



Identity Politics: The Pathway to Growing Extremism

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Introduction

- Identity matters in every aspect of what we do and why we do.
- People are either accorded or denied of things they claim in the society based on the identity
- Identity security is being affected by
 - diminution in the level of tolerance and
 - increase in the identity awareness within and outside of cultural characteristics
 - spread of discriminatory practices induced from globalization and economic growth and
 - modernization affecting traditional cultures
- In reaction are also becoming far more extreme along with the growth of confrontational politics, far right movements, religious terrorism, and extremism in the line of economic and political marginalization.



Identity Politics in a Changing World

What is Identity Politics

- A particular form of awareness of oneself as a member of a distinct group often oppressed or deprived of what he claims as his legitimate rights and more importantly the anger associated with that awareness
- Political arguments that focus upon the self interest and perspectives of self-identified social groups and ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through race, class, religion, sexual orientation or traditional dominance
- Unifying claims about the meaning of politically laden experiences to diverse individuals



Identity Politics (Contd.)

Dimensions of Identity Politics

■ Egalitarian identity politics

- Formation of social entities based on identity primacy in order to legitimize their claims and position in the society-
- Objectives: socio-political interests and cultural self-rule

■ Preservationist identity politics

- Attribution of certain cultural and ideological distinctions, mostly to indicate the potential contravention in the society-
- Objectives-to marginalize and separate identity groups from the people so as to reduce their popularity and weaken their acceptability and legitimacy.



Identity Politics (Contd.)

Interest Regimes of Identity Politics

- Identity politics is manifold with multiple dividing lines and with incompatible objectives
- **Political parties and terrorist organizations** clearly identified with religions are opting for greater share making them legitimate stakeholder within the society.
- **Secular stakeholders** are in resistance to exclude right wingers or Islamists from the mainstream politics and alienate them from the society
- **Religious leaders**, secular authorities and even the **national government** are taking the benefit of identity politics; unlike the past where only identity groups have the major benefits



Identity Politics (Contd.)

Identity Problematic

- The political analysis should focus more on “problematic of identity” (Coined by Robert Bailey, 1999) rather than about “identity” itself
- The ongoing dialogue between the social constructions of identity always takes place in a context marked by power relationships
- Two way extremist manifestation: from identity groups themselves and from the stakeholders who are frightened by the identity groups’ growth and power



Structural Changes, Identity Security, and Pathways to Extremism

- Firstly, globalization along with growing cultural awareness and differentiation, information and communication technology, and social network is the most striking factor in affecting identity security leading to formation and socialization of identity politics.
- Secondly, governmental policies in South Asian countries, have accentuated the extremist trend in all these states. Governments, in these countries, whether civil or military, have used the religion and ethnic card, in order to prolong and strengthen their rule, further strengthening the fundamentalists and extremists in the society.



Structural Changes (contd.)

- Thirdly, Islamization of politics particularly in Pakistan and Bangladesh has crucial effect in the growth of extremism in South Asia.
- Fourthly, insecurities from the deteriorating economic condition such as poor economic growth in the region, led to the problems of mass unemployment, hunger and malnutrition, health problems and income inequality all of which are growing and alongside the increase in population growth.
- Fifthly, the external interference and the war on terror are also major contributing factor in the changing socio-cultural belief and value structure within South Asia leading to identity insecurities and resultant extremism in both ethnic and religious dimensions.



Structural Changes (contd.)

- Sixthly, the demographics of South Asia suggests that it is the huge and mounting proportion of youth who will be the sufferer of such instability and insecurity at the same time they will be playing the key role in deciding their future course in terms of promoting and sustaining peace in South Asia.
- Seventhly, changes in the cognitive structures such as the growing fight between nationalism and religion is another factor that working towards radicalized societies in South Asia.
- Finally, Migration and human capital export have increased far greater than any another times of history making anti-immigrants movement emerge as a newer source of social and political stability.



