The State And Civil Society In Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

While the state has been a constant subject of study and discussion since its emergence several millennia ago, the concept of civil society is only a few centuries old. Again, while the state and the civil society have been studied together in reference to each other, they have also been discussed separately, in isolation from each other. The current discourse on the subject roughly coincides with the end of the Cold War, with renewed interest in it observed in the countries of the developing world as well as in the donor community. The concepts of globalization, economic liberalization, democratization, good governance, civil society, transparency, accountability, participatory development, etc have been increasingly gaining in currency in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world. However, the understanding of the concept of civil society appears to remain as elusive as ever. Differences in understanding pertain to the definition of the concept of civil society, to what its constituent elements are, to what its role is and to what its relationship with the state is.
This paper is an attempt to raise and discuss some of the issues that are relevant in the context of Bangladesh, with a view to having a better comprehension of the same. This is pertinent in view of the fact that the country was under long spells of martial law and military-dominated rule from August 1975 to December 1990 when people's power forced the last military ruler to step down, having paved the way for restoration of democracy in 1991. Interestingly, the civil society, which was expected to diversify its role and activities, has been facing problems that are stunting its growth. The underlying concern in the paper is to focus more on the role of the civil society in the process of democratization in Bangladesh.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part traces the evolution of the concept of civil society, while the second deals with the state and civil society in Bangladesh. The conceptual part is split into several sections in which the views of the classics and the contemporary scholars, of both liberal and Marxist varieties, about civil society have been discussed. Here the focus is also on the contemporary attempts to build civil society not as much from within individual nation-states as from without. The Bangladesh part deals with the nature of the Bangladesh state in brief, attempts to conceptualize the civil society and discuss its role in democratizing the process of governance, and focuses on the scope of activities of the civil society in Bangladesh in the era of post-Cold War globalization.

2. Civil Society: A Conceptual Discourse in Historical Perspective

The state and the civil society are not coterminous in terms of the timing of their emergence. The concept of civil society essentially "belongs to the tradition of political modernity founded on individualism and defence of human rights" and
manifested in the attempts to challenge the state in the seventeenth-eighteenth century Europe. "The civil society gained coherence and lucidity as a concept only when the civil domain was able to come into its own. And it came into its own as a result of the consolidation of capitalism". The concept of civil society has since evolved assuming a variety of meanings. Let us discuss some of them below.

2.1. Liberals on civil society

The school of liberal thinkers includes the economic liberals as well as the early and later political liberals. The beginnings of the concept of civil society are found in the formulations of the theorists of early modernity, such as Hobbes, Locke, Bodin and Kant. "In liberal theory civil society came to embody a whole range of emancipatory aspirations, aspirations which focused on the defence of human rights and human dignity against state oppression, and which marked out an autonomous sphere of social practices, rights and dignity of the individual." However, Hobbes and Locke did not distinguish between civil and political and used them interchangeably. This was so because the term "civil society was deliberately used to distinguish a particular form of social and political organization from the state of nature" and as such they thought that the "civil condition was defined by its conceptual opposition to the state of nature".

The classical political economists (such as Adam Smith, Malthus, Bentham, Ricardo and James Mill), the products as they were of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, sought to curtail the power of the mercantilist state. To Adam Smith, "civil society is a property of commercial societies" and "it should, therefore, be left free of political intervention."
The later liberals, like De Tocqueville and J.S. Mill, wanted the all-too-powerful state to be under control and held accountable. The former was of the view that civil society with its social, cultural, professional, and religious associations could do this. While De Tocqueville said in reference to a plural civil society that there was 'no other dike to hold back tyranny', J.S. Mill is paraphrased to have said that once associations were formed, they transcended individual interests and egoism, because they brought individuals together in wide-ranging programmes of social concerns. 6

The liberals understood the state-civil society relationship as zero-sum - expansion of one would limit the arena of the other. They also neglected to properly address the problems and contradictions within civil society itself. For this, we now turn to Hegel, Marx and Gramsci.

