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## **Framing of Migration, Climate Change and their implications for India: Rhetoric, Reality and The Politics of Narrative**

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**Abstract:** *In Gabriel Garcia Márquez<sup>1</sup> word's life was not about what someone lived, but about what someone remembered and how someone remembered it to reveal it. So, according to him life is about how people memorize, enlighten and re-tell their lives, about how people create their own life-narratives. We comprehend and make sense of the world by telling tales about this world. We realize the political processes and power relations among different actors in International Relations through the narrative geopolitician, scholars, and diplomats tell and re-tell it in their own traditions and positions. Our view of geopolitics is essentially shaped by particular stories told by leading scholars and writers of the field. Stories in essence make, shape and change the world. They influence our belief and our actions. They influence how we view the political processes and changing power relations in International Relations. This manuscript critically examines the three major sites in India where alarmist narratives related to climate change induced displacements and trans-border migrations into India from Bangladesh are being framed. This essay will address the following questions: What is the nature of and politics behind the imaginative*

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez was a Colombian novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter and journalist. García Márquez, familiarly known as "Gabo" in his native country, was considered one of the most significant authors of the 20th century. In 1982, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

*geographies of threats, narrative and dangers associated with the likely influx of a large number of climate change migrants from Bangladesh? Who is deploying the language and narratives of threats and for what reasons? How well or ill founded are the perceived threats and fears narratives of climate-induced displacements leading to 'climate migrants' crossing the border?*

## **1. Introduction**

In the coming century climate change is expected to have a profound effect over South Asia particularly the low lying Bangladesh which is consider as “black hole” due to its geographical location. We have seen how different reports and scenarios therein show that sea level rise, rising temperatures and changing weather patterns will cause extensive damage to Bangladesh and its neighbourhood due to both flooding and drought and leading to human migration and displacements. In this article we will be looking at how the phenomenon of climate migrations is being framed and flagged at three major sites of the production of geographical knowledge’s: Popular, Formal and Practical geopolitics. This aim to identify and explore discourses of fears and threats within current policy debates around the issue of climate induced migration in both India and Bangladesh by examining a collection of literature and texts produced by government agencies, academia, NGOs, popular media and think tanks. I will use discourse analysis to expose the power/ knowledge nexus behind different alarmist narratives, political rhetoric and speech acts related to climate change induced displacements and trans-border migrations into India from Bangladesh. These discourses reflect contested knowledge claims of various agencies/organizations as well as power struggles among policy communities who seek to establish their respective narratives within the “knowledge regime that determines the parameter of climate future debates on the subject” (Jennifer Milliken, 1999).

It is illuminating to note at the outset insights from the point made by Bettina B. F. Wittneben et al (2012: 1431), that “climate change is not just an environmental problem requiring technical and managerial solutions; it is a political issue where a variety of organizations state agencies, firms, industry associations, NGOs and multilateral organizations – engage in contestation as well as collaboration over the issue”.

In a similar vein, Baldwin, Methmann and Rothe (2014) argue that the debate about climate-induced migration should not be taken only as an academic debate. At its very core it is a highly political debate, the central concern of which is how and with what effects we imagine a world that is radically transformed by climate change and how we deal with the anxieties (including cartographic anxieties) that flow from such imaginaries and narratives.

## **2. Critical Geopolitics, Narratives and Alarmist Linguistic repertoires of Climate Change**

Even at the cost of some repetition, it will be useful to return to a critical geopolitics, focusing more sharply on climate change. When applied to the phenomenon of climate change, a critical geopolitical perspective questions the unproblematic description of the world political map. Seen from this perspective, geopolitics of climate change appears to be a discourse that is both culturally and politically varied. Little surprise ‘climate change’ in its discursive domain is marked by a variety of ways of describing, representing and writing about geography and international politics of climate change. Each discourse seeks to establish and assert its own truths. The point is that it is both desirable and possible to politicize the creation of geopolitical knowledge by intellectuals, institutions and practicing statesmen. Consequently the production of geopolitical discourse is seen as a part of politics itself and not as a neutral and detached description of a transparent, objective reality (Dodds and

Sidaway, 1994) such as ‘climate change’. As noted earlier, critical geopolitics approaches the ‘geopolitical’ as comprising the following three facets: Popular geopolitics, Formal geopolitics and Practical geopolitics.

Practical geopolitics implies reasoning that gives the impression of consensual and unproblematic assumptions about places, peoples and their identities. Typically, This is the reasoning of “practitioners of statecraft including politicians and military commanders” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1998: 81). Whereas formal geopolitics is the reasoning attributed to strategic thinkers and public intellectuals, whose writings are taken as the foundation stones of a particular ‘geopolitical tradition’ guiding the conduct of statecraft (ibid.). And popular geopolitics is the reasoning of popular culture and mass media, with the help of which certain understandings of geopolitics issues are constructed and turned in a ‘geopolitical common sense’.

This article is based on the assumption that dominant geopolitical narratives of climate change draw on various strands of practical, formal and popular geopolitics. Before proceeding further with the analysis, a brief engagement with the concept of ‘narratives’ is in order. According to Hinchman and Hinchman (1997, xvi cited in Ivor Goodson, Scherto Gill) stated that “Narratives in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people’s experiences of it.”. The definition suggests that narratives have three major characteristics (Elliott. J. 2005). “First, they are *chronological* (they are representations of sequences of events), second that they are *meaningful*, and thirdly, they are inherently *social* in that they are produced for a specific audience” (ibid: 4). As pointed out by Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) the word ‘narrative’ has Indo-European root ‘gna’ which means both to know and to tell. As White puts it “Narrative might well be considered a

solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling” (White, 1987:1). A number of authors interested in the concept of ‘narrative’ have underlined the importance of the context in ‘telling’ and the role played by ‘listener’ in the construction of narratives (Bernstein, 1997; Gubrium and Holstein 1998, Holmes 1997, Mishler, 1986). This emphasis on ‘context’ ‘telling’, ‘listener’ is most relevant and revealing when it comes to climate migrations narratives.

Both discourses narratives the written and spoken word occupies a central role in various framings and understandings of climate change. It is through a selective and strategic deployment of a particular language and vocabulary that governments, businesses, NGOs and media influence each other and build agreement on certain policy directions and choices. Discourses and narratives can take diverse forms, including historical, scientific, philosophical, folklore, and ‘commonsense’.. MacIntyre (1985) suggests a useful way of thinking about narratives as part of a cultural context or tradition. No surprise therefore various climate change discourses, including narratives of climate migrants challenging certain borders do have important cultural contexts and moorings. Latour (1993) argued that our narratives co-evolve with our notions of the ‘good’ our understanding of ourselves, our conception of society, our scientific conception of nature and our beliefs of the ‘supernatural’. Metz, et.al (2001) is quite right in pointing out that this diversity of understandings and conceptions is central to our responses to climate change. Therefore, a critical examination of various discourses can provide essential insights into different peoples’ assumptions, beliefs and visions about the world.

