Exploring Effectiveness and Impact: Think Tanks and University Relationships in South Asia: The Bangladesh Case

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Contents

Acronyms

BDI	BRAC Development Institute
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BIISS	Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BUET	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue,
DU	Dhaka University
IDCR	International Development Research Centre
IGS	Institute of Governance Studies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIDE	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
PPRC	Power and Participation Research Centre
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SOC	State of Cities
SOG	State of Governance
VfM	Value for Money

Introduction

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and think tanks in developing countries have been supported by international donors since the 1990s often in the name of a democratisation process of the governance structures, or/and in order to promote better research that informs policy. Given that the growth of civil society is generally associated with the greater accountability of policymakers and improved justice in society there has been an increase in specialised think tanks in the development sector spanning a range of development related issues such as human development, policy analysis, sustainable development, inequalities, social justice, agricultural policy, governance, food security, social protection, and human rights. The production and dissemination of knowledge within one country is rarely a linear process and involves a myriad of public and private stakeholders.

The objective of this paper is to answer two core questions: what are the relationships between think tanks and universities in Bangladesh and how do these relationships influence policy? To answer these questions requires an understanding of a) what factors encourage or discourage different types of relationships between think tanks and universities, and b) the complex relationships between knowledge creation and policymaking. Based on an extensive literature review and empirical research, a key argument of the paper is that the impartiality, independence, and efficiency of think tanks and universities in creating knowledge for policymaking is highly dependent on institutional politics and individual and personalized relationships. In most cases think tanks and universities have very limited or non-existent institutional relationships with each other. Where such relationships do exist, they occur at the individual rather than institutional level and focus on quite specific and time bound projects with clear outputs. This study also finds that such individual relationships result from key characteristics such as institutional politics, academic discouragement, low investment in staff and research in public and private universities, commercialization of knowledge production, and the weak, temporary and conditional access to funding by think tanks.

The first section of the paper briefly traces the origins of governance issues in the development discourse and explores the underlying motivations of development partners to support civil society actors and universities in developing countries. It explores the emergence of think tanks and their role as civil and policy actors. The second section presents the qualitative methodology followed in this research and the main challenges faced during the fieldwork in Bangladesh, our case study. The third section analytically contextualizes the relationship between think tanks and universities into a broader historical understanding of Bangladeshi

society. It explores the origins of the dominant political culture, the role think tanks and universities play in the knowledge society, their role and relationship in civil society, and the influence these processes have in policymaking.

This paper also explores the process of fragmentation of knowledge creation in Bangladesh across multiple stakeholders and draws out its implications on knowledge society, civil society and policy. It argues that the reliance of research on external funds affects the capacity of think tanks to be autonomous, which can often distort the role of think tanks landscape in Bangladesh and makes it highly heterogeneous and in some cases weak. The fragmentation of the research process, and its reliance on civil society, in turn, affects the type of research outputs being produced whereas in some cases weakens the research capacities of think tanks and universities. These two actors generally interact with each other in a collaborative manner at an institutional level and the majority of their interactions, individual-based, have strong commercial bases.

It is useful to contextualize the theoretical role of think tanks and universities in eastern development discourse. Studies centered around universities and think tanks have their roots in the west and in many cases institutions conducting these studies receive funding directly from international donors and development agencies.

The emergence of governance issues in relation to democratization and development is explored in the first part of this section. The second part locates think tanks and universities as policy and civil actors in development discourse.

A.   Emergence of Governance Issues in Western Development Discourse

At the beginning of the 1990s, international development agencies and donors developed and prioritised the "good governance" agenda. This quickly became an important policy leverage tool, and helped re-balance some of the extremes of the previous market-based liberalization focus (Doornbos 2001). In the development discourse, a consensus emerged between aid agencies, scholars and development partners, which recognised the importance of engaging with national governments in order for development practice and policy to be more sustainable and effective (Cornwall & Brock 2005).

Donors supported developing countries under specific good governance requirements and conditions (Parnini 2009). This concerned issues of transparency of public administration

(corruption notably), enforcement of human rights and public sector reform (PSR). The adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reflect the concretization of this mainstreamed development discourse into policy and practices which intended to prevent aid within developing countries from fragmenting and building inefficiencies through multi-sectoral downstream approaches through interacting directly at the macro-policy level and thus harmonize and strengthen developmental targets (Parnini 2009, Ellis & Biggs 2001). The rationale for pressing developing countries' national governments to adopt PRSPs and MDGs as poverty reduction tools and targets demonstrated development partners' intention to make governments aware of their responsibilities and commitment towards target achievements. Different development stakeholders bought into a result-orientated long-term strategy, which provided measurable targets for the governments of recipient countries to strive forward.

At the same time, external support for democratization of developing countries was also seen through the support given to civil society institutions, which played a substantial role in policymaking (Flanagan & Wray-Lake 2011, Kabeer et al. 2010, Lewis 2004). The appearance of think tanks in Western countries was, to some extent, considered an opportunity for civil society to enter the policymaking process from which they had previously been excluded by major political actors. The states' recognition and acceptance of the potential contribution of think tanks to policymaking is a long process. The level and quality of interaction between civil society and government actors varies from country to country. Some governments have been and are slower in developing structures, which are inclusive of civil society institutions. The development of think tanks and large NGOs has, in some developing countries, transformed the way governments made evidence-based policy decisions, and helped maintain some accountability in the political sphere (Harsh et al. 2010, Kaldor 2003, Uphoff 1996). According to some, this interaction and engagement resulted in more democratic forms of governance (Kaldor 2003) with think tanks being seen as representing citizens' interests and promoting greater transparency (Abelson 2009, Pautz 2011).

1. Political and Civil Actors and Policymaking

Though NGOs are often perceived as the most prominent civil society actors, this paper is concerned with understanding the present functions and place occupied by think tanks and universities, and their relationships within the policymaking processes. Publications available on this process occurring in developing countries' context are scarce. Development literature

is primarily concerned with NGOs – and to a much lesser extent, think tanks – while universities remain largely neglected.

1.1   Think Tanks

In the North American context, think tanks emerged in the mid-1950s as "non-governmental, not-for profit research organisations with substantial organisational autonomy from government and from societal interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties" (McGann and Weaver 2011:4). The non-governmental characteristic of think tanks does not imply that institutions that receive funding from governmental sources do not qualify as think tanks per se, but it highlights the relative level of independence of think tanks from government and state structures. The definition of think tank proposed by Abelson (2009:4) insists on the objective of these institutions which he describes as *non-profit, non-partisan organizations engaged in the study of public policy* [my italics]" which "organize and transform issues and ideas into policy debates". The function of think tanks can be perceived as both apolitical (i.e. politically neutral) and political (Faro 2012). The process of conducting research and producing knowledge in order for example to influence public policy is inherently political. The process of decision-making, which results in some themes or issues being prioritised over others, cannot be separated out from broader ideological influences and/or political agendas (Majone 1989). And yet, research entities and knowledge creators must establish their impartiality in order to be taken seriously in the policy debates and dialogues (McGann & Weaver 2011, Pautz 2011). Their effectiveness in advocating for and communicating on issues relies heavily on the ability to demonstrate the rigour, quality and reliability of their work. If the latter are questioned, the ability of think tanks to engage in public debate and policy advocacy is undermined.
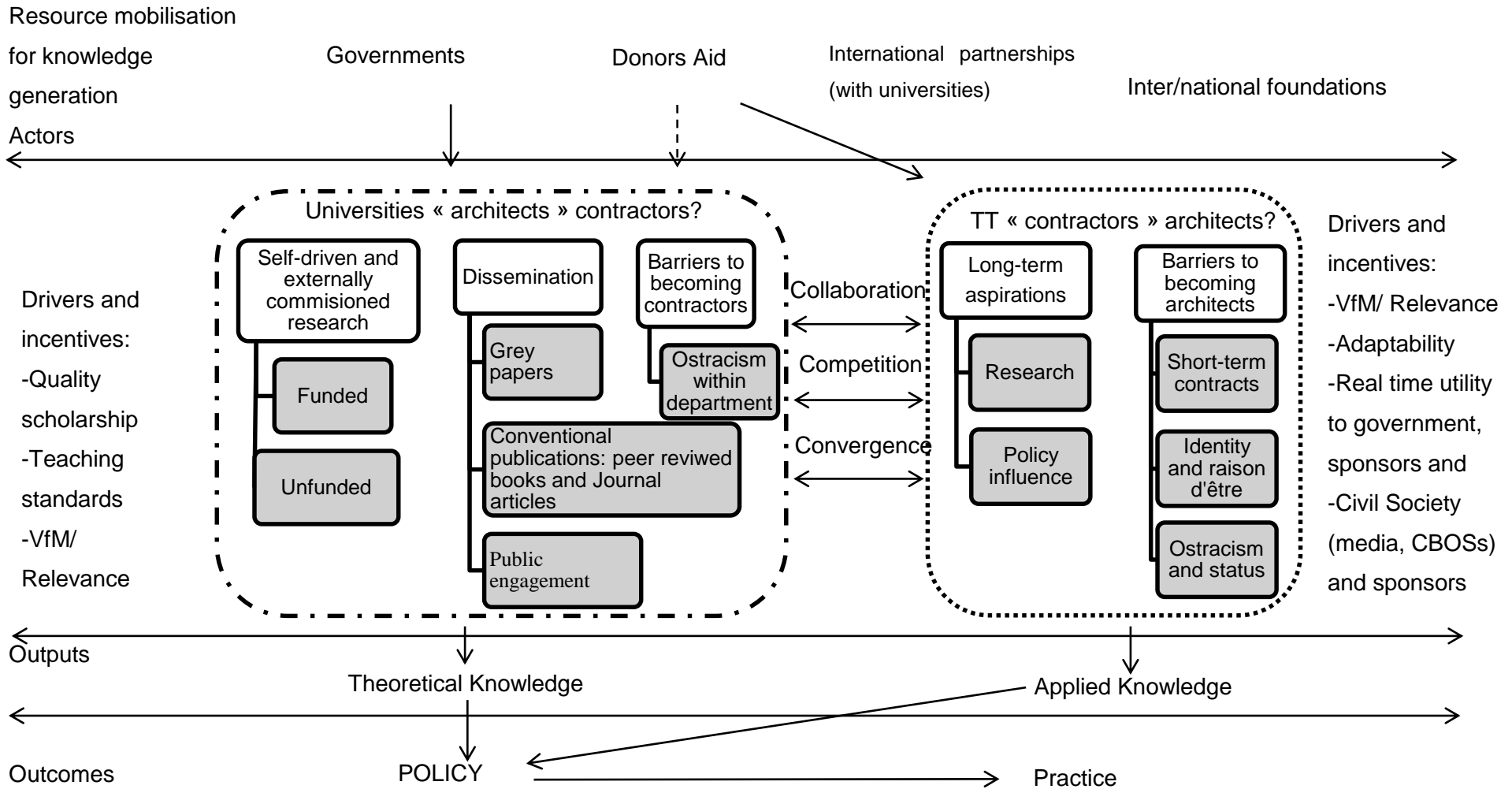
1.2   Universities

