A Galtungian Interpretation on the Madrarsa Graduates' Phenomenon on Violence

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to illustrate and analysis the phenomena of how the Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city perceive about violence against them. This research follows the qualitative approach applying in-depth interview tools. The Madrasa graduates expressed that they are deprived in various ways, such as, dispossession from freedom of choice, democratic rights and so on. There remain different stigmas against them in the society and those stigmas undermine their potentialities and humiliate them to live with dignity in the society. Moreover, global politics often points out them as terrorists and accuses them for severe crimes which they have not committed. These deprivations consist of Galtung's concept of direct, structural and cultural violence and these oppressions influence to construct their perceptions about sense of violence. This paper views that the rejection of socio-economic, political, educational rights of the Madrasa graduates forced them to feel alienated. I have also come to the impression of an embedded belief like "World is against them" has occurred in their mind. This sense of alienation and deprivation can tempt them to be angry against the social norms, state policy and international politics. Madrasa education in Bangladesh is not a static one as historical evolution of this system shows that it has been reformed overtime because of various societal pressures. This historical evolution bolsters that still there remains scope for reformation. Therefore, instead of producing and jolting the hostile relation to reinforce the sense of separation and inflaming the anger of the Madrasa graduates, initiatives to integrate them into society with respect, dignity and value would be helpful for shaping their perceptions about peace and conflict in expected manner.

Keywords: Madrasa education, Galtung's peace and conflict framework, positive peace, negative peace, structural violence, direct violence, cultural violence, Education for all.

Introduction and rationale of the study

In Bangladesh, Madrasa education, which is generally considered as a system for gaining Islamic knowledge, has been on practice for a long time. A significant number of school going children are enrolled in this system. Here, it is worthy to mention that literary meaning of Islam is peace. However, in recent years, particularly after 9/11, I have found that on many occasions Muslims are being portrayed as terrorists. It would be immaterial whether as a researcher I am a

practising Muslim or not, I cannot deny the influence of this notion in my life since I am a citizen of Bangladesh which possesses world's second largest Muslim population. So, I think we need to dig deeper into this issue. Though in this research I have narrowed my focus only to the Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city, I expect that this learning can at least help us to listen the voices of Madrasa graduates and probe the underpinnings on their perceptions about peace and conflict. Moreover, it can facilitate us to think critically regarding the causal relationship, if there is any, between terrorism and Madrasa education. So, this research intends to explore the perceptions along with the bedrock of the Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city in relation to peace and conflict.

Peace and conflict are very dynamic and complicated issues. There remain various conflict theories and dimensions of peace in social science and in the field of peace studies (Bajaj, 2008). Here, one of the pioneer and prominent proponents of peace and conflict studies is Professor Johan Galtung. This Galtung's framework incorporates both positive and negative peace concepts as well as deems on the issue of conflict. So, considering the 9/11 aftermath of global politics, socio-economic, historical, cultural background of the Madrasa graduates, I suppose Galtung's concept of negative and positive peace and the conflict triangle framework well suited to analyse context for the perceptions of the Madrasa graduates about peace and conflict (for Galtung's peace and conflict framework please see Appendix-1).

Research questions

Based on the Galtung's conceptual framework, I have divided the research questions as follows:
I. What are the perceptions of madrasa graduates on conflict and peace?
II. What are the direct, structural and cultural factors that influence Madrasa graduates' perceptions of conflict and peace?

Review of Literature

Here I would like to relate Galtung's peace and conflict framework with the context of Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city. For this I am going to review the literature on following category.

Embedded Global Politics

In this era of globalization, global politics can have a direct influence on the Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city in creating their perceptions about peace and conflict. Huntington's (1993,1996) famous and controversial `clash of civilizations thesis' states culture as the prime force for conflict in the twenty-first century. Huntington alleged that in the twenty-first century the causes of conflict would not primarily be ideological or economic; rather it would be cultural conflict between different civilizations (Heywood, 2011). Huntington (1993) wrote:

> It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.

Huntington's doctrine has been sternly criticised for its epistemological, methodological position by many academic critics (Said 2011; Fox, 2005; Mungiu Pippidi & Mindruta, 2002; Henderson & Tucker, 2001; Russett, Oneal, & Cox, 2000). For example Said (2001) addressed Huntington's `clash of civilization' as a `clash of ignorance'. He argued on the Huntington's misguiding view of `Islam' and pointed out the intention of Huntington' thesis as "…..of the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims." (Said, 2004)

Nonetheless, Huntington is being criticised for its empirical, logical, ideological positions by many scholars, the influence of this thesis cannot be ignored in the era post-cold-war global politics. It has also been boosted up after the incidence of 9/11 and so-called `war on terror' evident an emerging of `civilizational' struggle and conflict between West and Islam.

