period the US had supported Bangladeshi governments that were undemocratic and seemingly against US values, because of self interest. This duality can be seen as reflected in the JSB itself, a symbol simultaneously of oppression, emancipation, danger and opportunity.

Khaleda Zia was elected as Prime Minister in 1991, and during her regime one area of co-operation between Bangladesh and the US was the Haiti issue where Bangladesh supported the UN resolution backed by the US. Khaleda Zia expressed her support after a direct request from President Clinton.<sup>152</sup> In 1995 the US opened a new area of accord through military support to Bangladesh. During this period defense service personnel received training from the US under IMET (International Military Education and Training). Such a program exposes Bangladesh

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<sup>147</sup> R.W. Tucker, D. C. H, *The Imperial Temptation*, New York, Council of Foreign Relation Press, 1992.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* p.7.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> C. Baxter, *op. cit.* (134)

<sup>151</sup> Evera, S. V. The United States and the Third World: when to Intervene. *Eagle in a new world: American grand strategy in the post-Cold War era*. K. A. Oye, R. J. Lieber and D. S. Rothchild(eds), New York, NY, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992, p.117.

<sup>152</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98).

officers to American democratic values so that they nurture the democratic spirit of a nation in line with US prescribed democracy.<sup>153</sup>

America continued its policy of cultural exchange programs, first initiated by the *Smith–Mundt Act* in 1948 during the cold war era. In 1993–94, a total of 3,236 Bangladeshi students enrolled in American colleges and universities. Of them 60.3% were in undergraduate programs, 37% in graduate programs, and 2.7% in other programs. The trend of Bangladeshi-enrolled students rose about 10.3% in each year.<sup>154</sup> The Fulbright scholarship, initiated in the early 1950s resumed after 1975. From 1975 to 1995 almost 100 Bangladeshi scholars were awarded this scholarship and academic exchange also took place.<sup>155</sup> It seems despite the end of the cold war the US cold war cultural exchange policy was still in effect in developing countries.

Despite the establishment of the country's new democratic order after 1991, strong US influence was also evident in the internal democratic practice of the country. When the opposition boycotted Parliament, amid the political deadlock, US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael visited Bangladesh in early September 1995 mainly to streamline Bangladesh–US relations. Locally it was widely speculated that she came to negotiate the internal deadlock, which she firmly denied.<sup>156</sup> Haque states:

*...however, Raphael kept herself in low profile amid high profile media coverage moving cautiously not to transgress on local sensitivity and at no time indicated that she was dabbling in intramural politics.*<sup>157</sup>

Scholars in Bangladesh call for wider areas of co-operation beyond the US,<sup>158</sup> suggesting that in the post cold war era Bangladesh should attempt to break the neo-colonial influence of the US. Sabur et al. write:

*... However, the crucial challenge facing Bangladesh in its relations with the west is to further expand, deepen and intensify the multifarious cooperations, particularly those in the economic fields, between Bangladesh and western countries.*<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.250

<sup>158</sup> E. Haque, *op. cit.* (98).



Sabur suggests Bangladesh should focus its foreign policy on economic diplomacy that will elevate the status of Bangladesh from a recipient of aid to a development partner.<sup>160</sup> Countries receiving aid inevitably trade off conditions and independence from political influence, which may be detrimental to the development of the country. Economic cooperation has the potential to substitute for political pressure and a relationship of mutual respect can be fostered. Bangladesh has also shown its trust in economic co-operation. America is regarded as the largest destination of ready-made garments from Bangladesh and the second largest source of foreign remittance, indicative of a healthy and respectful relationship between two countries.<sup>161</sup> Thus Bangladesh can embrace the possibility of transformation from a strategically important country of the cold war era to an economically important country in the post cold war era.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has placed the commissioning and building of the JSB in the context of dominant global and local politics. It asks how politics have influenced the JSB in terms of symbolic meaning and what meaning can be attached to the building as a consequence of the political context of its time. It considers these questions in line with Vale's theory that '*Grand symbolic state buildings need to be understood in terms of the political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*'.<sup>162</sup> By viewing the JSB as an artefact of the politics of both the cold war and the post cold war era, new meaning is attached to the building. The area of capitalist socio-political spatial practice in urban Dhaka is discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>159</sup> A.K.M Sabur, M. Jashimuddin and Md. Yusuf, *National Security and Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, in Sheikh Munirul Islam (eds), Dhaka: UPL, 2009, p.136.

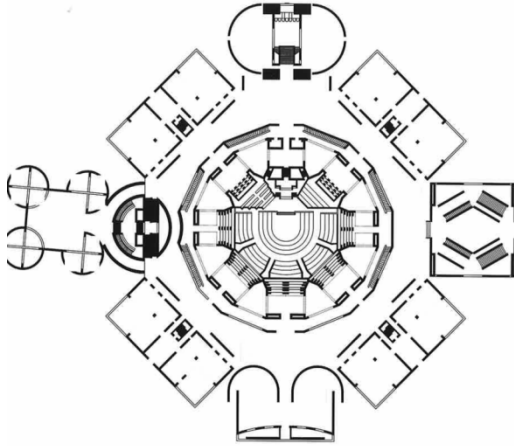
<sup>160</sup> In 2008 the US provided US\$110 million through USAid. It also provided military assistance US\$934,000 in IMET (International Military Education and training). It helped in combating extremism and working on terrorism. 2008. In 2009. Bangladesh received \$29 billion of external aid.

<sup>161</sup> A.K.M Sabur, M. Jashimuddin and Md. Yusuf, *op cit* (159).

<sup>162</sup> L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008. p.3.

## Chapter 6

### Socio-political Construction of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban as an Element of Urban Space



**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & P. Armstrong, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism?'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3), (2013), 22-55

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB: The Emergence of NeoColonial Capitalist Planning as a Sequel'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(2), (2013).

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, Dr Peter Armstrong & Dr Paul Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focus: The Imagined Social Construction of Space'. Published in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(6), 294-302, (2013)

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Geopolitics of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban in the Cold War Era'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(1).

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Graham Bell, 'Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban'. Published in *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4), 104-111 (2011).

## **Chapter 6: The Socio-political Construction of the Jatio Sangsad Bhaban as an Element of Urban Dhaka**

*The spatial development of a city inherently evolves from the dynamics of local and global politics and essentially is a product of the constant interplay of power structures. The idea of the social and political construction of space is a widely accepted phenomenon in the discourse of urban planning. The discussion of the socio-political construction of urban issues is particularly relevant to the JSB. The political and cultural components of symbolic buildings are discussed here in line with Vale's theory. At present the JSB occupies a significant portion of land in the heart of the city of Dhaka. This site was located on the outskirts of Dhaka when the land was selected for development. A range of socio-political issues have played a pivotal role in the understanding of the urban context of the JSB. These include, the legacy of British colonial urban development, the American neo-colonial capitalist influence on Dhaka and the importance of the JSB as an urban focal point that links its status as a democratic emblem to its social construct.*

### **6.1 Introduction**

The JSB was commissioned on the northern outskirts of Dhaka (then known as Dacca) in 1962. A huge area of farmland was acquired in order to accommodate the proposed second capital of Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> The land occupied was originally identified as high density housing in the 1959 Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane plan.<sup>2</sup> Dhaka grew rapidly in a northern direction mostly in an organic manner without following the top-down colonial Geddes plan of 1917, the British Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane plan of 1959 or any regulatory controls. The intention of these colonial and other plans was to regulate Dhaka's urban resources and spaces.<sup>3</sup> Despite having failed to regulate the physical growth of Dhaka in a controlled manner, the colonial plans made a permanent imprint on the landscape of Dhaka through disparate space creation, structures and buildings.<sup>4</sup> The JSB is one such example. It reflects neo-colonial planning in its segmented approach, subsequently shaping the development of new Dhaka in the capitalist Western mode of planning.<sup>5</sup> The first section of this chapter will consider the socio-political construction of the JSB as a result of colonial

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<sup>1</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, 'JSB as Democratic Emblem and Urban Focal Point: The Imagined Socio-Political Construction of Space', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4, 6 (2013), 294-302.

<sup>2</sup> Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane 1959 Report.

<sup>3</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit* (1).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

urban development. The second section will shed light on the JSB as a construction of neo-colonial planning in Dhaka. In the final section this chapter will analyse the social construction of the JSB as a democratic emblem and the assumption of the JSB as an urban focal point.

## 6.2 Theoretical Framework: The Socio-Political Construction of Space

The development of the JSB within the wider Dhaka setting is consistent with the socio-cultural and geographic discourses on cities, which are widely accepted phenomena in the discourse of urban geography.<sup>6</sup> Tonkiss contends that the development of socio-political and cultural issues of urban society can be linked to the development of complex and inter-related urban symbolic forms.<sup>7</sup> Castell and Giddens visualise urban developments as symbolic and metaphoric representation of socio-political and cultural values.<sup>8</sup> Bounds argues in this regard, *'The city is part of the wider society, with socio-political processes amenable to urban analysis. It is an area in which the structure and process of society can be studied'*.<sup>9</sup>

According to many scholars the spatial aspect of a city is parallel to the values, lifestyle, mores, and way of life of its people.<sup>10</sup> The connection between societal and spatial constructs is direct and mutual, and sometimes symbolic, metaphorical and conceptual.<sup>11</sup> These social constructs of space incorporate political, social, economic, ideological and technical dimensions as vehicles of urban space creation. Wright contends that both the spatial and societal constructs are mutually dependant, symbiotic and formative.<sup>12</sup> Susser's analysis of the social construction of space as a mutually supportive system can be understood thus:

*Spatial transformation must be understood in the broader context of social transformation: space does not reflect society, it expresses it, it is a fundamental dimension of society, inseparable from the overall process of social organisation and social change.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> F. Tonkiss, *Space, The City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms*, Cambridge: Polity.