The number of knowledge creating organisations has increased in developing countries (NGOs research wings, research institutes, think tanks and universities) and the external donor support to some of these institutions dates back to the 1980s (Srivastava 2011). This trend is partly based on the premise that strengthening the linkages between civil society and national governments as well as supporting knowledge creation would develop more rigorous and more evidence-based policy decisions. These arrangements, it is argued, have the potential to improve governments' and public administrations' accountability to citizens in countries where interactions are infrequent and sometimes ineffective. International development agencies (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, International Development Association, the United Nations, and a number of industrially and economically developed countries' governments) started supporting the development of think tanks in developing countries in the early 2000s (Huque 2011, Srivastava 2011).

In theory, universities are "key drivers" within the knowledge society which sometimes have the opportunity and capacity to develop relationship with other players in the knowledge society (Peters 2003). In the literature and in society, universities are perceived as "keepers" and "creators of knowledge" which seek "to prepare new generations with the skills, cultural and scientific literacy, flexibility and capacity for critical inquiry and moral choice necessary to make their own contributions to society" (Birgeneau 2005:x). The value and originality of the knowledge created by universities often depend on their level of autonomy and their internal management staff monitoring and incentive systems.

There are three typologies of relationships between think tanks and universities: collaboration, competition or convergence. All three typologies remain largely under-studied. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Asian research team working on this research project theorized the political economy of knowledge production and policymaking focusing on the relationships between think tanks and universities as illustrated in Figure 1. This conceptualization is based on the initial observation and assumption that the boundaries between university research centres, research institutes, consultancy firms and think tanks have become more blurred. Arguably if think tanks used to represent development "contractors" and universities represented "architects" of knowledge and policy interaction (Wood 2013), the former have evolved so much in the last few decades that the clear-cut dichotomy might not be relevant in some contexts. The analysis presented in section four confronts this theoretical framework to our empirical evidence and proposes a new analytical model for understanding these relationships.

Figure 1: Theorizing the Relationships between Think Tanks and Universities in relation to Policymaking

Resource mobilisation for knowledge generation

Actors

Governments

Donors Aid

International partnerships (with universities)

Inter/national foundations

Universities « architects » contractors?

Self-driven and externally commisioned research

Dissemination

Barriers to becoming contractors

Funded

Grey papers

Ostracism within department

Unfunded

Conventional publications: peer reviwed books and Journal articles

Public engagement

Drivers and incentives:
-Quality scholarship
-Teaching standards
-VfM/ Relevance

TT « contractors » architects?

Long-term aspirations

Barriers to becoming architects

Research

Short-term contracts

Policy influence

Identity and raison d'être

Ostracism and status

Collaboration

Competition

Convergence

Drivers and incentives:
-VfM/ Relevance
-Adaptability
-Real time utility to government, sponsors and
-Civil Society (media, CBOSs) and sponsors

Outputs

Theoretical Knowledge

Applied Knowledge

Outcomes

POLICY

Practice

9

B.   Research Methodology and Tools

This study adopted a qualitative approach in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by think tanks and universities as they attempted to produce knowledge and/or influence policy. It is important to emphasize that the principal investigator was involved at all stages during data collection, data analysis, and the generation of this report.

1.   Key informant interviews

In Part 1 of the fieldwork, in-depth interviews and personal observations were used besides secondary literature reviews (academic articles, reports and websites). With the help of an assistant, the researcher identified a set of key informants based within think tanks and universities. The criteria used to select participants included: their position in the hierarchy of their respective institutions and, when possible, their level of experience working with key stakeholders in Bangladesh. As much as possible, the researcher selected senior and high-level respondents since they tended to be better positioned to provide useful insights on key issues regarding knowledge production in Bangladesh and the role of think tanks and universities in producing and disseminating knowledge and advocating for policy.[2] Twenty one audio recorded in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders active at both the university and think tank level. These lasted for 30 minutes to three hours. The interviews followed the structure of a questionnaire developed before the start of fieldwork. The fieldwork was conducted in October and November 2013 in Dhaka.

2.   Institutional case studies

As part of Phase 2 of the research project, the team focused on generating the answers to our core questions through developing three institutional case studies in each country context, which illustrate different typologies of institutions. In the case of Bangladesh, the selection of the case studies was made on the basis of the model developed by the regional research team. The first case study presented in Annex B is the analysis of the Institute of Governance Studies

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[2] The list of respondents included in the study can be found in Annex A

(IGS) which is the case of a think tank, which holds a prestigious unconditional grant from IDRC and which continues to be progressively incorporated into the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) University (BRACU). The second case study (Annex B) is the institutional analysis of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). The third case study, in Annex B is the analysis of the evolution and development of Dhaka University (DU) since the 1980s as a hosting institution for think tanks and research centres.

3.   Participants and institutions' selection process

Initially, the intention was to include a number of institutions from different regions of Bangladesh. We eventually decided to concentrate our work in Dhaka, the capital city, for three reasons. First, during our initial scoping exercise it became clear that most of the key stakeholders in both the university and think tank sectors had some professional base in Dhaka even if their employing institutions were located outside of Dhaka. This is not an observation unique to the university or think tank sectors. Bangladesh is also known as one of the NGO capitals of the world, and NGO offices can be found in the most remote parts of the country. However, the vast majority of NGOs have offices or headquarters in Dhaka even if they do not have field operations in the capital centre. This allows NGOs to be closer to the heart of the economic, social and political life of the country, and also importantly to be closer to representatives of the international community. The same dynamic arrangement prevails with think tank and university stakeholders.

Second, it also became clear during our initial scoping exercise that although there were many think tanks in the country, many had either relatively few activities or existed in name only. This was more likely the case for think tanks, which were located outside Dhaka. A similar observation was made in the university sector – albeit on a small-scale. The government of Bangladesh is committed to expanding the number of universities throughout the country[3] and this has resulted in an increase in the number of private universities in particular, mostly in Dhaka city. This expansion, however, has not gone without criticism and suspicion including reports of illegal campuses and fake universities being established for political as opposed to academic reasons.

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[3] The government plans to establish a university in each of the country's districts

Finally, our data collection coincided with a particularly volatile period in the electoral cycle of Bangladesh. With national parliamentary elections set for January 2014, the latter part of 2013 was replete with frequent and increasingly violent *hartals* (strikes). This considerably restricted the mobility of the researchers and respondents and heightened concerns around safety. Also, during this time, the respondents (of think tanks) were busy responding and engaging with the political processes in place while university teachers and directors were concerned about the impact of *hartals* on the completion of final exams. Although this context considerably affected the fieldwork (respondents sample size and geographic coverage), it did not negatively impact on the quality of the information gathered.

4.   Data analysis

The principal investigator collected and analysed the different type of data collected. This enabled the researcher to ensure high levels of coherence and reliability of the findings exposed in this report. This entailed undertaking an intensive review of literature on governance themes in Bangladesh, an analysis and the transcription of twenty one audio recordings, a website search on institutions and a study of secondary data collected at the institutional level. The analysis and main findings are presented in the following section and the detailed institutional case studies are in Annex B.

C.   Major Findings of Research

1.   The Bangladesh Case Study

This section explores the major findings from this research. Understanding how knowledge is created and the role different types of institutions play in it requires a deep understanding of the political culture of the country. In Bangladesh, this helps to analyse the way in which stakeholders respond and adjust to the complex set of challenges and opportunities they face (Faro 2012:10). Research findings show that political culture in Bangladesh dominates institutional and personal relationships within three major domains (knowledge society, civil society and the policy sphere) and affects the research culture, processes and quality of outputs.

Considering the political economy of knowledge creation and the pressures this puts on both demand and supply for knowledge (for policy especially) we contextualize the study of the relationships between think tanks and universities within three domains: the knowledge

society, civil society and the policy sphere. The data presented in the next sections shows how the knowledge society in Bangladesh is composed of a few institutions, within which individuals often struggle to maintain "academic freedom" (or autonomy). Institutions in that category (by mandate) face significant constraints, notably financial ones that limits the possibilities of direct overlap or contribution of knowledge society to policymaking within the policy sphere – which is why a, in figure 2, is smaller than b and c. As a result, there is some overlap with individual civil society members (such as NGO-based researchers) or "consultancy" type think tanks which prefer to accumulate a double identity (b, on figure 2). The most typical example of this is the participation of university teachers in think tanks consultancies (or short-term research project) sponsored or commissioned by external stakeholders. Civil society institutions, often sponsored by external actors (with a political agenda and set expectations) mainly conduct short-term research projects, which can affect their internal research capacity, their level of autonomy and the quality of knowledge and critical thinking. Civil society actors have, however, relatively good access to resources and policy-makers which is why c, in figure 2, is larger than a and b. The space for relationships between civil society actors and policy makers, in the current political context is greater than the space for knowledge society to interaction with the policy sphere and greater than the space available to civil society to engage with the knowledge society, institutionally. The overlap between civil society and policymaking (c, in Figure 2), is however, to be considered carefully as civil society actors' capacity to drive and critically engage with national policies as opposed to follow or inform them is, in some cases, uncertain.

