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## **Political Parties and Political Development in Bangladesh: Revelation of a Pragmatic Nature of Populist Authoritarian Rule and Military Dominated Rule**

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### **Abstract**

*Bangladesh has started its political journey with a parliamentary system after independence but it has failed to sustain it. The parliamentary government degenerated into an authoritarian system. Bangladesh has completed about forty-six years of independence having about more than seventeen years of direct and indirect military rule. The country moved from a one party dominant to a single party system during the first three years of elected civilian rule (1972-1975). During the following fifteen years of military rule (1975-1990), a multiparty system and emergence of state-sponsored political parties were flourished. Finally the period after the restoration of electoral democracy in 1991 is marked by a two-party dominant system which later evolved into two electoral alliances led by the two major parties. This research is based on political parties and political development in Bangladesh. The party system and the political development inherited by Bangladesh at birth have undergone significant changes over the years. The political parties in Bangladesh are not institutionalized and sustainably developed as a result Bangladesh has failed to attain sustainable political development. It has specially focused on the pragmatic nature of political parties and political development in Bangladesh during the populist authoritarianism and military dominated rule. It scrutinizes the existence of one party dominant to a single party system in Bangladesh from 1972 to 1975, the era of populist authoritarianism, and a multiparty system and emergence of state-sponsored political parties in Bangladesh from 1975 to 1990, the era of military dominated rule.*

**Key Words:** *Political Party, Political Development, Populist Authoritarianism, Dominant Party, Single Party, Military Dominated Rule, and State-sponsored Party.*

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**Introduction:** The role of political parties in promoting and consolidating democracy has been highlighted by academics as well as practitioners of democracy-building projects. Parties work as incubators that nurture citizen's political competence.<sup>1</sup>

Political party is the driving force of political development. The different political parties of different countries ameliorate the political development of these countries. Without the sustainable development of political parties, sustainable political development is impotent. The major political parties in Bangladesh are Awami League, BNP, Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh and Jatiya Party. Awami League born in 1949 was in power during 1972–1975 and during 1996–2001, and currently from 2009–present terms. BNP established in 1978 was in power during 1979–1982, 1991–1996 and 2001–2006. After independence, Bangladesh has sad fate in terms of political development. The pioneering party Bangladesh Awami League omitted parliamentary democracy, brought changes to the constitution, and itself became an autocratic organization. In 1978, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was formed; it became another major political party in Bangladesh. The following two decades after independence saw a lot of changes in state power, political institutions, party structure, party leadership, and subsequently a new party system developed, which is mostly known as undemocratic, unconstitutional, autocratic, and based on financial power, clientelism, and patrimonialism, and party chiefs became unchallenged what Fareed Zakaria has termed as an “illiberal democracy.”<sup>2</sup> After 1991, these two parties come to power by turn through popular elections. The party system and the political development inherited by Bangladesh at birth have undergone significant changes over the years. The political parties in Bangladesh are not institutionalized and sustainably developed as a result Bangladesh has failed to attain sustainable political development. The country moved from a one party dominant to a single party system during the first three years of elected civilian rule (1972-1975). During the following fifteen years of military rule (1975-1990), a multiparty system and emergence of state-sponsored political parties were flourished. Finally the period after the restoration of electoral democracy in 1991 is marked by a two-party dominant system which later evolved into two electoral alliances led by the two major parties.

**Methodology:** This research is based on secondary data. Relevant literature has been reviewed and collected through internet browsing and library working.

Author	Book	Publisher	Country	Year	Pages
Rounaq Jahan	Political Parties in Bangladesh: Challenges of Democratization	Prothoma Prokashan	Dhaka: Bangladesh	2015	1-40
Ali Riaz	Inconvenient Truths About Bangladeshi Politics	Prothoma Prokashan	Dhaka: Bangladesh	2013	1-7, 20-23
Al Masud Hasanuzzaman	Role of Opposition in Bangladesh Politics	University Press Ltd	Dhaka: Bangladesh	1998	37-135
Rounaq Jahan	Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues	University Press Ltd	Dhaka: Bangladesh	2005	103-113, 227-245
Talukder Maniruzzaman	The Bangladesh Revolution and Its Aftermath	University Press Ltd	Dhaka: Bangladesh	1988	147-169

Also other number of books, journals, newspapers and articles has been used to carry out this research.

This study is based on political parties and political development in Bangladesh. The party system and the political development inherited by Bangladesh at birth have undergone significant changes over the years. The political parties in Bangladesh are not institutionalized and sustainably developed as a result Bangladesh has failed to attain sustainable political development. This study has focused on the pragmatic nature of political parties and political development in Bangladesh during the populist authoritarian rule and military dominated rule. The analysis of this study includes- the one dominant party system and a single party system in the era of populist authoritarian rule (1972-1975) and a multi-party and emergence of state-sponsored political parties in the military dominated rule (1975-1990).