Product of a class system and Process of history

Power differentials, such as class conflict, deprivation, contrast, historically dominant ideologies and so on can persuade the perceptions about peace and conflict. According to the Marxist view, `consciousness, in a materialist understanding, comes from real experience in a material world that proceeds thought.' (Peet, and Hartwick, 2009, p.145) So, the material (real, natural, social) position of the Madrasa graduates would carry a driving force to influence their perceptions about peace and conflict.

Ahmed (2005) and BEI (2011) reported that an overwhelming portion of Madrasa students in Bangladesh come from very-low income group. Parents send them to the Madrasa because they cannot afford to bear the expense to other schools. This scenario is worse for the Quami Madrasa[1] as about 82% of the students of Quami Madrasa come from poor families (BEI, 2011). Again, the Bengali Muslim people inherited class differences. Historically the Muslim people in this territory can be differentiated into two major social classes; one, the nobles (*ashraf*) who migrated from northern India (especially from nearby Bihar) and use the Urdu language to set themselves apart, and two, the commoners (*atraf*) who belong to the indigenous Bengali population. Before Islam came into this territory, like other parts of India, Bengali people were identified Hindus (Eaton,2001). A strong caste system prevailed there. The scheduled caste people were being extremely oppressed by the upper class of Hindus. History evident that when

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[1] Quami Madrasa functions independently. This type of Madrasa does not follow any prescribe curriculum and allow the intervention of any state authority.

the Islam entered here, most of the Hindus are affiliated with the scheduled castes, formerly called untouchables or harijans, were converted to Muslim (Eaton, 2001). It needs to be noted that conversion of the Bengali populations to Islam did not occur by the sword, as has been alleged sometime. Historian Richard Eaton (2001) identified that widespread conversion in Bengal was a result of several factors; such as, one, the gradual eastward shift of the Ganges river, which opened up forest lands to the outside world and to intense agricultural development; two, the influx of pioneer holy men who built mosques and shrines that formed the nuclei of hundreds of new agricultural communities and spread Islamic influence to the indigenous people, and three, economic prosperity under Muslim rule brought by the region's integration into the world economy through the export of textiles. However, Hindu gods and scriptures were not rejected but adapted to Islamic understandings of God, the prophets, and their holy books. At the same time, Islamic doctrines and practices were recast into Hindu forms. Thus, we can say that the oppression due to social caste system and scope of economic opportunities and interests were very vital causes for the conversion of Bengali Muslim (lower caste Hindus to Muslims) people, though this conversion does not mean that people rejected all the rituals of their Hindu forefathers (Eaton 2001, 25-51, ANON 2009, 86-88). So, I view that the conversion of Hindu to Muslim did not create a great theological conflict, but it reflects that class difference remains as a major cause behind this conflict.

Methodology

Since I want to know the perceptions, explanations and interpretations about peace and conflict of the Madrasa graduates, therefore, I consider the phenomenology[2] research paradigm fits best with my study (Kane,1995). My research approach is a distinctly qualitative one rooted in a

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[2] According to the Phenomenology paradigm, the reality is portrayed as people perceive, experience, and interprets it (kane,1995).

detailed analysis of interview texts, and grounded in a broader contextualisation of the socio-economic, cultural and political situation of the Madarasa graduates who participated in this study as interviewees. I used the `community interview' instrument to do this (Kane, 1995). In depth, I interviewed 3 Madrasa graduates (two male and one female) from Dhaka city.

Result and Discussion

In this section, I am going to illustrate three major themes those I derive from the conversation with the interviewees. In addition to this, I pinpoint the relevance of those themes on the basis of Galtung's framework.

Theme 1: Following Islam (complete code of life) means peace, deviation from Islam agitates conflict.