<sup>8</sup> M.Castells, *City, Class and Power*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> M. Bounds, *Urban Social Theory*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p.43.

<sup>10</sup> M. Low, *Cities as Space of Democracy, Spaces of Democracy*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004. S.M. Low, *Spatializing Culture, Theorizing City*, Roca. New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 1999. M. Castell, *The Urban Question*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977. A. N. T. Amin, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> B.I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>12</sup> G. Wright, 'Urban Space and Cultural Setting', *Journal of Architecture Education* 41, 3 (1988), 10-14,

<sup>13</sup> I. Susser (Ed.) *The Castells Reader on Cities Social Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 2002, p.293.

Socially constituted space engages two streams: the social construction and the social production of space.<sup>14</sup> *'The term social construction may be conveniently reversed for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict and control'*.<sup>15</sup> The discourse of social construction includes perceptions of colonial planning, a source of conflict, the images of which, when translated into symbolic meanings, underpin the scope of this chapter.

Physical space is the combined product of the natural and the built environments, which has imagined and direct links with societal and political issues. Both environments are symbolic and are attached to the idea of a socio-political construct.<sup>16</sup> Firth, Nas and Valentine explore this symbolic connection in their writing.<sup>17</sup>

The socio-political construction of space can also be metaphorical. This link between society and other discourses is a widely accepted phenomenon of the built environment and the creative arts, such as language and visual arts.<sup>18</sup> In connection with the built environment Lawrence and Low argue, *'Theories of metaphor have been used by a number of anthropologists to explore architecture and the built environment as a symbolically encoded cultural meaning system'*.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the built environment represents a shared mental imagery, a bridge from idea or cognition to the real.<sup>20</sup> Tonkiss sees this symbolic link thus:

*Cities in this sense are one of the best examples of the idea that things which are real are also imagined. Social structure, relations and practices are linked in sometimes complicated ways to symbolic urban form.*<sup>21</sup>

This thesis has sought to establish that Bangladesh's social and political upheaval and transformation to democratic status is epitomised by the JSB.<sup>22</sup> This perception of socio-political connection with urban spaces can be viewed through the theoretical lens of the critical urban theory of Lefebvre and Castell and via related discourses like urban

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<sup>14</sup> S. M. Low, *Spatializing Culture. Theorizing City. Rica*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.112.

<sup>16</sup> J.D. Proctor, The Social Construction of Nature: Relativist Accusations, Pragmatist and Critical Realist Responses, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88, 3(1998), 352-376.

<sup>17</sup> R. Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private*. London: Allen and Unwin. J.M.P Nas (Ed.) Jakarta, *City full Of Symbols: An Essay in Symbolic Ecology*, New York. Koln, 1993: Lieden. E.J. Brill and G. Valentine. *Social Geographies: Space and Society* New York, N.Y, Sydney: Prentice Hall, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> L. Low, The Built Environment and Spatial Form, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990) 453-505,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 472,

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.* (7), p.2.

<sup>22</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.*(1).

anthropology and cultural and human geography. However, there are possible difficulties in formulating an appropriate theory for making this connection. As Cooke argues, '*this is difficult, and modern urban theory failed to cope adequately with complexity*'.<sup>23</sup>

Theories explored in this chapter include those derived from A.D King's 'Colonial Urban Development', Kim Dovey's theory on 'Space and Resources', and Henry Lefebvre's theory of the 'Treatment of Space as Social Product'.<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre's theory operates at three levels. The third level, 'Representational Space', is explored in detail in section 3 of this chapter. Lefebvre delineates such kinds of space as '*embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not*'. '*Lefebvre's representational space are spaces of imagination, embodiment and desire. They are tied to symbolic and artistic practices*'.<sup>25</sup> Lefebvre's representational space can be understood in many ways.<sup>26</sup>

Cross-disciplinary discourses such as urban geography, urban sociology and cultural geography consider the socio-political context of space and architecture. Contemporary anthropologists, theoretical sociologists and archaeologists have reinforced the realm of spatial dimension and contend that space is central to the dynamics of interaction with built forms and people's lives. In their work *Social Logic of Space*, Hillier and Hanson underscored the social construction of space as follows, '*It[architectural structures and the system of space] has a direct relation, rather than a merely symbolic one, to social life*'.<sup>27</sup>

The discourse of anthropology supports the direct and metaphoric relationship of the socio-political milieu and urban space. Low writes about how urban space has socio-political and cultural underpinnings.<sup>28</sup> Tonkiss argues, '*for the early urban sociologists, cities are excellent laboratories in which to observe social relations*'.<sup>29</sup> He writes about the idea of symbolic and materialist interpretations of space as physical embodiments of the social and cultural experience.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> P. Cooke, 'Modern Urban Theory in Question', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 15(3) (1990), 331-343, p.332.

<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre argues that production of space operates on three levels. The first one, in which space is produced, is an effect of spatial practice. It reflects 'spatial sets characteristic of each social formation'. The second, 'representation of space', ordering conception of space, typifies scientific, architectural and/or governmental ordering of space. He argues that spaces are products of nature. Space evolved from economic, technical political and strategic realms. Our space, JSB, as an urban focal point, can be understood as a production of space as a socio-political construct.

<sup>25</sup> F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.* (7), p.3.

<sup>26</sup> B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit* (1).

<sup>27</sup> B. Hillier and J. Hanson *The Social Logic of Space*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.ix.

<sup>28</sup> S.M. Low, *Spatializing Culture, Theorizing City Rica*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.* (7), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

### 6.3 Dhaka's Urban Growth: The Gradual Surfacing of a Complex Hybrid City

As JSB is a physical entity within the city of Dhaka, it is necessary to understand the complex social and physical dynamics of Dhaka. Dhaka's growth is associated with a long history of social, political and economic transformation. Once a Mughal capital, it was regarded as the Venice of the East. Dhaka's importance during the last 400 years has varied: it was stripped of its capital status twice, once in 1715 and again at the end of partition in 1911. Its importance grew after the independence of Pakistan in 1947, when it became the capital city of East Pakistan and finally when it assumed the status of capital city after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971.<sup>31</sup> The story of Dhaka is one of struggling people, uprising, political battle, growth, development, social cohesion and, finally, a symbol of modernity. The rich mosaic of Dhaka, and its underlying values and norms are visible in its multi-faceted complex geography.

Morphologically Dhaka has three distinct phases. First, the indigenous or pre-colonial Dhaka, the history of which is not well known.<sup>32</sup> Present Sonargaon, now a heritage city, was originally founded as a pre Mughal city. During the Mughal period was made capital by Islam Khan Chishti in 1610 CE, who named it Jahangirnagar, after a Mughal emperor.<sup>33</sup> During this period the city comprised an area of 2.20km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>34</sup> During the later Mughal period it grew to an area of 25km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>35</sup> After the Mughal capital was shifted from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1717 Dhaka's growth stalled, especially after the Battle of Plassey in 1757.<sup>36</sup>

During the colonial period European traders were heavily involved in trading activities in Dhaka. The population at this time was close to one million, and Dhaka's area comprised 4.5 km<sup>2</sup>, mostly consisting of the older part of the present Dhaka.<sup>37</sup> With the establishment of the Dhaka Committee in 1830 the city grew further; by 1867 it covered an area of 14.5km<sup>2</sup> and had a population of 51,635.<sup>38</sup> This growth continued and Dhaka grew out to an area of 17.0km<sup>2</sup> by 1901.<sup>39</sup> After a period of little development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dhaka

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<sup>31</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *Physical Growth of Dhaka City*, Dhaka: Past, Present and Future in S. Ahmed (eds) Dhaka, Asiatic Society, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31). S. Hossain, 'Rapid Urban Growth and Poverty in Dhaka City', *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology* 5(1) (2008), 1-24.

<sup>35</sup> C. D'oyly, *Antiquities of Dhaka*. London: J.J.Landseer and Company, 1824.

<sup>36</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31).

<sup>37</sup> J. Taylo, *Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca*, Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1840.

<sup>38</sup> W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Dhaka*, Trubner Co, 1976.

<sup>39</sup> S. Hossain, *op. cit.*(34).



became a focal point during the consolidation phase, when Dhaka was established as the capital of Bengal in 1905. Unfortunately all development during its provincial capital status came to an end when the decision was annulled in 1911.<sup>40</sup> During this period Dhaka extended towards Ramna, which is a replica of a European garden city concept designed for residential accommodation for the Government of the newly created province. At the same time the university area was developed in line with the model of a European university city.<sup>41</sup> Dhaka's activity shifted from the old indigenous core to a new area demarcated by a railway line.<sup>42</sup> Ramna racecourse emerged as the lungs of the growing Dhaka city.<sup>43</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century political activities related to the establishment of Dhaka as the provincial capital, a political act, greatly enhanced the growth of Dhaka. Renowned British town planner Geddes was asked in 1916 to design a masterplan for Dhaka, mainly as a gesture of British sympathy for the Muslims of Dhaka, after Dhaka was stripped of its capital status.<sup>44</sup> Geddes designed a 22 page sketchy plan mostly inspired by the beauty of Dhaka, overlooking the socio-political aspect of planning. Geddes, as planner, was in a position to implement the idea of advocacy planning where the political and social needs of marginalised people are addressed.