**Political Party: How to Define:** Political party means an organized group of citizens, prefer to share and acting as political unit to control government policies and actions.

According to Leacock, “By a political party we mean more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit. They share or profess to share the same opinions on public questions and by exercising their voting power towards a common end, seek to obtain control of the government.”<sup>3</sup>

According to Gettell, “A political party consists of a group of citizens more or less organized who act as political unit and who by the use of their voting power aim to control the government and carry out their general policies”.<sup>4</sup>

According to Gilchrist, “A political party may thus be defined as an organized group of citizens who prefer to share the same political views and who by acting as a political unit try to control the government.”<sup>5</sup>

According to MacIver, “A political party is an association organized in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government”.<sup>6</sup>

According to Edmund Burk, A political party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some political principle in which they agreed.

**Political Development: How to Define:** The political aspect of modernization is also used as political development. The term political modernization and political development are used interchangeably. There are different views of scholars defining political development.

According to Rostow and pye, Political development aims at “national unity and broadening of the base of political participation”.

G. A. Almond regards political development as “the acquisition of new capability, in the sense of a specialised role, structure and differentiated orientation which together give a political system the range of problems”.

Hegan regards political development as the “growth of institutions and practices that allow a political system to deal with its own fundamental problems more effectively in the short run, while working towards more responsiveness of the regime popular demand in the long run”.

Alfred Diamont holds that political development is not a process which aims at achieving a particular political condition but one which creates an institutional framework for solving an ever widening range of social problems.

Eisenstandt considers political development “as the ability of a political system to sustain continuously new types of political demands and organization”. Thus there is no unanimity of opinion regarding the above definition.

Almond and Powell’s View of Political Development- To Almond and Powell, it implies four problems: state-building; nation-building; political participation; welfare and distribution.

**State-building:** State-building according to Almond and Powell implies the creation of new structures and increased degree of differentiation in the existing structures of the State. The state must have modern government and administrative apparatus and agencies. State-building is commonly associated with significant increases in the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system with the development of centralized and penetrative bureaucracy related to the increase in these capabilities.

**Nation-building:** While the State-building points out to the improvement of structure for the performance of State-building, nation-building emphasizes one should give up narrow loyalties and switch off his loyalty to the nation. In some developing countries while the problem of state-building has been solved, the problem of nation-building still remains to be solved. Bangladesh got dismembered from Pakistan because the problem of national integration was not solved there. In Sri Lanka, the ethnic problem has not been solved.

**Political Participation:** Whenever a society develops politically there is also an increasing demand of the public in the decision-making process. These claims are generally put forward through such political structures as political parties, pressure groups, factions, cliques and various organizations.

**Distribution and Welfare:** Increased political participation further leads to the demand that he values, benefits and national income should be distributed equally among the different sections of the society, irresponsible castes, color, sex and creed.

Lucian Pye’s View of Political Development- Lucian Pye changed his concepts by 1965 and thereafter he wrote that political development could be traced at three different levels.

- i. With respect to the population as a whole;
- ii. With respect to the level of governmental and general systematic performance;
- iii. With respect to the organization of polity.<sup>7</sup>

**Political Party and Political Development:** Political parties have a special importance in political development because during the elections they create consciousness among the voters. They keep the nation alive politically. They create the interest of the voters in politics and attract them towards important problems. They publish election manifestos in order to place their performance and policy before the people. The political parties have been viewed as central to the proper functioning of representative democracy. As Schattschneider has stated modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties. Scholars have argued that parties are inevitable and no one has shown how representative governments could work without them. Scholars have identified several roles of political parties in modern representative democracies.

