



POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bangladesh paradox

- **Political parties played contradictory roles in fostering democracy**
 - ü Parties made positive contributions in the nationalist and democracy movements of 1950s, 1960s and 1980s
 - ü But the failure to strengthen democratic practices within parties constrained consolidation of democracy
 - ü Frequent media reports of corrupt and criminal activities of party activists and their impunity from justice illustrate erosion of rule of law
- **After restoration of democracy in 1991 regular rotation of power through elections between two major parties, yet electoral democracy not institutionalized**
 - ü Four credible elections in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008 resulting in rotation of power between AL and BNP with incumbents always losing
 - ü But no agreement between AL and BNP about the basic rules of organizing elections
 - ü Continuing contestations over elections led to political confrontation, crisis and instability.



1. INTRODUCTION (CONTD.)

1.1 Bangladesh paradox (contd.)

- Since 1991 party structures and partisan identification have spread but this has not led to organizational strength
 - ü In last two decades party offices spread from national to grassroots levels and partisan identification has deepened
 - ü But focus on building clientelist parties through patronage distribution eroded party discipline
 - ü Intra-party factional contestation and violence to grab public resources have intensified
 - ü Client groups are held together by local/national patrons through force and patronage and not through commitment to ideology or policy
- Parties continue with street agitation and violence side by side with vote-centric electoral politics
 - ü Electoral democracy did not diminish the role of street politics. Ruling parties resorted to 'winner takes all' practice of rewarding supporters and punishing opponents. Opposition parties boycotted parliament and chose street agitation as their main instrument of voice.
 - ü Campaign to forcibly overthrow elected governments through street agitation became a part of opposition's election campaign
 - ü Democratic institutions were not nurtured either by the ruling or the opposition parties.



1. INTRODUCTION (CONTD.)

1.2 Background, Objective, Scope and Data

Background

- The study, undertaken under CPD-CMI research collaboration programme, is a follow up on the parliament study which identified deficits of political parties as major challenges inhibiting democracy and good governance.

Objective

- The objective is to generate knowledge and facilitate discussion of ideas to enable parties to nurture democratic practices.

Scope

- The study provides broad overview of political parties with a particular focus on internal party democracy. Four electoral parties e.g. AL, BNP, JP and JI are selected for comparison.

Data

- The study is based on published documents, interviews with selected party leaders and information from two randomly selected districts and upazilas.
- The study was conducted during 2012-2013. Data collection was challenging as party offices/officials provided limited information. It was not possible to interview Jamaat-e-Islami (JI).



2. ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

2.1 Key roles of political parties

Political parties perform various roles, the most significant being the following:

- Interest articulation and aggregation
- Representation and competition for political power
- Mobilization and socialization of citizens for political participation
- Recruitment and training of political leaders
- Policy-making
- Linking citizens to government
- Accountability of government to citizens
- Promoting democratization and democratic consolidation



2. ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL PARTIES (CONTD.)

2.2 Major challenges facing political parties

- In many democracies including the west, mainstream parties are focused on winning elections and pay little attention to ideology and policies. Negative campaign rather than policy debate gets prioritized.
- In new democracies parties are often marked by clientelism i.e. transactional relationship between patrons and clients based on resource distribution. As clientelist parties generally depend on state resources there is an incentive to hang on to state power at all costs and engage in corrupt and undemocratic practices.
- Party/ election funding is a major challenge. Parties are increasingly becoming dependent on people with money and in some places muscle power and losing touch with ordinary citizens.
- In many countries parties are gaining negative image and people have low trust in parties and politicians



3. EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN BANGLADESH

Party systems and party practices have evolved over three distinct periods. Undemocratic practices have been carried over from autocratic to democratic era.

3.1 From multi-party to single party system (1972-1975)

- At independence Bangladesh had multi-party system with dominance of a single party, the AL
- Islamist parties were defeated and banned
- Opposition came mainly from leftist parties but their electoral presence was weak
- Yet the government moved to a single party system, BAKSAL, in February 1975



3. EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN BANGLADESH (CONTD.)

3.2 Emergence of state-sponsored parties during military rule (1978-1990)

- Military rulers built parties through use of state agencies and public resources
 - ü BNP launched by Ziaur Rahman in 1978
 - ü JP floated by H. M Ershad in 1986
- Parties developed with no ideological coherence as BNP and JP were composed of breakaway factions of both leftist and rightist parties and opposition to the AL was their binding thread
- State-sponsored parties attracted a new class of political actors
 - ü Civil-military bureaucrats/technocrats
 - ü Politicians with limited party or electoral experience



3. EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN BANGLADESH (CONTD.)

3.3 Parties for electioneering under electoral democracy (1991-present)

- There was regular rotation of power through election between two mainstream parties, AL and BNP. Small parties became marginalized and moved towards two electoral alliances led by AL and BNP.
- Mainstream parties became increasingly clientelist. They contested mainly to capture state resources and became less interested in ideology or policy debate.
- Competition to grab power and resources led to criminalization of politics i.e. influence of black money and emergence of “godfathers” in many areas.
- There was no separation of government and ruling party. Ruling party’s monopoly control of state’s power of reward and punishment led to confrontational politics.
- Party activists/ cadres routinely used violence to settle inter and intra-party conflicts and establish control.
- Proliferation of factions, concentration of power in party leader and violence led to erosion of internal party democracy.