Thompson and Ray (1998), Ney (2000) and Thompson (2000) pinpoint some of the essential features of the discourses that describe and define various positions on climate change. While examining various climate change discourses, it could be highly

illuminating to see how each discourse offers its view of nature and its conception of society. For example some discourses may perceive the 'environment' as robust, while others could view 'nature' as fragile and vulnerable to human interference. Some might argue in favour of market-based approach to climate mitigation whereas others might choose to place explicit emphasis on egalitarian, participant approaches. Last but not the least it is good to ponder over of what Foucault (1980) meant when he underlined the importance of examining how narratives become an instrument for wielding power.

Authors such as Alisdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Martha Nussbaum would appeal in favour of 'turn to narrative' (Whitebrook 1996: 32). In their view, understanding the politics behind certain narratives(including climate change narratives) can make people much more aware about how humiliating certain climate narratives and underlying attitudes can be and how opposition to those dominant narratives can promote a sense of human solidarity based on the principles of climate justice. A critique of such narratives could also "allow us to notice suffering through the skill of 'imaginative identification'; the "ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers" (Rorty, 1989: 93; xvi).

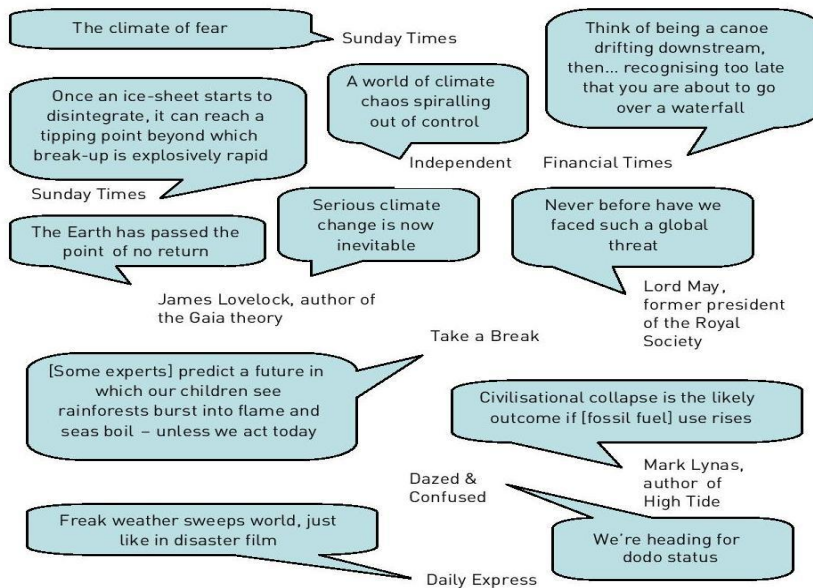
As noted by Gill Ereaut and Nat Segnit (2006) "Linguistic repertoires are systems of language that are routinely used for describing and evaluating actions, events and people. A linguistic repertoire might include a distinctive lexicon, a set of grammatical or stylistic features, or particular images, metaphors, idioms, stories and categories."How does one communicate the 'urgency' (and for many 'emergency') of climate change? In the context of the urgency/emergency of the climate change problem, one finds two broad categories of discourse on Climate change. Whereas the first invokes a sense of alarm, the other conveys and a sense of alarmism. The dominant climate change discourses are more often than not

constructed through the alarmist repertoire: “as awesome, terrible, immense and beyond human control” (Risbey, 2007).

Linguistic repertoires constitute different versions of what might be considered ‘common sense’, which, in other words, implies different ways of ‘making sense of the world’. These can also be seen as ‘interpretative repertoires’ because they can be (and often are) used for making judgements in terms of right/wrong and acceptable/not acceptable. “This collection of Alarmism is seen everywhere and is used or drawn on from across the ideological spectrum, in broadsheets and tabloids, in popular magazines and in campaign literature from government initiatives and environmental groups.” (Ereaut and Segnit, 2006).

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Alarmism ('We're all going to die!')



Source: Gill Ereaut and Nat Segnit.(2006). Warm Words How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?. Institute for Public Policy Research:pp13

The alarmist repertoire contains an urgent tone and cinematic codes, and invokes images and ways of speaking that remind one of horror and disaster films (Leake and Milne 2006). In this vein, Catt (2005) in his intriguing work titled ‘Has the Day After Tomorrow Arrived?; makes a reference to ‘astonishing scenes that might have come straight from Hollywood’. In such extreme portrayals there is no room for nuances, complexity or middle ground. A heady mixture of narratives metaphors and predictions of war and violence imaginatively transform the physical threat into a societal threat: ‘the breakdown of civilisation’. Betsy Hartmann (2010), in his intriguing writings on ‘*Rethinking climate refugees and climate*



*conflict: Rhetoric, reality and the politics of policy discourse'* reminds us that alarmist and crisis narratives about climate refugees and conflict serve the interests and priorities of national security actors. "These threat narratives themselves pose a threat to the kind of peaceful international cooperation and development initiatives needed to respond effectively to climate change" (ibid:234). As rightly pointed out by Penny(2007) "the potential security threat posed by climate change has caught the world's political imagination, generating a perceptible shift in the way that a growing number of decision-makers in the North and the South are talking about the subject that we shall be looking critically in the coming section."

### **3. Framings of Migration, Climate Change and their implications for India: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Alarmist Discourses/ Narratives**

Nation-states in international relations are very sensitive towards their borders, nationalisms and try to impose orders in order to maintain their borders. In western terminology, nations represent common religion, common belief, common history, common language and ethnicity. However, in case of post-colonial South Asia, it is after getting freedom from the domination of the Britisher's that nations became multi-religious, multi-linguistic, with multiple identities. In today's South Asia one already finds multiple problems including displacement and migrations. But now with the advent of Climate change, new kinds of fear, borders and boundaries have come into existence between India and Bangladesh. Ever since the concept of 'global climate change has risen to prominence in the 1980', a series of metaphors have been deployed *in* and *about* South Asia at the service of imaginative geographies of chaotic and catastrophic consequences of Climate change. The alarmist linguistic repertoire includes words such as 'mass devastation' 'ruined national economies', terror, danger, extinction and collapse.

All these danger and threats are primarily associated with the image of migrants or border crosser who will be coming from Bangladesh to India due to climate change related factors. In similar vein Thakur (2009:4) argues that had Ghoramara Island in the Sunderbans not submerged, turning its inhabitants into environmental refugees “they would have shown the world how an entire village can run on solar power at a time when cities are failing to grapple with the threat of global warming and climate change”.