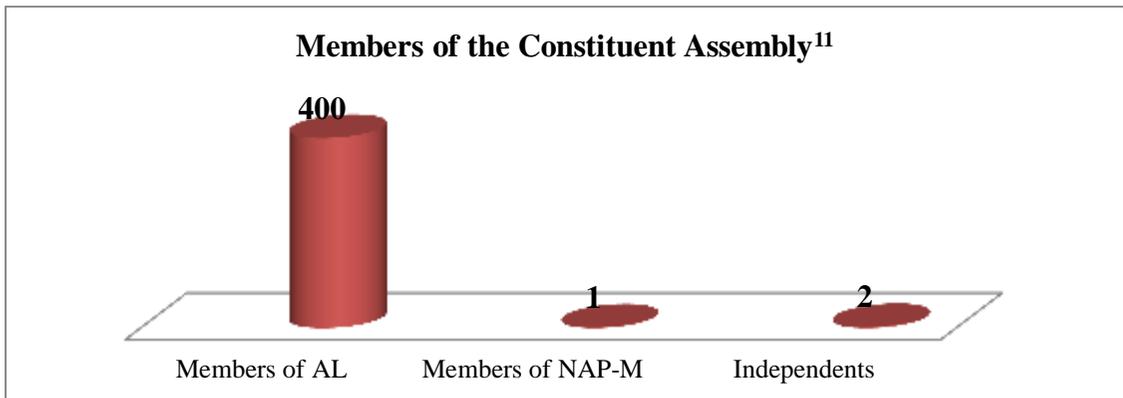
01	Political parties make sure interest aggregation and articulation. Political parties aggregate and articulate various interests that are found in a society. Parties bundle the demands of different groups in realistic policy packages and alternatives, seek support for these policies and propagate and articulate them.
02	Political parties ensure political recruitment and socialization. Political parties engage, select and train people for elected positions and offices. Through debates and discussion as well as electoral campaign and competition, parties are also important agents of citizen’s political education and socialization.
03	Political parties ensure representation and mobilization. Parties nominate candidates for election to public offices and structure voting choices of the citizens.
04	Political parties facilitate accountability of government. Political parties monitor the performance of the government. When they are in power, parties keep an eye on implementation of their policies and in opposition the parties provide a check on the activities of the ruling party.
05	Political parties connect citizens with the government. Parties inform the government about public opinion and they keep the public information about government’s policies and actions.

Parties can create political legitimacy, conciliate and manage conflict among competing groups, facilitate national integration and promote political stability.<sup>8</sup> Though some of the classic works on political parties have pointed out the built in tendencies of party organization to be autocratic, such as Michels’ ‘iron law of oligarchy’<sup>9</sup>.

**Political Party and Political Development in Bangladesh:** The first three years of populist authoritarian rule (1972-1975) was marked by a one party dominant to a single party system. The military rule (1975-1990) is also marked by a multiparty system and emergence of state-sponsored political parties. After restoration of electoral democracy in 1991 is marked by a two-party dominant system which later evolved into two electoral alliances led by the two major parties. This research has specially focused on the pragmatic nature of political party and political development in Bangladesh during the era of populist authoritarian rule and military dominated rule.

**From One Party Dominant to a Single Party System: 1972-1975:** The country moved from a one party dominant to a single party system during the first three years of populist authoritarian rule.

**The Dominant Party: The Awami League:** One of the traumatic events of Bangladesh was the emergence of a one party dominant political system after independence. The Awami League (AL), campaigning on a Bengali nationalist agenda won an overwhelming majority of seats both in the NA and the PA in the historic 1970 National Assembly (NA) and Provincial Assembly (PA) elections. In a house of 300 seats the AL won 167 out of 169 seats allocated to the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh in the NA elections. In the PA elections, the AL won 288 out of 300 seats.<sup>10</sup> This landslide electoral victory lent legitimacy to the AL led government during the liberation war in 1971 and the post independent in 1972. The elected members of the NA and PA elections in 1970 formed the Constituent Assembly in 1972 which drafted and adopted the Bangladesh constitution within a year. Out of 403 members of the Constituent Assembly-



After independence, the opposition to the AL was extremely weak. Islamist political parties opposing independence like ML, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), the Nizam-e-Islam (NI) and the Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP) were regarded as collaborators with the Pakistani Junta. Among the collaborators, the JI earned the most notoriety as many of its leaders and workers were believed to be actively involved in abetting and committing war crimes in Bangladesh.<sup>12</sup> The JI an islamist party established in 1941 in India as the Jamaat-i-Islami Hind by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi started with a strong belief in establishing an Islamic state and society. Under Moududi's leadership the JI began to develop a strong organizational base recruiting support from the lower middle classes, discontented urban groups and a section of the youth.<sup>13</sup>

During the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 the JI supported Pakistan and was involved in setting up peace committees, and para-military forces such as Al-Badar and Al-Shams involved in committing wide spread atrocities against the Bengalis. The JI support of the Pakistani forces committing genocide made the party a poster boy of war crimes committed in 1971. As a result, after the independence of Bangladesh, many of the JI

leaders together with other collaborators were arrested under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order which was promulgated on January 24, 1972. The JI and other religion based parties were banned under articles 12 and 38 of the Bangladesh constitution which prohibited organization of religion-based political parties.