2. 2. Hegel, Marx and Gramsci on civil society

Hegel expanded the notion of civil society and rescued it from being excessively identified with the economy. To him, civil society is a set of social practices which are constituted by the logic of the capitalist economy and which reflect the ethos of the market, but which have an existence distinct from the economy. However, Hegel subordinated civil society to the state because he regarded the state as the embodiment of universality. 7

Karl Marx inherited the Hegelian perspective on civil society, but the former reversed the primacy given by the latter to the state and made civil society the theatre of history. Significantly, Marx showed that it was the civil society where the appropriation of surplus labour took place. He inherited the Hegelian conception that civil society was characterized by egoism, self-interest and conflict, and that this stage needed to be transcended. But Marx, unlike Hegel, rejected the possibility that any existing institution could do so. Civil society must find
a new agency from within itself to transcend egoism and self-interest, exploitation and inhumanity. Marx found the solution in the reunification of state and society. His base-superstructure model thus positioned itself against the liberal concept of the disembodied state standing apart from society. However, Marx viewed state, society and their relationship as explicable by only economics. The laws of politics in his perspective automatically followed the laws of economics.\(^8\)

Gramsci gave political theory the valued notions of civil society, political society, and hegemony. He makes a distinction between political and civil society in terms of sites and forms of power. Political society is the location where the coercive apparatus of the state is concentrated. Civil society is the location where the state operates to reinforce invisible, intangible and subtle forms of power, through educational, cultural and religious systems and other institutions. Gramsci's conceptualization of civil society is Hegelian, but the solution is Marxian, which is that the principle that transforms civil society has to be found within this sphere. And this solution is, according to Gramsci, the counter hegemony of the subaltern classes, because civil society is precisely the terrain where these classes can challenge the power of the state.\(^9\)

Now the question is whether civil society is necessarily democracy friendly. The liberal theorists would certainly give an emphatic 'yes' to this query, as the presence of civil society is likely to contribute to democratic process by means of accountability of the government and limiting state power. For the non-liberals, civil society is a terrain where the domination of the capitalist classes is legitimized with the consequences of exploitation and class inequality. While the liberals highlight the oppression of the state, they tend to ignore the oppression perpetrated by civil society. And, while the non-liberals locate
oppression in the sphere of civil society, they seem to neglect its potential to control the state as well as to achieve internal democracy. It may, therefore, be observed that the existence of civil society may be an essential but not a sufficient precondition for the practices of democracy. In other words, civil society is a crucial but not an adequate precondition for ensuring state accountability.  

2.3. The state and civil society: Recent views

Civil society seems to have staged a comeback in the late 1980s into the political and development discourses of scholars as well as the individual countries and donor community. The recent debates have been characterized by constant references to good governance, the rule of law, empowerment, efficiency, accountability, transparency, decentralization, participation, etc. Mainly four influences are often referred to as the causes of the reanimation of civil society. These are the not-so-successful structural lending to the developing countries by the international financial institutions, the collapse of communism in Europe, the resurgence of neo-liberalism in the West, and the rise of social movements and pro-democracy movements in the countries of the developing world.  

The return of civil society to political discourse has been partly due to neo-liberal projects, such as operation of market forces with or without state involvement and the retreat of the state from social engagements. The neo-liberal theorists define civil society in terms of independence, liberty, plurality and voluntary action of civil society organizations like communal, civic, religious, economic, social and cultural associations. The enterprise culture of the market is not just an economic theory but also something that holds strong views about the functions of the state and civil society. The neo-liberals saw in an
expanded civil society a check on an interfering state. But to this they added the view that a vibrant civil society was indispensable in fostering a similarly vibrant market economy.

Civil society became active again in the 1980s, because it articulated real problems that occur with the rise of market economies and suggested a means of reconciling them that does not invoke a regulating and interventionist state. Thus, civil society has now become pretty appealing to the international financial institutions (IFIs). The USAID view is given thus: "Civil society organizes political participation and collective action in the same way that markets organize economic behaviour." The UNDP has identified civil society organizations as potential allies in their pro-poor, pro-people and pro-planet development philosophy currently pursued. The World Bank's policy of late has been to create capacity within society to hold the state accountable to its citizens, and to create mechanisms for reaching the poor in a more targeted and systematic way. For this, both these IFIs have established policies of collaborating with NGOs. One scholar has termed these efforts as 'building civil society from the outside.'

It is interesting to note that the proponents from the Left of the political spectrum seem to be equally interested in strengthening civil society now. This, in their view, is essential for both resisting the predations of the state machinery and of those who man it, and for ensuring a fair distribution of the benefits of economic activity.

