CONCLUSION

Resource scarcity has been a perennial problem in human history. Wars between states have often been fought over natural resources. However, the violent conflict which has arisen in recent years in poor societies is different in nature. Explanations have ranged from an analysis of ecological and demographic pressure to that of environmental scarcity and the Malthusian notion of insecurity.

The recent conflict in the society has occurred due to the degradation of renewable resources — fresh water, fisheries, agricultural land, forests. In the past it was depletion of non-renewable natural resources that led to war between states. Environmental problems in terms of land degradation, desertification, deforestation, green house effect, global warming and ozone layer depletion due to anthropogenic reason has been common all over the world. It has devastating consequences on the agricultural production and decline of state’s economy and above all the survival of people.

The thesis begins with the identification of environmental problems and their negative impact on society. Scholars have proposed a causal pathway from degradation of renewable resources and conflict in the society. Anthropogenic factors have been considered as a significant variable for the degradation of renewable resources. Environmental factors to a great extent are responsible for environmentally induced conflict, however, this is not sufficient cause for most environmental conflicts. The study considers state policy as a key element which affects population settlement, resource allocation and development in poor countries, which in turn causes resource scarcity and violent conflict. We have taken Chittagong Hill Tracts in South Asia and the Gaza Strip in West Asia as case studies and compared the state policies of two the states vis-à-vis population and settlement, resource allocation and development. We have analysed the impact of those policies on the scarcity of renewable resources and violent conflict in the region.

In the introductory chapter, an attempt was made to present the environmental problems which that societies are facing all over the world. The existing literature on environmental scarcity and conflict was critically reviewed. The study found the research of the Swiss Environment and Conflict Project Programme (ENCOP) and the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), Oslo very useful. These groups have identified a wide range of
environmental problems and their impact on intra/inter-state conflict from the environmental security perspective, but, they do not provide a clear methodology and tools to pursue a research programme on the link between environmental changes and conflict, which the Toronto group does. According to the Toronto group, environmental scarcity can not lead to conflict in society directly, but it produces social effects like decreased agricultural production, economic decline, population displacement and disruption of legitimated institutions which leads to various types of violent conflict in society. We have followed the Toronto group’s line of enquiry because this group offers a causal path linking environmental scarcity to violent conflict. For the instigation of environmentally induced conflict, social effects are necessary. A large number of factors also affect environmental induced conflict. One school of literature is of the opinion that environmental change and high population growth are the principle sources of societal conflicts. The other school gives primacy to religion and ethnicity. Explanations have also been developed in terms of state policy. However, it should be noted that the policy of the state vis-à-vis conflict works in the capacity of a variable. This could be elaborated further by suggesting that policy formulation by the state in favour of a certain group often leads to relative deprivation and conflicts. Hence, in the proposed thesis, it has been an endeavour to assess the relationship between population growth, resource scarcity and state policy as the potential cause for the emergence of violent conflict in the CHT and the Gaza Strip.

In the second chapter, we have analysed Pakistani/Bangladeshi government policy vis-à-vis population and settlement, resource allocation and development and its impact on the environmental scarcity in the CHT. In the early 1960s the Pakistan government launched the multi-purpose Karnafuli Project. This project evacuated large number of indigenous family from the area. They are also known as internally displaced population (IDP). Few of them were rehabilitated in the reserve forests land in the pahari area and large numbers of them took refuge near the hilly region. They were not even paid adequate compensation. The non skilled tribals soon started their traditional occupation – jum (slash and burn) cultivation. The additional population pressure caused degradation of arable land, water and forest resources. Later, the Bangladeshi government initiated the policy of plains Muslim settlement into the hilly region. The argument of the government in favour of this policy was that, the CHT was a sparsely populated region and every citizen of the country had a right to settle in any part of
its territory. Also, it was argued that khas lands were taken by the state for settlement. Because khas land was not owned by the individual, it was a common land. However, these arguments are not convincing. We have found that the CHT contains a tiny amount of cultivable land which is about 3 per cent. Over the issue of khas land we found that the indigenous people have a common right to it. Furthermore, the CHT Manual clearly prohibited the settlement of population from any other part of the country. The large number of plains Muslim settlement into the hilly region raised population pressure on the area. The additional population has created scarcity (since land has been redistributed among settlers) of arable land, forest, water and other renewable resources. Therefore, we have argued that the population and settlement policy of Pakistani/Bangladeshi government has tremendous negative effects on the environment of the CHT which in turn led to scarcity of renewable resources.