The main opposition to the AL was mounted by the leftists. Some factions among the underground Marxist-Leninist parties opposing the liberation war remained underground and continued their militant activities. The leftist parties supported the liberation war functioned openly but these parties were also factionalized. The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the NAP, Muzaffar faction (NAP-M) pursued a policy of being a responsible opposition and earned the nickname of being the ‘B’ team of the AL. The NA, Bhasani faction (NAP-B), put up a more strident opposition largely through the public positions of Maulana Bhasani expressed through his *Huq Khata*. The part developed an anti-India posture and picked up support from Islamists.

The most vigorous opposition came from a new party, titled the *Jatiya Sajtantrik Dal* (JSD) formed in October 1972 by a group of AL’s own student front leaders and some radicalized former military officers. The JSD quickly gained popularity with students and youth with its slogans of nationalism and socialism. Some groups of the JSD also engaged in armed insurgency.

But none of these parties could muster significant electoral strength. In the first parliamentary elections held in March 07, 1973, the AL again achieved overwhelming victory winning 276 out of 300 general seats in parliament.

**Results of the First National Parliamentary Election, 1973<sup>14</sup>**

Political Party	Percentage (%) of Votes	Seats
AL	73.66	276
NAP (Muzaffar)	8.29	2
JSD	6.44	1
Bangladesh Jatiya League	0.6	1
Independents	5	9
Total	-	289

Barua insists that “a reasonably free and fair election would have returned to the first parliament about fifty to sixty opposition members and these would have included fifteen to twenty major opposition party leaders”.<sup>15</sup>

**Shift to a Single Party System: The BAKSAL:** However, the AL’s continued dominance did not bring political stability. In the early years of India, the dominant position of one party, the congress, helped in the process of nation-building and ameliorated the development of a stable parliamentary democracy but in Bangladesh the dominance of a single party encouraged authoritarian tendencies.

AL leadership should be a parliamentary democracy based on a competitive multi-party system, soon after independence a section of the party’s more militant youth and student

leaders such as the Rab-Siraj faction of the Student League started demanding the establishment of a revolutionary government under Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's personal rule.<sup>16</sup> Another faction of the Student League (Siddiqui-Makhon) initiated a personality cult branding the four principles of state policy, nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism, as Mujibbad. The Awami Jubo League founded by Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni in November 1972 and the Jatiya Shramik League demanded abolition of parliamentary democracy and establishment of a revolutionary government under Bangabandhu's leadership. Sheikh Moni called for a 'second revolution'.

As the massive victory in the first parliamentary elections did not ensure immunity from attacks by the underground extremist parties, or the opposition parties operating in the open, the AL regime took some retaliatory steps. Military combing operations were carried out in a number of districts against groups branded as 'Naxalists' or 'Ultra-leftist' or 'Miscreants'. In September 1973, the second amendment to the constitution was passed introducing emergency provisions. Attempts were also made to close down newspaper belonging to the opposition.

Finally in the January 1975, through the fourth amendment of the constitution, passed by the first elected parliament, drastic changes were brought about. A presidential form of government and a single party system was introduced. The single party was named the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL). All political parties including the AL were dissolved and their members were asked to join the BAKSAL. A few parties such as the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the Muzaffar Ahmed led faction of the NAP and Jatiya League led by a former chief minister, Aaur Rahman Khan joined BAKSAL. But other left groups wooed by Mujib to join BAKSAL such as the JSD stayed out of BAKSAL.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib became the party president as well as the chairman of the BAKSAL. At the national level, the BAKSAL's organizational structure included a fifteen member executive committee, a 115 member central committee and a party council. But the party chairman was all powerful. BAKSAL had five fronts: peasants, workers, youth, students and women. BAKSAL's leadership remained in the hand of the AL. Though some of the leaders of the opposition parties were accommodated in the 115 member central committee, none of them were given any role either in the key executive committee or in the five fronts of the party. The civil bureaucracy and the armed forces were allowed to join the BAKSAL. It is impossible to ignore the awesome constraints which a war ravaged country and a political scene riddled with diverse and conflicting social groups imposed on Mujib and the Awami League government.<sup>17</sup> Within six months, on August 15, 1975, Bangabandhu together with many members of his family were killed by a group of endangered army officers.

**Party Practices in the Populist Authoritarian Rule:** Political parties started demonstrating certain characteristics in the years following the independence of Bangladesh. These are summarized below:

**Organizational Weakness:** All the parties including the ruling AL were organizationally weak. Though the electoral parties maintained on paper an elaborate organizational structure at the national and sub-national levels, party machinery generally became active only around election time. To capture power through the electoral process the parties often co-opted the dominant local leaders who controlled the votes. These co-opted local leaders could move up faster in the party hierarchy over old and trusted party workers.