It now appears that "today, civil society has been found in the economy and the polity; in the area between the family and the state, or the individual and the state; in the non-state institutions which organize and educate citizens for political participation; even as an expression of the whole civilizing
mission of modern society." However, one scholar warns against romanticizing the concept of civil society and loading it with the virtues of freedom, equality and liberty in isolation from the state, as he observes that "...civil society, left to itself, generates radically unequal power relations, which only state power can challenge." Indeed, the independence of civil society is not absolute when it is considered as a form of political space understood as the venues for contesting and shaping public policies.

Another conceptualization contends that civil society cannot be seen only in oppositional terms in relation to the state, that strengthening of civil society requires simultaneous strengthening of other aspects of governance, and that the idea of empowering civil society to participate in development is fraught with shaky assumptions about the nature of civil society. In other words, civil society is not likely to thrive, and for that matter be judged worthy of 'strengthening', unless there is an effective, strong state which can establish the rules of the game and provide some discriminating framework for civil society activities.

Indeed, the relationship between state and civil society in the present-day world is not a zero-sum conception. An adversarial view of the two is certain to downplay the cooperative and complementary relationship between elements of both that have shared objectives. Civil society, therefore, needs to be understood as "a realm of association interpenetrated by the state", because civil society values like freedom, equality, participatory planning, autonomy will become empty slogans without parallel formulation, application and conflict mediating functions undertaken by the state. As mentioned earlier, an Indian scholar - Neera Chandhoke, has done a seminal work, relevant to this theme. She positions her
analysis against the state-centric theories of political explanation as also against studies that use the concept of civil society in isolation. She argues instead that civil society can only be understood by referring to the politics of the state and vice versa.22 She maintains that "states invariably seek to control and limit the political practices of society by constructing the boundaries of the political. The state attempts in other words to constitute the political discourse. However, politics...are not only about controls and the laying down of boundaries. They are about transgressions of these boundaries and about the reconstitution of the political. The site at which these mediations and contestations take place; the site at which society enters into a relationship with the state can be defined as civil society...The institutions of civil society are associational and representational forums, a free press and social associations.23 The writer of this paper shares Chandhoke's views on civil society.

The foregoing discussion on the state and civil society in historical perspective is expected to help understand the same in the context of Bangladesh.

3. The State and Civil Society in Bangladesh

It is pertinent here to recall that the emergence of Bangladesh was the result of a long, democratic and arduous political and civil society movement against the military-civil oligarchy of Islamabad, and the sanguinary nine-month long war of liberation fought in 1971 against the occupation forces of Pakistan. The broad rationale for the movement and war for an independent and sovereign Bangladesh was to create a democratic dispensation in governance which would be participatory and citizen-friendly, be able to lead a poverty-free life, and enjoy a peaceful and secure social life. It is now
worthwhile to ask ourselves how far we have succeeded in honouring the countless martyrs who made supreme sacrifices for the cause of such a Bangladesh. For the purpose of this paper, I shall concentrate on the state and civil society aspect of the whole range of issues involved.

3. 1. The nature of the Bangladesh state

In order to comprehend the concept of civil society, understand the relationship between the state and civil society, and grasp the role of civil society in Bangladesh, one needs to have some ideas about the nature of the state in this country. And for some of these ideas, one needs to refer to the stages and watersheds in the process of state-formation and governance in Bangladesh.

Needless to say, a state does not only govern but also grant rights to its citizens, undertake developmental activities and promote ideology which may take the form of nationalism, form of government, role of religion, and economic philosophy. These are usually enshrined as fundamental principles of state policy in the basic law of the land, which is the Constitution. Depending on which forces happen to exercise state power at a given point in time in a nation's life, the nature of the state tends to change with the change in the very dispensation of governance and in the ideological orientation. The post-Liberation government of Bangladesh believed in Bengali nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. Bengali nationalism, which connotes lingua-cultural-ethnic nationalism, alienated some non-Bengali ethnic minorities creating as a consequence a problem of nation-building. The government believed in secularism, which resulted in the banning of religious political parties, having antagonized a vast
array of powerful political and social forces. It is notable that a
citizen of Bangladesh has a twin identity - he is a Muslim (we
are concerned here with the vast majority of population) as well
as a Bengali. Although not necessarily so, secularism may tend
to thrive at the expense of the more potent half of this identity.