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI

4.1 Ideology

Table 1: Ideologies of the Political Parties

Political Party	Ideologies
Awami League (AL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bengali Nationalism• Democracy• Secularism; freedom of all religions & non-communal politics• Socialism i.e. establishment of exploitation free society & social justice
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bangladeshi nationalism• Democracy• Free market economy• Preserve the teachings of Islam, religion of the majority and other religions
Jatiyo Party (JP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independence & sovereignty• Islamic ideology & freedom of all regions• Bangladeshi nationalism• Democracy• Social progress & economic emancipation
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish Islamic way of life• Establish just, exploitation free society & state• Faith & trust in Allah, democracy, economic & social justice & ensure basic needs of all citizen irrespective of religions & ethnicity• Fraternity with World Muslims & friendship with all states

Source: Party Constitutions



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

4.1 Ideology (contd.)

- Party constitutions of AL, BNP and JP highlight three common elements: democracy, nationalism and social justice (Table 1).
- Over the years ideological divides have narrowed. The parties have developed consensus on economic policy e.g. commitment to free market economy.
- However, there is a continuing difference between AL and the other three parties in social/cultural policies. BNP, JP and JI invoke Islam. AL retains a formal commitment to secularism and non-communal politics, though in practice AL too adopted many symbolic references to Islam. The 15th amendment restores secularism but also retains Islam as state religion.
- Role of leaders and interpretation of history are the main contestations between AL and BNP.



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

4.2 Organizational structure

- There is a similarity in organizational structure of the parties. At the national level parties generally have six structures: council, executive committee, small decision-making body (presidium in AL and JP, NSC in BNP, majlish-e-sura in JI), advisory council, parliamentary board and parliamentary party (Table 2).
- At the sub-national level, party structures follow the administrative units: district, upazila, union, metropolitan city, municipality and ward (Table 3).
- Parties maintain several front and associate organizations to mobilize different groups, e.g. women, student, youth, workers, etc. Associated student and youth organizations are well known for their rent seeking and violent actions.
- Party constitutions stipulate elections for the councils and committees at the national and sub-national levels as well as in front and associate organizations.



Table 2: Organizational Structure of the Political Parties at the National Level

Political Party	National Bodies of the Party	Highest Decision/Policy Making Body	Highest Forum of the party	Members	Tenure
Awami League (AL)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Awami League Council Executive Committee/Central Committee/Working Committee (CEC/CC/WC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President, Presidium, General Secretary, Secretaries, Treasurer, and 26 Members National Committee Advisory Council Parliamentary Board Parliamentary Party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (CEC/CC/WC) Presidium 	Awami League Council	<p>(CEC/CC/WC)- 73</p> <p>Presidium- 15 (including President and General Secretary)</p>	Three years
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> National Council National Executive Committee (NEC) National Standing Committee (NSC) Advisory Council to Chairman Parliamentary Board Parliamentary Party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEC NSC 	National Council	<p>NEC-351</p> <p>NSC- 19 (including Chairman, Senior Vice Chairman and Secretary General)</p>	Three years
Jatiyo Party (JP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> National Council Central Executive Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman Presidium General Secretary Vice Chairman Secretaries Executive Members Advisory Council Treasurer Parliamentary Board Parliamentary Party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEC Presidium 	National Council	<p>Central Executive Committee- 299</p> <p>Presidium- 42</p>	Three years
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Central Members' (Rokon) Conference Ameer-e-Jamaat Central Executive Committee (CEC) Central Working Committee Central Majlis-e-Sura 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Majlis-e-Sura Central Executive Committee (CEC) 	<p>Central Members' (Rokon) Conference</p>	<p>Central Majlis-e-Sura?</p> <p>(CEC)- 16 (including the Amir-e-Jamaat)</p>	Three years



Table 3: Organizational Structure of the Political Parties at the sub-national Level