Various national security establishments and strategic experts, including many in South Asia, are increasingly perceiving climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ (Podesta and Ogden 2007:117), echoing the growing geopolitical anxieties in the West over South Asia getting further destabilized due to climate change. These agencies and actors appear rather convinced that Bangladeshi migrants will become a major source of cartographic anxieties and geopolitical tension as they cross the region’s contested borders and territories, such as those between India, Pakistan, and China.

Similar anxieties are being articulated by many security experts who believe that “Climate change will lead to terrorism and increased immigration into the UK as millions are displaced by rising seas (Kyla Mandel 2014).” In their view India-Bangladesh border has long been a site of significant political friction and its further securitization and militarization is difficult to contain, especially after the invasion of Afghanistan by the United States. They fear that a very large number of Taliban and jihadists have sought and found safe haven in Bangladesh and a ‘volatile mix’ of deteriorating socio-economic conditions, radical Islamic political groups, and acute environmental insecurity induced by climate change could result in serious regional and even global fallouts. South Asia is considered as caught up in an unholy triangular of climate change.

One point that we have been flagging in the preceding sections is that in the case of South Asia, climate change is not the only contributing factor to region's vulnerability and stability. A combination of factors and forces that make this region so vulnerable is widespread poverty, poor governance, corruption, transnational organised crime, natural resource depletion, population growth, ecosystem degradation, competition for limited resources) and the impact of natural hazards such as tsunamis and storms. The implications of climate change for these (and many more) factors need a careful, detailed and critical analysis.

#### **4. Practical Geopolitics Reasoning in India: Government official claims and counter-claims in India**

In India, alarmist rhetoric around climate migrations/refugees and conflict has been deployed by both state and non state actors, including U.N. agencies, development NGOs, national governments, security pundits and popular media. The process and narrative of securitisation began with the British officers who treated migration at best as a political issue. Generally speaking, the securitising actors are the political leaders, security personnel and the intelligence agencies. In India too one finds a broad spectrum of imaginative geographies and narratives revolving around climate change induced displacement and migrations (Sarfaraz Alam 2003, Architesh Panda 2010). In the remaining part of this essay, I will examine practical geopolitics reasoning in India and show how geopolitics of fear, imaginative geographies, bordering practices and narratives of migration from Bangladesh into Indian Territory feed into each other to form a dominant discourse.

A close examination of several texts related to security discourse on climate induced migration reveals that it is an extension of the long standing concern of illegal migration from Bangladesh to India. The overall geopolitical and cultural climate has also played

important role in deciding the nature of texts written by India based organizations. One finds running through these texts, narratives and response some kind of cartographic anxieties, infused with the imaginative geographies of fear and insecurity of the 'Others'. Government of India has heavily securitized the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh by projecting it as a potential threat to India's national security and by viewing it through the lenses of terrorism as well as ethnic or communal violence. Bangladeshis have been migrating in order to seek better economic opportunities and are highly in demand in Indian upper and middle class families, not only in neighbouring states but also in Delhi, Mumbai and other urban centres across India. Narratives of Geopolitics of fear has been dominant in Indian government's rhetoric towards illegal migrations from Bangladesh since 1971. "At the forefront 'the response of the Indian state over the years also reflects the failure of young South Asian nations to face up to their challenges, reluctance of its political leaders to strategies long term solutions and the failure of the combined political leadership of the region to formulate common strategies to secure their future'" (Joseph, 2006:2).

As pointed out by Rizwana Shamshad (2008) Bangladeshi migrants became a central issue in the political rhetoric of the BJP during the 1980s and 1990s. This was the period when many among the Hindu nationalists felt that the Muslim minority was increasing its presence in India, and the growing number of Muslims might pose a threat to Hindu majority status in India. Factors such as these facilitated BJP's entry into the political sphere in collaboration with orthodox Hindu communal ideology, the RSS, Vishwas Hindu Parishad, and Bajrang Dal (Anuj Nanadur, 2006).

The tone and tenor of former Union Minister Indrajit Gupta Statement regarding illegal migrants from Bangladesh are visibly marked by the geopolitics of fear and cartographic anxieties. On 6 May 1997, he declared that there were nearly 10 million

undocumented immigrants, largely from Bangladesh, residing in India (*Times of India*, 1997). This was the first official statement by the Government of India regarding the extent of the problem of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Ramachandran (1999: 236). In response to the above statement, Uma Bharati, a member of the Sangh Parivar, expressed her deep sense of regret over the failure of the Indian government in taking effective steps to check the entry of Bangladeshi citizens. One can discern from various statements made by her a great deal of fear, anxiety and the alarm over the possibility that undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants would soon demand a separate state from India (Ramachandran, 1999: 236). From time and again the Indian judiciary too has played the role of a conscience keeper on issues of illegal migration.

In 2001, the Supreme Court of India stated that “unchecked migration of Bangladesh citizens to India might pose a threat, both to the economy and the security of the country. They are eating into the economy of the country and, to a large extent, are becoming a security threat”. The bench also criticized the Union Government for its inability to address the issue of illegal migration, including deportation. In January 2009, the Supreme Court once again expressed concern over the centre’s tardy progress in flushing out illegal Bangladeshi migrants. A status report was sought by the Supreme Court from the government on the status of both their deportation and on the fencing of the India–Bangladesh border.

Praveen Togadia (2014), President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad stated in a statement that Muslim infiltrators from Bangladesh should be sent back and Hindu refugees should be given citizenship. He declared that “Any Muslim from Bangladesh is an infiltrator and should be pushed back to Bangladesh and any Hindu from Bangladesh has been persecuted and is a refugee. They should be given Indian citizenship. About 50,000 Hindus have come from Bangladesh who should be given permanent citizenship here and all

Hindus should be ensured of food, education, health and employment” (ibid).

In December 2014, The Supreme Court of India directed the central government to complete fencing work along the Indo-Bangla border within three months in order to check cross-border influx of illegal Bangladesh nationals into Assam. The government was also asked to streamline the process to deport them back, while ensuring that security forces keep the vigil along riverine boundary. On the issue of curbing influx of migrants, the bench said, "The vigil along the riverine boundary will be effectively maintained by continuous patrolling. Such part of the international border which has been perceived to be inhospitable on account of the difficult terrain will be patrolled and monitored at vulnerable points that could provide means of illegal entry." In its 70-page verdict, the bench directed the Centre to take all effective steps to complete the "fencing (double coiled wire fencing) in such parts/portions of the Indo-Bangla border (including Assam) where presently the fencing is yet to be completed to prevent illegal access to the country from Bangladesh” (*Jagran Post* 2014).