**Factionalism:** Organizational coherence was suffered a lot within the political parties. In the AL, there were factional disputes among the senior party leadership and youth fronts and the student leadership. This made the leadership of Bangabandhu even more indispensable as only he could mediate amongst the conflicting factions within the party. Factional disputes often led to violent clashes and killing of rivals. The CPB, the NAP (M), the NAP (B) and the two factions of the Jatiya League (JL) were also fractionalized. Underground communist parties were also factionalized. Since 1966 five separate underground communist parties emerged i.e. the Purbo Bangla Communist Party, the East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), the Purbo Bangla Sammya Badi Dal and the Purbo Bangla Sorbohara Party. Many of the communist parties were known by the name of their leaders which was indicative of the factional nature of the origin of these parties.

**Dependence on Top Leadership:** All the political parties were dependent on the charisma, reputation or name of their leaders. Sheikh Mujib's stature and moral authority was so high that all leaders and whole party organization was completely dependent on his charisma. In mid February 1972, the AL working committee decided to separate the party organization from the parliamentary party and ministers were barred from holding any party office. But the party council met in April 1972 and requested Bangabandhu to continue as party president.

**Emergence of State-sponsored Political Parties: During Military Rule (1975-1990):** Bangladesh was essentially ruled by two military dictators from November 1975 to December 1990 with a short interregnum of rule by a civilian president Justice Abdus Sattar from June 1981 to March 1982. Major General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981) and Lieutenant General Hussain Mohammad Ershad (1982-1990) both military rulers followed a number of common strategies of governance and party-building. Zia and Ershad initially ruled under martial law prohibiting open political and party activities later civilianizing themselves. They floated their own state sponsored parties which were branded as sarkari (government) parties. The intelligence agencies were used to build these parties through state patronage exploiting factionalism within existing parties. Some retired civil-military bureaucrats and technocrats and break away groups from existing parties joined these Sarkari parties. Both Zia and Ershad made political use of Islam and rehabilitated the Islamist groups who politically inactive after the national liberation war of 1971. Both military rulers were committed to the presidential form of government. Both organized presidential and parliamentary election carried victory for them and their parties. But these elections were never perceived as free and fair because of engineering of the then governments.

**Party Building by Major General Ziaur Rahman: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP):** Zia was, of course, a key participant- he remained without firm ideological or personnel commitments.<sup>18</sup> After the imposition of martial law in November 1975, open political party activities were prohibited. The new military regime led by Major General Ziaur Rahman started discussions with various political leaders and began party-building efforts. He met and carried out negotiations with political leaders in private and special public post a special assistant to the president was created and Justice Abdus Sattar was appointed to the post barely two weeks after the regime took power. In the next two weeks newspapers reported about Justice Sattar meetings with different political leaders. Media reports of such meetings with political leaders continued for the next two years though the country was still under martial law prohibiting all political activities.

Zia tried to portray himself as a soldier, not interested in party politics and remained in the background as one of the three deputy martial law administrators. Chief Justice (CJ) ASM Sayem appointed as president and chief martial law administrator. During this period Zia repeatedly promised to restore electoral democracy. Zia was ideologically pragmatic and astute and famous to both leftist and rightist political forces. Initially, he avoided being identified with any one particular party. His strategy was to split the faction prone of the existing parties and to pick up the support of some of the break-away factions. He followed a carrot and stick policy to ameliorate political support. The stick of the regime was meant primarily for two parties, the AL and the JSD. Many of the leaders and supporters of these two parties were imprisoned. According to one account at least 1,100 military personnel were executed after an abortive coup in 1977.<sup>19</sup> The promise of parliamentary election was held as a carrot for parties to participate in and to legitimize the political system designed by the regime. Zia facilitated with the presidential form of government and astutely tried to open up a multi-party system.

In July 1976, political parties were allowed to function on limited scale. Government issued a Political Parties Regulation (PPR) permitting 'indoor' politics. Through the mechanism of PPR the regime started negotiation with various parties and succeeded in fragmenting them further. Zia used state machineries, particularly the intelligence agencies, in this task of breaking parties and recruiting political support. Under PPR, fifty seven parties applied and twenty three were given permission to function. The ML received permission but JI did not. The regime was able to get the support of Maulana Bhasani's NAP-B.

Zia needed to mobilize the support of other political parties and factions specially the political forces opposed to the AL. This is meant bringing on board not only the leftist opponents of the AL but also the Islamist political forces opposed to the AL. In December 1975 Zia repealed the Collaborators Act of 1972, disenfranchised those parties and politicians who had opposed Bangladesh. These leaders then became Zia's political allies and gradually became rehabilitated in Bangladesh politics. In November 1976, a year after emerging as the strongman of the regime Zia stepped forward as its front man and became

the chief martial law administrator. In April 1977 he declared himself the president of the country.

