

# The interplay of doxa and episteme in Bangladesh's politics



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In the terrain of Bangladeshi politics, the tension is not simply between belief and knowledge, myth and reason, or performance and policy. These oppositions—framed as *doxa* and *episteme*—do not neatly resolve into a hierarchy of value. Instead, they constitute a dialectic in perpetual suspension. The allure of *doxa*—popular belief, inherited legitimacy, and the immediacy of affect—often coexists with the imperatives of *episteme*: evidence, deliberation, and long-term vision. Yet, attempts to privilege one over the other repeatedly collapse, not least because the conditions for a stable synthesis are historically absent.

The dominance of *doxa* in Bangladeshi political life cannot be disentangled from the structural failure of *episteme*. Nor can *episteme* be simply summoned as a rational corrective to belief without grappling with the aspirations, anxieties, and lived conditions that *doxa* organises. Drawing on recent events—including the July 2024 uprising, the interim government's fragile mandate, and chronic budgetary neglect of public goods—this essay offers not a critique of *doxa* per se, but a reflection on how its entanglement with *episteme* produces a volatile political condition, perpetually caught between rupture and restoration. The argument resists framing *doxa* as pathology or casting *episteme* as panacea, and instead culminates in a contingent wager:

that if democratic politics is to retain even a fragile footing in Bangladesh, we must cultivate the institutional and cultural space where critical knowledge can engage belief without disavowing it.

**Doxa and Episteme: A fragile dialectic**

Inherited from Plato and reworked by Pierre Bourdieu, the distinction between *doxa* and *episteme* has long served to diagnose the epistemic decay of public discourse. *Doxa* is that which circulates unquestioned; *episteme* demands justification, critique, and institutional depth. But to read Bangladeshi politics as a mere triumph of *doxa* over *episteme* would be to miss the deeper dialectic at play. In a society marked by colonial afterlives, authoritarian interruptions, and epistemic unevenness, *doxa* often fills the vacuum left by weak institutions of knowledge. Belief becomes infrastructure when state capacity fails.

Here, the slogans of liberation, invocations of unity, and fetishisation of sovereignty are not ideological residue alone—they serve as affective scaffolding that stabilises a fractured polity. *Episteme*, meanwhile, does not always arrive as emancipation. As Michel Foucault reminds us, *episteme* is not neutral; it governs the very conditions of truth production, delimiting what may be known, by whom, and on what terms. To many,

it appears not as enlightenment but as elite imposition—technocratic, aloof, or externally induced. Thus, the friction between *doxa* and *episteme* is not a clear-cut antagonism but a shifting, unstable interplay of power, affect, and legitimacy.

**Media and the epistemic short-circuit**

Nowhere is this dialectic more

Student movements, independent platforms, and segments of civil society continued raising uncomfortable questions. But the simultaneous rise of mob justice—bypassing due process in favour of affective retribution—illustrated how easily the epistemic impulse could be eclipsed by *doxa*'s visceral force. What this reveals is not the disappearance

rather than interrogate it. This is not merely strategic—it is existential. In a polity where historical legitimacy often carries more weight than policy credibility, *doxa* becomes the currency of political survival.

**The interim government's epistemic interregnum**

The interim government, birthed by an epistemic rupture and popular mobilisation, initially held promise. Unencumbered by electoral calculations, it could have embraced technocratic governance and long-term planning. Expert panels were formed, policy white papers circulated, and consultations initiated. For a moment, *episteme* seemed to gain ground.

Yet, that promise has proved elusive. Pressed by the urgency of stabilisation and haunted by the spectre of collapse, the interim regime has leaned on the tropes of continuity: nation-branding, investor confidence, bureaucratic inertia. Its budgetary choices are telling. Education receives less than 2.5 percent of GDP, undermining efforts to cultivate critical thought. Health remains sidelined in a country vulnerable to both pandemics and chronic illnesses. Agriculture—crucial for rural livelihoods and food security—faces declining support amid mounting climate threats.

Rather than a clean break from *doxa*, we witness a painful return to it. The government, lacking both the democratic legitimacy for sweeping reform and the public trust necessary to anchor technocratic rationality, is caught in a double bind: govern too rationally and risk mass alienation; govern by sentiment and reenact past failures.

**Arab Spring syndrome and the epistemophobia of governance**

Hovering over this impasse is the ghost of the Arab Spring—the fear

that epistemic uprisings end not in democratic renewal but in chaos, authoritarian relapse, or technocratic drift. The lesson many elites draw is caution: too much reform too fast can unmoor the system. The lesson many citizens internalise is impatience: if knowledge does not deliver material or affective results quickly, it is dismissed as irrelevant.

This mutual suspicion makes *episteme* hard to anchor. It is not that reasoned policy is unwelcome—but that, in the absence of institutional memory and civic trust, it struggles to resonate, to “stick.” *Doxa*, for all its volatility, offers immediacy; *episteme* offers complexity, which can feel like delayed gratification and postponement.