In response to talk about their learning from the Madrasa regarding peace and conflict the interviewees responded, "We learn moral values from Madrasa about peace. Absence of moral values is the mother of all conflicts". (Interviewee:2) They identified that moral education that they have learnt from their schools is the most important lesson to achieve peace in mind as well as establish harmony in the society. A set of moral standard guides the people to live in a `right track'( *sahipath*). This `right track' they learn from the Madrasa and this `right track' can uphold them to live with peace and harmony with others. Moreover, the learning about peace and devotion to Allah provide them mental peace. For example, one participant said, "Islam is a complete code of life. If one follows Islam, he or she will get peace in this life and life after death." (Interviewee:3)

This deviation and absence of moral practice are the keys for the unrest of the society. These also arouse conflict within the members of a family as they expressed that *haram* (forbidden) income wipes out peace from the society and welcomes conflicts. They firmly alleged that following the

code of conduct of Islam defines as peace and deviating from this means conflict. (Interviewee:2 &3)

So, **theme 1** is a reflection of the presence and absence of positive peace. This theme reflects that according to the Madrasa graduates human beings can achieve mental and social peace if they can learn and practice Islamic moral values. The absence of this `positive peace' paves the way to bring conflict in the society.

Theme 2: Peace and conflict are political concerns.

The interviewees exclaimed with grief, "After 9/11 all the Madrasa students are identified as terrors. How can we have peace?" (Interviewee: 1 &2) They strongly utter that it is a part of the global politics to identify the Madrasa as `a factory to produce terrorists'. Especially, after the 9/11 incident the idea has been widespread. Now, media, civil society even some government officials and policymakers are also talking like this. Presenting evidences from newspapers one participant said, "A few days ago one the Ministers of Bangladesh (he mentioned the name, here I am not disclose the name of Minister) said that all the Madrasas are producing terrorists." (Interviewee:3) In addition, one interviewee said,

> The incident of 9/11 destroys our peace. Though we are not involved with this at all, this kills our peace. All the time situation leads us to a conflicting situation. After 9/11 all the Madrasa students are identified as terrors. How can we have peace? (Interviewee:2)

 They reported that this is a conspiracy of a group of `Western people' to stimulate a hostile relation between West and Islam. Moreover, it is propaganda against Islam (Interviewee:3).

They viewed that in Madrasa they had learnt that peace is the fundamental of Islamic teaching. They raised the question that if these kinds of propaganda to sketch madarsa students as terror

are going on then how they could contribute to ensure peace. The `9/11 and war on terror' aftermath are provoking the Madrasa students for more conflict and violence.

So, here, they strongly opined that peace and conflict both are vital political concerns.

I would say **theme 2** reflects the Galtung's concept of direct and structural violence. `War on terror' sometimes translated in the mind of many people as a `war against Muslims'. Thus, the incidents of war (Afghan, Iraq) might be considered by Madrasa graduates as direct violence. Furthermore, the participants viewed that since the `9/11', many people and organizations are often propagating against the Muslim. This sort of structural violence is influencing the mind-set of the Madrasa graduates to perceive about peace and conflict.

Theme 3: Discrimination hampers our peace and persuades conflicts.

The Madrasa graduates are being discriminated in various ways. Say, in Bangladesh female students in general medium are getting stipend, but there is no provision of stipend for the female students in Madrasa. They said that personally the madrasa graduates do not bear hostility with the other medium students. One interviewee expressed, "I consider them as *bhai* (brother) and *bon* (sister). But they treat us as *sot bhai/bon* (stepbrother/ step sister) because of the education system." (Interviewee:3) However, this sort of discriminatory policies sometime persuade conflict and hinder the peaceful and harmonious relationship with the other students.

Thus, the policy tends the Madrasa graduates to be discriminated from the students of other streams. Even there remains bigotry in attitudes among the female participations as well. This has been identified by them as a `conspiracy' to create conflict.

Here, they have also talked about the subject of rights. If equal rights are fulfilled then it brings peace, any violation on this rights or discrimination persuades conflict. So, it can be said that **theme 3** is an example of structural and cultural violence. The deprivations of the female

Madrasa students from the support of stipend, the discriminatory policies of the state are influencing the Madrasa graduates to conceptualise the perceptions about peace and conflict.

Exploring the Evidence

Here in the above discussion, the Madrasa graduates expressed that they are deprived in various ways, such as, dispossession from freedom of choice, democratic rights and so on. There remain different stigmas against them in the society and those stigmas undermine their potentialities and humiliate them to live with dignity in the society. Moreover, global politics often points out them as terrorists and accuses them for severe crimes which they have not committed. These deprivations consist of Galtung's concept of direct, structural and cultural violence and these oppressions influence to construct their perceptions about peace and conflict.