Political Party	Local Bodies	Members	Election/Selection Procedure
Awami League (AL)	• Zilla/District Awami League Executive Committee	71	Election through triennial council
	• Upazilla/Thana Awami League Executive Committee	71	Election through triennial council
	• Union Awami League Committee	65	Not specified
	• Metropolitan City Awami League Executive Committee	71	Election through triennial council
	• Metropolitan Thana Committee	67	Election through triennial council
	• Metropolitan Ward Awami League Committee	65	Not specified
	• Metropolitan Unit Awami League	37	Not specified
	• Municipal Awami League Committee (lying in the district headquarters and belonging to the Municipality of 'a' category)	65	Election through triennial council
	• Municipal Awami League Committee (other)	51	Not specified
	• Ward Awami League Committee	31	Not specified
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	• Zilla/District executive committee	151	Election through triennial council
	• Upazilla/thana executive committee	101	
	• Union executive committee	71	
	• Mahanagar thana executive committee	121	
	• Mahanagar Ward Executive Committee	71	
	• Mahanagar executive committee	171	
	• Pouroshova executive committee	101	
	• Ward executive committee of Union	71	
• Ward executive committee of Pouroshova	71		
Jatiyo Party (JP)	• District/Zilla Executive Committee	111	Election through council
	• Upazilla Executive Committee	71	Election through council
	• Union Executive Committee	51	Election by the members
	• Union Ward Executive Committee	41	Election by the members
	• Municipal Ward Executive Committee	35	Election by the members
	• Municipal Executive Committee	71	Election through council
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	• District Majlis-e-Sura & Working Committee	??	Election by the members
	• Upazilla/Thana Majlis-e-Sura & Upazilla/Thana Working Committee		
	• Union Majlis-e-Sura & Union Working Committee		

Source: Party Constitutions and interviews



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

4.3 Leadership: centralized, dynastic, family

Centralized Leadership

- Power is concentrated in the hands of party chief. There is no change or competition for party presidency/chairmanship for nearly 30 years in AL and BNP (Tables 4.1 and 4.2).
- There was change and competition for general secretary position but no election in council meetings and final selection was made privately by party chief. (Tables 4.1 and 4.2).
- Party general secretaries have often been LGRD Minister
 - ü Mannan Bhuiyan, BNP (1996-2007)
 - ü Syed Ashraful Islam, AL (2009 - present)
- In the JP, H. M Ershad has been party chairman since 1986 with two short breaks. However, both Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury (1991-1997) and Anisul Islam Mahmud (2007-2008) were only acting chairman.
- The JI too was led by only two leaders for two decades, Ghulam Azam (1992-2000) and Matiur Rahman Nizami (2000-2010).



Table 4.1: President and General Secretary of the AL 1981 – present

President	Tenure	General Secretary	Tenure
Sheikh Hasina	1981-present	Begum Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury (Acting)	1982-1987
		Begum Syeda Sajeda Chowdhry (Acting)	1987-1992
		Zillur Rahman	1992-2002
		Md. Abdul Jalil	2002-2009
		Syed Ashraful Islam	2009-present

Source: List of Presidents and General Secretaries of the AL since the inception of the party, Telephone Directory, Department of Publicity and Publication, Bangladesh Awami League.



Table 4.2: Chairman and Secretary General of the BNP 1981 – present

Chairperson	Tenure	Secretary General	Tenure
Abdus Sattar	1981-1984	A. Q. M. Badruddoza Chowdhury	1979-1990
Begum Khaleda Zia	1984-present	Abdus Salam Talukder	1991-1996
		Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan	1996-2007
		Advocate Khandker Delwar Hossain (Acting)	2007-2009
		Advocate Khandker Delwar Hossain	2009-2011
		Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir (Acting)	2011-Present

Source: Khan *et al.* (2008:119);

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A. Q. M. Badruddoza Chowdhury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._Q._M._Badruddoza_Chowdhury) (accessed on 25 May 2013);

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdul_Mannan_Bhuiyan) (accessed on 25 May 2013);

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirza_Fakhrul_Islam_Alamgir) (accessed on 25 May 2013);

<http://welovebnp.webs.com/historyofbnp.htm> (accessed on 25 May 2013)



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

4.3 Leadership: centralized, dynastic, family (contd.)

Dynastic leadership

- Both AL and BNP are led by dynastic leaders, Sheikh Hasina (daughter of Bangabandhu) and Khaleda Zia (widow of Ziaur Rahman). In AL no formal dynastic successor of Hasina yet. In BNP Khaleda's son, Tareque Rahman's dynastic succession is formalized.
- In JP recent move of dynastic succession to Ershad's wife, which is being contested by another group led by his brother.
- Dynastic succession has spread to many political families. All four national leaders of AL have dynastic successors (Table 5).
- Dynastic successors have emerged in many other constituencies.
- Dynastic inheritance is particularly important for women. Nearly half of directly elected women MPs of 9th parliament were dynastic successors. (Table 6)
- Dynastic successors are evident also in smaller parties e.g. BJP, Bikalpa Dhara