After having the post of president, Zia took significant changes in the constitution that introduced an Islamist orientation. Through a martial law ordinance, having the post of president, Zia changed the fundamental principles of the state.

Secularism	was replaced with the word ‘absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah’.
Socialism	was redefined to mean ‘economic and social justice’.
Nationalism	was also redefined as ‘Bangladeshi’ rather than ‘Bangalee’ nationalism

In May 1977, article 38 of the constitution was revoked which had prohibited political use of religion. The revocation of articles 12 and 38, thus, paved the way for the return of religion-based political parties.<sup>20</sup>

Zia was pushed towards a more openly political posture in October 1977 because of an abortive coup attempt. In December 1977, he declared his decision to launch a political front and in February 1978 his supporters proclaimed a new political front called Jatiyatabadi Gonatantrik Dal (JAGODAL). Justice Abdus Sattar became the convener and many of the bureaucratic/technocratic ministers and their supporters joined the JAGODAL but Zia himself did not join. In June 1978, Zia contested a presidential election as a candidate of the Jatiyatabadi Front (JF), an electoral alliance of the JAGODAL, the ML, the NAP-B, the United People’s Party (UPP), the Bangladesh Labour Party and the Bangladesh Scheduled Castes Federation.

Zia’s major opponent in the presidential election was General (retired) M.A.G. Osmani, a nominee of the Gonotantrik Okka Jote (GOJ), an electoral alliance of the AL, the NAP-M, the People’s League, the Jatiya Janata Party (JJP), the JL and the Krishak Sramik Party. Zia won a presidential election. The government claimed that fifty three percent of the eligible voters had cast their ballots with Zia winning 76 percent of vote cast.<sup>21</sup> Zia finally decided to launch his own political party to bring further coherence and unity. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was formed in September 1978 with Zia as the party chairman. The BNP consisted of the JAGODAL, the UPP, the NAP-B and the ML. The party had both leftists (NAP-B and UPP) and rightists (ML) political parties. In the hands of the party chairman the organizational power was concentrated. The national executive committee (NEC), the national standing committee (NSC) and the parliamentary board were not elected by party members but were nominated by the party chairman.

After the formation of the BNP, Zia moved to organize parliamentary elections. The second parliamentary election was held in February 1979 and the BNP come out as winners.

**Results of the Second National Parliamentary Election, 1979<sup>22</sup>**

Political Parties	Percentage (%) of Votes	Seats
BNP	41.16	207
AL	24.55	39

AL (Mizan)	2.78	2
Bangladesh Muslim League & Islamic Democratic League (Rahim)	10.8	20
JSD	4.48	8
NAP (Muzaffar)	2.25	1
Bangladesh Gono Front	0.6	2
Bangladesh Samajbadi Dal	0.39	1
Bangladesh Jatiya League	0.36	2
Jatiya Ekota Party, Samajbadi Dal	0.23	1
Bangladesh Ganatantrik Andolan	0.17	1
Independents	10.10	16
Total	-	300

After the parliamentary elections, martial law was terminated. The second parliament passed the fifth amendment of the constitution ratifying all actions of Zia's martial law administration. The indemnity ordinance of September 1975 giving legal protection to the killers of Bangabandhu was also ratified. The inherent contradictions within the party began to surface after Zia's assassination in May 1981 without the unifying presence of Zia over BNP. Zia's successor, Justice Sattar contested and won the presidential election of November 1981 against Dr. Kamal Hossain, the nominee of the AL-led alliance, the engineered election where the security agencies had played a key role, could not consolidate Sattar's hold on power. In spite of Sattar's electoral victory de facto power resided with General Ershad as the army chief. Within a few months, Ershad directly assumed power.

The BNP underwent open splits between the Sattar group and the Huda Group, a former minister, Shamsul Huda Chowdhury after the overthrow of the Sattar government by Ershad in March 1982. The Huda group later joined with Ershad. Zia's widow, Khaleda Zia had been earlier brought in as the executive vice chairman of the party and became the chairperson of the BNP when Sattar relinquished his position as the head of the party in late 1984. Since Khaleda has remained the chairperson of the BNP. She succeeded in transforming the BNP from a state-sponsored sarkari party to an opposition party. She took the decision not to participate in parliamentary elections organized by the military ruler Ershad. Her decision led to a further split in the party when several BNP stalwarts joined Ershad's party. Khaleda managed to control over the main faction of the BNP. In 1988, another factionalism split led by K. M. Obaidur Rahman made little dent on the party.