The Awami League spearheaded Bangladesh's liberation
struggle under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Yet,
the post-liberation Mujib government had not always succeeded
in striking a "balance between the imperatives of governing a
post-independence turbulent polity and at the same time
keeping a non-coercive democratic order in place." The Special
Powers Act, enacted in 1974, had curtailed certain fundamental
rights of the citizens. What is considered to have been a blow
to the multi-party political system was the Fourth Amendment
to the Constitution brought about on 25 January 1975 to make
the state a one-party system called BAKSAL. Also, it is widely
believed that excesses were committed during this time by the
state.

The next phase in the history of Bangladesh - August 1975
to December 1990 - was different in many respects such as in
the complexion of the ruling elite, the ideology and governance
philosophy, the ethos and values they sought to perpetuate and
promote, the attitudes they showed towards constitutional
politics, the role they sought for themselves in the polity and the
methods and techniques they adopted in the statecraft.
President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated and his
government overthrown on 15 August 1975 in a military
putsch, having paved the way for a long spell of military and
quasi-military rule, first by President Ziaur Rahman (1975-
1981) and then by General H.M. Ershad (1982-1990). They
both, in their own ways, attempted to democratize their
respective regimes by means of civilianization process and elections. A multi-party system was allowed to function.

Changes were brought into the fundamental principles of state policy. The absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah substituted secularism, Bengali nationalism was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism. The ban on Islamic and other right-wing political parties was lifted. Bangladeshi nationalism, which is territorial in scope in contrast to Bengali ethnic nationalism, is an inclusive concept and ideology. It embraces all the citizens of the country irrespective of their ethnic origins.

Democracy was restored in 1991 with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) winning the majority of seats in Parliament. Begum Khaleda Zia became Prime Minister and Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League became Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. It was a rare symphony of political views played out in Bangladesh Parliament when the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution was unanimously adopted, changing the form of government from Presidential to Parliamentary.

However, the Awami League alleged massive vote rigging in bye-elections and boycotted the Parliament, and eventually demanded the establishment of a neutral caretaker government for holding general elections. The political opposition led by the Awami League boycotted the Parliament and the political scenario in the country in 1995 and early 1996 became pretty chaotic due to political movement to unseat the BNP government. Begum Khaleda Zia eventually yielded to the demand for caretaker government and a new political institution had thus been created in Bangladesh – Neutral Caretaker Government to be headed by retired Chief Justice of the
Supreme Court of Bangladesh - through the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

The Awami League, headed by Sheikh Hasina, came back from its prolonged political wilderness to power on 23 June 1996. The political opposition, led by the BNP, alleged partiality of the Speaker in running the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) and boycotted it for a good part of its 5-year term. As such, the Sangsad could not function properly, the government could not be made sufficiently accountable and transparent, and as a result the democratization process and the democratic institution building had suffered. The law and order situation in the country also deteriorated considerably. However, the government completed its mandated 5-year term and left office on 15 July 2001. As per the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, a Caretaker Government assumed office on the same date for three months and it was mandated to preside over the transition to the next elected government by holding a free and fair national election within 90 days. General elections were held on 1 October 2001, in which the BNP-led four-party alliance won a landslide victory garnering more than two-thirds majority in Parliament. Begum Khaleda Zia has for the third time become Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League has since been reeling from the election debacle. Democracy would definitely be strengthened from her party’s constructive role in and outside Parliament.

Let us now see how the civil society has fared in Bangladesh.

3.2. Civil Society in Bangladesh

Contrary to popular perceptions, the civil society in Bangladesh has not been particularly active and strong. For the growth of civil society, it needs a strong but not repressive or
authoritarian state as well as the presence of non-partisan associations and organizations of the citizens to articulate their views and demands, and to seek to play a constructive role in the society. However, the concept or the conceptualization of civil society in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world is neither clear nor universally recognized. There is, therefore, a need to delve a bit into the civil society as understood in this country.

3. 2.1. Conceptualization of civil society in Bangladesh

There are several different conceptualizations of the civil society in Bangladesh. According to Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, civil society is to be understood in opposition to the military society, which they create after having seized the state power and established themselves in it. The values of the military, he writes, are anti-democratic, their logic and legitimacy is force and not mediation and people's consent, and their motive is to suppress popular politics and political supremacy in the conventional sense. But Jahangir's civil society is synonymous with civilian society, which is hard to accept. Because civil society needs to be understood in reference to the state and not to the forces which control it. Civil society is a sphere or site between citizens and state. The problem with Jahangir's conceptualization becomes more evident when it is seen that the military has withdrawn from politics and is not in the business of reducing the civilians into dispensable subordinates.