**A non-synthetic path forward**

If a path forward exists, it lies not in the forced synthesis of *doxa* and *episteme*, but in embracing their constitutive tension. *Episteme* must learn to translate itself without arrogance; *doxa* must be engaged without condescension. This demands civic education rooted in dialogue, not rote; media that functions less as sermon and more as agora; and budgets aligned not with donor expectations or performative sovereignty, but with the structural needs of the vulnerable.

Most crucially, we need a political ethic that resists collapsing into either technocratic detachment or populist fury. To invoke *episteme* today is not to prescribe a cure; it is to place a wager—a wager, paradoxically, in the power of knowledge to disrupt belief.

In an era haunted by failed uprisings and weaponised mythologies, the wager is fragile and fraught—yet if democracy is to endure in Bangladesh, it is one we cannot afford to squander.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

evident than in Bangladesh's media landscape. It neither simply reproduces *doxa* nor wholly commits to *episteme*. Instead, it oscillates between moments of critical inquiry and spells of ideological closure.

This tension sharpened in the aftermath of the July 2024 uprising that ousted the formerly ruling Awami League. For a brief moment, an epistemic opening emerged: media scrutiny intensified, public discourse turned toward electoral fraud, economic mismanagement, and authoritarian drift. Yet, this space was quickly sealed off. Media narratives pivoted toward stability, institutional restoration, and investor reassurance. *Doxa* reasserted itself under the sign of national interest.

Still, the closure was incomplete.

of *episteme*, but its fragility—its inability to institutionalise itself in the face of narrative consolidation and emotive closure.

**Political parties: A feedback loop**

Political parties, rather than being mere vessels of *doxa*, function as sites where *doxa* and *episteme* feed off each other. The Awami League's invocation of its liberation legacy or the BNP's narrative of marginalisation are not purely mythic constructs; they also reflect the epistemic vacuum left by underdeveloped democratic norms and public distrust of expert discourse.

Suppressing internal dissent, sidelining expert advice, and rewarding loyalty over competence create a culture in which knowledge is selectively deployed to affirm belief

## Bonn climate conference falls short on key promises



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As the climate justice movement gains ground, this year's Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB 62) served as a critical juncture, but fell short of the breakthrough many had hoped for. Instead, it exposed deep fractures around gender justice and loss and damage (L&D) finance, revealing how far global climate governance remains from real equity.

Women—particularly from Indigenous, Global South, and marginalised communities—continue to endure the worst impacts of climate breakdown: wrecked livelihoods, food and water insecurity, and displacement. Yet, their meaningful participation in negotiations and finance mechanisms remains minimal, often symbolic.

The SB 62 saw the launch of the new Gender Action Plan (GAP) drafting process, extending the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG). A technical workshop was convened to develop gender-responsive activities ahead of COP 30 in Belém, Brazil, where negotiators agreed to reference intersectionality, structural barriers, and marginalised groups. But backlash followed quickly as Argentina and Paraguay resisted inclusive gender definitions, pushing for binary language, while countries like Canada, Norway, and Iceland defended rights-based frameworks. The exclusion there was structural: only about 35 percent of Bonn delegates were women, most without decision-making authority, often hindered by travel, childcare, visa, and institutional barriers.

Finance again fell short. Though mentions of gender-responsive budgeting, capacity building, and access to funding were inserted, no binding mandates or financial earmarks emerged. Feminist groups warned that without concrete commitments to grassroots and women-led initiatives, the GAP risks being merely aspirational.

Once relegated to the sidelines, L&D took centre stage in Bonn as the climate crisis escalates. Developing countries demanded clarity, urgency, and scale—while developed nations remained hesitant.

Key outcomes of the Bonn conference included: (i) vague advancement in the third review of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), with tentative steps toward better coordination with the Santiago Network and the new Fund for Responding to Loss & Damage (FRLD); (ii) acknowledgement of the massive finance gap—estimated at \$395–724 billion annually by 2025—but no hard commitments; (iii) preliminary discussions to integrate L&D into Biennial Transparency Reports, in which guidance, nonetheless, remains voluntary; (iv) a Baku-to-Belém Roadmap targeting \$1.3 trillion in international climate finance, including \$300 billion annually. Also, proposals to allocate \$400 billion annually to the FRLD were raised, but again, no pledges followed.

The L&D board meeting ended with broad intentions but glaring omissions. Urgency was acknowledged, but not matched with action.

Bonn delivered some wins—intersectional references in the draft GAP and technical momentum toward COP 30—but persistent resistance, underrepresentation, and underfunding still loom large. If gender remains narrowly defined, the plan risks being diluted rather than transformative.

On L&D, SB 62 marked progress—from silence to recognition. Yet, no hard finance, clear mandates, or binding pathways emerged. While the house is on fire, negotiators are still debating who will hold the hose.