More recently, India’s National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval is reported to have told the West Bengal Chief Minister that the border district of Jalpaiguri has emerged as a new terror hub in the state and the terror network stands extends beyond the southeastern town of Burdwan and neighbouring areas. A Doval list of 180 Bangladeshi militants hiding in West Bengal was handed over by him to the state government after visiting the site of the October 2 blast in Burdwan. The BJP president Rahul Sinha expressed the view that “It is clear that Trinamool Congress is allowing jihadi elements in Bengal. Mere assurances will not drive them out” (Sumanta. Ray Chauduri and Bibhas Bhattacharyya 2014). Issuing a stern warning, Ajit Doval is reported to have said that “I consider infiltration of Bangladeshis the biggest internal

security problem. Bangladesh supports the demographic invasion of India.” On another occasion, addressing the supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Doval argued that a millennia-old Indian national identity was under threat. In his view the core of national security was not so much physical security as it was cultural identity (Joshi, 2014).

Given the context such as the one outlined above, it is possible to envisage that anti-Muslims sentiments are going to be reinforced with climate induced migration and in some cases might lead to violence, which in turn would encourage certain politicians to push for harsher measures against Bangladeshis. In order to control the flows of people from Bangladesh, the BJP West Bengal president Thathagata Roy has proposed a plan to place antipersonnel mines along the entire border. The rationale offered by him is that Bangladeshi migration (could be climate induced migration in the times to come) “would bring terrible things for India. It is going to dilute our population balance and lower wages for everyone. There is no reason for them to come to our doorstep let them go to Canada.” Roy expressed the fear that if left unchecked, the country’s population of 900 million Hindu would have no choice but “to convert or jump into the sea”. Underlying the above speech and narrative one can even sense a feeling of xenophobia.

The imaginative geographies of the ‘future flood’ of climate migrants would be grave and that could even lead to large scale communal riots. Given the long standing climate of fear with regard to illegal Bangladeshi migrations, the fear of climate migrations is likely to multiply many a fold. As pointed out earlier, the 2012 episode of violence in Assam is a revealing example of a complex web of relationships between border, environment, migration, process of othering and mass violence in India. Such violence should be contextualized as one aspect within the umbrella of climate induced conflict considerations. As pointed out by some analysts,

“In the absence of any unified theory to incorporate all aspects of climate migration violence nexus, these considerations are designed to show the future climate ‘hotspots’ may lie, how climate change may create conflict and why current models would fail to be projecting” (Kristian Hoelshcer and Jason Miklian, 2013).

What deserves mention at this point in analysis is the initiative being taken by the Home Ministry to grant Indian citizenship to nearly one lakh Hindu refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh. During the parliamentary election campaign West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Hindu refugees will be treated like ‘other’ Indian citizens. Most of the Hindu refugees from Bangladesh live in West Bengal and some in North eastern states of India. In a statement Rajnath Singh argues that "for many applicants, the grant of long-term visa would have to be processed considered first. The Task Force will coordinate long-term visa-related matters also" (*The Daily Star*, 2014).

In May 2014, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, while addressing a rally in Ramnagar (as we have mentioned in our first chapter too) had shown his grave concern about many Hindus facing a threat in Bangladesh, due to lack of proper security and development. He had urged the people of Assam to show their support for those who had their lives ‘ruined’ in Bangladesh and had come to India to seek ‘refuge’. He said: “Be it any nation, if a Hindu is troubled then there is only one place and that is where the Hindu will come. Should they be treated in the same way as they are treated elsewhere? No we cannot...”

Strongly reacting to the statement of Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamta Banerjee declared her determination to protect and safeguard the interests of each and every infiltrator. A number of intellectuals called Modi's statement a grave danger to the minorities in India. Arnab Goswami, a well



know news anchor, made a reference to the BJP manifesto and vociferously objection to the reference to “persecuted Hindus”. He raised a few sharply formulated questions: 'My question to you is why only persecuted Hindus, Mr Modi and why not persecuted Buddhists why not persecuted Sikhs, why not persecuted Jains, why not persecuted Muslims or persecuted Christians?'

Modi's rhetoric against illegal migrants from Bangladesh living in India, asking them to 'pack up and leave', also invited a good deal of criticism. A well known minority leader Hafiz Rashid Ahmed Chowdhury expressed his concerns over tensions, fear and insecurity across Assam, while calling upon Narendra Modi to restrain BJP leaders from stirring up an 'anti-minority tirade'. Kapil Sibal (2014) held the BJP and its prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi chiefly responsible for the massacres in Assam. He argued that the BJP leaders were inciting violence in Assam using morphed pictures as part of its 'communal propaganda' on social media (ibid.).

Yet another response to Modi's speech, using a legal argument came from Sunil Garodia (2014). He argued what Modi had suggested was in fact legally impossible since even those who migrated after the 'Nehru-Liaquat Agreement' of 1950 enjoy legal protection and hence cannot be deported. And as far as those who migrated as a result of the Bangladeshi liberation war are concerned, they are covered/protected under international agreements on displaced persons and refugees. Moreover, India had given them the permission to settle and earn their livelihood. What had also been granted were even concessions' like non-transferable housing land at low cost in Kolkata and other places of West Bengal). And most of them have become Indian citizens through naturalization with their children having acquired Indian citizenship by birth and that fact is indisputable.”

If on the one hand the speech-act of Narendra Modi was securitizing the issue of illegal migration, on the other hand, Sushma Swaraj, India's External Affairs Minister during her visit to Bangladesh in June 2014 emphasized the need for a careful handling of a rather sensitive issue. She is reported to have said, "We want to address the issue through consultations with all stakeholders... The issue is also important for both the countries on security front." Stating further that India shared its longest international boundary with Bangladesh, she noted: "It's a porous border. People living on the border are poor and the areas are densely populated. For this, lots of illegal activities are taking place... Both countries should work together to stop illegal activities in the border areas." She also highlighted the need for "better border management" and called upon the two neighbouring states to "work together to control these illegal activities... If the security is ensured, our border areas will become prosperous and for which rule of law will have to be strengthened. The helpless and innocent people must not be allowed to be victims of mindless activities."

Whereas Ms. Sushma Swaraj is making a reference to the physical borders between India and Bangladesh, some of the most challenging borders (far more difficult to cross) have been the mental borders. As early as 1995, a non-government organization, The Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) in its report titled *Immigrants in Bombay: A Fact Finding* (1995) had revealed that the number of illegal migrants given by the BJP-Shiv Sena was not merely an exaggeration but complete fabrication..The BJP-Shiv Sena government was trying to manufacture illusionary dangers and generate fear and anxiety. A politics of fear was deployed to divert people's attention from the demolition of Babri Masjid and its aftermath. The BJP-Shiv Sena had claimed that there are 15 to 21 million illegal Bangladeshi but during their tenure 1998-2004, the number of those detected was not even 10,000. The report had also criticized 'Operation Push Back' initiated by the Narashima Rao

government in 1992 as “inhuman, condemnable and unthinkable in this century.” It concluded that the so called infiltrators did not pose any threat and the perception of danger and was a product of Hindutva Politics and propaganda” (ibid).