Figure 2: The knowledge and policymaking economy in Bangladesh: a model[4]
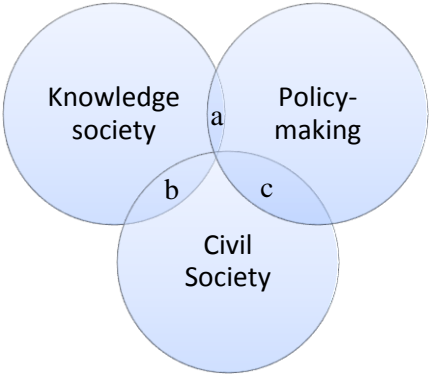
Source: the author

This analytical section is organized as follows. The first section traces the dominant political culture in Bangladesh and explains how it can represent an important challenge to the governance of some public, private and often "third sector" institutions. The last two sections provide an analysis of the interactions between think tanks and universities within the knowledge society, civil society, and the policy sphere. It explores the main challenges to producing knowledge and conducting research in an environment where institutional autonomy is rare. Along those three interrelated sections, the discussion is framed around the theoretical evidence-based model, illustrated in Figure 2.

1.1   Bangladesh's Political Culture

Given that the role of think tanks and universities in a society varies according to context, this section presents a brief historical overview of the political culture in Bangladesh. It is argued that governance structures and systems in place generally lack accountability to citizens presenting significant symptoms of mal-governance (clientelism, elitism, partisanship and corruption). This can be found in public and private institutions and, third sector organisations.

Since achieving independence in 1971, Bangladesh's public administration and political institutions have undergone significant and continuous transformation. Public administration and bureaucracy, which before 1971 used to attract knowledgeable and talented people, has since suffered from politicization (Jahan and Shahan, 2008). As a result the quality of the

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[4] This model was developed by the author based on the data collected during fieldwork, and secondary literature reviewed and their analysis.

accountability with the public administration systems after the British and Pakistani periods eroded (Huque 2011, Huque and Rahman 2003).

Political instability has characterised the last four decades resulting in successive coups d'état, violent political changes and confrontations combined with military interventions. This has profoundly affected the way in which power is exercised by the government (Huque & Rahman 2003) and the legitimacy of the government (Huque 2011:63). A number of factors contributed to nurturing problems of governance (Huque 2011) including corruption, inefficiency, lack of accountability, ineffective bureaucracy, elitism, political cronyism, factionalism, patronage and clientelism (Jahan & Shahan 2008, Zafarullah 1987). In addition natural disasters, famines and economic stagnation, have led to the emergence of an organized civil society that has incentivized the state to use forms of despotic power (Srivastava 2011). This new political and bureaucratic culture has proliferated especially in weak and nascent public institutions (Huque, 2011). In relation to this, Kochanek writes: ….a combination of weak institutions, patrimonial politics, personalized political parties, patron-client relationships, and the absence of political consensus have resulted in a partial democracy dominated by perverse corruption, a lack of transparency, normless behaviour, an absence of public accountability, and political instability (2000:531).

For many years, allegiance to the ruling party (Rahman 2002:51) has been an important criterion which political institutions have used to recruit and appoint civil servants to positions of power, obtain rapid promotions and favours from other bureaucrats. More than their performance, experience or merit, bureaucrats could become influential senior members of civil administration if they directly served the interest of the party (Zafarullah & Rahman 2008, Ahmed 1980). This partisanship contributed to establishing a culture of patronage within major public administrations and the cabinet which transformed the "state machinery including law enforcement and the judiciary […] into politicized instruments of the ruling party" (Sarker 2008:1423). Self-serving civil servants pursuing personal interests (Zafarullah 2013, Zafarullah 1987) still largely dominate these opaque micro-bureaucratic within public administrations which affect their performance and accountability to citizens (Huque & Rahman 2003, Rahman 2002).

1.2   Elitism and Clientelism

Such governance systems have contributed to establishing a culture of elitism within the public institutions. (The term 'élite' here refers to a small and exclusive group of persons who have a political function, enjoy higher status and power within the political system and exploit the advantages power can provide them). In politics, élites generally emerge from contexts where

the distribution of power in society is unequal and hierarchical (relying on patrons). This group is often, according to Meisel (1962:4) and Putnam (1976:4), highly conscious of the benefits of belonging to this particular group and sharing its values and norms. The members pursue the common interest of preserving the group's power and the members' status, which in our country case, according to Zafarullah, can lead to power "abuses", "malevolence", "venality" and "malfeasance" (2007:169). In Bangladesh, these are engrained in the core of the political culture and adversely impact on the efficiency of public institutions, rational decision-making, performance and accountability (Sarker 2009).

In Bangladesh, this type of élitism established significant patron client politics which affected the way in which the country was governed both formally and informally (Sarker 2008:1417). (Clientelism is the result of a calculation of certain groups in the society, which make the rational decision to engage with state actors in a way that allows them to obtain favours. Clients of élite groups are not necessarily loyal to a political party but use them to pursue their personal interests through preserving good relationships with patrons). Alam and Teicher (2012) find that besides partisanship, recruitment decisions in the civil service, police administration, regulatory and judiciary bodies are based on clientelist relationships. According to a few authors, favouring certain political leanings constitutes the violation of principles of impartiality, equality and fairness, which destroy "the moral standing of fundamental institutions, turning them into profiteering tools for the distribution of patronage and its benefits" (Alam and Teicher, 2012:881).

All of these factors affect Bangladesh's political economy at different levels. In rural areas, social relations are often dependent on the domination of the élite based on landholding, and resources allocation. This system of patron-clientelism based on wider friendship and kinship relationships or political allegiance create extra-bureaucratic networks where transactions and decisions are arbitrary driven by personal ambition (which often lies in preserving the élite's power) (Wood 2000) . Pervasive patronage processes and relationships between state actors and civil society actors underpin policymaking processes in Bangladesh (Huque 2011, Parnini 2006:190, Sarker 2008, Kochanek 2000).

One of the most documented symptoms of such informal processes is corruption within political and bureaucratic power structures. "The abuse of public office for private gain", hinders the quality of administrative performance and the fairness of its decisions (Huque, 2011:51) which has many consequences on the way citizens are governed (Khan 2003). First, because corruption often excludes poorer segments of the society that often lack bargaining power within these entities; the poor suffer more from lower quality public services compared to the

rest of society (Kamal 2000). Second, the corrupt behaviour of public officials and the allocation of resources based on kinship and friendship networks rather than performance and efficiency can result in inefficient project planning and execution (Zafarullah 2013, Zafarullah & Rahman 2008, Khan 2003). Third, corruption can dis-incentivise underpaid civil servants because performance is not rewarded and in some cases can be penalized (Sarker 2009, Sarker & Rahman 2007).

1.3   Civil Society

Bangladesh has a vibrant civil society which includes NGOs, indigenous community groups, cooperatives, professional bodies, trade unions, think tanks and the media (Huque 2011). The growth of NGOs in particular has come to mark the development of civil society in Bangladesh. Following Independence in 1971, NGOs were heavily involved in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the country. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the NGO sector grew steadily. However, from the 1990s, growth accelerated significantly and NGOs were soon at the centre of poverty reduction and democracy building initiatives (Alam & Teicher 2012, Khan 2003, Kamal 2000, White 1999). International donor agencies tended to encourage successive governments of Bangladesh to engage with NGOs on development activities and were instrumental in the rise of the sector (Sarker 2009).

During the 1990s, international donors promoted good governance programmes in Bangladesh implemented by civil society actors prominently NGOs. For some, civil society actors like NGOs helped support governance and democracy by increasing accountability and participation (2001:185). Others, however, argued that NGOs were not able to free themselves from the country's culture of political clientelism and patronage (Devine 2003, Devine 2006) and as a result, were not able to act as autonomous organisations representing the interest of the poor (Parnini 2009:562, Sarker 2008:1427, Parnini 2006) or tackling the deeper causes of poor governance (Banks & Hulme 2012).

In view of the political culture and structures described above, the scope for non-state actors to contribute to or influence policymaking processes is limited. Zafarullah (2007: 169) argues that if some non-state actors interact with policy makers, the interaction is "rarely" effective in terms of influencing policy formulation. Many authors report that the public bureaucracy's inertia, alienation and politicization are the main obstacles to better interaction between state and non-state actors and reforms (Zafarullah & Rahman 2008, Khan & Zafarullah 1982). The failure of important national reforms can be attributed to "bureaucratic intransigence and inertia, political insensitivity and inaction, anti-reform sentiment in public sector organisations and alienation of the civil society from the reform process" (Zafarullah 2002:66). In short, in

Bangladesh the state's structures are based on long-established patrimonial dynamics and a complex web of patron/client relationships, which, according to some authors, has a limited capacity to refuse major donors' pressures (Kochanek 2000:549). In this context, civil society organisations have had to find strategies to sustain their activities within the civil society arena and within the policy sphere. These are explored in the following sections.

2.   The Knowledge Society in Bangladesh

This section explores the "knowledge society" in Bangladesh. The concept of knowledge society is referred to frequently in the literature and by research participants to explain their observation of problems with knowledge production in Bangladesh. They analyse existing gaps in the current state of research and knowledge creation in Bangladesh. Participants insisted on how producing *knowledge* (as opposed to information) has the potential to empower its possessors (intellectually and practically). For the purpose of being analytically clear, knowledge society, in this paper, is defined as a space within which self-determining institutions set their research agendas based on indigenous needs and interests and conduct the research to create original knowledge independently. In this section, it is argued that in Bangladesh the knowledge society is weak. Only a few institutions are active in producing knowledge (including a few universities, a few large NGOs with strong research wings and a few think tanks). The data collected shows that such institutions face significant challenges and limitations, which prevent them from pursuing their core research and capacity building mission and from being more pro-active within the knowledge society. This section explores the opportunities and challenges faced by major institutions within the knowledge society and analyses some of the implications for civil society and for policymaking.