Emerging Strategic Trends in Political Extremism

1. Confrontational Politics and Political Violence

- Looming source of extremism among the mainstream political activists
- Complete dysfunction including personal enmity, political favoritism and opposition boycotts
- Political fragmentation within has resulted into violent demonstration, hartal, police attack, torture and, unwarranted imprisonment, disappearance or assassination
- Dysfunctional politics have created space for radical Islamist groups



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

2. Right Wing Extremism

- Growing culture of politically motivated violence induced from far-right ideology
- Right-wing radicalization in line of anti-immigrant violence, racial discrimination, cross-ethnic conflict and demise of multiculturalism
- Established norms and institutions of governance under intense stress leading to civil unrest and political instability
- Rising rightwing terrorism in India: Saffron and Hindutva
- Mainstream politics adopting chauvinism, anti-Islamism and other forms of racism in their political programs



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

3. Political Misuse of Youth

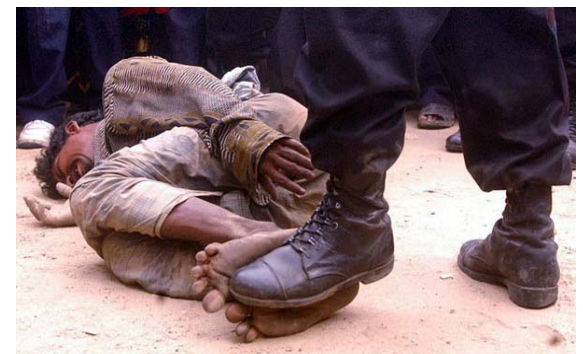
- Criminalized nature of student politics to demonstrate muscle power
- Violent intra-group and inter groups clashes among student political wings
- Hooliganism, hijacking, extortion, robbery, adoption of violence and radical ideologies



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

4. Extreme State Machinery in Law and Order

- Window of human rights violation and state sponsored terrorism
- Over exaggerated hold of political responsibility and law and order maintenance
- law enforcing agencies tool of oppression on protesting voices
- Unlawful killing of 'at least' 700 people by RAB in Bangladesh since 2004



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

5. Instrumental Use of Religion and Religious Extremism

- Resource to negotiate parental and community pressures or response to experiences of racism and discrimination
- Radicalization sought refuge and utility in religion, and drew inspiration from Wahabi influences – i.e. JMB, JMJB, HuJI-B
- Politics of identity important tool for radicalization and also for de-radicalization

6. Elite vs. Non Elite: Dormant Radicalization

- Radicalization within the poor non-elite majority of the people
- Enclave Economy, economic exploitation and class Struggle