Rehman Sobhan comes up with a view on civil society that is diametrically opposite to Jahangir's concept. Sobhan's definition is liberally all-embracing, as it includes also the military along with the other professionals in the country like the doctors and engineers. This concept seems to be flawed at least on two counts. The first is that his civil society is
synonymous with the total population, with the people as a whole residing within a state. And the other problem is that he tends to ignore the fact that the military, which is part of the state itself, is the best armed and the most repressive organ the state has in its command. The members of the armed forces are of course members of the society at large. But that does not mean that a lawyer and a military officer in civilian clothes in their respective drawing rooms or in wedding parties are the same in relation to the running or execution of the writ of the state. The dress of a man does not make him part of the state apparatus, but his job does. Similarly, dress does not make a citizen a member of the civil society. All citizens are not members of the civil society. And all military personnel are citizens and members of society but not members of civil society. As mentioned above, civil society consists of associational and representational forums of the citizens, and not the citizens themselves as individuals. Thus civil society is a space between the state and the citizens.

Former President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed gives another idea about civil society. He includes in the definition both the unorganized masses as well as the professional groups as members of civil society. Mahmud Hassan also expresses a somewhat similar view. But his conceptualization is more elaborate and insightful. He discounts the military, the police, the prison, the bureaucracy, the political parties and the market from the concept of civil society. These institutions are either organs of the state or tend to influence the political decisions of the government to the detriment of the common man's interest. Political parties are indeed not part of the civil society, because they are in the ultimate analysis part of the state and political establishment and they aspire to exercise political power. They are represented in national parliament and as such become part of the state. However, when Hassan says that the
common unorganized masses also constitute civil society, it is not realistic to lend credence to such conceptualization. Civil society is to be understood in reference to the state and as such unorganized masses cannot articulate their demands, views and aspirations with respect to the state without the intermediate zone of engagement which is done through associations and organizations formed of and for various professionals and others.

Zakir Husain rightly contends that "civil society organizations (CSOs) are situated intermediate between the citizens and the state, often acting as a buffer between state power and citizens' rights. They are essential and potentially effective instruments to secure accountability of the state. They articulate public concerns and rights in matters of state policies and remain vigilant about people's rights. The CSOs are usually more effective when they exercise their functions and duties through a process of constructive engagement and negotiation with the state apparatus rather than an adversarial or confrontational approach."  Abdul Hye has given a similar conceptualization of civil society. He includes in it "the private sector, voluntary organizations (NGOs), social welfare organizations, professional bodies, trade unions, community based organizations, special interest groups, research organizations, "advocacy group" and, last but not the least, the media in the private sector. By this definition civil society excludes the legislature, the judiciary, the government, the local government institutions and the private sector trading and manufacturing units." "Civil Society as defined above covers multifarious activities from provision of limited public goods (micro-credit, primary health care, etc.) to advocacy for social reform (gender equality, human rights for disadvantaged group, etc.)." This definition is more accurate than others, as it is more realistic in including the NGO community and the private sector.
in a limited sense. The realities of the donor funded national and international NGOs engaged in certain activities involving a segment of the population cannot be ignored, although their democratic credentials in terms of their popular legitimacy and manner of functioning and organizing themselves may be a subject of controversy.

3. 2.2. Growth of civil society in Bangladesh

The talk about civil society in Bangladesh at the conceptual and discussion levels is of recent origin. This is of course related to the phenomena like globalization, economic liberalization, democratization, good governance, etc. This has been one of the results of the policy prescriptions offered by the donor community as well as the increase in the level of consciousness of the citizens of Bangladesh about their rights and their role in an impoverished society. However, one cannot say that civil society in the country is the product of the post-Cold War developments. It had also played some role in the life of the nation in the past.

The growth of civil society in the first few years of the country's independence was not so encouraging for several reasons. Firstly, these were the difficult initial years of the state formation and governance process. The second is that the civil society then was a sort of adjunct to the state. And thirdly, the citizens at that time could not quite relate themselves to the new state, which found itself overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the problems facing a war-ravaged country. Nevertheless, there were some protests launched by some student organizations and trade unions against some of the repressive measures adopted by the then government. And for a considerable part of the time under President Zia the country was under martial law. And, as such, civil society could not be
very active beyond some occasional outbursts of anger and protests against the new political order.