Frustrated actors (individual and institutions) face significant challenges, which are explored below. Based on respondents' opinions and experiences, this section shows how, within the knowledge society, universities, as institutions, make little contribution to knowledge for policymaking and remain confined to their disciplinary roles (teaching) generally dis-engaged from policy debates. As a result, teachers based at few "teaching organisations" such as universities (some private some public), engage themselves with think tanks within the civil society sphere (more supported by donors' projects and development partners' support) to escape the structural and financial challenges they face in their institutions. The extent to which these forms of engagement lead to policy changes (within political society) is discussed in subsequent sections.

2.1 Universities' Challenges and Limitations to Knowledge Production

The first finding emerging from this study was that when public and private universities engage in research, this affects the academic work undertaken within those structures and pushes teachers towards individual personalized career paths outside the knowledge society through regular interaction with civil society actors. Some authors such as Altbach argue that "academic freedom", the capacity given to higher education teachers to research and publish freely, should be at the "very core" of universities' mission (2001:205). The data presented in this section shows that in Bangladesh academic freedom of teachers from public or private universities is generally low given the lack of financial resources and institutional support granted to research the production of knowledge is either under-valued or instrumentalised.

Here, it is worth briefly outlining the higher education landscape in Bangladesh. The country's first university, Dhaka University, was founded in 1921; and its second, Rajshahi University, in 1953. Both were founded as part of a process of colonial power enforcement (first the British and then the Pakistani colonial rule) through education and publication. After independence and until 1985, there were six public universities in Bangladesh[5] (Rahman 2003). More than twenty years after the Private University Act (1992), the country has 34 public and 76 private universities (UCG 2013). The implementation of social sciences courses such as sociology, anthropology and development studies was first introduced in major public universities like Dhaka University and Jahangir Nagar University thanks to the support of external donors[6]. The pressures and challenges to producing knowledge differ significantly between public and private universities but until now they result in comparable outcomes which are described below.

Public Universities

Despite the significant rise in the number of private actors in higher education, the reputation of public universities is one of the guarantors of quality knowledge production in the county. Private universities on the whole do not enjoy such a reputation – although this may be changing. A few public universities benefit from international recognition, including The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Dhaka University which,

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[5] Four general universities (Dhaka University Rajshahi University, Chittagong and Jahangir Nagar Universities which were established in the second half of 1960s), and two technical universities (University of Engineering and Technology BUET and Bangladesh Agricultural University, BAU)

[6] Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali

as one respondent highlighted, was once called "*the Oxford of the East*".[7] Similarly to what Kors and Silverglate (1998) observed in the USA, this study finds that public university teachers and their student bodies tend to be publically affiliated with political parties and are important public political activists (pundits) in the country. The power of political parties within universities reflects how political parties see universities as key developers of the nascent futures elites' civic engagement. The political attachment of teachers is significant and, according to the majority of respondents, affects the internal functioning of universities. One example of this is the significance of political affiliations during teachers' association elections[8]. This phenomenon, according to some respondents, leads to universities dis-engaging with knowledge creation and in turn affects universities' effectiveness in developing and serving as valuable actors in the knowledge society[9]. Sakhawat Ali, a research fellow at PPRC said:

> Political loyalism is a key element within our public universities. Recruitment, promotion and posting, everything is happening based on loyalism. So the quality of the knowledge suffers and we are not investing in research. […] People who have the quality and the intention of creating knowledge go outside, for their livelihood and for their knowledge 'hunch'[10] also. So the private sector and development sector give them opportunities. As a result knowledge production is not institutionalized.

This encroachment of politics within academia goes against the principles of "academic freedom" and, according to many respondents, affects the independence, impartiality, and autonomy of knowledge production within public universities. Such internal politics contributes to dis-incentivising donors from supporting public universities. Furthermore, "unconditional promotion" of teachers based on their political loyalism more than merit discourages teachers from conducting research within their universities and publish original work for which they are not rewarded. This therefore, pushes lecturers and academics to publish their work in their university's internal journal, as they have lower standards and faster review systems compared to international journals.[11] The quote above illustrates how mal-governance and non-meritocratic systems in public universities prompt some teachers to be more active outside

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[7] Dr. Zulfikar Ali
[8] Blue, white or pink panel, AL, BNP or left-leaning party respectively, in Dhaka University
[9] Dr. Zulfikar Ali
[10] the term 'hunch' here is used to imply the curiosity and hunger for knowledge
[11] Dr. Zulfikar Ali

their own universities or to remain fully within knowledge society as political figures or public intellectual.

University staff members' salaries are relatively low (although they vary significantly according to experience and status) and allow little engagement of teachers with any other academic pursuits besides teaching activities (or political activities in public universities). Respondents generally observed that within public universities, the financial resources available for conducting research were low and that this affected the quantity and the quality of the research outputs generated from these institutions.[12] One respondent, Manzoor Hasan (from IGS), described it as a "chicken and egg situation" in that the universities do not have sufficient funds to finance research, while at the same time their staff members do not get funding because their capacities to produce good quality research proposals and obtain research grants is low. The paradox emerging here is that although most public universities have sufficiently strong faculty capacities to conduct good quality research and publish, the structural limitations posed by their universities regarding research platforms and the political recompenses involved in stepping out of their institution or remaining within it, are two important factors which constrain public university teachers' involvement within the knowledge society.

Private Universities

In private universities, according to many respondents, the observations highlighted above are fewer because teachers are better paid (higher tuition fees) and the "accountability systems" are stronger than in public universities[13] where the commercial bottom-line is more crucial.[14] In general, the perception of respondents is that compared to public universities, private universities remain relatively independent from party politics.[15] Private universities are principally preoccupied with recovering their costs and are orientated towards a market-based expansion strategy in a way akin to private sector firms. The quality of the knowledge produced and the instruments in place to maintain the quality of the research outputs are however non-existent or inadequate. In fact many respondents said, based on their experiences and observations that "very little research is done in the private universities, apart from one or two

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[12] Dr. Bazlul Khondoker
[13] Dr. Emdadul Haq
[14] Dr. Sultan Hafeez
[15] Some respondents reported that some private universities had formal rules which forbid political activities on their campuses (from both students and teachers)

exceptions [...] they remain generally uninterested in it."[16] Respondents identified a few private universities, which are successful in producing good quality and original research outputs. These included BDI, BRACU and North South University, which enjoy strong reputations for teaching and place value on research and multiply consultancy activities.[17]

Similar to think tanks, it appears that to remain relatively independent from the political sphere, universities tend to get increasingly closer to private sector actors to whom they provide knowledge according to demand. This explains why private and public universities, as institutions, have few visible research outputs which contribute to policymaking. This finding partly confirms the observation made by Gibbons et al. that universities make limited contributions to knowledge production because ''the universities, in particular, will comprise only a part, perhaps only a small part, of the knowledge producing sector'' (1994:85). A number of respondents from universities and think tanks warned that through having regular consultancy contracts sponsored by private actors, knowledge institutions might be tempted to transform into consultancy firms (private actors). The data collected from respondents[18] shows that universities offer their services to private actors, such as banks for example, for recruitment purposes by organizing exams and training courses. After 38 years of experience at BUET, Dr. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said, "now BUET has become the number one consultancy institution when it comes to engineering. Referring to both the private and public sector Dr. Reza added, "..... the first agency they will think of is BUET*"[19]*

Although informants recognized the importance of being in touch with the world of *practice,* they also warned of the dangers of consultancies as it reflects a trend of universities to shift their priorities towards mobilizing more financial resources. If left unsupervised, the ruthless pursuit of more income can jeopardize the faculty of universities and some recommended that undertaking consultancy work should be both encouraged and "regulated".[20] The impact consultancies have on the quality of the research outputs is, however, difficult to estimate through this research.

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[16] Mr. Manzoor Hasan
[17] Dr. Zulfikar Ali
[18] Dr. Hossain Zillur, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya and Mr. Manzoor Hasan
[19] Dr. Jamilur Reza
[20] ibid

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The political economy of the knowledge society in Bangladesh is characterized by a lack of financial resources and structural limitation at the university level to conduct research and generate good quality research outputs. Universities' financial focus on teaching and the lack of transparency regarding promotion procedures (in public universities), often dis-incentivizes researchers to publish in international peer-reviewed journals. Globally, this type of publication generally reflects the quality of the research output generated by universities and the international standard particularly valued within the knowledge society. Few university teachers in Bangladesh (often in public universities) publish outside national Bangladeshi academics journals or publication houses. Unlike peer reviewed journals, the latter have significantly weaker review systems. The common perception of respondents is that generally universities' research outputs quality is weak compared to international standards.

2.2   Privatisation of the Knowledge Society

Public intellectuals and think tank founders explained that one reason for establishing their own research institute was to escape the research "inertia" and disinterest of universities (described in the previous section) and create their own knowledge creating platform.[21] These phenomena affect the role played by both private and public universities in the knowledge society, and consequently the role think tanks play in producing knowledge and the relationship they have with universities. This section explores this argument in more detail.

In the context of Bangladesh the actual role and functions of think tanks is divorced from the theory presented in the first two sections of the paper. The data collected suggests that "think tanks" are so diverse that it is hard to categorize them under the same label. A differentiation between think tanks is therefore made based on their role within three major arenas: knowledge, civil and political societies. While the efficiency of a think tank can be assessed in different ways according to its vision and mission, in theory civil society actors focus on a few core activities which include setting a political research agenda, researching on particular topics to inform policy, framing the debates and making the issues accessible to different types of audiences (in compelling ways) and facilitating public dialogue with stakeholders around key ideas, topics, or policies (Faro 2012).