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

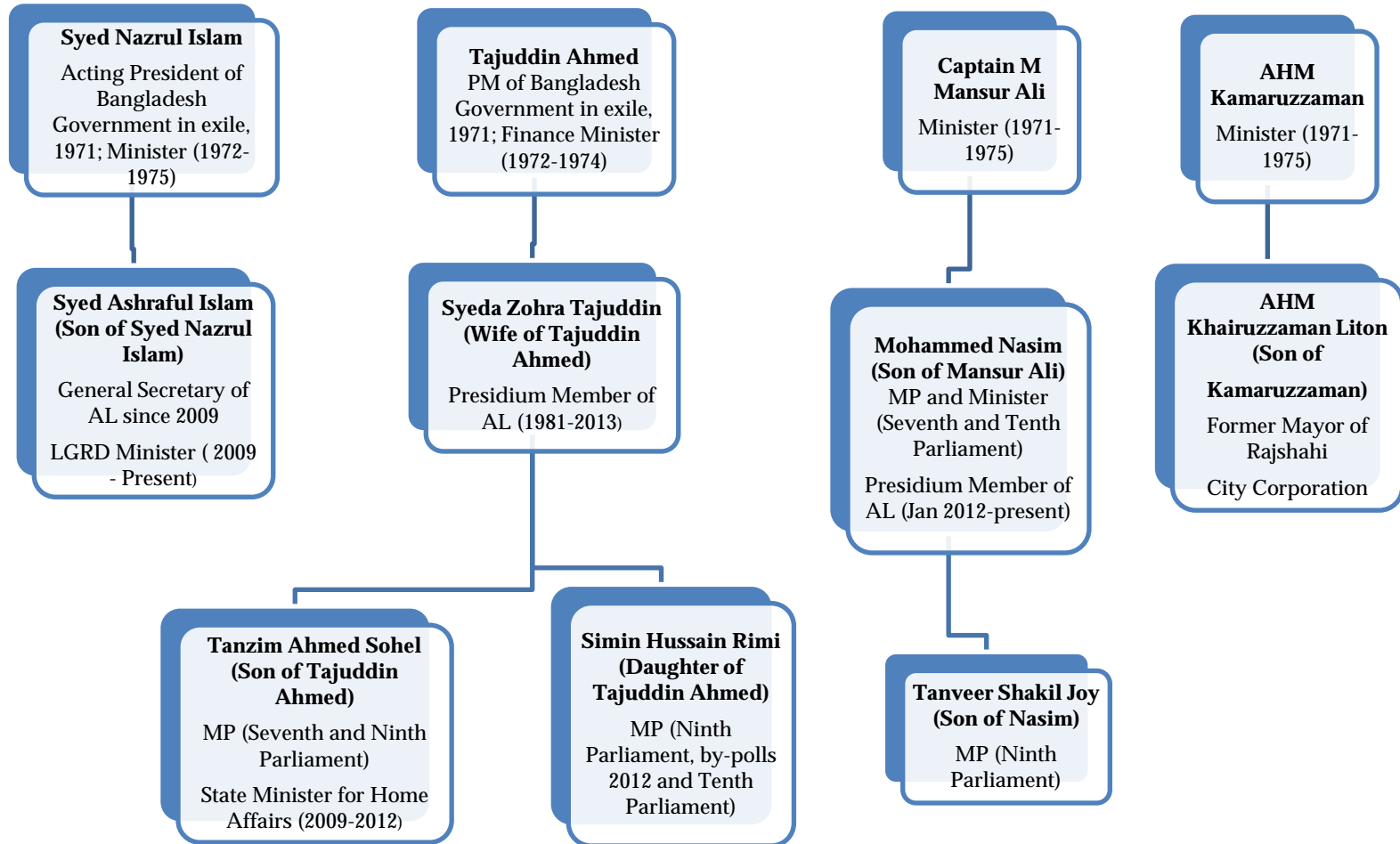
4.3 Leadership: centralized, dynastic, family (contd.)

Leadership through family connection

- Family (near and extended) of dynastic leaders are prominent in politics and influential in power. Some are elected representatives. Some exercise informal power.
 - ü Though Hasina recently limited definition of her family to her and her sister and their children, many members of her extended family have been influential in politics. In the 10th parliament, 7 MPs (3 cousins, 3 nephews and father-in-law of daughter) can claim family connection.
 - ü Khaleda's brother and sister were MPs in the 8th parliament. Two nephews also wielded power and influence.
 - ü Ershad's wife, brother and sister were MPs in the 9th parliament. His wife and sister are MPs in the 10th parliament.
- Members of political families can also belong to rival parties/ factions. e.g. Rashed Khan Menon (BWP) is with the ruling alliance and his sister Selina Rahman is with the opposition BNP.



Table 5: Dynastic inheritors of four national leaders of AL



Source: Several news paper articles.