I view that the rejection of socio-economic, political, educational rights of the Madrasa graduates forced them to feel alienated. In addition, I have also come to the impression of an embedded belief like "World is against them" has occurred in their mind. This sense of alienation and deprivation can tempt them to be angry against the social norms, state policy and international politics. Here, one issue needs to be addressed. Madrasa education in Bangladesh is not a static one as historical evolution of this system shows that it has been reformed overtime because of various societal pressures. This historical evolution bolsters that still there remains scope for reformation. Therefore, instead of producing and jolting the hostile relation to reinforce the sense of separation and inflaming the anger of the Madrasa graduates, initiatives to integrate them into society with respect, dignity and value would be helpful for shaping their perceptions about peace and conflict in expected manner.
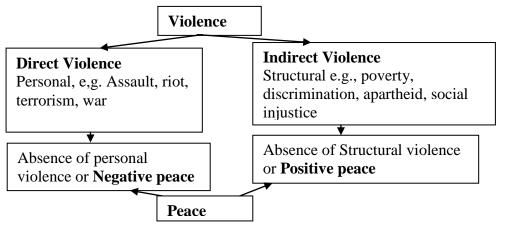
Recommendation and Conclusion

In this paper, I set out to answer about the insights of the Madrasa graduates of Dhaka city about peace and conflict? Along with the insights, I also tried to identify the influential factors towards shaping their perceptions. In sum, it has been found that Madrasa graduates perceived peace and conflict as binary and the presence or absence of the Galtung's peace concept has been distinctly noticed in their perceptions. They have emphasized the accomplishment of equity, political rights, mutual respect, trust and so on as the components to assert peace. On counter, violation of political and democratic rights, attitudes of negligence, misinformation, distrust, stigmas negative propaganda and so on have been identified by them as elements of conflict. Moreover, the faiths on Islam and values of Islamic learning have been mentioned by them as a pathway to ensure peace and reverse of this is likely to bring conflict. The underpinnings for these perceptions are also embedded in their reflection in peace and conflict. Direct, structural and conflict violence towards the Madrasa graduates have swayed them to feel alienated and this alienation is belonged to reinforce anger. Here, in this study the sense of alienation and anger have been reflected as the important factor to shape the perceptions of the Madrasa gradutes on conflict and better integration of them by vanquishing the discriminatory factors have been pointed out as peace.

Galtung's peace and conflict framework

In the 1960s, Galtung expanded the concepts of peace and violence to include indirect or structural violence, and this was a direct challenge to the prevalent notions about the nature of peace (Grewel, 2003). Here, the figure 1 depicts an illustration of the Galtung's framework about peace and conflict.

Fig. 1. Galtung's concept of peace and conflict (Grewel, 2003)

Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence. Reduction or elimination of direct violence, for example, assault, riot, terrorism, war, is considered as the way to create negative peace. Initiative to cease a war can be an example of negative peace (Galtung, 2008).

Galtung (1964) defined **positive peace** as the absence of indirect and structural violence. In other words, the presence of social justice and equality is referred as the positive peace. Thus, it is characterized as the existence of harmonious and integrated social relationship. However, to understand more about positive peace we need to have an idea about structural violence which is elaborated by the Galtung's works on conflict triangle.
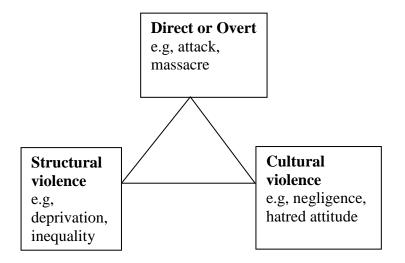
Fig.2: Conflict triangle

Johan Galtung's **conflict triangle** (figure 2) focuses on three sorts of violence as the components for conflict, they are direct or overt, structural and cultural violence. Direct (overt) violence refers to the direct attacks to the people, for example, direct attack, massacre. **Structural violence** or indirect violence refers to the social structures which obstacle people from meeting the basic needs and fundamental human rights. Poverty, social injustice, gender discrimination, apartheid and so on are the example of structural violence. **Cultural violence** occurs as a result of the cultural assumptions that blind one to direct or structural violence, for example, one may undervalue the `black-people', or even consider their expulsion or extermination as a right deed. (Grewel, 2003)

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