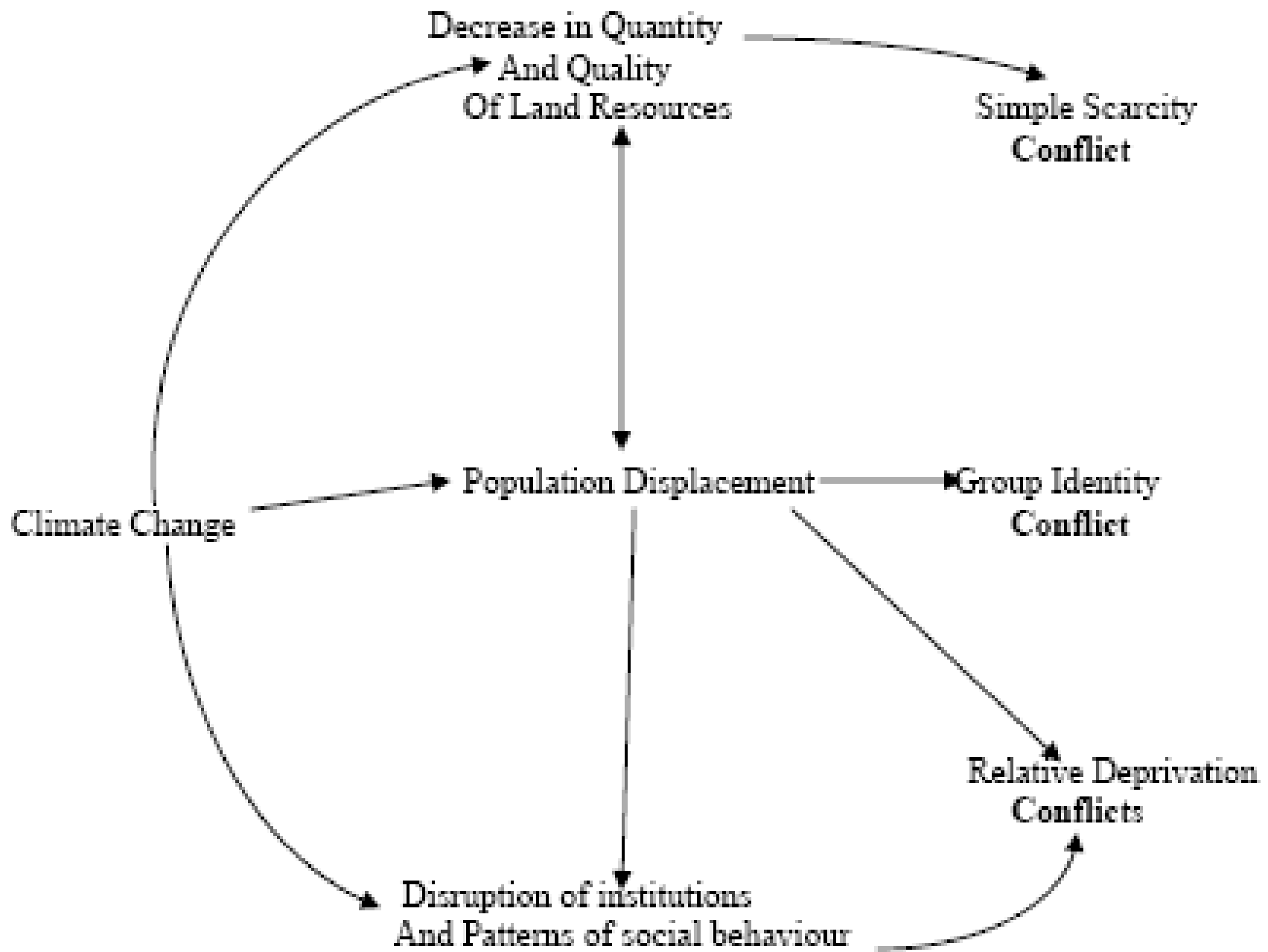


Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

7. Climate Radicalization and Climate Change Bringing Ethnic Conflict at the Fore Front

- Radicalization and terrorism due to the climate induced social and economic deprivation
- The decreasing availability of resources and the condition of “simple scarcity”, “group identity” and “deprivation
- Potential of ethnic and hydro-conflicts in intra-state and interstate sphere in South Asia
- The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was in many ways a consequence of squabbles over agricultural resources
- The 1974 Nigerian coup resulted largely from an insufficient response to famine





Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

8. Misperceived International Policy

- Policies of the national government particularly with regard to its decision to cooperate with the outside pressure
- The case of Musharraf in Pakistan to help the United States in its invasion in Afghanistan in 2001
- An increase of 1,500 terrorist incidents in 2010 in comparison to 2009 in South Asia and Middle East

9. The Esoteric Appeal of Violent Ideologies and Intellectual Radicalization

- Intellectuals with a higher level of modern education and acquaintance with secular philosophies are fascinated with religious fundamentalism
- Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh (HT-B) is an example of such radicalization