*Geddes' failure to acknowledge the troubled history of Dhaka and his lack of awareness of the sense of marginalization of the people of Dhaka meant that his plan was doomed. Rather than seek to understand the political, cultural and social context in which his plan would operate, Geddes developed his plan for planning's sake.*<sup>45</sup>

After the independence of Pakistan from British Colonial rule Dhaka again was in the spotlight. Choudhury argues that '*the sudden flow of people to Dhaka in the post-1947 period created the 'new Dhaka' in the highland available north, north-east and north-west of Ramna [the centre of colonial Dhaka]*'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> B.I. Choudhury, P. Jones and P. Armstrong, 'Why Geddes Plan Did not Materialize, Planning for Planning Sake in the Case of Dhaka', *Proceedings of International Urban Design Conference*, Melbourne (2012), 36-45.

<sup>41</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31). P. Geddes, *Report on Town Planning, Dacca*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1917.

<sup>42</sup> H. Meulder and K. Habib, 'Representation and Public Contestation: The Post Colonial Public Spaces of Dhaka'. In AMC (eds) *400 Years of Capital Dhaka and Beyond*. Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. 3, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> B.I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, 'The Failure of the 1917 Geddes Master Plan and 1959 Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane Master Plans: Some Reflections', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4,10 (2013), 449-460.

<sup>45</sup> B.I. Choudhury, P. Jones and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (40), p.42.

<sup>46</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31), p. 72.

In 1948, the East Bengal Government created a planning division to supervise the physical growth of Dhaka.<sup>47</sup> The city grew northwards and major development also took place on the western fringe of Dhanmondi. The inception of the Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT), in 1954, was a milestone in the development of urban Dhaka after the introduction of the 1952 Building Construction act followed by the Town Improvement Act in 1953. In 1959 the Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane masterplan was undertaken under the supervision of the DIT.<sup>48</sup> The commissioning of the JSB on the outskirts of Dhaka in 1962 significantly contributed to the development of Dhaka during this period. In the mid 1960s the railway line was moved and major thoroughfares developed in its place. Overall Dhaka's growth during this period has two distinct aspects. One is evident in the early 1950s with the separation of the indigenous and colonial city and the second in the 1960s where development was integrated with some discrete areas on the northern and eastern sides of the city.<sup>49</sup> The old city developed densely along the river and the new growth took place loosely and in a scattered way in line with Western cities so that the old city became isolated, with the focus shifting from the old to the new city, in particular with the change of the CBD from Gulistan to Newmarket.<sup>50</sup>

Post-independence Dhaka became the capital city of Bangladesh and the development of Dhaka started to accelerate.

*The growth of Dhaka Development that took place in the 1950s could very well be termed as slow and gradual; in the 1960s the pace picked up and in the period after the emergence of Bangladesh it could be said to be phenomenal.*<sup>51</sup>

The growth of Dhaka till 1989 took place under the provision of private and public development on the eastern side such as Jurain, Goran, Badda, Khilgaon, and on the western side with areas like Kamrangir Char, Shamoli, Kalyanpur. The northern area of Tongi, north eastern Mirpur and southern Postugola underwent extensive development.<sup>52</sup> However, the growth was unhealthy moving into low land unsuitable for development and taking over

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<sup>47</sup> N. Islam, *Dhaka from City to Megacity: Perspective On People, Places, Planning and Development Issues*. Urban Studies Program, Department of Geography, University of Dhaka, 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Q.M. Zaman, *S.Lu City Expansion Policy versus Compact City Demand: The Case of Dhaka*. *Compact Cities*, R. Mike Jenks (Eds). London and New York, 2000.

<sup>49</sup> F. Nilufer, *Urban Morphology of Dhaka City: Spatial Dynamics of a Growing City and its Urban Core*. In G. R. Roxana Hafiz (ed) *Urbanization and Urban Development*. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31), p. 73

<sup>52</sup> F. Nilufer, *op. cit.* (49)

green space. Pockets of administrative, commercial and institutional centres developed haphazardly in and around the city. Since 1990 development has accelerated further, due in part to foreign remittances and the growth of the garment industry. Many economic and climate-induced migrants have moved to the city; industry has brought infrastructure and physical change.<sup>53</sup> The city has gradually become a place of contrast, where wealth and poverty exist side by side in a strange symbiotic process.<sup>54</sup> The huge influx of rural migrant (approximately 2000/day) and introduction of new cars (200/day) on the street of Dhaka compounds the existing situation further.<sup>55</sup> The disparity between poor and rich is marked with slums mushrooming alongside concrete jungles of high rise buildings.<sup>56</sup> The juxtaposition of tall, modern structures vis-à-vis shanty represents the co-existence of a dual social reality.

#### **6.4 Socio-political Construction of the JSB as a Legacy of British Colonialism**

The history of British and European colonial urban development goes back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century after Christopher Columbus discovered America. In the following years British and European colonial urban development spread across Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world.<sup>57</sup> Burnell asserts in this context that ‘*colonisation refigured the terrain everywhere*’.<sup>58</sup> In 1921, 84% of the world’s surface was acquired and controlled by colonial powers, approximately 186 countries.<sup>59</sup>

The Bangladesh experience is much like those of other colonial countries. The European and British colonial urban history of the Bengal region dates back to 1520. After the battle of Plassey in 1757,<sup>60</sup> the British East India company emerged as the de facto ruler of Bengal. In 1857, the British Crown took over direct control of this region.<sup>61</sup> The British left India in 1947.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> B.I. Choudhury, A. M, ‘Climate Change and Climate Refugee Nexus in Bangladesh Context’, *Proceedings of the Conference on Engineering Research, Innovation and Education (CERIE) 2011*, 1, 2011, pp. 95-100.

<sup>54</sup> B.I. Choudhury, A. M. ‘Policy Response to Wicked Problem: The Paradigm of Slum and Squatter in Dhaka’, *Journal of Administrative Studies* 4(59), (2011).

<sup>55</sup> A. Murshed, *Oculus*, Dhaka, UPL, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> B.I. Choudhury and P. Jones, *Adaptive Measure to Reduce Climate Induced Urban Migration to Dhaka, Insights from Bangladesh* VDM Publishers, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> P. J. Burnell, and V. Randall, *Politics in the Developing World* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p.36.

<sup>59</sup> G.O. and A.L. Foster, *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives. American Encounters/Global Interactions*, Durham, N.C: Duke University Press. 2003, p.316.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Clive’s decisive defeat over the Nawab Bengal prepared the way for British dominion over India.

<sup>61</sup> W.V. Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Leela Gandhi argues that the conclusion of British rule does not infer the end of colonialism.<sup>63</sup> According to Yeoh, post-colonial identity is a 'mirage' and that does not imply total freedom.<sup>64</sup> It is more of an 'ironic' form of expression of colonial rule.<sup>65</sup> Colonialism casts its long shadow even after independence of the postcolonial countries. As Burnell and Randall state:

*Though by the mid-1960s most colonies were, at least formally, independent, the experience of subsequent decades showed how much the ghost of colonisation still looms over the post-colonial world.*<sup>66</sup>

The impact of this 'ghost' may in more subtle terms be expressed as 'legacy'.<sup>67</sup> The legacy of the British is evident in all colonial countries, including the Indian subcontinent. The British presence was widespread in the legal system, administration, education and policy, including that related to urban growth.<sup>68</sup> A form of 'colonisation of the mind' is a lasting legacy of colonialism.<sup>69</sup> Bush argues, '*This colonisation of the mind was arguably one of the most tractable and damaging legacies of colonial rule*'.<sup>70</sup> Pylee writes post-colonial British India continued to follow a mostly British system of government and administration. During the post-colonial period the leaders of the newly independent country failed to generate a new vision.<sup>71</sup>

This lack of vision was also apparent in built forms and urban planning. As Njoh observes, '*It is true that town planning in British colonial possessions was derived from British town planning legislation, principles and practice*'.<sup>72</sup> Yeoh writes that post-colonial cities reflect the colonial form of planning.<sup>73</sup>

The idea of British colonial urban planning policies and projects, including built forms, was to civilise the 'inferior race' or 'mission civilisatrice'.<sup>74</sup> The introduction of cultural projects was an attempt to civilise the colonial country. Similarly, for built structures in colonial India,

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<sup>63</sup> L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, St Leonards, N.S.W., Allen & Unwin, 1998.

<sup>64</sup> B. Yeoh, 'Post Colonial Cities' *Progress in Human Geography*, 25, 3 (2001), 456-468

<sup>65</sup> A. Kusno, *Behind the Post-Colonial Architecture: Urban Space and Political Culture in Indonesia*. London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>66</sup> P.J. Burnell and V. Randall, *op cit.* (56), p. 36.

<sup>67</sup> B.I.Choudhury and P. Armstrong, Jatio Sangsad Bhaban : A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism? *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3)(2013) 22-55.

<sup>68</sup> M.S. Rajan, 'The Impact of British Rule in India'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4(1) (1969), 89-102.

<sup>69</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (66).

<sup>70</sup> B. Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, Harlow, U.K: Pearson Longman, 2006, p.135.

<sup>71</sup> M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional History of India, 1600-1950*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1967.

<sup>72</sup> A.J. Njoh, *Planning Power: Town Planning and Social Control in Colonial Africa*, London: UCL Press, 2007, p.145.

<sup>73</sup> B. Yeoh, 'Post Colonial Cities', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25(3) (2001), 456-468.