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[21] Mr. Rashed Titumir

Within the knowledge society, the data collected strongly indicates that in Bangladesh the function and capacity of think tanks to contribute to the production of independent knowledge vary considerably according to their internal capacity and financial independence – both of which directly conditions their level of autonomy.[22] Significant trade-offs and compromises are made between financial capacity and autonomy which affect think tanks' function within the knowledge society and can push them to narrow their role as civil society actors engaging with shorter-term research projects dependent on donors' funding. As a result, the quality of the research produced by think tanks in Bangladesh is often qualified as "uneven" mainly depending on the stability and the nature of the term of funding they are under.[23] Think tanks struggle to access sustained and untied type of funding which would allow them to keep a clear policy focus.[24]

> Think tanks in Bangladesh, unlike other research institutes from outside Bangladesh cannot follow a clear research plan because they have insecure funding. They bid for research projects funding and then decide to conduct the project for the funder.[25]

In the knowledge society, there are very few think tanks which are active in critically engaging with an issue in an independent manner with the intention to guide policy makers. Centre for Policy Dialogue, Institute of Governance Studies, and the Power and Participation Research Centre (CPD, IGS and PPRC, respectively) and to some extent BIDS[26] are part of this small group of institutions, which remain coherent and rigorous in their approach to knowledge creation and try to protect their research agenda from external influences as much as possible (see Annex B). BIDS has very strict promotion rules based on staff members' academic publications quality and number[27] as well as its own internationally recognized peer-reviewed journal. This stands as a rare exception and in general think tanks have low or poor publications quality standards and monitoring. Such systems certainly incentivize staff members to focus on conducting original research work or at least produce good quality research outputs.

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[22]Dr. Sultan Hafeez, Dr. Bazlul Khondaker, and Dr. Shaheen Afroze
[23]Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Dr. Bazlul Khondokar, Dr. Manosh Chowdhury, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya
[24]Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman and Dr. Bazlul Khondokar
[25]Dr. Bazlul Khondokar
[26]Often seen as a collecting bio-data and ex-post studies for programmes and policies (for the government and for development partner agencies)- See annex B.
[27]Dr. Zulfikar Ali and and Dr. Binayak Sen

On the other hand, one way think tanks reserve their research autonomy and build their capacities is establishing linkages with international universities. Collaborative research projects with international universities based in South Korea, Japan, the United Kingdom or the USA, according to some respondents, enables think tanks to benefit from significant financial benefit and more importantly technical support, whilst compromising their autonomy to a much lesser extent.

2.3   Think Tank/University Relationships within the Knowledge Society

Compared to Gibbons et al.'s findings (1994), this study finds that although universities, as institutions, have a limited presence in the knowledge society, university staff members, as individuals, are often actively engaged in these activities. This is, according to a few respondents, "due to both incentive structures and institutional weakness within universities".[28] University teachers struggling to get sufficient and appropriate funding to pursue individual research projects turn towards the private sector. Similarly to what Arocena and Sutz found in Latin American universities, in Bangladesh the situation described above results in teachers 'migrating' (establishing an independent think tank or a university research wing) or adopting other strategies consisting usually of multiple jobs (2001:1230). The data collected from respondents indicates that as a result of this, it is common for public university teachers and for private university teachers to "migrate" away from universities to lecture or participate in conferences in other universities. For most researchers, combining a post at a university and doing regular consultancies for development agencies and think tanks is a common strategy, which enables them to supplement their income and publication records as well as survive in an underfinanced and politicized knowledge society. Dr. Debapriya (from CPD) said:

> Teachers from public universities, of course do not receive enough funding from their universities to conduct research so they engage in teaching but not in public universities, they take some jobs in the private universities to supplement their income. It is not one, not two but three sometimes. And you will find that universities advertise that they have public university teachers.

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[28] Prof. Mustafizur Rahman; Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya; Dr Jamilur Reza

In the knowledge society, some university teachers (mostly from public universities like Dhaka University) are heavily involved in conducting long-term research projects through the few think tanks that are active within knowledge society. By taking leave from their universities some university teachers can pursue their research interests and keep building their research skills. The relationship between think tanks and universities within the knowledge society is not unilateral and think tanks' staff members are sometimes active within universities (both public and private) to deliver or design teaching module. These types of tasks would correspond to "architects" roles described in the conceptual framework but the relationship between universities and think tanks on these remain mainly informal and heavily rely on one's personal networks. In the knowledge society, such relationships are limited as the number of institutions within it is small and the number of individual actors who can transcend these sectorial boundaries is even smaller.

2.4   Civil Society

Civil society in Bangladesh is dominated by the media, a large number of international and national NGOs and think tanks with universities, in theory, excluded from it. Within the "civil society" arena the relationships between some types of think tanks and universities are more frequent and short-term than within the knowledge society. The think tanks and NGOs active within civil society are usually reliant on external funds and tied to "*value for money*"[29] obligations.[30] Although the emergence of think tanks is a relatively recent phenomenon in Asia, only five countries have more think tanks[31] than Bangladesh (Rashid, 2013, 2012). Most private independent think tanks fund themselves through commissioned research work (for the GoB, external donors, bi-lateral agencies or large NGOs). Although think tanks cover a large number of topics, the level of autonomy of think tanks in selecting those is significantly affected.

2.5 Research: A New Economy?

A strand of literature has studied the paradox emerging from the need of NGOs to be financially sustainable whilst being politically relevant and engaged (Devine and Wood, 2009, Devine, 2003). Some authors identified a trend in the NGO and microfinance sector to move away from public mobilization to focus more on the financial return and value of their operations and

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[29] Maximizing outputs from support acquired from external sources
[30] Mr. Rashed Titumir
[31] behind China, India, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea

service provision (Lewis, 2011, Kabeer et al., 2010, Kabeer et al., 2012). External funds account for the majority of NGOs income source, therefore, have an influence on the way NGOs define and prioritize their activities (only few donors and external funding bodies offer non-conditional grants). For think tanks too, the reliance on external funding often contributes to creating a lack of coherence in their research agenda, which, according to some respondents, does not align with the needs of the knowledge society to remain impartial and apolitical. In a country where knowledge creation largely relies on external funders it is difficult for think tanks to preserve their independence and originality. Dr. Binayak Sen, director of research at BIDS, said:

> Theoretical critical thinking occurred mainly in the 1960s. Since then the production of knowledge has been diverted.[…] I think that knowledge is lagging behind significantly and one reason for it is that most of the research in Bangladesh is sponsored research. Sponsors may have a different objective function than the national objective function. Sponsors may have the objective to study the impact of climate change and poverty but this might not be the most important research need.[32]

Donors and development partners' intervention, through supporting civil society actors, contributes to transforming the type of knowledge created and the research capacity of individuals. The knowledge society is a supply-driven sector where research priorities are set by external actors and whereby civil society actors are consultancy firms. Arocena and Sutz (2001) described the rise of the "call for projects" phenomenon and explored the effects that the demand-driven research funding apparatus has on universities in Latin America. In the Bangladesh context, this study found that think tanks experience a similar trend of shortening research projects against rigid time frames set by external funders. Commissioned knowledge outputs produced by think tanks require relatively minor data analysis work. As explained earlier, Manzoor Hasan explained that apart from a few exceptions, think tanks "are not involved in knowledge production" and that they mostly publish research outputs based on "knowledge products together and secondary data" that they put together with a limited analytical and critical analysis.[33] This is in line with funders' interest to obtain rapid research outputs (mainly reports or books) for which they contract private institutions such as think

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[32] Dr. Binayak Sen
[33] Mr. Manzoor Hasan

tanks. Such research outputs are sometimes not made publically available. These types of think tanks have often been referred to by respondents as "consultancy firms" as most of their time is allocated to findings call for proposals, research grants applications and bidding.[34] These think tanks generally have no scope to develop in-house research capacities and often sub-contract data collection or analysis to individuals or other institutions to deliver research output.

Across the diverse typology of think tanks in the country, think tanks generally experience similar financial limitations which affect their capacity to produce independent knowledge. As Dr. Sultan Hafeez describes it: although the purpose of think tanks is to "produce 'think' pieces that will influence public policy and action" the way in which external funders condition and influence their research according to their own interests often interferes with the knowledge contribution of think tanks and constrains them from producing apolitical and non-theoretical types of information which require little analytical thinking. Overall, within civil society the lack of autonomy of think tanks fails to build more democratic structures and according to respondents working inside think tanks this affects "the creativity of the research process" and the "ability of researchers to create new narratives and challenge mainstream narratives".[35] Generally, think tanks are increasingly commissioned to conduct programme impact assessments, policy effectiveness evaluations and programme related research for international donors and development agencies or government ministries. Though valuable for programme implementation, this type of work is mainly instrumental.[36]

Donor organisations and international development agencies contract think tanks to conduct this type of work for two major reasons. The first one is that think tanks have developed the capacity to bid for grants and contracts and they have the research experience and expertise their work requires. The second one is that like with universities, the relationships between think tanks and donor agencies have "deformalized" and donors often established personalized relationships with individuals within think tanks. As a result, individuals working within think tank institutions are regularly approached by external agencies to conduct the commissioned research, and in this way donors develop their own networks of experts.

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[34] Mr. Manzoor Hasan and Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya
[35] Mr. Rashed Titumir
[36] The value of this type of work depends on the demand from policy-makers

University/ Think Tanks Relationships within Civil Society

In the context described above, university individual staff members, mostly teachers from public universities and a few from private universities, often have diverse types of affiliations with think tanks within civil society. Given the difficulties university staff members face in their own institutions to conduct research, they are often involved in short-term, output-driven or periodic types of jobs outside universities. They deliver courses, trainings, seminars and research projects undertaken by think tanks. Individual academics and private sector institutions like think tanks, within civil society have frequent relations, which make the barriers between the two increasingly porous.[37] For teachers, non-governmental, non-academic institutions such as think tanks, NGOs and donors' research through short-term consultancies, provide access to substantial extra income (related to their salary scale) access to research projects in their domain of expertise, access to social networks and exposure to the international donors and key national stakeholders[38] (and potentially identify future researchers). Civil society actors represent an attractive vehicle for teachers to satisfy their personal financial needs and pursue their interests.

For think tanks, university teachers represent valuable resources within the civil society arena, because they embody a certain status. Their specific level of expertise and research skills is valued by think tanks. This situation serves the interest of the "consultancy type think tanks" which use the services of university professors and lecturers for report and other paper reviews, trainings, seminars and conference purposes, which give them more credibility (towards donors, policy-makers and students) and flexibility.[39] This indicates how the relationships between universities and think tanks, in civil society, are more frequent and heavily reliant upon individuals' connections in terms of conducting research or short-term consultancy projects.