However, civil society was seen to be very active during the time of President Ershad. One of the main reasons could be that the longest serving ruler of Bangladesh had always had the problem of the lack of popular legitimacy, unlike President Zia. Perhaps there was a more significant factor behind the spectacular visibility of the civil society in the country. The Awami League and BNP occupied most of the space in the political spectrum, which were against the Ershad government. This perhaps had emboldened the civil society to launch movement against him. A good number of civil society organizations, such as labour and peasant associations, Bar Associations, student organizations, the SKOP (Unity Council of Workers and Employees), the Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, various cultural and professional groups, etc were demanding Ershad’s ouster. As a result of the combined force of these CSOs and the three-party political alliance, the Ershad regime came to an ignominious end. Although the movement against the Khaleda Zia government and for the establishment of a neutral caretaker government in 1995-96 was essentially political in nature, some of the civil society organizations also played a role in it.

In the 1990s, the civil society organizations in Bangladesh quite visibly proliferated and expanded their role in a wide range of activities. These are mostly human rights organizations, women’s rights organizations, advocacy groups, and various other NGOs concentrating on the developmental and environmental issues. However, since these organizations are financially and otherwise dependent on the home state as well as on the donor country or agency, their role as one of civil society has not been beyond controversy.
4. Concluding Remarks

It is seen from the preceding discussion how civil society has historically developed in terms of its conceptualization and role. The views of the liberals on both counts differed from those of the Marxian tradition. Interestingly, the views of both the traditions in the context of the post-Cold War realities seem to be closer to each other's, albeit for different considerations and objectives.

Democratization and civil society has suffered at the strong hands of the state in Bangladesh. However, both seem to be gaining in strength and momentum, not only because of the military withdrawal from politics but also because of other internal and external dynamics relating to good governance, state role in development, operation of market forces, etc.

Peter Eigen summarizes well the role of the present day civil society. He writes that civil society now acts as a catalyst and advocate of those interests which are underrepresented or when the government falter, mobilizes people, raises public awareness and sensitizes various issues, and defends the interests of the poor, the uneducated, the illiterate, the unorganized and the weak. In other words, while the role of the civil society used to be essentially rights-based until the 1980s, it has spread its zone of engagement in the realms of governance. Civil society now articulates concerns for the rule of law and demands from the state, efficiency, accountability, transparency, decentralization and participation. It also takes part in development and in the delivery of services to the targeted citizen groups. As a result, the relationship between the state and civil society in Bangladesh has been both adversarial and cooperative.
There are two main problems facing the civil society in Bangladesh. The first is that the state, contrary to common perception, is not strong in democratic sense. Institutions are yet to constitute the democratic critical mass and the political culture is far from the desirable. The state appears powerful not in democratic sense but when we see its repressive face. The comments of a Brazilian scholar are quite apt to cite here. He writes in the context of Brazil that "The truth is...that we have simultaneously too much state and too little state." The other problem is that the civil society in the country is far from being non-partisan and civil. It is polarized and intolerant like the political parties. As such, it is seen as adjuncts to the country's major political parties and resorting to violence. All in all, what is needed in Bangladesh is both a democratically strong state and a strong civil society working in cooperation with each other. Only this will ensure a decent political, economic and social life to its citizens.
Notes:

1. I feel heavily indebted for, in this section, I have extensively drawn on the seminal work of an Indian author. See Neera Chandhoke, State and Civil Society: Explorations in Political Theory, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1995.

2. Ibid. pp. 26 and 78.


4. Ibid. pp. 80-81.

5. Ibid. pp. 92, 96-97.


7. Ibid. p. 17.


10. Ibid. pp. 10 and 151.


16. Jenny Pearce writes that "the strength of civil society is a condition for the effective monitoring of democracy and to achieve sustainable and equitable development. See Ibid., p. 189."
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21. See Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society......", op. cit., p. 390.


23. Ibid., p. 9.


25. This Act is still in force.


27. For Rehman Sobhan's views on civil society as expressed at a seminar at the Staff College, Mirpur, Dhaka, on 20 January 1997 see Bhorer Kagoj, (in Bengali), Dhaka, 21 January 1997.

28. See for President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed's Inaugural Address at the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum held in Dhaka on 24 July 1997.