The next section of the second examined the impact of resource allocation policy of the government on resource scarcity. The government policy of plains Muslim settlement into the pahari region was directly linked to confiscation of indigenous owned land. The government confiscated jumma land and redistributed it among the plains Muslim settlers. The confiscation of arable land reduced the share of cultivable land among indigenous families. The reduction in the amount of cultivable land of indigenous families naturally led to a sharp fall in total production. Simultaneously, the high population pressure in the region degraded environmental resources of the region, as stated above. Also, the process of confiscation of resources were not peaceful. Torture, atrocities and repression were committed by settlers and the armed forces of state on the indigenous people. A large number of armed forces are also present in the area. They use forest wood for cooking their food and for other purposes which has also contributed in the destruction of environment. Therefore, in the second chapter, we have found that the causes of environmental scarcity in the CHT is the state policy of population settlement, resource allocation and development.

In the third chapter we investigated the impact of state policy on the population and settlement, resource allocation and the development and its impact on environmental scarcity of water resources in the Gaza Strip. The refugee influx due to war, high population growth and Jewish settlement has caused the population pressure on the arable land and water resources in Gaza. Population density is very high in the Gaza Strip. Although only 8,000
Jewish settlers (now evacuated) were settled in Gaza, the Gaza Strip has a tiny area and population density was already very high. Thus even the small Jewish settler population added extra pressure. Further, the settlers were given arable land for cultivation. Through various legal notices and Military Orders, land was confiscated and redistributed among settlers. Land were also cseized for establishing military camps. Water is the most scarce resource in West Asia, and particularly in Gaza. The Israeli government launched a water policy which was discriminatory in term of its allocation and pricing. The settlers were allocated greater amount of water as compared to Palestinians. Also, the settlers had to pay less for the water than Palestinians. For our purpose we have considered developmental policy of state as source of environmental scarcity in the Gaza strip. We have seen that there is lack of industrial development in Gaza. The Israeli government has mainly focused on the agricultural sector. The Israeli settlers had been provided incentives by the government in the agricultural sector. The settlers embarked on intensive agriculture. Consequently, the limited sources of water declined. The over pumping of ground water has led to intrusion of sea water into the aquifers, which caused salinisation of water. The level of salinity is very high in the Gaza Strip. Contamination of water resources has also been experienced. Therefore, in this chapter we have seen that state policy of population settlement, resource allocation and development combined with high population growth has caused severe resource scarcity in the region.

The fourth chapter focused on the consequences of resource scarcity and its impact on the violent conflict in the CHT and the Gaza Strip. The scarcity of renewable resources has caused decreased agricultural production and economic decline in both society. In the CHT the construction of Kaptai dam displaced a large population that was living as refugees in the hilly part of CHT as well as in the bordering states of India. The capture of jumma resources, plains settlement and atrocities committed by the Bangladeshi army and settlers has also displaced indigenous people to Tripura and Mizoram in India. The scarcity of resources in CHT has adverse impact on the living condition of poor pahari people. There is scarcity of food, drinking water and sanitation. Scarcity of drinking water has caused several water-borne diseases. Malaria is still prevalent in CHT. From the beginning of the construction of Kaptai dam the indigenous people have protested against the irrational and biased government policy, which was not in favour of indigenous people. The pahari people formed
organisations to raise their issues. Militant organisations were also formed. We found that the indigenous people lost faith in the government and started opposing the government legitimacy violently in the late 1970s or in the early 1980s. The negative social effects of the environmental scarcity on indigenous people were by then evident. Also, the plains settlement further added pressure on the environment of the region, which accelerated the scarcity of environment resources and its social effects. Consequently, the indigenous armed group Shanti Bahini attacked a military camp in 1980. The Bangladeshi army launched severe armed operation against the militant organisations and the indigenous civilians. Atrocities and repression were committed on the jumma. The crisis in CHT has still not been solved. The indigenous people hold the view that the Bangladeshi government is accountable for the conditions under which they are living. We found that there is a strong opposition against government in the CHT. Legitimacy of the Bangladesh government has been challenged violently.

Similarly, the impact of environmental scarcity on the people of Gaza is severe. There is a sharp decline in agricultural production and the economy of Gaza. The economic decline has further caused decline in living standards which in turn resulted into various health problems. Living conditions in the refugee camps are awful. Unlike, CHT, there is no evidence of large population displacement from the Gaza Strip to other area. However, Palestinians of Gaza have been migrating to neighbouring Muslim states for employment.