This form of collaboration between think tanks and universities is also found at the dissemination stage. A number of respondents explained the difficulties think tanks in Bangladesh were facing between making a research topic an accessible issue to the citizens and a policy issue to policy-makers. These groups use different languages and require a broad

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[37] Mr. Rashed Titumir, Prof. Mustafizur Rahman
[38] Dr. Jamilur Reza, Dr. Hossain Zillur and Mr. Rashed Titumir
[39] Dr. Ahsan Mansur

set of communication skills.[40] In civil society, many think tanks' efficiency depends on the popularity, connectedness and media exposure of a few key staff members. As a result of the competition for short-term funding, few think tanks in Bangladesh are established around a clear policy agenda on which they have clear ownership. Often the creation of these entities and the development of their advocacy and research activities revolve around one strongly opinionated, vision-driven person exposed to the media more than in research activities. These key civil society representatives have developed wide political networks within the formal political and state apparatus and expanded their aura of influence over the years. Sakhawat Ali, for example, said:

> In most of the cases the think tanks are trying to draw media attention because we think that policy advocacy is very useful, I think sometimes this is misguided. Think tanks try hard to hit the headlines of the newspapers rather than the content of the research.[41]

This phenomenon in the long run can weaken the autonomy of think tanks as institutions as they can become impotent and struggle to carry the research and advocacy work without them. These different factors explored in this section (reliance on short-term, project-based conditional funding, on individual personal networks) have an impact on the structures, which develop with the knowledge and civil society and the way in which they interact. Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya explained:

> These mechanisms do not create institutions, do not create sustained capacity, so in order to have institutions with sustained capacity, you need to have built that institution with a proper portfolio with appropriate predictable funding.[42]

In line with Sarker's argument that patron-client politics' entrenchment in governance processes prevents and constraints the institutionalization of good governance structures (2008), this paper argues that the way in which think tanks respond to the political context they operate in, leads to the promotion of key experts to the detriment of the institutional force of civil society actors to be "tanks" within formal policymaking processes. As a result the lines

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[40] Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman
[41] Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali
[42] Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya

between civil society and political society in Bangladesh are "blurred".[43] Although most university teachers and think tanks staff members generally recognize potential benefits to establishing more formal forms of institutional collaboration between think tanks and universities they also expressed significant reserve and caution. Respondents emphasized that for universities and think tanks to collaborate, one needs more leadership and vision[44] in order to overcome the challenges highlighted in previous sections and establish more collaborative and long-term institutional relationships which go beyond sharing a research project or attending each other's' policy events. Public universities, as institutions, are often seen as too political for think tanks to be associated with them[45] and high quality private university staff members are, at the moment, more attracted to consultancy work (often seen as more prestigious and more lucrative).

The Policy Sphere

The result of this political economy situation with the civil society and knowledge society impacts on the way, which think tanks and universities can take part in policymaking. In theory think tanks, like NGOs, have a political role to play in society (Harsh et al. 2010) although the way in which they interact with political actors and policy makers is rarely formalized sometimes undesired (Kabeer et al. 2010, Gauri & Galef 2005, Clarke 1998, Edwards & Hulme 1996). Overall, it is clear from the research findings that think tanks are significantly more active in the political sphere – in terms of policymaking - compared to universities.[46] Universities, as institutions, whether they are public or private are not major actors in terms of policymaking. As explained in earlier sections, individually, university teachers are engaged in politics either through political parties directly or through civil society institutions such as NGOs and think tanks. The process of sequenced sub-contraction and commissioned research, as described in the earlier section, fragments the process of research and in turn, individuals' and institutional' capacities as well as the quality of research outcomes. In the face of these constraints emerging from the research demand and supply (as described in previous sections) side think tanks often adjust their research focus and sometimes their internal capacities.

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[43] Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali
[44] Dr. Sultan Hafeez
[45] Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali
[46] Mr. Manzoor Hasan, Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali, Faiz Ahmad, Dr. Ahsan Mansur

Financial Dependency and Advocacy

One could argue that the required changes in attitudes for a more democratic culture in the established policymaking process cannot occur through individual kinship-based relations but necessitates civil society institutions' longer-term commitment and engagements with political processes. The data collected shows how the fragmentation of think tank's mission across diverse stakeholders weakens their advocacy and leadership capacity, as often, the focus of their research has been set by external agents. There is therefore a problem of ownership over the issues that are being researched through commissioned work. The fact that most research conducted by think tanks is commissioned by external funders, to a certain extent erodes the capacity of these civil society actors to bring sustainable change in key areas of policymaking in the long-run. Dr. Debapriya said "I think that these two missions, the research and .. policy advocacy, require independence, which is not attained by think tanks."

Think tanks, which heavily rely on external funds, often have an issue of identity in that they have often lost control over their research focus and internal capacities, which have become fluid and malleable. Without a clear policy focus and stable and reliable capacities to serve it, think tanks have limited credibility and opportunity to influence policymaking. It is, therefore, difficult to be "ahead" of the policymaking process. They inform policy makers on the impact of policies, instead of conducting research and advocacy activities around issues, which are new to policy makers. The fragmentation of the institutional capacities down to the individual level affects the efficacy of think tanks in the long-term. Consequently, the potential influence of think tanks on policy relies on their adaptability to both supply and demand pressures. Manzoor Hasan said:

> Think tanks do not address or meet the needs for policymaking because they are focused on meeting the needs of the donors. So their work does not focus on the government's and public sector's needs. But there is another important reason…… there is not the kind of demand that there should be from the public sector. The problems are therefore stemming from both the type of supply and the type of demand.

This quote illustrates how the contribution of think tanks to policy is not only dependent on think tanks' capacities to produce and disseminate knowledge but also reflect how "uneven" or "weak" the type of research demand from the government and policy makers, who are yet to be convinced about the utility and the value of qualitative research for example, especially if

they have not commissioned it.[47] The efficiency in affecting policy depends on their openness and willingness to read policy notes, report, flagship publications when policy makers in Bangladesh are generally more sensitive to quantitative evidence.

Political Influence and Autonomy

Think tanks that intend to be active in the political society and influence policy (as opposed to inform it by anticipating, monitor or assessing impact of policies and activities) have little room for manoeuvre and face common challenges. Although, think tanks might be given a window by government offices and structures to inform policy (by analysing budget or policy impact or prediction of impact) it is a different mission to driving policy and "being ahead of policymaking" which many respondents have identified as the main mission of think tanks[48]. Institution such as BIISS, BIDS and PRI might, therefore, be "active" in the political sphere as policy informants but have a limited role and produce little independent and impartial research work that would lead to new policies. In that sense, the impartiality and objectivity of the research outputs of think tanks and of their political and policy intention vary according to their leadership capacities and political aspirations. The former might also be influenced by their funding opportunities. Similarly to NGOs therefore the accountability of think tanks and their capacity to remain independent from politics is challenged. Devine (2006) explored this paradox between the need of NGOs, to remain non-political representative of civil society and active political players, and the data collected here indicates that think tanks are experiencing such a paradox whereby donors' intervention both helps think tanks sustain their research activities and affect their advocacy autonomy. The way in which think tanks select research themes (or projects), the way in which they conduct it and invest in their in-house capacity heavily depend on their funding sources and terms.

The data indicates that the strategy adopted by most think tanks (located outside universities and which do not have access to predictable untied funding) is to behave like "consultancy firms" which would suit both the supply for research funding and the demand for information[49] (Faro 2012:15), which has implications for governance in Bangladesh. We found little evidence that think tanks advocate for a political alternative (although this is one of their core functions) to key policy issues and that, in general their role and capacity to challenge policy is limited.

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[47] Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Dr. Bazlul Khondaker
[48] Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Mr. Manzoor Hasan and Dr. Bazlul Khondaker
[49] Dr. Bazlul Khondoker ; Mr. Manzoor Hasan ; Dr. Binayak Sen

Because they must keep good relations with the policy makers and avoid political confrontation in order to be effective, some of them either chose to follow a strict demand-based approach to research (mostly based on consultancy work) and only few manage to maintain a focus on one particular issue, a niche (through collaboration with foreign universities or think tanks or access to predictable, long-term core funding). In general, it is found that think tanks active within the policy sphere in Bangladesh generally lack political aspirations because they do not have sufficient financial and human capacity, willingness or time to pursue. The relationships amongst think tanks and between them and university individual staff members rarely involve collaboration around policy dialogues, lobbying activities or joint policy publications it mainly corresponds to attending each conferences, seminars and dialogues. This makes the influence of think tanks on the policymaking process more informal, individualized, fragmented and iterative instead of building the institutional capacities of non-state actors to represent a political agenda at the national level.

D. Conclusion

The diverse relationships between think tanks and universities in Bangladesh within three major domains (knowledge society, civil society and the policy sphere) have been analysed and discussed in this paper. This paper provides an in-depth picture of the demand and supply pressures think tanks and universities face in the political economy context of Bangladesh. The data indicates that in the knowledge society there are only a handful of actors that have the capacity to maintain their "academic freedom", or autonomy to produce independent knowledge. The data shows that there are some significant financial, political and structural constraints which institutions face and which often affect the type and quality of research outputs emerging from the knowledge society. It is clear from the data collected that there are only a few think tanks, which, as institutions, qualify as active members of the knowledge society. Individual think tank staff members are also sometimes drawn in for particular inputs such as designing curriculums or courses and modules. These relationships vary across institutions and individuals. The tangible or immaterial outputs can have some formal or informal impact on policymaking or on the way in which policymaking is structured and understood (a on figure 2).

Because knowledge society faces a critical lack of funds, the production of certain types of knowledge and research tends to be implemented by civil society actors. A large number of civil society actors conduct some form of "research" (monitoring, *ex-post* assessment, etc.), which contributes to informing and providing an evidence-base for policy makers. The lack of

independence and autonomy of civil society actors can affect the value and the quality of knowledge they produce, and their research capacity. The underlying trend of commercialization of knowledge creation and information dissemination influences the relationships between universities and think tanks and incentivizes them to collaborate on short-term, output-based research projects. These relationships mainly include report reviews, paper editing and methodological support to the research project. Such activities are generally described as consultancy work, which pulls academics out of university structures to collaborate with civil society actors (b on figure 2). Significant barriers faced in the two types of institutions push towards a less independent research agenda (decided by donors and funders' terms) carried out in a fragmented manner by different types of institutions and individuals.

