

## Теория социальных изменений для интерпретации эмиграционных потоков бенгальской трудовой эмиграции

Шаханаз Парвен

аспирант, ФГБОУ ВО «Российский университет дружбы народов»,  
г. Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: 0000-0002-4766-6390, e-mail: arfin.cu29@gmail.com

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### Аннотация

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Рассмотрены особенные характеристики рабочей силы эмигрантов из Бангладеш. Приведено объяснение причины в теоретических рамках социальных изменений, по которой неоклассическая теория миграции, а также теория «толчка-притяжения» не могут объяснить конкретное наблюдаемое распределение мигрантов. Проанализирована неоклассическая теория миграции, предполагающая, что экономические факторы самостоятельно должны определять выбор страны назначения эмигрантов, и показывающая как теория может предсказать, что распределение эмигрантов должно быть соотнесено с относительным средним доходом из принимающих стран. Поэтому теория не соблюдается в случае эмиграции Бангладеш. Теория «толчка-притяжения» миграции, хотя она частично решает эту проблему, не может целиком объяснить появление анклавов бангладешских граждан в принимающих странах.

Теория социальных изменений с некоторыми изменениями, происходящими из сетевого подхода и подхода «правительственности», может объяснить распределение эмигрантов из Бангладеш за границей. Выдвинуто предположение, что эта теоретическая разработка проливает свет на исследуемую проблему и ее причины. Согласно этой теории, бангладешская эмиграция является элементом глобального процесса, который создает глобальную цивилизацию из совокупности ранее независимых обществ. Следствием данной теории является то, что потоки мигрантов должны более или менее следовать волнам развития глобализованного общества и, следовательно, должно быть возможно измерить изменения в тенденции глобализации через измерение изменений в потоках мигрантов или в их распределении по регионам.

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**Ключевые слова:** эмиграция, социальные изменения, бенгальская рабочая сила, неоклассическая теория миграции, сетевой подход, агентства рекрутинга для мигрантов.

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# A social change theory for interpretation of the migration flows of the Bangladeshi labor emigration

Shahanaz Parven

Postgraduate student, People's Friendship University of Russia,  
Moscow, Russia, ORCID: 0000-0002-4766-6390, e-mail: arfin.cu29@gmail.com

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### Abstract

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The special features of the Bangladeshi emigrant work force have been considered. The explanation of the reason under the theoretical framework of social change has been presented, on which the neoclassical theory of migration, and, also the push and pull factors theory, cannot clarify the specific distribution of migrants, which is observed. The neoclassical theory of migration has been analyzed, which supposes, that economic factors should determine the choice of a destination country by a emigrant, and it shows how the theory would predict, that the distribution of emigrants should be correlated to the relative average income of the hosting countries. Therefore, the theory is not respected in the case of the Bangladeshi emigration. The network model of migration, even though it partially fixes this problem, can still not explain the emergence of enclaves of Bangladeshi citizens in hosting countries.

The theory of social changes, with some modifications originating from the network approach and the “governmentality” approach, might however explain the distribution of Bangladeshi emigrants abroad, and it has been assumed, that this theoretical development sheds light on the studied problem and its causes. According to this theory, the Bangladeshi emigration is one part of a global process, which creates a global civilization from a number of previously independent societies. A consequence of this theory is that the flows of migrants should more or less follow the waves of development of a globalised society, and, therefore, that it should be possible to measure modifications in the trend of globalisation by measuring the variation in the flows of migrants, or in their distribution across regions.

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**Keywords:** emigration, social changes, Bengal work force, neoclassical theory of migration, network approach, recruitment agencies for migrants.

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The neoclassical theory of migration suggests, that the primary factor, that explains migration movements is the difference between the income received at home by the prospected migrant and the one received in the hosting country, after arrival [14]. Therefore, this theory would expect, that the emigrant population of a given country is distributed in countries abroad on the basis of the economic advantage, that derives from migrating. The theory cannot however explain why, when comparing with real-world data as we shall be doing later, the demographic composition of the migrant force of a country tends not to be distributed along the lines of the economic profit. The global change theory of migration however suggests, that migration occurs as part of a social phenomenon of change on a global level [7]. According to this theory, it is not possible to understand the nature of the migratory phenomenon of any given country, without assuming a systemic approach from a global perspective [11]. The individual migratory flow is considered, under this theoretical framework, as being only a part of a complex process, which builds a common, globalised society.