Development justice demands that women are not excluded from decision-making, climate finance, and land rights. Without gender-

**Development justice demands that women are not excluded from decision-making, climate finance, and land rights. Without gender-responsive funding, resilience efforts fail. Moreover, global credibility is at stake when aspirational language without financial backing deepens the trust deficit and imperils the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal. The clash over gender definitions mirrors global rollbacks of progressive rights, putting human rights under threat.**

risks codifying injustice rather than dismantling it.

Belém, Brazil, November 2025, is now the true test. These three demands must be met: (i) mounting finance commitments, (ii) solidifying gender justice, and (iii) enabling participation. Mounting finance commitments mean capitalising the FRLD with at least \$400 billion annually, integrating L&D into the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), and transforming voluntary reporting guidelines into mandatory obligations. Solidifying gender justice includes embedding inclusive, intersectional definitions of gender, enforcing financing, capacity building, and access for women and gender-diverse communities, and gender-responsiveness across all thematic tracks, not isolating them. The last but not the least, enabling participation means funding for low-income women's attendance and leadership, providing childcare, visa assistance, and institutional

support and guaranteeing decision-making roles, not token presence for women in delegations.

Bonn laid bare political divides but brought no resolution. The urgency is not theoretical: extreme climate events have already displaced hundreds of thousands in 2024–25. Communities are paying the price for negotiation delays—with lost homes,

destroyed harvests, and eroded rights. To observers, Bonn's outcome may read like a draft priority list. But for frontline communities and activists, all eyes are now on Belém. A weak GAP or empty L&D pledges would signal business as usual, not justice.

Bangladesh offers a blueprint. Its push for grant-based L&D funding, rather than debt-inducing

loans, shows how international commitments can translate into community impact. But national action alone isn't enough. Global systems must step up or risk failing those who need them most.

Gender justice and Loss and Damage are both at a tipping point. Belém must decide: pass the moment or seize it.

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২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরে বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউটের জন্য সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে পণ্য/সেবা সরবরাহের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী/টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের তালিকাভুক্তির লক্ষ্যে নির্ধারিত ফরমে সীলপালায়ুক্ত খামে আবেদনপত্র আদান করা যাচ্ছে:		
ক্রমিক নং	সংগ্রাহক সত্তা ও তথ্যাদির বিবরণ	আত্মস্বী দরদাতাদের জ্ঞাতব্য ও যোগাতার বিবরণ
১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	আইন ও বিচার বিভাগ, আইন, বিচার ও সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়।
২	প্রতিষ্ঠান	বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট।
৩	সংগ্রাহক প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা	বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট, ১৫, কলেজ রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।
৪	সংগ্রাহক প্রতিষ্ঠানের জেলা	ঢাকা।
৫	দরপত্র আবেদনের উদ্দেশ্য	সরবরাহকারী/টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান তালিকাভুক্তি
৬	নথি নম্বর	১০.০৬.০০০০.০০১.৫০.০২৪.২৫.
৭	বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	৩১/৭/২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ
৮	জন্ম পদ্ধতি	সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (LTM)
৯	আবেদনপত্র ত্রয়ের তারিখ ও স্থান	৩১/৭/২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ হতে ১৭/৮/২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন, হিসাব শাখা, বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট, ১৫, কলেজ রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০ হতে সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
১০	আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও স্থান	১৭/৮/২০২৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকা। পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট, ১৫, কলেজ রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০-এর কার্যালয়।
১১	বাজেট ও তহবিলের উৎস	ইনস্টিটিউটের অনুকূলে বরাদ্দকৃত রাজস্ব বাজেট
১২	আবেদনকারীর যোগ্যতা	পাবলিক প্রাকটিকারমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮ এর শর্ত অনুযায়ী যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন হতে হবে এবং আবেদনপত্রে বর্ণিত কাগজপত্রসমূহ আবেদনপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৩	আবেদন ফরমের মূল্য	৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা (অফেরত যোগ্য) পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট-এর নামে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট-এর মাধ্যমে দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৪	তালিকাভুক্তি ফি	নির্ধারিত আবেদনকারী কর্তৃক ৫০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার) টাকা+১৫% ভ্যাট (অফেরতযোগ্য) পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট-এর নামে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট-এর মাধ্যমে দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৫	আবেদনপত্র আদানকারীর নাম, পদবি ও ঠিকানা	জনাব এ. ই. এম. ইসমাইল হোসেন, পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বিচার প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট, ১৫, কলেজ রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০।
১৬	আবেদনপত্র আদানকারীর টেলিফোন ও ই-মেইল নম্বর	০২-৪১০৫৩৭৪৪ (অফিস) E-mail: director.admin@jati.gov.bd
১৭	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	(ক) সরবরাহকারী/টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নতুন তালিকাভুক্ত করার ক্ষেত্রে পাবলিক প্রাকটিকারমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮ এর বিধি বিধান পালন করা হবে। (খ) আবেদনপত্র যথাযথভাবে পূরণপূর্বক দাখিল করতে হবে। অসম্পূর্ণ তথ্য সম্বলিত আবেদনপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
১৮	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যেকোন বা সকল আবেদনপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	

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