It is instructive to take note of the fact that the imaginative geographies of climate change-induced, trans-border migrations are also creating considerable cartographic anxieties in the immediate neighbourhood of India. In the case of Bangladesh and its immediate neighbourhood, fear rather than hope narrative seems to be growing.

As Bangladesh’s vulnerability to climate change has become visibly more pronounced, Indian officials too appear to be increasingly inclined to cite “climate refugees as a concern, in addition to the arguments concerning the Islamist threat”(Friedman 2009). Here is an interesting example. Some of the Indian officials have started expressing concerns over the strong possibility that Himalayan glaciers will melt rapidly, resulting in initial flooding followed by drought. There is a good deal of evidence to show that melting is happening already and is anticipated to accelerate further. It is equally true that the pace at which the melting would occur is somewhat uncertain and has also been a source of controversy for the IPCC itself. While the IPCC has receded from its more alarmist estimations concerning the pace of melting, some from the military establishment India, among others, have used the initial assertions made by the IPCC to securitize the issue of climate migrations. In a seminar held in February 2014 the then Chief of Indian Army General Bikram Singh stated that the “the problem of illegal migration in Bangladesh has led to demographic changes in the northeast. It has led to serious internal security challenges in Assam.”

Gregory White (2011) has insightfully pointed out that security actors and governments may use climate induced Migration in

inappropriate and counterproductive ways, but this should not be taken to imply that climate induced migration does not merit analysis. Whereas Idean Salehyan(2007) would caution that governments would need only point to climate induced migration as a real and compelling phenomenon “to be off the hook, relieved(along with allies that support them) of responsibility for solving other problems that cause population movements.” Both these astute observations make sense in the contemporary South Asian context.

### **Formal Geopolitical Reasoning on Climate Change In India**

Indian think tanks like The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) and others have published reports (Alarm 2003; Panda 2006) that ‘raise the alarm’ about the ‘threat’ of Bangladeshi migrants. Pathania (2003) argues that Indian analysts place the blame squarely on Bangladesh while framing the issue of climate change as serious security threat, or as an act of ‘irresponsibility’ on the part of Bangladesh combined with inability to keep its citizens from leaving (Kumar, 2011). Karlekar (2005) in his work titled ‘Bangladesh: The next Afgahanistan?’ relates Indian migration policy to encouraging some kind of a Islamist rule, fearing that “Al-Queda will brainwash Bangladeshi migrants into attacking Delhi and Mumbai”. Kumar (2006:2) warns that large scale immigration from Bangladesh to India could turn out to be very grave. It will have adverse effects on Indian economy and social environment. Sudhir Chella Rajan (2008) reminds us that phrases such as “sudden mass movements,” “catastrophic events,” and “massive environmental displacement” plays an important and consistent linguistic role in conveying a sense of urgency and disaster. The issues highlighted above (and in the following paragraph) do find some echo in the formal geopolitical reasoning underlying the narratives of various think tanks and academic writings.

Nana and David (1998:188) postulate that of late the securitization of migration discourse has increasingly framed migrant populations as a national security threat to the receiving state. Smith (2007:629) further argues that this threat is multi-dimensional, with migrants presented in some cases as “a burden on national social and economic systems, a cultural threat to societal identities, and/or a political threat to governance structures and institutions.” These arguments are then effectively used to underline a “binary opposition between the “self”, defined by economic, cultural, and/or political features of the receiving state, and for the “threatening other” that is represented by the migrant group in question” (Echavarria 2010). The re-production of this “othering” process is now so omnipresent as argued by Bourbeau(2010:1) in migration discourses presented by politicians, academics, and the media that it is widely accepted, and largely unremarkable.

As we can find that in their policy document, the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI: 2009) talked about security implications of migration in the Indian neighbourhood. To quote

It is important to note that climate-change induced migration has the potential to exacerbate conflict and be a stress multiplier by accentuating competition for land and water, ethnic tension, distrust, or by adding to existing socio-economic fault lines. That is, given the scarcity of resources and the continuously rising rate of population within India, competition for access to resources between ‘insiders’ and ‘aliens’ has been a constant reality. There have been several instances of violence between immigrant labourers and natives. The north-east and Jammu and

Kashmir can be identified as particularly vulnerable to the possibility of climate change accentuating the already prevalent conflict situation. Because religion and cultural issues such as language play a highly emotive role in South Asia, the rise in ethnic tension and conflict is a very real threat within and across India's borders. Conflict between India and one or more of its neighbours due to climate change induced migration, can be envisaged only between India and Bangladesh, and possibly between India and Nepal(ibid.:3).

The report further highlights concerns related to the non-traditional security implications in the following words:

The social and economic impacts of migration are felt at various levels: on the migrants, the region receiving the migrant community, as well as the country of origin. Climate change-induced migration will cause a strain on the natural and other resources in the country accepting migrants. In South Asia, countries such as India are already under increasing population pressure and rising expectations. The infrastructure in the country is yet to fully support the needs of its burgeoning numbers. An additional inflow of people will therefore create further pressures, and affect the capacity of the state to meet its obligations towards its own

people. It can be expected that the bulk of the people from Bangladesh who are under pressure to move, would migrate to India-migrants move to regions that are attractive because of pre-existing family or community ties, economic opportunities and cultural affinity. ....People who choose to migrate move from situations of vulnerability and often their arrival in 'safe' territory exposes them to new risks and threats. Lack of protection from state authorities, lack of access of food, water, medical and other humanitarian aid, difficulty in finding employment; and a feeling of dispossession and helplessness, contribute to a sense of insecurity(ibid.: 4).

The report further points out that on the Indian sub continent the political situation is already marked by wide-ranging tensions, anxieties and contradictions between states. The increasing impact of climate change will further trigger more intense and long lasting waves of migration. The report expresses concern over the fact that South Asian nations lack an exclusive regional process in place to manage migration and its various facets and fallouts. "Since mitigation of green house gas emissions will be insufficient to avoid some of the impacts that may lead to migration (such as sea level and precipitation fluctuations), adaptation at all levels is a necessity. Here, migration can be seen as an 'adjustment mechanism of first resort' or survival mechanism of last resort" (ibid).