In this paper we want to demonstrate, that economic theories of migration cannot, autonomously, explain the specific way in which the migratory phenomenon occurs. For purpose of providing a theoretical justification to the observed distribution of emigrants, we suggest, that the theory of global migration and social change might provide a better explanation. Unable to implement a desirable social change in the country of origin, the migrant leaves that country and looks for one, where the desirable social structures and institutions are already in place [22]. In doing so, however, the movement of migrants causes the social changes, that were being sought and would have not occurred had the migrant stayed, and both the country of origin and that of destination are affected by this phenomenon [24].

The empirical data, on which this paper is based, is taken from the several governmental and scientific studies, that have traced the movement of Bangladeshis during their emigration abroad. We need two types of data for this paper, for purpose of verifying, whether the theoretical framework constructed above functions: demographic data related to the distribution of Bangladeshi workers abroad, and economic data related to the difference between the salary, that those workers receive and the salary, which they would receive at home.

### **What are the characteristics of Bangladeshi emigration**

We will start by discussing: what is the salary, that a Bangladeshi worker can reasonably expect to receive if not emigrating, but staying in his country of origin.

The work force of the country is in the most part employed, even though the unemployment level remains significantly high. If we use the figures derived from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, as reported by the Dhaka Tribune, we can find that unemployment today is attested around 4.3 % [23]. While this level of unemployment is not high in comparison to that of some developed countries, for countries, which are undertaking development it counts as significantly high, and is a source of unhappiness for the population [1]. It appears that, although the aggregate economic output of the country is rising, the employment opportunities are not, and as of 2018 there are about 4.4 million people unemployed in the country [12; 28]. The reason for this phenomenon might be in the fact, that additional physical capital as opposed to labour, and in particular equipment, is being implemented in agricultural and industrial production of the country, and therefore, fewer workers are required to obtain the same amount of production [2]. What we are observing now from an economic perspective is, therefore, that the economic production is qualitatively increasing from a technological perspective, and fewer workers are needed for the country's productive structure. Unskilled workers, therefore, have an incentive to go abroad, because if they did not, they would risk remain unemployed. The question as to whether or not there is an incentive in leaving the country, therefore, has a sufficiently clear answer: there is an incentive, insofar as unemployment is a real possibility. Therefore, now it becomes important to determine: what is the distribution of migrant workers abroad, and verify whether the biggest communities of Bangladeshi emigrant workers are located in the countries with the highest income, as this would either verify or falsify the economic theory of migration.

Most of the Bangladeshi emigrants are destined, in decreasing ordered of quantity, for the Middle East countries, Malaysia, Asian countries, Europe, Australia, and Africa [5]. The sole economic reasons would put the order of preference to Europe, Australia, Asian countries, and only then the others, but this order is not respected in the observed distribution of emigrants. Therefore, we can determine, that the economic theory of migration is falsified for the specific case of Bangladeshi emigration, and that instead a different approach is required. An argument, that the economic conditions at departure are the same or at least sufficiently similar for all emigrants, having them emigrated from the same country, and an argument, that the country of destination is not selected on the basis of the maximum expected advantage or salary, it means, that there are non-economic factors, which explain the choice of the country of destination by the emigrants.

It's still remained to be examined whether demographic factors, and not simply economic factors, might however explain the emigration of Bangladeshis. A study among Bangladeshi workers by Md. Mizanur Rahman and Lian Kwen Fee found, that some general demographic characteristics can indeed be identified in the set of Bangladeshi individuals, who emigrate abroad looking for employment [23]. More in detail, these individuals are on an average between 20 and 30 years old, and a majority of them, 77 %, had at least 6 years of certified schooling. Two thirds of them are single bachelor or nubile people, and it appears, that migration of families is significantly rarer, than migration of young adults. Almost all of the migrants originate from a rural area, and more specifically from a couple of Bangladeshi districts. It was also determined in the cited study, that the rate of repeat migration was about 7 %, suggesting, that most migrants thus do not repeat the initial emigration to a given country. These underlying demographic characteristics of migrants from Bangladesh are quite peculiar, and make it so, that the Bangladeshi might receive a different treatment, than other immigrants from other parts of the world when they emigrate abroad looking for employment. From this arise economic consequences, as well as demographic, which are worth mentioning. Migration between South Asia and South East Asia at least in part involves unequal encounters between populations, which are sometimes culturally and physically similar. Moreover, historically both these host territories were former colonies, like South Asia, that too often belonged to the same colonizing power. However, when two populations are not similar, then it is important to assess in what ways they are different. They are, indeed, different in the way they are treated by the employers, who hire them, accordingly to the following criteria. The first criterion is work abuse, accordingly to which workers may be denied the registration of the working contract, and would only be hired illegally, without any social security or contribution being paid in their favour. Sometimes alleged temporary contract works are granted, which have instead the nature of a permanent full-time employment, in the detriment of the interest of the employee. The second criterion is the number of daily working hours, which often exceeds by several times the maximum amount of hours, that a worker can legally work in a given legal system. In addition to this, when additional working hours are demanded, workers are normally not rewarded proportionally in terms of salary. The third criterion is the work conditions, which often are not compliant to the legislative standards available in a given country. Immigrant workers are held frequently in situations, which pose them at risk of life or health damage, since the employers can easily exploit their lack of language knowledge and understanding of the health