Table 6: Dynastic inheritance of women MPs in the 9th Parliament

No.	Name of the MP	Constituency	Party Affiliation	Dynastic Roots
1	Raushan Ershad	Rongpur-3	JP	Wife of HM Ershad Party President and the Former President of Bangladesh
2	Rumana Mahmud	Sirajganj-2	BNP	Wife of Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Former MP of BNP (Sirajganj-2)
3	Begum Sultana Tarun	Kushtia-4	AL	Wife of Abul Hasan Tarun Former MP of the AL (Kushtia-4)
4	Habibun Nahar	Bagerhat-3	AL	Wife of Khulna Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque
5	Rebecca Momin	Netrokona-4	AL	Wife of Late AL leader Abdul Momin.
6	Simin Hossain Rimi	Gazipur-4 (By-Polls)	AL	Daughter of Taj Uddin Ahmed PM of Bangladesh Government in Exile, 1971; Finance Minister (1972-1974)
7	Meher Afroze Chumki	Gazipur-5	AL	Daughter of Former MP Moyez Uddin Ahmed of the AL
8	Begum Nilufer Zafar Ullah	Faridpur-4	AL	Wife of Awami League Presidium member Kazi Zafrullah
9	Hasina Ahmed	Cox's Bazar-1	BNP	Wife of Former State Minister for Communications during the BNP led Four Party Alliance Government Salauddin Ahmed



4. FEATURES OF POLITICAL PARTIES: AL, BNP, JP, JI (CONTD.)

4.4 Membership, Support Base, Factionalism

Membership

- Membership criteria are similar in AL, BNP and JP. Any citizen above 18 years, not involved in anti-social activities and not against independence and sovereignty of the country can be a member. JI is restricted to Muslims. Membership drive is not a priority for parties except JI.
- Cadres are maintained by all parties. Student and youth groups affiliated with parties often act as musclemen and are involved in inter and intra-party violence.

Support base

- AL, BNP and JP are “catch all” electoral parties appealing to all groups. AL has traditional support base with the religious and ethnic minorities. JP traditionally drew support from Rangpur, Ershad’s home district. JI has regional support base in the border areas.

Factionalism

- Factional splintering of parties were common in 1970s and 1980s. BNP and JP were formed with breakaway factions. Personal ambition of leaders rather than policy differences led to factionalism.
- After restoration of electoral democracy in 1991, factionalism is contained within parties. There has been few open splits leading to formation of new parties.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY

- Practice of internal democracy within parties is a major concern as its absence is identified as a cause of democracy deficits.
- Generally three criteria are used to assess the state of internal party democracy
 - ü leadership selection
 - ü candidate selection
 - ü policy/programme discussion.
- We have used three additional criteria to assess the state of internal democracy
 - ü social diversity of leadership
 - ü transparency in party/campaign funding
 - ü inter and intra-party conflict resolution



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.1 Leadership selection

RPO and party constitution rules and guidelines

- Both RPO and party constitutions highlight democratic principles for leadership selection.
- RPO requires election of members of the committees at all levels including members of the central committee [Article 90B(1)b(i)] and fixing the goal of reserving at least 33% of all committee positions for women and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020 [Article 90B(1)b(ii)]
- Party constitutions stipulate election to select leaders of committees at national and sub-national levels and also in front/ associate organizations
- Party rules for leadership selection at national level is illustrated by Table 7



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.1 Leadership selection (contd.)

Table 7: Leadership Selection Process of the Political Parties at National Level

Political Party	Position/Body	Selection Process
Awami League (AL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • General Secretary • National Committee • Executive Committee • Advisory Council • Parliamentary Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election by the Council • Election by the Council • Election by the Council • Election by the Council • Nominated by President • Election by the Council
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson • Secretary General • National Executive Committee (NEC) • National Standing Committee (NSC) • Advisory Council to Chairman • Parliamentary Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election by national council • Election by national council • Election by national council • Election by national council • Nominated by chairperson • Standing committee members and representatives from concerned district
Jatiyo Party (JP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman • Secretary General • Central Executive Committee • Advisory Council • Parliamentary Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election by national council • Election by national council • Election of 299 officials by national councils and others of the grass-root committees • Nominated by the chairman • Ex-officio and election from the presidium based on seniority. Chairman can break the provision to ensure divisional representation
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amir-e-Jamaat • Secretary General • Central Majlis-e-Sura • Central Working Council • Central Executive Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secret ballot by the members by the members of the Rokon's Conference • Appointed by Amir-e-Jamaat in consultation with Majlis-e-Sura • Selection, Nomination, and ex-officio of various committees • Nominations and ex-officio of various committees • Not specified



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.1 Leadership selection (contd.)

Leadership selection in practice

- In practice parties do not follow their own rules. Council meetings are infrequent in the BNP and the JP. In the AL, council meetings are more regular but these are more a public show than a forum for democratic competition, discussion and debate.
- Since inception AL organized 19 council meetings (1 in every 3 years). But in recent years there was no election for leadership positions. Council meetings elected the party president unopposed and delegated to her the authority to select other office bearers.
- Since inception BNP organized only 5 council meetings (1 in every 6 years). There was a gap of 16 years between BNP's 4th and 5th council meetings. In BNP too council meetings elected party chairperson unopposed who was then given the authority to select other office bearers.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.1 Leadership selection (contd.)

Leadership selection in practice (contd.)