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

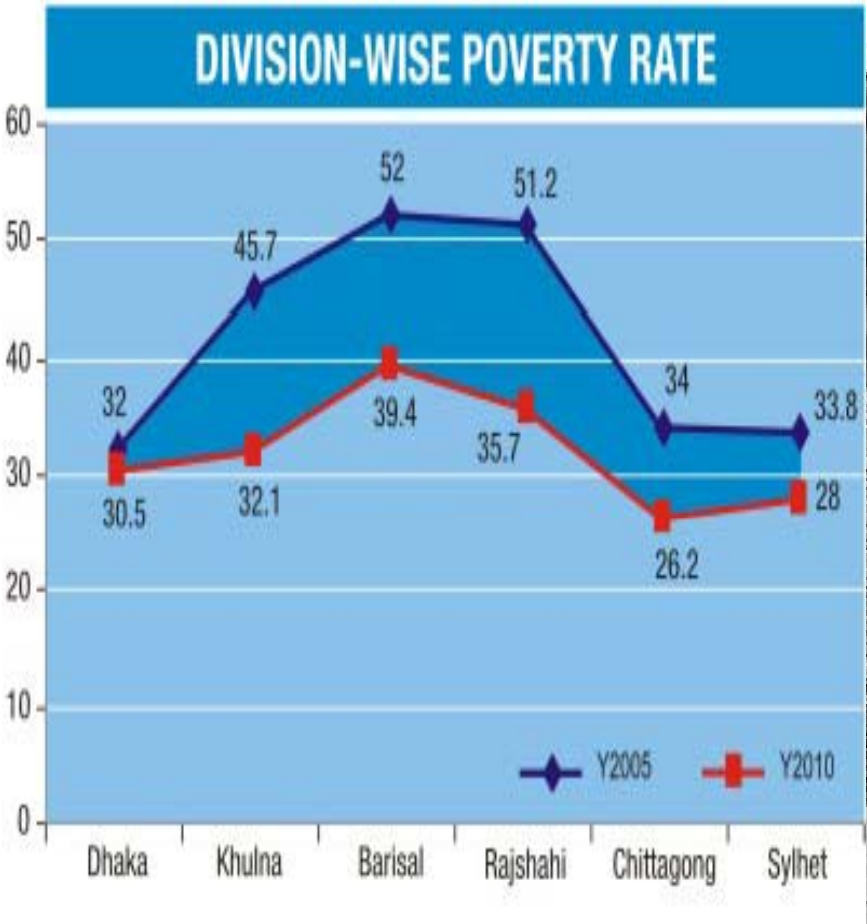
10. Identicide and Radicalization

- Identicide – destruction of libraries, cemeteries, families, sacred places, monuments, and landmarks of an identity group
- Ethnic extremism due to experienced or perceived threat of identicides by the majoritarian politics in South Asia

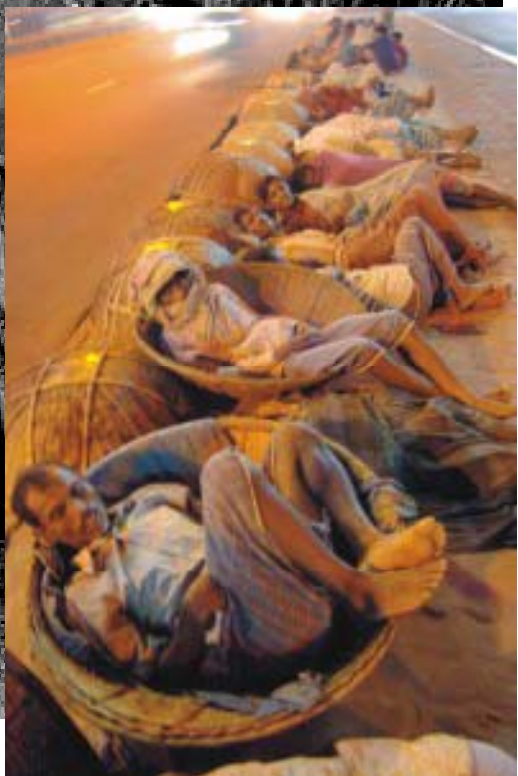
11. Radicalization from Extreme Deprivation and Marginalization

- Failure of the state to deliver welfare, services, and justice and marginalized groups resorting to violence, including terrorism
- Rise of terrorist's organizations capitalizing extreme poverty and marginalization in the northern districts of Bangladesh





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Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

12. Long-term Status as Identity less Group and Radicalization

- Stateless and identity less community hosts atmosphere for violent extremism
- Depression, anger, resentment and a readiness to face even death such as the case with Rohingya in Bangladesh
- “Destitute and stateless people” recruitment base to various militant Islamist groups



Emerging Strategic Trends (Contd.)

13. The State of Confused Identity

- Wahabi vs. Sunni dilemma among the returning migrants from the Gulf



14. Low Left Identity Bulge and Self Radicalization

- Radical tendency from self assessment of the society motivated by low left identity bulge
- Internet and other kinds of information and communication networks



Conclusion & Recommendations

- Increasing dialogue among the stakeholders and different identity groups.
- Managing social recognition of identity groups and their legitimate imperatives and demands.
- Fostering inclusive economic growth and increase in the equality of the society.
- More social engagement and contribution of the advance and richer community for the poor.
- Cultural exchange and exploration of commonalties and cooperation among the identity groups.
- Ensuring minority rights and effective nation building.



Contd.

- Functional democratization and strong, efficient and accountable institutions for state administration.
- Increasing efficiency in the political governance and upholding rule of law and ending human rights violation by the state authorities.
- Wide scale awareness building and program directed to increase tolerance in the society
- Ethical education and more creative participation of the youth in the society
- Protection of the cyber spaces against unwarranted use and so on.



Questions

and

Comments





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