Another report that deserves mention as an example of formal geopolitics of climate change in India is by the Greenpeace India, entitled 'Blue Alert: Climate Migrants in South Asia, Estimates

and Solutions’ (Rajan 2008). According to the report, the South Asian region could face a wave of displaced migrants if the global temperature were to rise by about 4-5 degrees centigrade in their course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, resulting insignificant sea level rise. Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, the three South Asian countries share a coast line and nearly 130 million people currently live in what is known as the Low Elevation Coastal Zone (LECZ). This zone comprises the coastal region that is less than 10 metres above average sea level. One of the key findings of the report is that about 125 million migrants, including about 75 million from Bangladesh, and the rest from densely populated coastal regions as well as other vulnerable parts of India, could be rendered homeless by the end of this century. The mass migration induced by climate change triggered will be moving from Bangladesh towards India and the “scale of this human migration would be ten times greater than 1945 partition of India” (ibid). The report frames climate change-related migration as a potential cause of “unprecedented social and economic damage,” and says that this tragedy can only be averted by reducing India’s green house gas emissions. Brikesh Singh of Climate and Energy Campaigner from Greenpeace would argue that “India invests huge amounts in protecting its national boundaries from military incursions, but it is ignoring the climate crisis that can redraw its coastlines permanently and displace as many as 50 million people in India and 75 million more in Bangladesh”. He further argues that “India needs to recognize that mitigating the threat by building a low carbon economy is the biggest economic opportunity of the 21st century” (ibid).

The New Delhi based Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and Greenpeace India, in their respective documents use more or less similar linguistic repertoire and narratives. In both the cases, the, anticipated climate-related migration from Bangladesh to India are described by using words such as “large-scale,” “sudden



mass migration” and climate change “triggered” migration (rather than “induced” or “related”). By using this kind of language, the issue is presented as an existential threat to the political stability of the state. The text produced by TERI (2009: 6,7) also uses words like ‘insiders-aliens,’ and ‘natives-immigrant labourers’ and implicitly establishes a binary opposition between these two categories. As pointed out by Roddick 2011: 24), “Both organizations frame climate change-related migration from Bangladesh as a security threat to India because in Indian public discourse this is the lens that is generally applied to illegal migration from Bangladesh.” Here is yet another illuminating example. R. K. Pachauri, Chairman of the IPCC, and Director General of TERI New Delhi, delivered the convocation address at the Military college of Telecommunication Engineering, Mao, on 26 June 2009. He was quoted in Indian media under highly sensational headlines such as ‘Global warming’ and how it encourages terrorism in India’ and ‘Climate change your biggest enemy’. Dr. Pachauri was reported as having said that, “Climate change poses new threats to India...Melting snows in the north open up passages for terrorists, just as melting glaciers affect water supply in the subcontinent’s northern part, sharpening possibility of conflict with our neighbours. Changing rainfall patterns affect rain fed agriculture, worsening poverty which can be exploited by others” (TERI 2009). Highlighting the ‘national security’ implications of climate change for India he concluded on the note that, “Our defence forces might find themselves torn between humanitarian relief operations and guarding our borders against climate refugees, as rising sea-levels swamp low-lying areas, forcing millions of ‘climate refugees’ across India’s border” (TERI 2009).

Laipson and Pandya (2010) have noted that India’s National Defense University, which is overseen by the Ministry of Defense, too has conducted scenario training on “how to address a mass influx

of refugees from Bangladesh following catastrophic flooding” (ibid, 10). The decision by India to construct a fence over water, as also reported in certain sections of Indian media (Gupta, *The Times of India*, 24 August 2014), to stop the flow of immigration from Bangladesh can also be seen as a possible counter-measure to check climate change-induced migration, despite the fact that construction began well before the effects of climate change on illegal migration issue were considered as urgent and compelling. A top BSF official has been reported to have said: “There are two areas that needs to be addressed- the mapping of the riverine border and then the fencing of that border. According to the instructions of the central government we have almost completed the mapping and have identified our area along the river and other water bodies. Now we are waiting for the sanction of funds so that the fencing portion can be done,” (ibid.).

The Institute of Defense and Strategic Analysis (IDSA), a leading think tank of the Ministry of Defense, Government of India, has also come out with a number of publications dealing with military/defense/security implications of climate change. P.K. Gautam (2012) a Research Fellow at IDSA in his work titled *Climate Change and Conflict in South Asia* has insightfully argued that:

Though migration is an historic process, it has led to social tensions and insurgencies, as in India’s northeast because of migrants from Bangladesh. One way is to look at it from the perspective of international political economy. Cheap labour has been an important factor in encouraging movement of people throughout the history. But it could lead to social conflict if such migration across national frontiers leads to significant demographic change in the

receiving country. There is also a possibility of the spread and export of terrorism as well as smuggling. Fencing, like that being erected along the Indo-Bangla border, may reduce the rate of migration but it cannot stop it entirely. Socio-economic conditions that prompt people to migrate are often due to changes in climatic conditions. With the rise in sea level, more and more coastal areas would be inundated, forcing further inland migration into the coastal areas. Both India and Bangladesh have to face this reality' (ibid: 37).

What is noteworthy in the above quotation is the juxtaposition of the 'old and the 'new' categories of fears and underlying anxieties within the overarching perspective of geopolitical economy. In one of the IDSA Task Force Reports (2010) it has been pointed out that in the wake of Climate Change and fast deteriorating environmental conditions the water sharing agreement between India and Bangladesh is likely to be subjected to a great deal of stress in the times to come. The report peeps into the future and points out:

Given the agrarian and power generation needs of the river systems and the vagaries of the monsoon, upstream-downstream animosities will arise. The Teesta talks demonstrate that there is no easy approach. Bangladesh would be bargaining for access to larger quantum of common water resources. Indeed, Bangladesh is keen that India comes to an early agreement not just on Teesta but also on all major rivers that crisscross the two states. Bangladesh cannot change its lower riparian position and will have to accept cooperative arrangements

based on water sharing and not on water rights. India as the upper riparian has the responsibility to ensure that the equitable principles are fairly adhered to without undermining its own requirements. But given the advantage that India has an upper riparian state, India should be using that leverage its other interests, particularly security considerations which Bangladesh has not adequately addressed. The West Bengal government in fact has been advocating that India should link security issues with water issues and make it conditional on Bangladesh to deliver on that front before India agrees to any mutually acceptable solution of water sharing on the common rivers between the two states' (ibid:56).

There is a growing acknowledgment among scholars and analysts, both in India and abroad, that climate change will also carry implications for the process of urbanization and have a significant bearing on migrations from rural to urban areas. Kasali (2011) has examined the links between environmentally induced urbanization and urban conflict in Nigeria, showing how immigration exacerbates existing religious fault lines, which in turn are manipulated by political and religious elites. It is possible to argue that nearly all of these conditions are evident vis-à-vis Bangladeshi migrants in Indian cities. What does not get recognized at times in some of these writings is that there are multiple factors like political, economic, social and environmental that influence the decision of an individual or a group of individuals in Bangladesh to move cross border and enter into India. In this vein Hossain et al (2005) and Kabir et al. (2008) provide a useful list of climate induced 'push' factors are more likely to result in climate migrants

seeking only temporary migration; an option which is unlikely to be utilized by the poorest or most vulnerable in society.