<sup>74</sup> A.J. Njoh *op. cit.* (71).

the British presence was felt in buildings of national importance, hospitals, universities, colleges, schools, police stations, high courts, post offices, railway stations and bungalows.<sup>75</sup> This view of planning as a socio-political construct of colonial development is one adopted by A.D. King.<sup>76</sup>

King's *Colonial Urban Development* outlines the influence of Western colonial urban impact on developing societies.<sup>77</sup> It is of particular relevance when considering the socio-political construction of the JSB. Choudhury and Armstrong argue,

*It is important to note that King's theory of colonial urban development evolved from the context of British Colonial India (Imperial India) and for this reason can appropriately be applied in the context of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban.*<sup>78</sup>

The surge of socio-political movements from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century has been examined in line with three components of King's theory, namely culture, technology and power structure of colonialism. In King's terms '*the three main variables of culture, technology and the power structure of colonialism are suggested as heuristic aids for studying the structure of the colonial city*'.<sup>79</sup>

## **6.5 The JSB as a Socio-political Construct of British Colonial Urban Development**

The JSB strongly represents the British legacy, in terms, according to A.D. King, of colonial third culture, technology and power structure, or the relationship of dominance and subordination.<sup>80</sup> These three components, '*colonial third culture, technology and the dominance-dependence*' relationship are instrumental in shaping the JSB.<sup>81</sup>

The first component, culture, is also described by King as 'colonial third culture,' a value and belief system with its own institutions, social structure and social relationships.<sup>82</sup> 'Third Culture' is the combination of the selected parts of both the first and second culture, which

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<sup>75</sup> P.N. Chopra and P. Chopra. *Monuments of the Raj*, New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 1999.

<sup>76</sup> Anthony D. King, an expert in the field of Art History and Sociology, propagated his ideas on colonialism, post-colonialism and the globalisation of cities and construed the idea of the societal image of spatial and building form. *Colonial Urban Development* is a work that evolved from his thoughts on the social construction of space.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op cit* (66), p.41.

<sup>79</sup> A.D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment.*, London, Boston: Routledge & Paul, 1976, p.xiv.

<sup>80</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op cit* (66).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> A.D. King, *op. cit.* (78)

confer a hybrid status, in other words, a combination of Eastern and Western culture.<sup>83</sup> Ayub Khan, the military dictator responsible for commissioning Louis I. Kahn for the design of the JSB emerged as an entity of a third culture representing British metropolitan and indigenous South Asian cultural traits.

Technology is the second component of the social form of urban growth in a colonial city.<sup>84</sup> Technological advancement articulates and shapes the overall structure of urban development.<sup>85</sup> The JSB stands as testament to post-colonial technological advancement. Considered an engineering marvel, it was the first of its kind in post-colonial Pakistan to use concrete extensively as a building material.<sup>86</sup>

The third signifies the dominance-dependence relationship in structuring the urban development of the colonial city.<sup>87</sup> This relationship connects at two levels; first the metropolitan, dominated by the military and administrative function and second, the indigenous, representing the local people. Dominance- dependence may be reinterpreted as the ruler and the ruled, the powerful and the powerless.<sup>88</sup>

In designing the JSB, Louis I. Kahn segregated the dominant function of ‘Citadel of Assembly’ and the sub-ordinate or dependent function of ‘Citadel of Institution’ (consisting of stadia, markets and museums which were not built later).<sup>89</sup> Kahn maintained that these dominant and dependent functions should ‘face each other’ across vast parks and should maintain their distance as they are different in type and function. The dominant nature of the Citadel of Assembly was expressed by its placement.<sup>90</sup> As Ksiazek states, the central position of the Citadel of Assembly indicates the notion of a dominant separate precinct.<sup>91</sup>

This socio-political, dominance-dependence aspect is expressed through the monumental presence of the JSB and the subservient scale of the rest of the complex and city.<sup>92</sup>

Choudhury and Armstrong argue, ‘*Kahn tried to provide dominance to the Assembly building*

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> A.D. King, *op. cit.* (83).

<sup>85</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (66)

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> A.D. King, *op. cit.* (83), p.37.

<sup>88</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (66).

<sup>89</sup> S.W. Ksiazek, *Changing Symbol in Public Life: Louis Kahn's Religious and Civic Projects 1944-1966 and Architectural Culture at the End of the Modern Movement*. Unpublished PhD, Department of Architecture and Planning, Columbia University, New York, 1995.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.*(66)

by introducing monumentality in reference to other dependent functions'. This monumentality also represents the intention of dictatorial Ayub Khan to showcase his power and authority, his own power supplanting the former British dominance of the colonial city.<sup>93</sup>

Kahn's articulation of monumentality is in line with the notion of A.D King's third component of colonial urban development. Choudhury and Armstrong ask, '*Did the monumentality at the national assembly come at the expense of humanistic ideals? The building does look like a fortress, as indeed it was intended to*'.<sup>94</sup> The social segregation of Kahn's monumental design and its segregated domain disjointed from the city as '*a haughty sequestration*' from the rest of the city demonstrates this dominance-subordinance theme.<sup>95</sup>

The third component casts a long shadow, evident in the present context of Dhaka in which can be seen the inappropriate land allocation for the JSB compared to the city. The JSB occupies 610 acres of land, yet 37.4% of Dhaka's population occupy an area of only 4% of the total Dhaka Metropolitan Area.<sup>96</sup> This unjust distribution of land harks back to Dhaka's colonial history, in which the divide between the oppressed and the oppressor was clearly defined.<sup>97</sup>

## **6.6 Socio-political construction of the JSB as Neo-colonial Capitalist Planning in Dhaka**

The JSB emerged as a sequel to neo-colonialist planning in Dhaka,<sup>98</sup> a consequence of the transformation from indigenous to British colonial and finally to American neo-colonial planning. This neo-colonial planning is inherently a socio-political construct, evolving as a successive sequence of three layers of Dhaka towards the north from the river Buriganga, articulated and shaped by the political scenario.<sup>99</sup> The political scenario is mostly guided by power and resource control.<sup>100</sup> Cold war politics and local political dynamics, strongly influenced the planning of the JSB, which Ayub Khan intended to be built on the periphery of Dhaka. This would usher in a new dimension in the morphological mosaic of Dhaka and influence future land use in Dhaka in line with American capitalist style planning

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*. p.434

<sup>95</sup> S.W. Goldhagen, *Situated Modernism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

<sup>96</sup> CUS Bulletin *On Urbanization and Development*, Dhaka: Momin Press Ltd, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> D.L. Foley, 'British Town Planning: One Ideology or Three?' *British Journal of Sociology*, 11(3) (1960), 211-231.

<sup>98</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban: The Emergence of Neocolonial Planning as a Sequel', *Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2 (2) (2013)

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*.

principles.<sup>101</sup> The JSB remains as a sequel of three successive phases of use of space in Dhaka: the indigenous Dhaka located in old Dhaka; the British colonial Dhaka in the middle, and the neo-colonial American style planning in outer Dhaka.<sup>102</sup>

## 6.7 Resource Control as a Means of Constructing the Urban Space of Dhaka

The city is a space that reflects the dynamics of struggles for power and control over resources.<sup>103</sup> History tells us that the control of urban space is implemented by the possession of resources.<sup>104</sup>

*Cities might capture and concentrate wider struggles over exploitation and inequality, but they also posed specific questions of justice on the ownership and distribution of public space collective goods.*<sup>105</sup>

The economic aspect of planning as a socio-political construct has also been highlighted in the writing of Yiftachel, who asserts four different aspects of planning: territorial, procedural, socio-economic and cultural.<sup>106</sup>

Choudhury et al. argue:

*Dhaka emerged as a hybrid city as a result of successive change in power and textual character. The exercise of power is evident mainly through resource control manifested physically in the changing pattern of urban form.*<sup>107</sup>

The growth of most cities is a product of the control of money and resources.<sup>108</sup> According to Tonkiss, *'The politics of urban space is also played out through economic and symbolic claims to the city'*.<sup>109</sup> Visualising the neo-colonial planning of the JSB through the lens of Marx raises the question of what happens when a capitalist approach is taken to urban planning. The planner's underlying intention in a modern capitalist city is to serve the

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> A. R. Cuthbert, *Understanding Cities: Method in Urban Design*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>105</sup> F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.* (7), pp.61-62.

<sup>106</sup> Yiftachel, O, 'Planning and Social Control: Exploring the Dark Side'. *Journal of Planning Literature* 12(395). Retrieved from <http://jpl.sagepub.com/content/12/4/395>, 1998.

<sup>107</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (97), p.31.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.* (7), p. 2.



wealthy by capitalising on the poor.<sup>110</sup> The socio-political-economic construct of the city in terms of the concept of a power struggle is evident in spatial transformation.<sup>111</sup> The changing pattern of urban spaces in Dhaka from indigenous to neo-colonial American can be articulated by Kim Dovey's theory, '*The Nexus of Built form with power is, at one level, a tautological truth place creation is determined by those in control of resources*'.<sup>112</sup>

## 6.8 The JSB: From British Colonial to American Neo-colonial Planning

The planning of the JSB emerged as the next phase of a sequence from old or indigenous Dhaka to British colonial Dhaka to neo-colonial American Dhaka.<sup>113</sup> Before discussing the socio-political construct of the JSB as a consequence of neo-colonial American planning, it is pertinent to discuss the two phases of Dhaka, indigenous and British colonial and how these were subject to resource control and manipulation.