**Party Building by Lieutenant General H. M. Ershad: The Jatiya Party (JP):** Ershad the second military ruler (1982-1990) followed the path of his predecessor, Zia. Initially he remained in the background with a civilian president, Justice AFM Ahsanuddin Chowdhury as the front man and used the latter for meeting with the politicians and floating state-sponsored political alliances and parties. Ershad also pursued the strategy of breaking existing parties using state machinery and state patronage.

In November 1983 a new party titled the Janadal was formed with President Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury as the convenor. The Janadal was composed of several BNP stalwarts as well as factions from the JSD, the ML, the NAP-B, and a few individuals from the AL. Several retired civil-military bureaucrats also joined the party. In December 1983, Ahsanuddin Chowdhury, relinquished his position as the front man and Ershad assumed the office of the president. In 1985, Ershad formed another party called the Jatiya Front with the Janadal, a group of leaders from the BNP, the ML, the Ganatantrik Dal, and the UPP but in less than six month Jatiya Front was dissolved. On October 01, 1985 the banning order on political activities was particularly lifted.

Finally in January 1986, the Jatiya party (JP) was launched with Ershad as the party chairman. The JP consisted of the Janadal, break away factions and individuals from the BNP and the UPP, factions from the Ganatantrik Dal and ML. Ershad organized a presidential and a parliamentary election in 1986. The election results showed Ershad's party, the JP won the majority of seats. This election was also widely perceived as rigged.<sup>23</sup> The AL, then being led by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, decided to participate in the election. Hasina living in exile since 1975 after the assassination of Bangabandhu, was brought back to party leadership in 1981, to prevent the splinting of the party due to unresolved contestation for the leadership of the party. The JI participated in the elections on its own and not as a part of an alliance. But the BNP, under Khaleda Zia's leadership, refused to participate.

**Results of the Third National Parliamentary Election of May 7, 1986<sup>24</sup>**

Political Parties	Percentage (%) of Votes	Seats
JP	42.34	153
AL	26.16	76
JI	4.61	10
JSD (Rab)	2.54	4
Bngladesh Muslim League	1.45	4
NAP	1.29	5
CPB	0.91	5
JSD (Siraj)	0.87	3
NAP (Muzaffar)	0.71	2
BAKSAL	0.67	3
Bangladesh Workers' Party (BWP)	0.53	3
Independents	16.19	32
Total	-	300

It was believed that intelligence agencies again played a role as they had done before in the case of the elections of 1978 and 1979 under Zia and the 1981 election of President Sattar. On November 10, 1986, the third parliament passed the seventh amendment of the constitution which ratified all the actions of Ershad's martial law administrator. Martial law was then withdrawn and the much amended 1972 constitution was restored.

Ershad had to tackle opposition from political forces from the beginning. In February 1983 students demonstrated on the streets marking the first public expression of opposition against Ershad. The BNP under Khaleda Zia did not participate in parliamentary elections and engaged in mass mobilization demanding restoration of democracy. The AL initially participated in the 1986 parliamentary elections. The AL's decision to participate in the controversial parliament election in 1986 provided the impetus for the split, but problems had been brewing for more than a year. Though the BNP and the AL had policy differences they both joined hands and launched a series of mass mobilisation including a 'seige of Dhaka' to oppose Ershad's regime.

In December 1987, Ershad dissolved the parliament and called for another parliamentary election in March 1988. Both the BNP and the AL boycotted the elections to the fourth parliament. The JI also did not participate and joined in the pro-democracy movement. This enabled the JI to demonstrate its presence as a player in street politics and the party consolidated its position within mainstream politics. Neither the AL nor the BNP at that stage registered any discomfort in associating the JI within the anti-Ershad movement.

The results of the fourth parliamentary elections predictably showed the JP sweeping the polls winning 251 seats out of 300 seats.

**Results of the Fourth National Parliamentary Election, 1988<sup>25</sup>:**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Percentage % of Votes</b>	<b>Seats</b>
JP	68.4	251
Combined Opposition Party (COP)	12.6	19
Bangladesh Freedom Party	3.3	2
JSD (Siraj)	1.2	3
Independents	16.3	25
Total	100	300

Facing continued mass mobilization led by both the AL and the BNP, Ershad decided to project Islamic fervor. The eight amendments to the constitution declaring Islam to be the state religion was passed in 1988 by the fourth parliament. The country was repeatedly shut down by continuous hartals. But as the election, boycotted by the opposition parties, failed to garner enough public support for the ruling Jatiya Party the regime collapsed in December 1990 in the face of a popular upsurge.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Ershad resigned on December 4, 1990. A Non-Party Caretaker Government (NCG) with Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as its head took over on December 6, 1990 and parliamentary elections were organized within three months. This election, organized by the NCG on February 27, 1991, was regarded as the first free and fair election in the country. The election results showed the emergence of two major parties in the country.