Hoelsher and Miklian (2013) too would agree that at least to begin with climate induced migration is often at first seasonal in South Asia. No doubt this phenomenon may become more permanent over some time, but migrants themselves may not perceive their decision to move/migrate as simply climate induced, or restrict their personal experiences to only global climate trends. In their view, “This distinction serves two ends: it allows the host country to use a ‘climate’ bogeyman to shift localized blame, and it tends to perpetuate the belief within the migrants themselves that the shift is temporary. Both migrations even seasonal or temporary can create political tragedies” (ibid: 110). A critically important point made by these two authors is that what further complicates things is the question of how “climate change already entwines with economic factors driving migration, and where migrants from these events will move” (ibid.: 114). To quote them further:

In 2009 the Cyclone Aila tore through Bangladesh, destroying levees that held back water and submerging Koyra district. When the water retreated, the land was soaked in salt that it was impossible to grow crops, and 120,000 people lost their homes and livelihoods. Mostly moved to Dhaka or the regional capital Khulana, bolstering Herrmann and Svarin’s (2009) claim that much of the future rural-urban migration will remain within Bangladesh, increasingly pressures on major cities like Chittagong and Dhaka. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development(2003) projections show that the salt could reach 100 miles inland, rendering

vast swaths of southern Bangladesh's arable farmland useless(Kabir et al 2008 cited in Jason Miklian, Ashild Kolas 2013). This will multiply the estimated 100,000 rural Bangladeshi made homeless annually from riverbank erosion to over 1 million (Saferworld, 2009) as part of the 75 million Bangladeshis who will be displaced by 2020(Akter, 2009). Migrants will slowly drift away from affected areas while people migrate to urban areas in Bangladesh, or other places where they can still farm or fish. These migrants are unlikely to think of themselves as climate refugees-just people searching for better economic opportunities. Of those affected thus far most have been unable to return, and many have moved to similar areas within India in order to attempt to employ the only skills they knew. Datta(2004) after a survey, pointed out that in Bangladeshi movement both push and pull factors were primary reasons for migration. It is clear, then, that while a number of Bangladeshis affected by environmental change will move to India, the reality is that the majority are likely to remain in Bangladesh (ibid.: 115).

One of the key findings of research done by Hoelscher and Miklian (2013) is that in case additional conflicts result from climate migration in India, it all probability they may not occur in west Bengal or Assam, but in Delhi and or Mumbai, "where differences in language, religion and social capabilities are more easily exploited and consumed by Hindu majority populations." The following insights warn against the tendency on the part of several

scholars and think tanks to go for generalizations without paying any attention whatsoever to this significant differentiation.

This differentiation requires Indian policymakers to respect the tremendous demographic and climate-induced challenges that Bangladesh is facing, make a concerted efforts to discourage xenophobia rhetoric that promotes violence, undertake renewed efforts to give domestic legal protections to those who have crossed, institutionalize a more humane border policy that recognizes that a more dangerous and violent border will not alter migration dynamics and develop coherency amongst migrants from not only Bangladesh, but also including neighbouring Nepal, which will likely tackle several large scale climate migration events of its own in the coming decades. Cross border migration is a global issue, not without contentious questions that surround it, but ensuring that violence remains tempered requires localized political solutions. As migration across borders in the developing world is projected to continue to accelerate, it is important to unpack these drivers as well as contextualize migratory patterns within political contexts in order to understand fully how climate migration may foment violence between India and Bangladesh. (ibid: 116).

How many in India would pay serious attention to the above quote insights remains to be seen. There are several reasons why such an attention may be found lacking. As Gregory White (2012) reminds us governments in the developing world too might raise the

spectre of security to advance a particular political agenda. Any such claims as that ‘Climate refugees’ crossing over from Bangladesh will seriously undermine its security need to be closely scrutinized (Khory 2012). Moreover, “Applying a security framework to a complex issue such as climate induced migration has major policy implications. When government officials in the India viewed migration as challenge to territorial sovereignty and a problem of border security, tougher law enforcement and sophisticated technologies, such as those employed in biometric screening , become the preferred policy and tools for controlling and limiting human mobility across national boundaries” (ibid.: 234).

Quite contrary to fairly persuasive arguments made by a scholars like Kavita Khory (2012), a large number of studies in India on climate change displacements continue to give the impression that victims in Bangladesh will ‘inevitably’ cross international borders into India. (Baumik, 2013). This would provide further geopolitical fodder to various political parties and regional groups across India, especially in states like Assam which border Bangladesh, to further securitize illegal migration flows from Bangladesh into India. Baumik anticipates large scale climate induced migration from affected rural areas to cities. Citing example of ‘climate migrants’ being intercepted by Indian border security forces, he argues that in case 40 to 75 million ‘climate migrants’ from Bangladesh were to move into India by 2100, the demographic burden of India would be simply unbearable.

## **5. Framings of Climate Change in Popular Geopolitics: Media Discourses and Cartoons**

The ways in which masses are being socialized into dominant representations of other places and peoples (positive or negative) through media, cinema, cartoons, books and magazines is the subject matter of popular geopolitics. In this section we focus on daily print media narratives because people usually get their daily



news from newspapers and television programs. A central role is played by media narrative in transporting and translating scientific knowledge for common understanding in the public perception of risk (Nelkin, 1987; Allan, Adam, & Carter, 2000). Billet. S. (2010) in his well researched study (covering the period of January 2002 through to June 2007) entitled *Dividing Climate Change: Global Warming in the Indian Mass Media* argues that climate change coverage in the Indian print media constructs the coverage along a North-South divide.. India's media representational practices against this backdrop of global trends provide an interesting mix of both fear and hope narrative. Billett reveals how English-language, nationally circulated papers may have actually strengthened rather than weakened barriers stemming from climate change narratives that flag 'risk-responsibility divide'. He also shows how the "demonization of the US position on climate mitigation action has contributed to insider-outsider discourses evidenced in these media representations" (Boykoff, 2010: 20). Billett approaches contemporary trends historically, through attention paid to factors such as India's growing population, urban-rural demographics, and per capita as well as country-level greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions profiles. He also effectively makes connections between how differentiated per capita emissions and colonial legacies link to current conceptions of moral responsibilities and perceptions of 'fairness' in India. Billet concludes his study on the following note.

On one hand, the Indian media present climate change in a far more scientifically representative frame than many Western media have done, almost completely depoliticising the question of the existence of climate change (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004). However, this depoliticisation of science is replaced by a highly contentious political frame that defines attitudes towards climate policy-making. The

‘normative assumption’ that there is a neo-colonial desire to suppress India’s growth through unrestrained climate change impacts and restrictive policy has fuelled a nationalistic reaction in the press that reinforces the non-compliance of India and its public with any binding emissions targets (Power 2003: 136–137 cited in Radcliffe 2005: 6). Such an assumption sets imminent post-Kyoto climate negotiations in India within a less than-compliant—and less than ideal—context of public discourse in the country. (Billet 2009: 15).