Dhaka became an important centre in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>114</sup> Sen asserts, '*its importance lay not only in being the capital of the Bengal province, but also in monopolizing its trade and commerce*'.<sup>115</sup> Thus its economic activities were the defining factor in shaping its physical landscape.<sup>116</sup> The vibrant business and trade activities generated bazaars and chawks as the essential urban element of the city,<sup>117</sup> with a '*series of shops fronting onto the main street of Mahalla, and inter connected Mahallas give rise to a pattern unique to Dhaka*'.<sup>118</sup> All neighbourhood areas (mahallas) were headed by a group of commercially important wealthy persons called 'Panchayat'.<sup>119</sup> The Panchayats and Mahallas were headed by a group of wealthy and powerful individuals.<sup>120</sup>

*The panchayet, as an institution played an important role in bringing about changes, including spatial developments, responding to the changing needs, but within a traditional social framework.*<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>R. E. Klosterman 'Arguments For and Against Planning'. *Town Planning Review* 56(1) (1995), 5-20.

<sup>111</sup>I. Susser (Ed.), *The Castells Reader on Cities Social Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 2002.

<sup>112</sup>K. Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999, p.1.

<sup>113</sup>B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (97).

<sup>114</sup>A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui *op cit.*

<sup>115</sup>R. Sen, *Society and Social Structure in Capital Dhaka Since The Mughal Period. 400 years of Capital Dhaka and Beyond* in A. M. Choudhury (eds), Dhaka,; Asiatic Society, 1, 2011, p.107.

<sup>116</sup>B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (97).

<sup>117</sup>Q. A. Mowla, 'Urbanization and the Morphology of Dhaka - A Historic Perspective'. *Journal of Asiatic Society* 48(1) (2003), 145-170. R. Sen, *op. cit.* (114).

<sup>118</sup>Q.A. Mowla, 'Settlement Texture: Study of Mahalla in Dhaka', *Journal of Urban Design* 2(3)(1997), 259-275,p.267.

<sup>119</sup>Q.A.Mowla, *op cit.* (125); R. Sen, *op. cit.* (123).

<sup>120</sup>R. Sen, *o. cit.* (114).

<sup>121</sup>Q.A.Mowla, *op cit.* (117), p. 262,

The physical development of British colonial Dhaka emerged as a response to the coloniser's economic exploitation so it, too, is an inherently economic construct. The bazaar remained as the centre of all political struggle,<sup>122</sup> while the British created an alternative urban landscape enabled through control of commerce and industrial activities.<sup>123</sup> This is common to European settlements in colonial countries.<sup>124</sup> The British enforced their rule in the business district as a means of political control.<sup>125</sup> All three distinct phases of Dhaka — the early British phase (1763–1905), the provincial capital phase (1905–1912) and the final British phase (1912–1947) — evolved as products of socio-political forces through economic exploitation.<sup>126</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the early British phase, Dhaka's growth stalled due to a decrease in its cotton production as European cotton took over the local market and a duty was imposed on the local product.<sup>127</sup>

*The decline of manufacturing and commerce, as may be naturally expected, has occasioned a diminution of the population of the city. In 1800 the inhabitants were 200,000 but now [1840] they do not amount to more than 63,038 in number, according to the census of 1838 poverty has increased in a far greater ratio than population decreased.*<sup>128</sup>

After the British Government took power from the East India Company in 1857, economic activities started to rise, further enhanced by the inception of Dhaka Bank in 1864.<sup>129</sup> *The presence of this bank in Dhaka transformed the city into the financial centre of east Bengal*'.<sup>130</sup> Moreover with the establishment of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) the city's urban growth accelerated. When the Dhaka Municipal Corporation was established a new era

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<sup>122</sup> K.Habib, H.Meulder, *Representation and Public Contestation: The Post Colonial Public Spaces of Dhaka. 400 years of Capital Dhaka and Beyond*. A. M. C. et al (eds). Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. 3, 2011.

<sup>123</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (97).

<sup>124</sup> S. Sen, 'Between Dominance, Departure, Negotiation, and Compromise: European Architecture and Urban Planning Practice in Colonial India', *Journal of Planning History* 9 (4), (2010).

<sup>125</sup> Habib and Meulder, *op cit.* (121).

<sup>126</sup> R. Sen, *op cit.* (114).

<sup>127</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (97). M. Islam, *The Economy of Dhaka. 400 years of Capital Dhaka and Beyond* in A. M. Choudhury (eds.), Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. 2, 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Taylor in R. Sen, *op cit.* (114), pp.114-115

<sup>129</sup> S.U. Ahmed, *Dhaka: A Study in Urban History and Development 1840-1921*. Dhaka: Academia Press and Publishers Library, 2010.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p.115.

was ushered in.<sup>131</sup> Under the auspices of the DCC in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, middle Dhaka began to take shape.<sup>132</sup>

However, with the establishment of Dhaka University after the annulment of the Bengal partition, Dhaka began to grow in a different way, following the British plan to create a modern European university city.<sup>133</sup> The decision to make Dhaka a provincial capital was entirely related to the control of policy, power and resources set out by the British against complex Hindu-Muslim discord.<sup>134</sup>

After the independence of Pakistan from British in 1947 the newly independent country became more closely aligned to the US. In the changing socio-political and cultural scenario, US neo-colonialism replaced British colonialism. During this period, growth took place in a northern direction. *'The sudden flow of people to Dhaka in the post-1947 period created the 'new Dhaka' in the highland available north, north-east and north-west of Ramna [centre of colonial Dhaka].*<sup>135</sup> In order to regulate the growth of Dhaka the *Town Improvement Act 1953* was formulated followed by the 1959 Minoprio Spencely and Macfarlane Masterplan.<sup>136</sup> The area of Dhaka during the Masterplan was 220 square miles with a population of 575,000.<sup>137</sup> Despite the end of British rule the British presence was felt through the commissioning of the British firm of Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane. This was mainly due to British trained Pakistani bureaucrats who were inclined to British values and ideas.<sup>138</sup> Young argues in connection with colonial legacy, *'although the formerly colonized territories gradually had their political sovereignty returned to them, they nevertheless remained subject to the effective control of the major world powers'*.<sup>139</sup>

It was against such a backdrop that the JSB was commissioned in 1962 designed by an American architect, three years after commissioning Minoprio Spencely and Macfarlane, a British firm, for Dhaka's masterplan. With the commissioning of Louis I. Kahn American capitalist dreams of the cold war era substituted the British colonial grip on the planning of

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong, and P. Jones, *op cit.* (97).

<sup>133</sup> P. Geddes, *Report On Town Planning*, Dacca, Calcutta, 1917.

<sup>134</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, 'The Failure of the 1917 Geddes Master Plan and 1959 Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane Master Plans: Some Reflection's', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences* 4(10) (2013), 449-460.

<sup>135</sup> A. F. Chowdhury and S. Faruqui, *op. cit.* (31), p.72

<sup>136</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (97). B. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (1).

<sup>137</sup> MacFarlane, M. A. S. A., *Master Plan of Dhaka*. Dhaka, 1959.

<sup>138</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, *op. cit.* (58).

<sup>139</sup> R. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical introduction*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001, p.45.

Dhaka.<sup>140,141</sup> During this period architecture and urban planning were employed like any other product to instil the values and way of life of American capitalism via US assistance and conditional support.<sup>142</sup> The Clay Committee (1962), prior to the commissioning of the JSB, stated that the US prefers to provide aid that conforms to the democratic beliefs, economic philosophy and traditional values of the US.<sup>143</sup> This placed assistance to the design and construction of the JSB firmly within US preferences for aid.

Mahajani writes:

*The gigantic physical imprint of the Jatio Sangsad Bhaban immensely influenced urban planning in Dhaka. In scale the project dominated the landscape as a built metaphor for the dominance of the neo-colonialist US. The policy makers related to land use inspired by American cultural propaganda during the cold war period and the physical attributes of JSB started to generate out of scale land projects for affluent members of society, disregarding the fact that many people in Dhaka were struggling to have even the basic necessities at that time.*<sup>144</sup>

In this period the Western trained bureaucrats of the Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) initiated Western style housing projects, such as Gulshan Model Town (1961), Banani (1964), Uttara (1965) and Baridhara (1962) following the Western concept of garden houses, a realisation of the American dream.<sup>145</sup>

The US neo-colonial influence was also visible after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, especially after 1975.<sup>146</sup> The neo-colonial order worked in favour of the wealthy and affluent, a blatant demonstration of the capitalist form of social structure, disregarding the rights of the people.<sup>147</sup> The divide between rich and poor, which was evident in the post-independence period further, accelerated in the post-Mujib rule after 1975, when the capitalist mode of economy substituted for socialist ideology. This new direction of capitalist thought

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<sup>140</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (1).

<sup>141</sup> B. I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of American Cultural Imperialism in the Cold War Era', *Architecture and Civil Engineering* (ACE2013), Singapore, Global Science & Technology Forum, 2013.

<sup>142</sup> J. Chase, 'The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture', *Journal of Architectural Education* 44(4), (1984), 211-224. W.J.R Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996.