and safety standards to their detriment. This also includes the lack of provision for the protective equipment aimed at minimizing injuries or death, which in some sectors, and especially in the construction sector, tend to happen significantly frequently. To this regard, a recent study of Bangladeshi migrants undertaken by the IOM found, that 60 % of the workers experienced injuries while working abroad, and 34 % now has some disability related to such injuries [21]. The fourth criterion is the salary, which normally amounts to about US\$1 per hour of work. While this is below the legal minimum in most jurisdictions, we can still recall how about 1 of 4 Bangladeshi lives under the poverty line at home, as stated earlier, and, therefore, a small salary such as that one still looks like a huge one, in comparison to the living conditions, that they experience at home. The last method, according to which workers are exploited, relates to the system of job agents and recruiters, whose costs are illegally and forcibly paid by the workers, to ensure, that the workers start off with a huge debt. The debt is, in fact, a guarantee, that the employee would comply with any order from the employer, and, that would thus accept to be subject to violations of his/her human rights, leading to a situation, that is akin to temporary bondage. There are also hidden costs, which are connected to the issue of exploitation of the immigrants. These are material and psychological costs, and assume the form of lowered aspirations, both socially and professionally. As a consequence, several generations are typically bound in this cycle of temporary work, without any concrete prospect for stability. The analysis of the economic conditions of the Bangladeshi migrants abroad however tells us that, generally, the theoretical expectations that we held were correct: not necessarily people go to places, where they can receive a higher salary, and, therefore, a naive economic theory of migration cannot be a good explanation of the Bangladeshi emigration.

#### **Further theoretical development. Network theory for social change, and "governmentality" of migration processes**

The theory of global migration and social change would explain the migratory flows from Bangladesh as part of the process of creation of a globalised world, in which any person can in principle move to any area on the planet, and in which social change occurs in both the countries of origin and destination as a consequence of the migration, that happens between those two countries. This theory, however, fails to explain the specific mechanisms, according to which, a decision is taken by the migrant, and a country is selected as a destination for migration as opposed to another. We have noted how the migration of Bangladeshi citizens tends to follow the

lines of the available relations in a network, that involves the migrants themselves, the host communities abroad, and the job recruiters, who intermediate in the process of acquisition of workforce by the foreign employers. In order to explain, why the specific network of relations involving these three roles emerges, and how does it interact with the theory of global migration and social change, we need a network-based theory of migration [3]. The network theory of migration suggests, that migration cannot occur unless an edge in a social network is shared between the migrant and the host community [18]. This theory has already been applied to explain the migratory phenomena in several countries, such as Rwanda, the United States, Mexico, and Brazil [6; 18; 25; 20]. Attempts to study the structure of Bangladeshi society through network theory have also been made, and have concerned the ideation and health practices, and the empowerment of women [13; 4]. There is also at least one paper on the subject of the relationship between social network theory and social change theory in Bangladesh, although we do not know of any attempt to study the phenomenon of migration from Bangladesh at an international level [10]. Future researches might move on that direction, towards the integration of network theories of international migration, and theories of social change, for purpose of studying the consequences in the

long-term, that arise from the movement of Bangladeshi workers across the globe [3; 15].

There is one last aspect of international migration of the Bangladeshi work force, which must be discussed. We have seen how positive advantages, such as salaries, cannot themselves explain the way in which emigrants choose their destination. As often is the case in social sciences, we, therefore, need to point out, that not only the visible present, but also the invisible past should be studied to understand a given social phenomenon. Migration is a phenomenon, which has undertaken and is still undertaking significant attempts for the implementation of governance systems [27]. In this sense, it is not a “spontaneous” phenomenon, but the observations, that are ready, today are the consequence of artificial attempts at its control, that were performed in the past, and are continued to date [16]. Governments open and close borders, favour or disfavour migration flows and, more in general, realise a significant and artificial modification of whatever might be the spontaneous behaviour of the populations [9]. Sometimes the process of artificial management of migration by governments happens intentionally, sometimes unintentionally at least as far as the prediction of its consequences, but always artificially and impacting the development of global society in one direction or another [8; 19; 17].

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