As pointed out by Boykoff (2007) and Rosati(2007) mass media representations as well as translations of climate change predicaments and progress shape discourses in an influential manner and highlight various considerations and options for possible climate mitigation and adaptation actions. There is therefore a compelling need to examine ‘how’ various representations and symbols pertaining to climate change are produced and reproduced in mass media. No surprise in the wake of the release of Al Gore’s film, *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006 the media coverage of climate change issues became more extensive. One could also see an increase in coverage in Australia/New Zealand, the Middle East, Asia, Eastern Europe and South Africa among other countries (Boykoff and Roberts 2007: 39). Media reporting in India on climate change and climate induced migrations appears to be heavily influenced by geo-historical and socio-political factors over time, and has become increasingly affected by formal and practical geopolitical actors and interests. The term ‘illegal migrants’ has been used quite extensively in the print media.

Cartoons have long served as a very important site of popular geopolitics narratives. Cartoons can be used to both supplement and subvert a particular knowledge-power nexus. They can be deployed to give face to the faceless, voice to the voiceless, story to the truth. They can often speak louder than words. In order to illustrate the ‘strategic’ significance of cartoons in the climate change debate in India, we have selected just a few. For the purposes of analysis and illustration in this section, we draw a good deal of inspiration from a seminal study by Yoram Bauman and Grady Klein (2014) titled *The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change*.



Source: Satish Acharya.2012.Illegal Bangladeshi migrants, legal voters!<sup>2</sup>

Indian cartoonist Satish Acharya through the above cartoon graphically as well as persuasively shows that India has been

<sup>2</sup>Satish Acharya.2012. Illegal Bangladeshi migrants, legal voters! Accessed December 2 2016 [http://cartoonistsatish.blogspot.in/2012\\_07\\_01\\_archive.html](http://cartoonistsatish.blogspot.in/2012_07_01_archive.html).

ignoring the issue of illegal Bangladeshis for too long, mainly with an eye on vote bank. Assam riots indicate the magnitude of the problem. Shown in the cartoon are the prime ministers of India and Bangladesh striking some kind of a mutually rewarding geopolitical deal. The cartoon also shows the manner in which human-cultural geographies and identities of people are being marginalized by geopolitical considerations. The sufferings and humiliations to which a large number of displaced and migrants are being subjected on a regular-daily bases are being effectively concealed. One of the most striking contrasts offered by the cartoon is between ‘illegal migrants’ and ‘legal votes.’



Source: [Barenakedislam.com/2014/05/12/](http://Barenakedislam.com/2014/05/12/)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> India: Frontrunner for PM, Narendra Modi, threatens to deport all Bangladeshi Muslim illegals if he wins, Accessed December 6 2016, <http://www.barenakedislam.com/2014/05/12/india-frontrunner-for-pm-narendra-modi-threatens-to-deport-all-bangladeshi-muslim-illegals-if-he-wins/>

Looking at the above cartoon, it could be illuminating to recall the speech-act of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, analyzed by us at the beginning of this chapter. Modi, in this cartoon is shown in a threatening posture, promising to his Hindu vote banks that he would loose no time and efforts to deport all illegal Bangladeshi Muslims if he is voted into power.



Source: Heavy rains in Mumbai!<sup>4</sup>

It is well known that the financial capital of India, Mumbai, gets badly flooded due to heavy rains; causing havoc. The cartoon has a subtle but significant message to convey. Mumbai, slows down due to heavy continuous rains over several days, Raj Thackeray, is seen making politics out of the vagaries of weather in a direct conversation with his uncle Bal Thackeray. Raj Thackeray is keen to use 'natural disaster' for political gains by 'declaring' the Biharis (the outsiders) responsible. The cartoon cautions against the deployment of a narrative of geopolitics of fear to divide and rule.

<sup>4</sup> Cartoons Doodles Quotes.2012. "Heavy rains in Mumbai" Accessed December 7, 2016. <https://mysay.in/2012/09/04/heavy-rains-in-mumbai/>

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Thanks to the visual narrative of geopolitics of bordering and othering, conveyed through the medium of the cartoon, the textual analysis attempted in this essay stands rejuvenated.



Source: Love Thy Neighbours<sup>5</sup>

This cartoon ably support the reference we have made in this manuscript to the role played by emotional geographies of climate change. It also shows various facets of climate dilemma faced by intellectuals and institutions of statecraft in the context of the ‘global’ and ‘globalizing’ climate change. The unresolved tension between nationalism/citizenship and internationalism/cosmopolitanism is also quite visible as insecure Pakistani Hindus seek shelter in India due to ‘security’ concerns and increasing number of ‘impoverished’ Bangladeshi Muslims illegally entering and staying in India. Both cause rising concerns in India but for different sets of reasons.

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<sup>5</sup>Cartoons Doodles Quotes.2012 “Love thy neighbours?” Accessed December 5 2016, <https://mysay.in/2012/08/16/love-thy-neighbours/>



Source: Yoram Bauman and Grady Klein (2014) *The Cartoon Introduction to Climate Change*

In the above collage of diverse images personifying vulnerability to climate change, the image of Bangladesh is in the company of a number of other landscapes from different parts of the globe. The cartoon underscores the point that 'global' climate change (along with its regional and sub-regional manifestations) is both about physical transformations (farmlands getting submerged under water) and cultural representations of these changing landscapes.

## **6. Conclusion**

The importance of narratives in geopolitical practices has received recent attention, in particular the connection between narratives, climate migration, and state responses. A leading authority on India-Bangladesh borderland, Willem van Schendel (2005) has coined the term ‘A Patchwork Border’ to describe a borderland where, “the new border [between India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh] was anything but a straight line; it snaked through the country side in wacky zigzag pattern. It showed no respect for history and cut through numerous ancient geographical entities...” (ibid. 54). ‘Securing’ this challenging border landscapes has not been easy despite the deployment of various tools such as expanded bureaucracy, putting into place various paramilitary, border security forces and “homogenizing the borderland population” (ibid. 93). This essay has shown that fast evolving narratives of climate borders between India and Bangladesh are not only material but also ideational. The Indian responses to border defying climate change appear to be reinforcing both the material and the mental borderlands narratives.

The fear narratives with regard to illegal migrations has historically played a major role in deciding the nature and scope of India-Bangladesh relations. A state-centric, national security obsessed understanding of climate change and fear of climate migrations/migrants could reinforce old borders and introduce new ones. Emotional- legal narratives of care and protection is still at a nascent stage and yet to acquire a firm grip over the subject of displacement and climate migration.



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