<sup>143</sup> U. Mahajani, 'Kennedy and the Strategy of Aid', *The Western Political Quarterly*, 18(3) (1965) 656-668.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

powered by American ideology propelled the unjust distribution of land between rich and poor in Dhaka.<sup>148</sup> Sen writes:

*According to a study undertaken by Kamal Siddique and his colleagues, only 30% people of the city controlled 80% of land. In the name of 'housing societies' the affluent families were getting exemption from the ceiling of city land ownership and grabbing city land by sheer might of money. The city land has been used mostly for residential purposes, about 88%. The said study which was conducted in 1986 reveals the fact that 2% of the population of Dhaka city belong to the upper class owned 15% of land, 28% of the population belonging to the upper middle class owned 20%, and 40% population belonging to poor class owned nothing. There was, in other words, a growing trend of concentration of land ownership in Dhaka City.*<sup>149</sup>

## **6.9 The JSB Dominates the Urban Mosaic of Dhaka**

This section looks at the JSB as the urban focal point of Dhaka and attempts to understand its metaphoric and symbolic connection with the long historic process of socio-political upheaval of the people of Bengal and how the JSB works as a social construct symbolising democracy.

Many scholars have discussed the configuration of the JSB as an urban focal point emerging in parallel to democratic Bangladesh.<sup>150</sup> Linking a city's space with the city's democratic historic transformation is a topical discussion in regard to geo-historical transformations.<sup>151</sup> Low states, '*cities are certainly spaces where democracy should matter, work, be tested and extended, even if they are not in some way spatially or socially fundamental in our thinking about this form of rule*'.<sup>152</sup>

Although significant for its physical quality as an architectural and planning masterpiece, the JSB is inherently a socio-political construct. It has forged a national identity for the people of Bangladesh, evolving as a dynamic force in the internal political interplay between East and

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> R. Sen, *op cit.* (114), p.127.

<sup>150</sup> M. Low, *Cities as Space of Democracy. Spaces of Democracy.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2004. M. Castells, *City, Class and Power*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978: A. N. T. Amin, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

<sup>151</sup> M. Low, *Cities as Space of Democracy. Spaces of Democracy* in M. Low, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p.145.

West Pakistan. This construct spans two historical periods, those of pre- and post-independent Bangladesh.<sup>153</sup>

The pre-independence social aspect evolved out of Ayub Khan's intention to appease the people of East Pakistan, who were excluded from the decision-making processes of their country, unable to use Bangla as their language, and subject to intolerable economic disparities.<sup>154</sup> In this period Bangladesh was responsible for 80% of all Pakistan's exports while very little revenue was returned for the economic development of Bangladesh.<sup>155</sup> Ayub's attempt at appeasement in commissioning the JSB was included in the 1962 Constitution. This Constitution, however, was mostly rejected by the East Pakistani people,<sup>156</sup> and thus the commissioning of the JSB in the pre-independence period constituted a socio-political event to satisfy the whim of a benevolent military dictator.<sup>157</sup>

After independence in 1971 the JSB became a symbol of hope and democracy for the people of Bangladesh.<sup>158</sup>

Choudhury et al. write:

*The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 totally changed the regime, and JSB emerged as a true democratic emblem after 1991. In the period from 1971 to 1991 the nation was ruled, and suppressed, by extremist nationalist forces, turncoat politicians and military dictators.*<sup>159</sup>

However, the journey to genuine democracy was a long one and the first democratic session of Parliament was held after a free and fair parliamentary election under the supervision of a caretaker Government on 27 February 1991.<sup>160</sup>

By the time it was completed in 1983, the JSB was at the centre of the city.<sup>161</sup> The large area of land earmarked for the complex became the lungs of a vibrant city.<sup>162</sup> When it was initially

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<sup>153</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>154</sup> A. Mascarenhas, *The Rape of Bangla Desh*, Delhi: Vikas, 1971.

<sup>155</sup> A. Mascarenhas, *op. cit.* (153),

<sup>156</sup> B. I. Choudhury, 'The Engagement of Khan and Kahn in Jatio Sangsad Bhaban' *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4) (2011). A. Gauhar 'Pakistan: Ayub Khan's Abdication'. *Third World Quarterly*, 7(1), 1985, 102-131

<sup>157</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* p. 297

<sup>160</sup> During Ershad's regime there had been two parliamentary elections, in 1986 and 1988. But there remained a question over the legitimacy of these elections based on whether Ershad's Government itself was legitimate (Jahan, 2005). Paradoxically the first session of JSB after its completion was illegitimate.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

commissioned the land proposed was on the periphery of Dhaka.<sup>163</sup> Initially 200 acres of land was earmarked for the proposed site by a designated committee after the historic conference of Nathiagali on 12-13 June 1959. Later the committee proposed 1,000 acres of land comprising 600 acres of open, flat land that could be extended towards the north. The final site occupies 610 acres,<sup>164</sup> and is bounded by two highways, Mymansingh road on the east and Mirpur road on the west. These were a determining factor in selecting the site because of accessibility.<sup>165</sup> The effect of shifting the centre of the city parallels the way in which democracy has become central to the nation of Bangladesh; the construction of space is echoed in the social and political.

This discussion of the social construction of space encompassing socio-political history and urban transformation is significant in terms of the discourse of urban history and historiography. In this regard Wright points out that '*urban history can show how major buildings and monuments affected the cities around them; creating distinctive styles and urban space*'.<sup>166</sup> The discussion of such issues provides new insight into the discourse of urban history in Dhaka. It helps understand the complex web of colonial planning residing side by side with the indigenous way of life. As Sassen says '*the city has long been a strategic site for the exploration of many major subjects confronting society and sociology*'.<sup>167</sup>

The organic growth of Dhaka, shifting to centre around the JSB, confirms the idea of the building as a social construct. Alexander writes, '*When we look at the most beautiful towns and cities of the past, we are always impressed by a feeling that they are somehow organic*'.<sup>168</sup> He states that 'artificial cities' or 'planned cities' do not achieve the same richness because they lack the complexity or superior nature resulting from the vibrancy of 'natural' or 'organic' or 'spontaneous' cities.<sup>169</sup>

However, despite its organic growth, Dhaka is not a 'sustainable' city because it does not conform to the usual definitions of sustainability that centre around socio-economic,

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>164</sup> Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'The Duality of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban and the Notion of Nationalism', *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 4(9), (2013), 414-424.

<sup>165</sup> File no -w- cap-58/ace collection no -10, year -1968.

<sup>166</sup> G. Wright, 'Urban Space and Cultural Setting', *Journal of Architecture Education*, 41(3). (1988),10-14.

<sup>167</sup> S. Sassen, 'The City: Its Return as a Lens for Social Theory', *City, Culture and Society* 1(2010), 3-11, p.3.

<sup>168</sup> C. Alexander, *A New Theory of Urban Design*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, p.2.

<sup>169</sup> N. Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory Since 1945*. London: Sage, 1998.

environmental and cultural issues.<sup>170</sup> Based in its neo-colonial past, the JSB symbolises cultural aspiration rather than genuine cultural roots.<sup>171</sup> Kong points out that *'increasingly, attention has also been given to the cultural production of space and place, often in monumental proportions, as a means of attracting and sustaining global human and economic flows'*.<sup>172</sup> As an urban focal point it incorporates past and present, encompassing physical and cultural determinants.<sup>173</sup> Choudhury et al. write *'The symbolic connection between the spatial and social constructs of JSB constitute an idealistic vision, thus indeed making it quite a successful urban design within the precinct<sup>174</sup> of the city'*.<sup>175</sup> Lynch's argues *'a desirable image [city] is one that celebrates and enlarges the present while making connection with past and future'*.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> R., R. Camagni Capello, et al, 'Towards Sustainable City Policy: An Economy-Environment Technology Nexus', *Ecological Economics* 24(1) (1998), 103-118.

<sup>171</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>172</sup> L. Kong, 'Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status'. *Political Geography* 26, 2007, 383-404, p.384.

<sup>173</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op. cit.* (1).

<sup>174</sup> Lang argues, 'most urban designs deal with precincts of cities rather than cities as a whole ...Brasilia and Chandigarh (Chandigarh?) fall under this category.'

<sup>175</sup> B. I. Choudhury, P. Armstrong and P. Jones, *op cit.* (1), p.300.

<sup>176</sup> K. Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972, p.1.

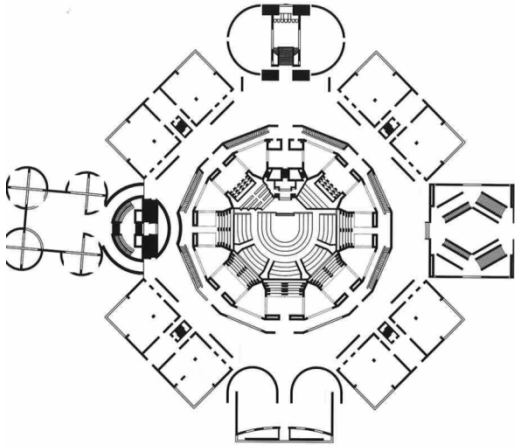


## **6.10 Conclusion**

Despite the enforcement of British colonial planning as a tool to control its physical and social mosaic, and US patronised capitalist growth in recent history, Dhaka still has its original flavour and fosters its entrenched socio-political inheritance through organic growth. The juxtaposition of modern planning, as seen in the JSB as the core of the city, and the free flowing growth surrounding it resonates with the claim that Dhaka is a hybrid city in physical terms as well as economic. The complex nature of social dynamics brought into physical being by the JSB adds complexity and contradiction to Dhaka's urban landscape, adding richness to the city.

## Chapter 7

### In Retrospect



**Some content of this chapter evolved from the following publications by the author:**

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Graham Bell, 'Engagement of Khan and Kahn in JatioSangsadBhaban'. Published in *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4), 104-111 (2011).