- At the sub-national levels elections for committees are infrequent. Most sub-national committees are either ad-hoc or their tenure has expired. In many cases sub-national leaders are selected by central leadership. Compared to BNP and JP, AL appears to have better record in organizing committees and electing leaders at the sub-national levels.
- Front and associate organizations of parties also do not hold regular council meetings to elect leaders who are again usually selected by party chief. In many cases student and youth organizations are led by nominal students and people in their 40s!
- In our two study areas JP's committees were formed by the party chairman and BNP was functioning with ad-hoc committees both at district and upazila levels. In AL, one district and two upazila committees were formed through "kontho" (voice) vote. In one district committee was formed through secret ballot. In JI, all committees were elected through secret ballot.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.2 Candidate selection

RPO guidelines

- RPO provides guidelines for the candidate selection process. RPO in 2008 required that grassroots committees will have meetings or local councils will prepare a list of panel for each constituency. The list will be sent to central parliamentary board who must select a candidate from the list.
- The 2009 amended RPO has removed the mandatory provision of selecting candidates from the grassroots list which has now been made optional.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.2 Candidate selection (contd.)

Candidate selection in practice

- In practice parties did not strictly adhere to the RPO in candidate selection process in the 2008 parliamentary election .

üAL has a better record in following RPO. AL invited list of panels from grassroots consisting 3 names (TIB,2011). However, it ignored grassroots panels in at least 40 constituencies (*The Daily Star, 29 Dec 2008*).

üBNP did not seek lists from grassroots. It formed 7 special teams for gathering information from grassroots; grassroots opinion was hardly reflected (TIB, 2011); Nomination was finalised from those who directly applied to PB (*The Daily Star, 28 November, 2009*).

Source: TIB. 2011. Local Participation and Expectations in the Nomination process of National Elections



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.2 Candidate selection (contd.)

Candidate selection in practice (contd.)

- In our two study areas which had in total 9 constituencies we found similar difference between AL and BNP. BNP and JP did not involve grassroots committees.
- In AL grassroots committees recommended panels to PB from all 9 constituencies. In 6 the nominated candidate was chosen from the grassroots panels. Out of 9 constituencies in 4 a panel of 3 was recommended; in 3 only one was recommended; in one constituency the panel contained 5 names.
- JI nominated in only one constituency. Only one candidate was recommended from the grassroots who was selected.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.3 Representation of diversity in party leadership

The study looked at the representation of women, minorities and the income poor in party decision-making bodies. Presidium in AL and JP and NSC in BNP are considered as the highest decision-making body.

- Women's representation in the highest decision-making body of parties is marginal in BNP and JP (only around 10 percent), In AL women's representation is close to RPO guideline of 33%. JI has none.
- Parties have not prepared a plan to meet the RPO guidelines of 33% women in all committees by 2020.
- There is only one prominent Hindu in the senior leadership of the AL and the BNP. There is none in JP. JI is restricted to Muslims.
- Business people are increasingly dominating decision-making bodies of parties. Business presence is more prominent in the BNP and JP. AL has a mix of politicians and business people in its decision-making body. However, as politicians are transforming themselves into business persons, it is hard to distinguish between a politician and a businessman.
- There is no mechanism or plan to systematically ensure the representation of the resource poor in decision-making bodies of parties.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.4 Party policy/ programme discussion/debate

- There is little policy/ programme discussion/debate within party forums
 - ü Election manifestos are drafted by a small group without wide discussion and debate in grass roots and other party strata
 - ü Policy discussions are generally pro-forma at national level committee meetings
- In our two study areas party members/ activists were not involved in any policy discussion/debate. They were mostly engaged in organizing celebration of various special days and mobilizing protests against opposition. No meeting was organized to discuss or debate party policy direction/ alternatives or concerns of the citizens.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.4 Party policy/ programme discussion/debate (contd.)

- There is little consultative process or collective decision-making. Key decisions are often taken by party chief sometimes rejecting the views of senior party leaders.

ü In 2011, AL's decision to give up the non-party caretaker system was taken by the party chief. All AL MPs of the special parliamentary committee tasked to recommend constitutional amendments initially unanimously recommended retention of the non-party caretaker system. But they changed their recommendation after meeting with party chief Sheikh Hasina. (*S Liton, The Daily Star, August 25, 2013*)

ü In 2007, Khaleda Zia removed the secretary general of BNP, Mannan Bhuiyan without a consultative process in the party. She announced her decision on her way out of a magistrate's court following her arrest order. Senior party leaders who initially protested Mannan Bhuiyan's expulsion later switched their support to Khaleda. (*R. H. Suman, The Daily Star, September 4, 2007*)



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.5 Party /campaign funding

- Party constitutions describe various sources of funding e.g. membership fee, donation, income from assets etc. but in practice party funds are collected from a variety of non-transparent sources.
- The bulk of funding is privately channeled to party leaders to sustain individual or party activities. These funds underwrite political activities as well provide livelihood support to individual politicians. The funds are mostly provided by business people, remain undocumented and often originate from “black” money. This builds collusive compact between politicians and businessmen and lead to corruption.
- Though RPO requires parties to submit annual audited reports to Election Commission (EC), these are not made public or scrutinized for veracity by independent bodies
- In our two study areas the study team could not investigate the sources of all party funds. Informants were reluctant to discuss party funding. In AL, BNP and JP party funding appeared to be ad-hoc. These parties did not maintain any account of income and expenditure or a register book. Funding was never discussed in party meetings. Only JI required party members to donate a part of their monthly income to party fund called *baitul maal*. Account of income and expenditure was maintained and was discussed in meetings of *majlish-e-sura*.