Looking at the Bangladesh case study from the perspective of democratisation, this study presents some of the most important limits of civil society's potential contribution to the consolidation of democratic structures in Bangladesh and the paradoxes this can encompass. This precarious manner of producing knowledge (*demand-based*), results in consultancy reports with often questionable analytical or academic value. These dynamics serve a knowledge creation system, which is *ad-hoc* (a response to policies) rather than one which precedes it. The fragmentation occurring within the knowledge building and dissemination continuum interferes with the development of strong institutional capacities or strong research autonomy at the think tank level. In Bangladesh, it can affect the capacity of think tanks to drive and own their research agenda and their capacities to critically engage with policy (c on figure 2). Therefore, despite the active role played by think tanks within the policy sphere, the task of assessing the impact of their activities on policy remains difficult.

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Annex A

Respondents List

	Respondents name	Current position	Past positions[50]
Institute of Governance Studies	Manzoor Hasan, OBE	Institutional Advisor IGS BRACU	Deputy Executive Director of BRAC Founding Executive Director of TIB[51] Regional Director (Asia-Pacific) of TI
	Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman	Executive Director IGS	Director General of ADB's[52] Pacific Department, Deputy Director General of SARD Adviser to the Ministry of Finance and Planning Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
Centre for Policy Dialogue	Prof Mustafizur Rahman	Executive Director CPD	Member of the Panel of Economists for the SFYP[53] and the TYPP[54] Member of the Panel of Economists for the Seventh Five Year Plan WTO Advisory Committee Regulatory Reforms Commission
	Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya	Distinguished Fellow	Chair of Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals Special Adviser on LDCs to the Secretary General, UNCTAD President of UNCTAD's governing board

[50] This list is non-exhaustive
[51] Transparency International Bangladesh
[52] Asian Development Bank
[53] Sixth Five Year Plan
[54] Ten Year Perspective Plan Five Year Plan

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Dr. Binayak Sen	Director of Research	Policy-adviser and part of a number of national committees (Member of the Macroeconomic Consultative Committee to the Ministry of Finance) Member of the International Steering Committee of the South Asia Network of Economic Institutes (SANEI) Adjunct Professor at the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, formed under the National University Dhaka
	Dr. S.M. Zulfiqar Ali	Senior Research Fellow	Research and Communication Director EEP/shiree
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies	Munshi Faiz Ahmad	Chairman, Board of Governors	Ambassador (Grade-A) of Bangladesh to the People's Republic of China High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Singapore. Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, New York. Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka
	Dr. Shaheen Afroze	Research Director	Ph.D. in International Relations, University of Glasgow, UK, 1994.
Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh	Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur	Executive Director	Fiscal Affairs and Policy Review and Development departments and area departments of the IMF IMF Senior Resident Representative to Pakistan during 1998-01 Fiscal Advisor to the Minister of Finance Division Chief of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) IMF Mission Chief for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman
	Prof Bazlul Khondaker	Senior Fellow	Dhaka University as a Professor of Economics Affiliated to PRI
Power and Participation Research Centre	Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman	Executive Chairman	Drafting of the poverty reduction strategy of the government in 2005 Member of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA). Founder of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) Researcher at BIDS Adviser (cabinet minister) to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh- ministries of commerce and education. President of the Dhaka University Economics Department Alumi Association DUEDAA

	Mr. Khondoker Sakhawat Ali	Research Fellow	Research Fellow at Power and Participation Research Center Lead of the education research team. BRAC Development Institute, Communication Coordinator Managing Editor, Protichinta, Journal
Unnoyon Onneshan	Rashed Titumir	Chairman	Lecturer in economics at Dhaka university Advisor to the government on multilateral negotiations such as WTO, UNFCCC, UNCBD. Member of different UN committees of experts.
Dhaka University	Prof. Mahbubul Mokaddem Akash	Professor of Economics	Lead economist
	Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen	Director of Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies	Member, National Disaster Management Advisory Committee (NDMAC), Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Executive Member, South Asian Sociological Society Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Sociological Association (BSA), 2010 Executive Member, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Environment Movement/BAPA) and former Joint Secretary
Jahangir Nogor University	Dr. Manas Kumar Chowdhury	Professor of Anthropology	Head of the department of Anthropology Visiting Professor at Hiroshima University
Independent University Bangladesh	Dr. Saleemul Huq	Director of the International Centre for Climate Change & Development (ICCCAD)	Chairman of BCAS (Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies) Board of Directors Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – as contributor to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Director of the Climate Change Programme at International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) Consultant at the World Bank, UNFCCC, Global Environment Facility (GEF) Washington DC, SIDA, Sweden and NORAD (developing climate change programme).
North South University	Dr. M. Emdadul Haq	Chairman, Department of General & Continuing Education	Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2007 – 2010 Founder Chair & Professor of the Department of International Relations, University of Chittagong

			Professor at Department of Political Science, University of Chittagong
	Prof ATM Nurul Amin	Professor and Dean	Division Chairman of Human Settlements Development at AIT Senior UN Fellow with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Nagoya, Japan and Guest Editor of Regional Development Dialogue
University of Asia Pacific (UAP) **BUET**	Jamilur Reza Chowdhury	Vice Chancellor	Doctor of Engineering (Honoris Causa) degree by Manchester University on 20th October, 2010 BRAC University Vice Chancellor Adviser (Minister) in the Non-Party Caretaker Government in April, 1996 and was in charge of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Water Resources.

Annex B

Case Studies

Case Study 1: IGS

A year after its inception, the Centre of Governance Studies reached the status of an Institute in 2006 under the direction of Dr. Akbar Ali Khan, a distinguished international and national civil servant as well as a Professor at BRACU Business School. After him IGS was directed by Barrister Manzoor Hasan, the founding director of Transparency International in Bangladesh (TIB) and a Deputy Executive Director of BRAC, and now by Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, the current Executive Director.

IGS has benefitted from dedicated and visionary leaders and executive directors, enabled to develop strong academic webs and linkages with donors and academic partners in the US, UK, Dutch and Australian universities. To pursue its institutional mission, IGS strategizes to place itself as a major civil society actor in Bangladesh and as an independent institute focusing on governance issues while also issuing Masters level teaching on this to civil servants and NGOs or think tanks staff members. The question of relationship of the Institute with universities in Bangladesh is, in this case, asking the question of its relationships with BRACU because of the structure of the think tank. This case study analyses the importance and significance of this think tank/university relationships for the teaching, training and advocacy activities undertaken by IGS.

In a context where continuous efforts to regularly deliver quality outputs is rare, IGS reinforced its presence by publishing Briefing and Policy Notes, based on survey data addressed to policy makers and the GOB as well as regular contribution to national newspapers' op-eds in order to sensitise the general public about governance issues. IGS uses qualitative research approaches alongside quantitative survey data, which is uncommon and challenging in a context where quantitative evidence generally is more valued by policy makers than qualitative data. IGS is also regarded as a strong research centre with international collaborations (with universities and think tanks abroad). Through its contribution within the World Bank's Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA) programme and its support from IDRC, IGS

developed important capacities to produce and disseminate quality research activities[55] and regular published outputs. IGS's most nationally renowned research output are the State of Governance Reports (SOGs, henceforth) (four since 2006) and the State of Cities (SOC) Urban Governance in Dhaka Report (since 2012). Manzoor Hasan, who instituted the production of these Reports, thought of it as a contribution to exploring development issues "through a new dimension" and a "useful new angle".[56] In general, the authority of these reports is strengthened by IGS's internal peer review processes.

IGS has implemented professional training courses and Masters Degrees as well as advocacy activities. IGS's mission is 'to identify, promote and support effective, transparent, accountable, equitable and citizen-friendly government in Bangladesh and South Asia. 'IGS' motto is 'Bringing Value to Public Life' as stated on the institute's website and confirmed by Dr. Hafeez Rahman. To this effect, IGS established its early reputation through Masters programmes[57] as well as certified professional training course. Inspired by BRAC's lesson learning, IGS developed a Masters course on issues of governance to early career civil servants called the Masters in Governance and Development.

There are clear substantial advantages of being located within BRAC for IGS regarding its teaching mission. Firstly, the aptitude of IGS to deliver certificates is an important comparative advantage compared to other think tanks, which are located outside universities. This directly derives from its positioning under the BRAC umbrella. The implications of being located within or alongside the BRAC structure was not negligible to establish the reputation of IGS's training and Masters courses, the MAGD programme in particular. Secondly, historically, BRAC intervene to maintain the continuity of the MAGD. Although the Masters course was initially supported by a grant from the Dutch Government for the first three years, after the grant ended the programme experienced a brief interruption before BRAC directly sustained the programme through direct financial provision. The quality of these programmes is generally acknowledged in the country and within the government. Thirdly, to a lesser extent IGS largely relies on external lecturers and speakers located within public and private universities (including BRACU) to deliver high quality courses. These examples show how the formal

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[55] Such as the Journalism Training and Research Initiative (JATRI)
[56] Interview with Mr. Manzoor Hasan
[57] Masters in governance and development (established in 2005) and Masters in procurement and supply management (to start in Spring 2014)

institutional relationship between IGS and BRACU can broaden the type of activities undertaken by IGS and facilitate their implementation.

The data collected, however, indicates that IGS faces significant difficulties in trying to influence policy. The institutional advisor of IGS explained that although the quality of the SOG and SOC was broadly acknowledged by development partners; it is unclear as to whether policy makers read these reports. In response to this, IGS started publishing more "digestible" shorter versions of them under Policy Briefs and Policy Notes format in order to penetrate policy circles and sensitise them to key issues of governance. This is even more challenging as the analysis presented in these reports can often challenge the current governance structures or systems of the country, a topic which the targeted audience might be reluctant to read about. To this attempt IGS convenes international and national conferences on governance themes[58] alongside organizing workshops, seminars and publications public launches convening the media. This could question the capacity of IGS to fulfil its advocacy mission nationally and what role BRAC plays in strengthening IGS's national presence. Based on the data collected the analysis of IGS strength and opportunities suggest that the on-going relationship between BRAC and IGS is not yet used at its full potential and that both institutions could significantly benefit from stronger collaboration.