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture in Shaping National Identity'. Published in *Global Built Environmental Review*. 2012, pp. 45-67, UK

Bayezid Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong 'JSB: Emblem of Duality of Nationalism'. Published in the proceedings of ICERIE, Sylhet, Bangladesh, 2013, pp. 40-46.

Bayezid Ismail Choudhury & Dr Peter Armstrong, 'The Geopolitics of JatioSangsadBhaban in the Cold War Era'. Published in *GSTF International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 2(1).

## Chapter 7: In Retrospect

This thesis is an attempt to explore the unknown and less known social, political and cultural phenomena surrounding the iconic building that is the JSB in Dhaka, Bangladesh. By exploring the historical, political and cultural context of the building, it is possible to understand its extrinsic meaning and to extract meaning from its architectural qualities. Because it evolved in response to the nationalist movement of East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), nationalism and the exploration of it as a concept constitutes a significant part of the thesis. Chapter 3 discusses issues of nationalism, duality of nationalism, how this duality of nationalism is reflected in the JSB and the emergence of Bangladeshi nationalism. Chapter 4 discusses the post-independence state of Bangladeshi nationalism and anti-nationalist forces in independent Bangladesh. Nationalism, as a construct of politics and culture, is supported by Vale's theory: '*Grand symbolic buildings need to be understood in terms of the political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*'.<sup>1</sup>

Global politics also figured greatly in the life of the JSB. The way in which they have formed the backdrop to the commissioning and construction of the JSB is outlined in the thesis. Chapter 5 discusses the global political scenario surrounding JSB, and the engagement of the US in the region after independence. As the JSB complex is a physical entity and spatial phenomenon, its spatial aspect in relation to the socio-political construct is discussed. Chapter 6 discusses the socio-political construct of the urban aspect of the JSB.

The thesis comprises seven chapters, based on refereed conference and journal articles published by the author, each discussing an aspect of this important building. Seven refereed journal and three refereed conference articles are directly related to the JSB. One or more published refereed article constitutes the contents of each of the core chapters.

Central to the thesis is the notion of nationalism and its connection to the JSB. Peter Alter's dual aspect of nationalism, in which he encompasses oppression, emancipation, repository of danger and finally opportunity informs a discussion of the duality of the JSB, which represents both

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<sup>1</sup>L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.p.281.

opportunity and emancipation for the Bangladeshi people, while at the same time also having a basis in oppression and danger. However, of all of Alter's four aspects of the duality of nationalism, I argue that it is opportunity that is the most applicable to the JSB. Opportunity overcomes the challenges and obstacles of Bangladesh's chequered history, suggesting a hope for the future born of new democracy, which finds its home in the JSB.

Further, the research explores the local and global politics that surround the commissioning and building of the JSB. Without asking questions about these aspects of Bangladesh, the importance of the JSB cannot be understood. The building is symbolic and its symbolism is based in a complex intertwining of historical and cultural factors.

A building that bears such a heavy weight of symbolism cannot, of course, be without controversy. Khalid Ashraf claims that '*Louis I. Kahn's Capital Complex at Dhaka is an epic work. Next to Chandigarh it is the most important landmark to influence the architectural destiny of the region*'.<sup>2</sup> Due to its architectural merit, the JSB received the Aga Khan award for architecture in 1989, although awarded in 1986. The award was suspended initially because of questions of cost in one of the world's most poverty stricken countries.<sup>3</sup> It is for its cost that the building has been widely criticised with Vestbro contending that the amount of money consumed by the JSB for operational costs could be alternatively used for the wellbeing of the mass of people in housing, schools, hospitals and other community services and support.<sup>4</sup> The estimated cost of the JSB in 1965–66 was about 50 million BDT which rose to 1300 million BDT in the final stage of completion in 1982–1983.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Malik raises a burning question regarding the building, its modernism and monumental scale seemingly out of place in the world's poorest country. He states:

*All the materials — cement, marble, aluminium, hardwood for windows and extensive internal panelling, lifts and air-conditioning plant — were all imported. At the time of its construction, the energy required for its 16 lifts and air-conditioning equalled half that available for the rest of city. Calculations carried out by a local architect show that the ratio between the total built-up*

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<sup>2</sup>K.K. Ashraf, 'Louis I. Kahn: National Capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Global Architecture*, 72 (1994), 1-47

<sup>3</sup>I. Serageldin, and S.Hamedm 'A Modest and Delightful Balance' *Landscape Architecture*, 80, 8 (1990), 49-51.

<sup>4</sup>D.U. Vestbro, 'Fifteen Years with ARCEACE' in D.U. Vestbro (Ed.) *Architecture as Politics*, Sweden:KTH, 2002.

<sup>5</sup>Q. Mowla, 'Architectural Identity of Kahn's Capital Complex in Dhaka: Re-evaluated', *ARCASIA Forum 16<sup>th</sup>*, Vietnam, 2011.

*area and the usable floor space is as low as 41 per cent. It is doubtful whether a building of such extravagance and poor efficiency would have been built in a western country.*<sup>6</sup>

However, what is the cost? How do we weight up the financial cost against the long term impact of this iconic building? As architectural theorist Roth states, *'True economy is measured in the quality of performance over the long run, not merely in initial cost'*.<sup>7</sup> That the building was awarded the Aga Khan award for architecture reverberates with Roth's statement. The JSB symbolises great hope for the future for Bangladesh, both because of its symbolic presence and architectural merit.<sup>8</sup> Kong argues in connection with such masterpieces, *'These often monumental structures are intended to support a vibrant cultural life, in order to attract and sustain global human and economic flows'*.<sup>9</sup> Of course, other components of the city, such as political stability, environmental practices and international relations also need to be addressed to achieve the status of a global city.<sup>10</sup>

Another burning issue raised here is the commissioning process of the JSB, a building conceived and imagined not entirely for noble reasons and created with little thought to its socio-political and cultural context. It represents both the self interest of the client Ayub Khan and that of architect Louis I. Kahn. However, it must be underscored that if a *'building is as good as the client'*<sup>11</sup> and if the JSB is considered as one of the great masterpieces of the 20<sup>th</sup> century then both the client Ayub Khan of Pakistan and the architect Louis I. Kahn of the US deserve credit despite their less than admirable motivations for undertaking the project.

The contribution of the thesis to the academic literature is in its insights into the way the JSB's intrinsic and extrinsic meanings are explored, its intrinsic meanings revealed in its spatial and visible forms and extrinsic meanings through its connection to history, culture, society and politics.<sup>12</sup> In addition to its place as a product of nationalism, the JSB is a product of capitalist thought, in the way it annexes large space in the city of Dhaka, disregarding the basic needs of

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<sup>6</sup> A. Malik, 'Post-Colonial Capitals of South Asia: A Critical Analysis of Chandigarh, Dhaka and Islamabad', 3(1), 68-80, p.74.

<sup>7</sup> L.M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture*, Boulder: West View Press, 1998, p.137.

<sup>8</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G.Bell, 'The Engagement of Khan and Kahn in JatioSangsadBhaban', *Architecture Plus Design*, 28(4) (2011), 104-111.

<sup>9</sup> L. Kong, 'Cultural Icons and Urban Development in Asia: Economic Imperative, National Identity, and Global City Status', *Political Geography* 26, 383-404, 2007, p. 382.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> B.I. Choudhury and G.Bell, *op. cit.*(8).

<sup>12</sup> H. Conway, *Understanding Architecture*, New York: Routledge, 2005, 27.

the people. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5 the US imperialist and capitalist neo-colonial ideology of planning and policies in relation to foreign assistance had a significant impact on the newly independent nation's Government. By imparting lasting influence on the minds of elites and bureaucrats, both British colonial history and the US neo-colonisers, have created a monument to capitalism in urban Dhaka. Unjust land distribution starkly contrasts the gap between rich and poor. Choudhury and Armstrong write '*Neo-Kahnian architecture [is] now blooming in Dacca and visible in the housing and public buildings near the Assembly district, in private houses, shops, and even the national airport*'.<sup>13</sup> This American product designed by Louis I. Kahn has become a standard for Bangladesh and the lifestyle of the nouveau rich.<sup>14</sup>

However, despite the cultural imperialism attached to the JSB, it has become a symbol of pride and prestige even for the hardcore proponents of leftist thought in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh they visualise the JSB complex as the lungs of the city and are critical instead of the enormous space occupied by the armed forces in Dhaka where land is scarce. The armed forces in Bangladesh are widely criticised for their adoption of Western values and lifestyles influenced by the cold war policy of the US. Thus the JSB is a paradox, its presence large both physically and in the psyche of the Bangladeshi people.

The JSB is regarded as a national emblem, the crucible for the spirit of the nation.<sup>15</sup> Physically and symbolically it represents the Constitution. Architectural historian Ksiazek explains, '*That the national assembly building was intended to embody democratic ideals is everywhere apparent in Kahn's statements about the project*'.<sup>16</sup> This iconic building can be regarded as a Parthenon of the East, evoking similar pride in its people. By utilising its immense potential as a symbol of national identity it has the potential to unite the opposing elements of Bangladesh and become the home of multi-party democracy.

This thesis reveals the multiple meanings of the JSB, that is, the socio-political, cultural, historic and philosophical meaning of JSB consistent with the theoretical framework of Hershberger's

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<sup>13</sup>B.I. Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'JatioSangsadBhaban: A Legacy of British Colonial Urban Development or American Cultural Imperialism?' *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3) (2013), 22-55, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> B.I.Choudhury and P. Armstrong, 'Monuments and Architecture Shaping Bangladeshi Identity', *Global Built Environmental Review*, 8(3)(2012), 45-67 .L.J. Vale, *op. cit* (1)

<sup>16</sup>S. W. Ksiazek, 'Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and The National Assembly'. *Society of Architectural Historians*, 52(4) (1993), 416-435, p. 428.