Both the BNP and the AL won 31 percent of popular vote. But the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system gave the BNP a clear seat advantage. It won 140 seats as opposed to the AL's 88 seats.

**Results of the Fifth National Parliamentary Election, 1991:**

Political Party	Percentage % of Votes	Seats
BNP	30.8	140
AL	30.1	88
JP	11.9	35
JI	12.1	18
BAKSAL	1.8	5
CPB	1.2	5
NAP-(Muzaffar)	0.8	1
Bangladesh Workers Party (BWP)	0.2	1
JSD (Siraj)	0.2	1
Ganatantri party	0.4	1
Islami Oiko Jote (IOJ)	0.8	1
National Democratic Party	0.4	1
Independents	0.4	3
Total	-	300

Surprisingly, though Ershad was in prison, his party JP emerged as the third largest party. With 12 percent of the popular vote the JP won 35 seats. Its support was mostly concentrated in the northern region of the country which was Ershad's home-base. The JI won 6 percent of the popular vote and 18 seats. Lacking an absolute majority of seats, the BNP was able to form the government with the support of the JI. The JI became the king maker in the aftermath of a closely contested election. Khaleda Zia became the prime minister.

**Party Practices during the Military Rule:** During the fifteen years of military rule political parties developed certain practices which are briefly discussed below:

**Party Building through State Patronage:** The military rule was marked by the emergence of state sponsored sarkari (government) party built on patronage system. Ershad as a military dictator establish his own political party the JP. This party was built using state machinery and state patronage.

**Party Fragmentation:** Since the party-building strategy of Ershad to break existing parties to pick up support of factional groups and individuals, the party was constantly influx. Most of the splits occurred in the party which formed the foundation of this state-sponsored party. The JP was established with factions from these parties as well as break away groups from the BNP.

**Dynastic Leadership:** To prevent fragmentation, political party turned to dynastic leader to hold the various factional groups together. In the regime of Ershad women leaders emerged during this period. Since the early 80's Ershad had succeeded asserting his control over various factional groups and had held his respective party together emerging as the unchallenged leader of his respective parties.

**Political Rhetoric:** The Rhetoric of political parties changed during the military period. During the fifteen years of military rule, the major slogans were nationalism, development and democracy. Instead the ruling party adapted the slogan of development and the opposition parties campaigned on the slogan of restoration of democracy. The Islam in public life and in politics is one of the most conspicuous tendencies of that period.

**Street Politics:** Side by side with military rule and sarkari parties, this period also witnessed the growing strength of opposition parties' whoused various forms of mass mobilization to build popular support against military rule. Street demonstrations and hortal was the two key instruments of movement politics during this period. Both the BNP and the AL were constantly engaged in street mobilization to topple the military rule Ershad.

**Rehabilitation of Islamist Parties:** The Islamist parties succeeded in returning to open political activities during this period. Leaders and groups from the ML joined the BNP as well as the JP. The ML participated as a separate party and won seats in the 1979, 1986 and 1988 parliamentary elections. The JI also slowly rehabilitated itself during this period. In October 1977, the JI, together with the NI, the Khelafat-i-Rabbani and other Islamist parties formed a new umbrella party named the IDL.

From the above discussion, it is understood that the research is based on political parties and political development in Bangladesh. It has focused on the pragmatic nature of populist authoritarian rule (1972-1975) and a multi-party and emergence of state-sponsored political parties in the military dominated rule (1975-1990). This has examined and proved that the party system and the political development inherited by Bangladesh at birth have undergone significant changes over the years. The political parties in Bangladesh are not institutionalized and sustainably developed as a result Bangladesh has failed to attain sustainable political development.

**Conclusion:** Political parties form government through popular election, engage in or represent different national institutions, and remain responsible to carry on political development of the state. Aftermath of independence, Bangladesh has failed to have institutionalized and sustainable political parties. As a result sustainable political development has to suffer a lot from the very beginning to till present. This has proved that the party system and the political development inherited by Bangladesh at birth have undergone significant changes over the years. The political parties in Bangladesh are not institutionalized and sustainably developed as a result Bangladesh has failed to attain sustainable political development. The country moved from a one party dominant to a single party system during the first three years of elected civilian rule (1972-1975). During the following fifteen years of military rule (1975-1990), a multiparty system and emergence of state-sponsored political parties were flourished. Finally the period after the restoration of electoral democracy in 1991 is marked by a two-party dominant system which later evolved into two electoral alliances led by the two major parties. Only through institutionalized and sustainable development of political parties, sustainable political development can be achieved.

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