The case study of IGS briefly presented here summarizes key dimensions of the IGS domain of expertise and activities and highlights the type of relationship it has with BRACU as well as their implications in way of IGS mission. It appears that IGS location under the BRAC University umbrella leads to developing more formal institutional relationships, which are largely collaborative. It also seems that it adds more formality and bureaucracy to the Institute's management, regulations and practices. This set up, for the moment, provides important benefits (international recognition, certification ability and staff migration) whilst also holding some drawbacks on the institute's agency especially regarding outreach and advocacy activities. There might be a sense that IGS is competing with some research departments at BRACU (like the BRAC Development Institute, BDI) at the national level, however, IGS remains a leading well-established research institute which has enough credibility and authoritativeness to focus on governance issues. Besides, IGS staff members also have

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[58] The International Conference on '40 years of Governance in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Future Prospects' in November 2011, and two national conferences in December 2012 and January 2013 for example.

individual relationships with other universities (both private and public) where they occasionally deliver seminars, workshops or lectures.

Case Study 2: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) was first created in 1957 in the name of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) which was a public enterprise established with both public (government of Pakistan) and private (Ford Foundation) funds to conduct policy-oriented research work in Pakistan. In the late 1960s, PIDE was considered by many as one of the leading development research centres. Later, it was moved from Karachi to Dhaka in 1970 because it contained many bright Bengali economists and researchers and after the war of independence in 1971 it was renamed as the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. Compared to the large majority of think tanks in Bangladesh, BIDS receives regular core funding from the government. Although the charter upon which BIDS was created stipulates that the Institute is an independent policy research entity, the relationship between BIDS and the government has, over the years, evolved. Although BIDS played a key role, with the Planning Commission, in re-shaping the country's economy in the post-war period, its linkages with the state has slightly waned as it insisted on preserving its independence from the military regimes as well as the political parties wanting to influence its work. The government's attempt to nominate the director of BIDS in 1991 to politicize the Institute led to a leadership crisis in the think tank.[59] The case study of BIDS is important to our study, as it illustrates the situations of think tanks/ universities relationship from the angle of an institute whose activities rely essentially on public finances. More than the issue of financial sustainability, it is the issue of autonomy which transcends this institutional case study.

BIDS is ranked 15th in the Top 40 Think Tanks in Asia (Excluding China, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea) (McGann, 2012) and ranked 99th in the world. Nowadays, the presence of the government is reflected through the composition of the Board of Trustee at BIDS. It consists of 13 members, including a member of the Planning Commission, the Governor of Bangladesh Bank and the secretaries attached to the Ministries of Finance and Education. The research

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[59] At the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), the chairman is systematically appointed for two years by the ministry of defense. The recently appointed chairman at BIISS is an ex-ambassador to China.

at BIDS is organized into five divisions which are: the Agriculture and Rural Development Division covering agriculture, natural resources management, and rural development related issues; the General Economics Division focusing on macroeconomic policies and global issues; the Human Resources Development Division covers the human related issues such as poverty, education, health and gender; the fourth one is the Industry and Physical Infrastructure Division which focuses on studying national manufacturing activities, industries, and infrastructures; lastly, the Population Studies Division researches on population dynamics and covers sociological behavioural studies (empowerment and reproductive behaviour, health, consumption, health-seeking behaviour, vulnerability, poverty, domestic violence, citizenship and dowry for instance).

On research scope and publication quality, BIDS' *Major Findings and Policy Implications of Completed Studies* reports on the major sponsored research projects undertaken by the Institute between July 2011 and December 2012 and on their policy implications. Within one year BIDS' work covered a total of 13 research studies, of which one study was funded by the BIDS Research Endowment Fund (REF), while the remaining 12 studies were sponsored by government departments/agencies (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, BBS, the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives, The Ministry of Food, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs,) and national and international institutions (Asian Development Bank, SANEI, South Asian Network of Economic Research Institute, The World Bank and UNDP for example). The duration of the sponsored projects undertaken ranges from one month to two years (BIDS 2013).

The most recent research work undertaken by BIDS[60] covered several areas, including barriers to the development of livestock and fisheries sectors, impact evaluation of maternity allowance programme, providing support to Parliamentary Standing Committees on oversight of budget implementation, energy subsidies and profile of groups vulnerable to energy sector reforms in Bangladesh, structure and growth of rural non-farm sector in Bangladesh, review and long-run impact study of projects and programmes. In conducting this sponsored research work and writing the publication outcome (reports or sometimes article) BIDS rarely engages with universities at an institutional level or at an individual level. It conducts its research and analysis

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[60] between July and December 2013

predominantly by using internal resources. At the moment BIDS has very limited interactions with universities and university staff members whether this concerns research, publication or training activities.

A research contract has recently been signed between BIDS and the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Planning to undertake impact evaluation of five government implemented development projects. These are: (1) Small Scale Water Resources Projects–II; (2) National Agricultural Technology Project Phase–I; (3) Technical Training Centers/ IGA Institutes in the Districts of Bangladesh under Different ADP Funded Projects of Various Ministries; (4) Reaching Out of School Children Projects (4th revision) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education; and (5) Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply.BIDS created its own academic journal called the Bangladesh Development Studies (BDS), which is the refereed quarterly flagship journal of the Institute. It publishes research articles, notes and book reviews by BIDS researchers as well as national and international scholars. It benefits from a strong international reputation and is currently in its 37th years of publication. BIDS incentivises it staff to publish in international peer-reviewed journals through its promotion systems. BIDS has very strict promotion rules based on staff members' academic publications quality and number[61] as well as its own internationally recognized peer-reviewed journal. This stands as a rare exception, and in general, think tanks have low or poor publications quality standards and monitoring. Such systems certainly incentivize staff members to focus on conducting original research work and publish regularly in international academic journals, which meet, at least, BDS quality standards.

Following the path taken by its sister organisation in Pakistan which has become PIDE University, BIDS has for a few years started thinking about initiating its own academic programme. The research participants explained that the institutional capacities of BIDS are comprehensive and based on its strong faculty and research capabilities. Proposals have been sent to the university grants commission to implement two Masters Degree programmes in public policy and development economics.

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[61] Dr. Zulfikar Ali and Dr. Binayak Sen

Case Study 3: Dhaka University

Established in 1921 under the Dacca University Act 1920 of the Indian Legislative Council, Dhaka University (DU) is modelled after British universities. DU is the largest public university in Bangladesh, with 33,000 students and 1,800 staff members. In Bangladesh, in the 1990s, few public institutions benefitted from international recognition, including BUET and Dhaka University which was once called "*the Oxford of the East*".[62]. However, the university has since suffered from intense politicization. The introduction of social sciences (sociology, anthropology and development studies) at DU was initiated by donors in 1990s[63].

The Case Study of DU helps illustrate the trend universities (public and private) experience in developing their own in-house think tanks. DU has 70 departments under 13 faculties and hosts 42 research centres. The number of research centres increased significantly particularly since the late 1980s. Some of them were set up to commemorate the memory of a late professor, others to encourage inter-disciplinary and intra-DU departments' linkages. If some of the research centres are apparently active and conduct regular research and publication work, others on the contrary seem to be inactive (or at least seemingly inactive). The later may have run out of financial support (but keep the structure of the centre in place) and become "façade centres" with no actual programme or staff members. There are non-negligible benefits to keeping these centres alive. For DU, teachers having their own, or being part of a research centre increases their status and promotes the prestige of their work through networking. According to the research participants, the motivations for developing these institutes are manifold:

1- It enables DU to widen its thematic coverage and multiply its domains of expertise and draws international observers' attention towards specific issues.

2- It creates a suitable administrative platform to help mutual collaboration and consultation amongst researchers and teachers to develop research proposals for grants application and bids.

3- It contributes to enhancing individuals' capacities to disseminate research outcomes through conferences, seminar, workshops, as well as through publications of journal articles.

[62] Dr. Zulfikar Ali
[63] Mr. Khondaker Sakhawat Ali

4- It encourages collaborative research among development practitioners, NGOs, development partners for influencing government policies and practices.

The Director of the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies (IDMVS), one of the 42 research centres located at DU, clearly explained that the funds dedicated to financing academic research were not sufficient at public universities. She also said that private universities can better afford to do so because of the significantly higher tuition fees they charge to their students. The Institute awards its own undergraduate and Master's degrees. The relationships between this institute and other national and inter-national stakeholders seem to have been significantly simplified by its status and structure within DU. The Institute collaborates regularly with various government ministries and agencies, development partners, and national and international NGOs. Students of the institute's graduate and post-graduate courses benefit from the technical and financial supports from the government of Bangladesh's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP-II). Certainly, the type of relationship often depends on the nature of the activities to be undertaken, but the respondent affirmed that most of the relationships between IDMVS and international or national organisations are usually formalized under the form of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Institute's internship and fellowship as well as the research and publication activities are set up with the financial and technical support of Associated British Food, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and Voluntary Services Overseas under a series of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU).

As explained in the main text of this paper, DU teachers and faculty members are also involved in conducting research, publishing and advocacy activities with Think Tanks located outside DU. This is, according to all our research participants, very common in public universities. This way, teachers extend their personal networks, conduct good quality research work, increase their income substantially and often obtain published work too. DU officially "allows" this consultancy type work, according to our respondents, as this is also a way of keeping teachers and faculty members up-to-date with practice by giving them the opportunity broaden their personal working experience in their field of expertise. The activities undertaken can range from reviewing bid or grant application document to taking the lead in publishing report and papers or supervising research work (using a specific set of theoretical knowledge, analytical skills and/or methodological competence). Such relationships are, as explained earlier, heavily based upon personal networks and individual connectedness in the sector rather than institutionalized and formalized relationships.