We found that the economic deprivation in Gaza created a legitimation crisis and disruption of institutions. While most of the Palestinians hold the view that Israeli government was responsible for the conditions under which they were living, the Arafat administration was also being held accountable. The Arafat administration were facing opposition from diaspora as well as from native Palestinians. The Palestinian authority weakened and the “radical” Islamist group Hamas got increased support from the people. Towards the end of 1994, hostility erupted between Arafat’s police and the supporters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. People were killed and wounded. In 1995, an estimated one thousand protesters again violently confronted Palestinian police who were trying to arrest suspected Hamas leaders. We found that the environmental scarcity of resources has resulted in disruption of legitimised institutions in Gaza via various social effects.
The next section of this chapter has focused on the typology of conflict. Homer-Dixon proposes three general types of conflicts — simple scarcity conflict, group identity conflict and relative deprivation conflict — may arise in poor societies due to environmental scarcity. Simple scarcity conflicts are explained and predicted by general structural theories. They are the conflicts we would expect when state actors rationally calculate their interests in a zero-sum or negative sum situation. In the case of CHT, there is no zero-sum or negative sum situation between states, since CHT is not a state. However, in the Gaza Strip violent conflict can be explained by the simple scarcity conflict theory, because the Palestinians have never accepted the authority of the Israeli government and have always considered themselves a state. Therefore, the scarcity of resources in the Gaza Strip has created a zero-sum or negative sum situation.

We find group identity theory as an useful tool to explain the causality of violent conflict in the CHT and the Gaza Strip. When different ethnic and cultural groups are propelled together under circumstances of deprivation and stress, there could be inter-group hostility in which a group would emphasise its own identity while denigrating, discriminating and attacking outsiders. The CHT a good example of this process. The ethnic group has been propelled to stay together directly due to state policy of development and population settlement. Further, the decline of environmental resources combined with other political and ethnic factors. Population displacement took place in the form of refugees within the region and in the bordering Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram. The interaction of different ethnic groups in such scarcity ridden situation caused violent conflict between indigenous people and the settlers over the last two decades. Hence, we find the environmental scarcity has potentially caused group identity conflict in the CHT.

Unlike the CHT, we do not find large environmentally induced migration from Gaza to other regions. Due to the ethnic and cultural differences and other political reasons the Palestinians have always perceived the Jewish settlers as their enemies. Palestinians hold the view that the settlers are responsible for their terrible living conditions. This view generated serious friction between these two communities which resulted into violent conflict on ethnic lines.

We have also employed the relative deprivation conflict to investigate the nature of violent conflict in the study. The principal social effects of environmental change in developing
countries may disrupt the institutions and of regular and legitimised social relations. Environmental problems may not only increase the frustration and anger within developing societies (by increasing relative deprivation) but by disrupting institutions and social relations, they may also open up structural opportunities for challenger groups to act on their grievances and seek to overthrow existing authority. The Chittagong Hill Tracts provides evidence of the links between environmental scarcity, economic deprivation, and civil strife. The country has suffered from serious civil strife for decades. The cropland and forest degradation in the hills sharply exacerbated environmental scarcity and economic deprivation. The insurgency by militant organisations – including attack on settlers and assaults on military stations – is motivated by the poverty of marginalised agricultural jumma farmers. Already living under the circumstances of deprivation and stress caused by resource scarcity, the indigenous people of the CHT consider the state policy of resource capture as the main reason for their appalling living condition. Hence, the indigenous people have taken violent action against the state machinery and have delegitimised the authority of state.

Similarly, the Gaza Strip has been suffering from civil strife for the past two decades. The scarcity of water resources has exacerbated environmental scarcity and economic deprivation of the Palestinians. The Palestinians hold the view that the Israeli government policy is responsible for their such conditions, so they are experiencing the feeling of relative deprivation. Already living under the circumstances of deprivation and stress caused by resource scarcity, the Palestinians of Gaza have developed inter-group hostility towards settlers. Also, the Palestinians have questioned the authority of the Palestinian Authority. Deprivation among Palestinians and the disruption of the Palestinian Authority led to violent conflict in the region.

After a close look at the sources of violent conflict in both areas, we find the environmentally induced conflict may arise within society but its impact will be intra - as well as inter-state. The study finds three key dimensions of violent conflict in the CHT and Gaza which has occurred due to the environmental scarcity. The conflict between indigenous people and Muslim settlers in the CHT and between Palestinians and Jewish settlers in Gaza offers group versus group conflict. The nature of conflict is internal in the CHT but it took an international form in the Gaza Strip, since the political conditions and nature of society is different in the Gaza strip compared the CHT. Another dimension of conflict emerges as state versus group
conflict in both areas. The indigenous people of CHT and the Palestinians of Gaza have perceived that they are getting exploited by the state in order to advance the interest of others. They therefore have developed hostility against the state. We also find that environmental induced violent conflict in the CHT and Gaza Strip took the form of state versus state conflict. The environmentally induced migrants from CHT took refuge in the bordering Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram. Over the issue of rehabilitation, tension emerged between India and Bangladesh. Also, capture over the resources in the Gaza strip has took shape of hostility between Palestine and Israel, which is inter-state in nature.

In conclusion, this thesis finds that the violent conflict which prevailed the CHT and the Gaza Strip for last few decades has its roots in environmental scarcity and its resultant social effects. Importantly these has arisen due to flawed governmental policies of population settlement, resource allocation and the development.