‘Architecture and Meaning’.<sup>17</sup> The presence of multiple meanings for symbolic and iconic buildings like the JSB is a widely accepted and topical phenomenon in the contemporary scholarly architecture field, surpassing the view of architecture as mere structure. Multiple meanings not only enrich and enhance the qualitative standard of symbolic architecture but also maintain its status as a socio-political and cultural construct rather than a physical entity.

The various multiple meanings of the JSB generate new perceptions, evoke new thoughts and provide new insights enhancing its symbolic nature. Architecture exhibits a ‘wealth of symbol’ and conveys ‘multifarious meaning’.<sup>18</sup> It conveys cultural, political, social and intellectual meaning as a symbolic and metaphoric expression.<sup>19</sup> These expressions emerge from the sensation of feeling which is at the core of architectural understanding of subjective meaning.<sup>20</sup> The feelings evoked vary from person to person — an architect may respond in one way, a historian or sociologist may respond in another way.<sup>21</sup> ‘Without this power or quality to evoke feeling, a work of architecture is a mere image on the retina of the eye’.<sup>22</sup>

Gieryn asserts ‘to some degree, every design is a blueprint for human behaviour and social structure’.<sup>23</sup> The discussion in this thesis about the cultural, political, historical, moral and spatial meanings of the JSB make it representative of the society and culture of Bangladesh, in much the same way as the Acropolis represents the social and religious practice of Greece.

While the exploration of the multitude of historic and contemporary political and cultural and spatial issues — nationalism as a local political and cultural construct, geopolitics, the socio-political construction of JSB — may provide disturbing insights that disrupt our view of the JSB as a grand edifice, the opposing and complex views and meanings discussed in this thesis underpin the uniqueness and richness of the building. Thus the JSB transcends from mere building to multidimensional meaningful architecture, ‘Meaning is therefore, a necessary part of what makes a building architecture’.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>R. G. Hershberger, ‘Architecture and Meaning’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 4,4(1970), 37-55.

<sup>18</sup>M. Donougho, ‘The Language of Architecture’, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21(3) (1987), 53-67.

<sup>19</sup>W. Whyte, ‘How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture’, *History and Theory* 45,2 (2006), 153-177.

<sup>20</sup>C. Alexander, S. Ishikawa, et al. ‘A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction’. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

<sup>21</sup>B. Shawcroft, ‘Architecture and the Layman’. *Journal of Architectural Education* (1947-1974), 15(2): 10-14, 1960.

<sup>22</sup>B. Shawcroft *op cit*(21).

<sup>23</sup>T. G. Gieryn ‘What Buildings Do’. *Theory and Society* 31(1), 35-74, 2002, p.42.

<sup>24</sup>R.G. Hershberger, *op. cit.* (17) p.39.



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## Research Design

The basic mode of inquiry and design of this research uses a case study strategy. According to Paul Leedy, the '*case study method is qualitative research in which in-depth data are gathered relative to a single individual, program, or event, for the purpose of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation*'.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, from a theoretical point of view, the single case study method is more appropriate here because it will help to uncover the very complex dynamics of the setting '*more deeply than to look less deeply at more settings*'.<sup>2</sup> As such, the research has attempted to reveal some of the unknown aspects such as political, cultural and socio-political spatial, of a case known as 'Jatio Sangsad Bhaban'. The case study strategy can be seen as a non-empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon or historic phenomenon in both contemporary and historic settings.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, this study looks into both the contemporary and historic settings of the JSB. The case study strategy is ideally a combination of explanatory, descriptive and exploratory approaches.

The primary characteristics of this case study approach are:

1. Focus on Sangsad Bhaban in its context;
2. The capacity to explain causal links (to uncover the multiple, complex, and sometimes overlapping factors such as political, culture , spatial patterns etc);
3. The case study research will be guided by theoretical development;
4. The case will be examined using multiple sources of evidence such as archives, documents, oral history, formal and spatial analysis , interviews.<sup>4</sup>

The study has collected an extensive data base in relation to the focus of investigation. It will include observation, interviews, documents (e.g. literature, newspaper articles), past records such as archival records, and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Leedy and J. E. O, *Practical Research - Planning and Design*, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> L. Groat, D. W, *Architectural Research Methods*, NY: John Wiley & Sons , 2002.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## Method

Method refers to the technique of data collection and gathering information such as interview, questionnaire or documentary analysis.<sup>5</sup> In this case study strategy approach, extensive data on the JSB had to be collected, which included method- like observation, interviews, documents (e.g., newspaper article, land survey document, etc), past records (archival documents and books), literature review, audio visual materials (e.g., books, photographs, videotapes, audiotapes).The research record details the context surrounding the case, including information about any historic, political socio-cultural factors and spatial aspects that have a bearing on the situation.<sup>6</sup>

The method of data analysis has included:

1. typology – a classification system, taken from themes patterns or groups from data;
2. content analysis;
3. hermeneutical analysis (hermeneutics = making sense of a written text) using context, different layers of interpretation of text;
4. phenomenology/heuristic analysis;
5. narrative analysis.<sup>7</sup>

The research mainly consists of narrative data. Once the data were collected from different sources, the analysis process was conducted. These steps were carried out:

1. Get to know all data because good analysis depends on understanding and screening of data;
2. Focus on the analysis;
3. Categorise information, identifying themes or patterns such as ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions, incidents, terminology (in this case study, the data (texts) were categorised under global politics, local politics, local culture, global culture,

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<sup>5</sup> M. Walter (Ed.). *Social Research Method*, Sydney: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> D. Ratcliff, from <http://qualitativeresearch.ratcliffs.net/15methods.pdf>.

spatial analysis, etc and an attempt has been made to categorise data in an organised and coherent manner).<sup>8</sup>

Data interpretation involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis process.<sup>9</sup> It synthesises the data analysis process. Data have been interpreted using themes and connections. In this case study research, data interpretation themes incorporate issues like political significance, socio-cultural significance, spatial significance and symbolic significance of the JSB.

### **Theoretical Critique of the Research**

In both qualitative and quantitative research theory plays a pivotal role in the research process.<sup>10</sup> A theory is a blending of a number of concepts or ideas, which together establish a new concept. 'A theory is essentially an explanation of the relationship and underlying principal that appear to characterise the particular phenomenon under study'.<sup>11</sup> Theory helps to explain interrelationships, the causality of variables and directs the research depending on those variables.<sup>12</sup> Theory helps to frame a 'mental picture', which is followed by testing with the help of evidence.<sup>13</sup> In particular, this research adopts Vale's theory, which states that, '*Grand symbolic state buildings need to be understood in terms of the political and cultural contexts that helped to bring them into being*'.<sup>14</sup> This theory falls under the category of 'conceptual framework' derived deductively. A conceptual framework comprises propositions that set a direction and prediction for empirical research.<sup>15</sup>

The motivation for the research is strongly influence by Jones' view that '*Architecture needs to be understood within a broader framework than the surface of image, both in*

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<sup>8</sup> T. Powell, Analysing Qualitative Data, From <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-12.pdf>, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> S. Aminuzzaman, *Introduction to Social Research*, Dhaka, Bangladesh Publisher, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> W.L.Newman, *Social Research Method*, Delhi, Pearson Education Inc, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Vale, *op cit.* (25), p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Chava Frankfort and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Science*, New York, St . Martin Press, 1996.

*terms of engaging with context and in terms of engaging with all the senses, through time and experience of use’.*<sup>16</sup>

Each component of the research (political, cultural issues including nationalism and state formation, spatial development, etc) has been evaluated applying narratives from a range of theoretical resources. In order to address issues of nationalism and political, cultural, spatial concepts, theoretical frameworks by Guibernau, Adam Smith, A. D. King, Benedict Anderson, Louise Snyder, Peter Alter, Kim Dovey, Lefebvre and many other scholars have been connected. In order to contextualise the notion of nationalism and state formation, the theoretical stand point of Eastern scholars has also been taken into consideration. In this context, the study incorporates the nationalist theory propagated by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and the National Poet of Bangladesh Kazi Nazrul Islam and other Eastern scholars like Satyamurti have been included.

### **‘Analysis and Verification’ as the Strategy of the Research**

This research has been undertaken applying ‘philosophical argument’ and ‘analysis’ in order to obtain credibility and to avoid a fictional understanding of history. To construct a true picture of history ‘verification of facts’ is essential.<sup>17</sup> Verification has been employed in this research following the approach of ‘rational convincing argumentation’. To obtain further authenticity of new facts, rigorous rational analysis was undertaken. In all circumstances, in this research, logical grounding and understanding remained as the key approach to discovery of new facts.

### **Research Questions**

Drawing together the theories, methods and background discussed above, the following questions are established for the research:

1. What is the process of the evolution of Bangladeshi nationalism and how is the notion of Bangladeshi nationalism connected to the very meaning of the JSB?.
2. How is the political construct of nationalism articulated in the JSB in line with local and global politics?

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<sup>16</sup> D.P. Blendell Jones, *Architecture and Participation* in Jeremy Till (Ed), N.Y.: Spon Press, 2005, p. xv.

<sup>17</sup> L. Groat, D. W, *op cit*, (2).

3. How do the components of nationalism (political and cultural aspects) define the spatial dimension of the JSB?