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.5 Party /campaign funding (contd.)

- RPO has put a ceiling on campaign expenditure and parties/candidates are required to submit reports to EC. But the ceiling was found to be too low by key informants. The reports sent to EC by the parties and candidates can be assumed to be gross underestimates. Again, these reports are not scrutinized by EC.
- We collected data about campaign finance of parties in our two study areas for the 2008 elections (Table 8). Though these may be underestimates, data shows that campaign expenditures are mainly borne by candidates. Parties made no contribution except in the case of JI. This explains why parties are increasingly involved in “selling” party tickets to wealthy candidates who can fund their own election campaign as well as fund the party.



Table 8: Election Campaign Expenditure in the Study Area

Const.	AL		BNP		JP		JI	
District A	Donation by party	Exp. by candidate	Donation by party	Exp. by candidate	Donation by party	Exp. by candidate	Donation by party	Exp. by candidate
Const -1	00	8,29,860	00	11,80,365	-	-	-	-
Const -2	-	6,50,000	00	11,60,600	00	3,00,000	-	-
Const -3	00	7,50,000	00	4,99,840	-	-	-	44,500
Const -4	00	7,60,000	00	10,03,780	-	-	-	-
District B								
Const -1	00	14,33,412	00	14,52,370	-	-	-	-
Const -2	00	12,33,550	00	7,81,800	-	-	-	-
Const -3	00	10,63,119	00	8,54,912	-	13,65,730	-	-
Const -4	00	13,66,203	00	14,56,600	-	-	-	-
Const -5	00	11,78,400	-	-	-	-	150,000	11,97,999
Const -6	00	13,77,495	-	-	-	-	150,000	13,88,600

Source: Political Party Election Expenditure of Ninth National Parliamentary Election, Available at: http://123.49.39.5/asset/exp_return/political.php (accessed on 4 June 2013).



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.6 Inter and intra party conflict resolution

- In a democracy it is assumed that inter and intra-party conflicts would be resolved through democratic means but in Bangladesh violence is routinely resorted to by party activists to settle disputes. Generally, student and youth groups affiliated with parties use violence. In many areas “godfathers” nurture violence.
- Three types of political violence are prevalent e.g. a) those triggered by street agitation, b) violence on campuses of educational institutions to extort money and gain national prominence and c) violence to control local areas, again, for financial gains and competition for spoils.
- As expected incidence of inter-party violence is higher between the two main parties AL and BNP, compared to other parties (Table 9).
- Levels of violence was particularly high in 2013, especially inter-party violence (Table 9) and violent clashes between police and party activists (Table 11).
- JI emerged as a major actor in inter-party violence and violence with police. In 2013 JI-Shibir-Police violence claimed most injuries and deaths. Clashes between police and other Islamist groups e.g. Hefazat also led to many injuries and killing (Table 11).



5. INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY (CONTD.)

5.6 Inter and intra party conflict resolution (contd.)

- Intra-party violence is higher when the party is in power, than when it is in opposition. This is true of the BNP during 2002-2006 and the AL during 2009-2013 (Table 10). Similarly, inter-party violence within alliance partners e.g. BNP-JI and AL-JP is higher when the alliance is in power than when they are in opposition (Table 9). This implies conflicts are less due to ideological or policy differences and more due to contestations over grabbing business contracts or other patronage deals
- Intra-party violence is less within JP and JI presumably because they are not ruling parties and do not have monopoly control over patronage resources.
- When parties are in the opposition they get more involved in police-party violence. This is true of the AL during 2002-2006 and the BNP-JI during 2009-2013 (Table 11). This demonstrates the government/ ruling party's intolerance and repressive policy towards political opposition.



Table 9: Inter-Party Violence

Political Parties	2002-2006			2007-2008			2009-2012			2013		
	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed
AL-BNP	522	11427	118	24	370	7	563	7534	100	148	2300	31
AL-JP	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	155	-	1	7	-
AL-JI	42	391	07	5	58	-	28	270	1	14	130	9
BNP-JP	5	36	-	-	-	-	1	15	1	1	10	-
BNP-JI	134	724	8	-	-	-	4	79	-	4	48	1
AL-BNP-JI	8	150	7	-	-	-	11	163	-	6	43	-
BNP-JP-JI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	34	968	17	3	7	-	2	18	-	31	744	22

Source: Information Desk. *Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)*.



Table 10: Intra-Party Violence

Political Parties	2002-2006			2007-2008			2009-2012			2013		
	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed
AL	269	4599	37	1	20	-	799	9823	97	167	2072	25
BNP	284	6684	55	8	133	2	229	3383	21	92	1108	8
JP	2	15	-	-	-	-	1	10	-	1	20	-
Jl	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-

Source: Information Desk. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).



Table 11: Violence between Police and Political Parties

Political Parties	2002-2006			2007-2008			2009-2012			2013		
	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed	Incidents	Injured	Killed
AL-Police	24	854	1	-	-	-	15	262	-	6	49	1
AL-BNP-Police	1	55	-	-	-	-	62	895	3	11	428	3
BNP-Police	6	80	-	1	100	-	81	2612	7	37	722	4
AL-JI-Shibir-Police	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	27	-
Shibir-Police	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	364	1	45	463	9
JI-Shibir-Police	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	208	1	68	1468	37
JI-Police	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	576	-	14	173	11
Hefazat-e-Islam-Police	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	573	55

Source: Information Desk. *Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)*.



6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Key findings

- Political parties led the democracy movements yet after the restoration of democracy in 1991 they fell short in institutionalizing democracy, promoting good governance and practicing democracy within their own organizations.
- Mainstream electoral parties tended to become pre-occupied with the mission of capturing state power with the goal of expanding their support base through patronage distribution. This weakened their ideological and policy orientation. Parties became less inclined to perform their key roles such as interest articulation, training of leaders, policy-making and democratic consolidation.
- As parties became more clientelist, their competition for grabbing public resources encouraged corruption and in some cases criminalization . Within parties factions have multiplied due to increasing contestation for a share of the spoils. Consequently, party discipline started eroding.



6. CONCLUSIONS (CONTD.)

- Factionalism and concentration of power in leadership created a vicious circle. Factional conflicts could be settled only by a supreme leader. On the other hand, the dependence on the leader removed other democratic means of conflict resolution.
- There are clear indications of erosion of intra-party democracy. Leadership is centralized and tends to be dynastic. Leadership at different strata are more likely to be selected rather than elected through secret ballot. Grassroots committees retain limited control over nomination of candidates. Ideological and policy issues are rarely debated within party fora. Key policy decisions are generally taken by the party chief. Sources of campaign and party funding remain non-transparent. Parties are becoming increasingly dependent on a new rich class who invest in party activities or get involved in party politics for material gains.
- A new class of political musclemen are increasingly evident in leadership positions at the grassroots level who use violence to acquire huge wealth which is then used to establish their political authority and to maintain close relations with the administration and law enforcement agencies. The rise of such elements is contributing to increasing violence between parties and within parties which threaten the sustenance of democracy.



6. CONCLUSIONS (CONTD.)

6.2 Suggested actions

Democracy can be sustained only when parties make a credible commitment to promote democracy in the country and practice democracy within their own organization.

- To promote democracy in the country parties need to:
 - ü Stop using state agencies and state resources to reward supporters and punish opponents. Rule of law, a critical element of democracy, can not be established unless parties refrain from using the state to promote partisan interest.
 - ü Stop using violence to settle inter party and intra-party conflicts. The persistent violence between and within parties and between parties and law enforcement agencies constrain development of democratic means of conflict resolution.
 - ü Stop the practice of boycotting parliament when they are in the opposition. Parties need to make the parliament the central agency of holding the government accountable.



6. CONCLUSIONS (CONTD.)

6.2 Suggested actions (contd.)

ü Shift from being clientelist patronage distribution machines to rule-based policy oriented organizations. Parties are not able to perform their democratic roles as they are busy building their patron-client networks which are dependent in many areas on corrupt and criminal activities.

ü Maintain a separation between the party and government. Party officials e.g. president, general secretary and other office bearers should devote full time to party work and not be assigned to government positions e.g. cabinet ministers. Separation of party machinery from the government will enable the ruling party to perform a very important role. It can critique the government's policies and make the government accountable to citizens without challenging its electoral mandate.

ü Focus on their role of aggregating and articulating the interests of all social groups and designing policies to address these interests. Parties are increasingly being dominated by interests of business groups. They need to articulate the interests of the excluded groups who constitute the majority of the electorate.



6. CONCLUSIONS (CONTD.)

6.2 Suggested actions (contd.)

- To promote the practice of democracy within their own organizations parties need to primarily follow their own constitutions as well as RPO guidelines. More specifically parties need to:
 - ü Select leaders of all committees at all strata through regular elections using secret ballot.
 - ü Nominate party candidates for elective offices from panels selected by grassroots committees.
 - ü Prepare plans to progressively increase the representation of women, minorities and income poor in party decision-making bodies.
 - ü Energize party fora at different levels through discussion and debate of party ideology and policy options.

- Parties should receive funds from the state budget for funding both the party organization as well as for election campaign expenses. The competition to raise huge sums of money for party/ campaign activities are making parties dependent on special interests and corrupt and criminal elements.
 - ü Public funds provided to parties should be managed professionally
 - ü The funds should be independently audited, presented before parliament and made public through website.



Thank You