# Democratization and Intra-Party Democracy: Bangladesh Experience

## Md. Enayet Ullah Patwary*

## Abstract

*In today's democratic government, political parties play an irrefutable role. Democratic growth and stability are impossible without well-structured political parties. In 1971, Bangladesh won its independence via a brutal battle that aimed to remove oppression and build democracy. Unfortunately, the people of Bangladesh are still denied many of their political rights 50 years after their country gained its freedom. Political parties played a prominent role in the freedom struggle and the subsequent democratic movement. But the parties could not succeed in establishing a democratic society as a whole. Democracies can only function properly if some fundamental ideas are put into practice. One of these is the democratic process within the political party itself.*

*The internal democratic practice of political parties in Bangladesh is low. The role of members in the selection of leadership in parties is very insignificant. The input of frontline workers is little considered during program development. Due to the lack of proper democratic practices within the party, the party leadership becomes authoritative and the party is deprived of proper leadership. It damages the overall democratic process. Due to the lack of democracy in party politics, there is development of dynastic rule. This phenomenon is a significant factor in the party politics of Bangladesh which is a hindrance to the formation of democratic governance. The question is what makes democracy dysfunctional in Bangladesh? Is it political institutions that are defective? Is it the political parties and party system that are problematic? This article argues that it is the lack of democracy within political parties that results in the democratic deficit at the national level. This paper is based on secondary sources including books, journals, research reports, newspaper articles and online resources.*

***Keywords**: Democracy, Parties, intra- party democracy, dynastic rule, Democratization*

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\* Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Chittagong. E-mail: eupatwary@gmail.com

Democracy has emerged as the political system most preferred by the mass citizenry. As a multidimensional process different agents i.e. Mass people, civil society, political parties are playing different roles to sustain democratization. Political parties organize politics in every modern democracy. Without the presence of political parties democracy cannot run functionally and smoothly but political parties need to be institutionalized and practice democracy internally. Bangladesh emerged an independent state in 1971 with the dream of establishing democracy. After five decades it is still struggling for the establishment of democracy.

Article 8(1) of the Constitution declares democracy a fundamental principle of state policy. However, unfortunately, democracy is nothing but a pretense in Bangladesh. It is a façade for an actual system of manipulation, influence, violence, and entrenched power. In this system, the wealthy gain special favors from the government, big businesses earn money at the expense of the people, and the government manipulates legislation and the constitution in order to maintain its grasp on power (Report of AHC, 2013). The question is what makes democracy dysfunctional in Bangladesh? Is it political institutions that are defective? Is it political leadership that is problematic? Is it political culture that is corrupt? Is it the political parties and party system that are problematic? This article argues that it is the lack of democracy within political parties that results in the democratic deficit at the national level. Therefore, this article will analyze the party system and intra-party organizational functions in Bangladesh to see how the parties are formed, organized, structured, make polices and decisions.

Looking at the political parties in Bangladesh one can identify certain prominent characteristics. Firstly, parties are 'personality' oriented. Secondly, parties are controlled by the families of national leaders. Thirdly, the leadership of the parties tends to be dynastic, with the children and grandchildren of the early leaders expected to follow in their parent's footsteps. Finally, party leaders tend to be unelected, autocratic and dominant (The Asia Foundation, 2012, Paper no. 13, P. 6). Therefore, it is important to study the nature, characteristics and internal culture of political parties in Bangladesh to identify democratic dysfunction in the country.  This paper is based on secondary sources including books, journals, research reports, newspaper articles and online resources.

**Democracy and Democratization**

Democratization generally refers to the movement towards democracy. It is a political process that shifts the political system into democracy. Specifically, it refers to the process of transforming an authoritarian political system into a democratic system in which government is formed

with the consent (i.e. by the vote) of the people and which responds to their demands. As a phenomenon, democratization is a multi-level and multidimensional process.

The main issue in the democratization process is democracy which is an ideology, a form of government, and a set of values. Democracy has become the most preferred system in the present world by the mass citizenry. It can be understood through a statistic revealed by the Polity IV data by Marshal and Gurr (Marshal, Gurr, 2005, p. 16).

According to their analysis, a dramatic global shift from autocratic regime to democracy began in the late 1980s and continued through the 1990s. In a report of the *Center for the study of Democracy* (CSD) in 2004, 122 of 192 independent countries (64%) were democracies (Shin. DohChull, 2006, p.5).

Democracy as a political system requires some elaboration. What does democracy mean? The answer is not straightforward but some sort of explanation can be attempted. Democracy classically means 'rule by the people' as expressed in Abraham Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people and for the people''. Democracy generally means a political system in which people rule themselves through periodical elections of the highest offices where some sort of rule of law is maintained. Scholars are of different opinions and name 'democracy' in different ways. They often use adjectives before democracy such as 'electoral democracy', 'procedural democracy', 'incomplete democracy', 'partial democracy', 'illiberal democracy', 'guided democracy', 'liberal democracy', 'substantive democracy', and 'consolidated democracy'. Of course, scholars have defined democracy in different ways to mean the degree of perfect democracy. However, democracy can be broadly classified as "procedural'' or "substantive''.

Procedural democracy refers to meeting certain minimum technical requirements such as free and fair elections for the real policy makers and the eligibility of all adults (Powell. and Powell, 2005, p.1). However, only elections by themselves are not sufficient to qualify a country as a democracy. Some civil and political rights, which form the substantial core, are also required in a procedural democracy to make democracy more meaningful. Therefore, in addition to the requisite free and fair competitive elections in a procedural democracy, many more political rights and civil liberties are necessary for a country to be deemed a substantive democracy. Freedom of press, freedom of association, independence of the judiciary, equal treatments of minorities and other civil and democratic rights are needed in fuller realization for substantive democracy. Democratization, then, refers to a transitioning process from

a nondemocratic regime through procedural democracy to a substantive democracy (Powell. and Powell, 2005, p.2).

## Political Parties and Democracy

Political parties are central to representative democracy and to the process of democratization. Political parties connect society and the state, aggregate and represent interests, recruit political leaders, manage conflicts of interest and act as forums for social and political integration and nation-building. Democracy in the modern world is inconceivable without healthy parties and an effective party system (Burnell, 2004, p 5). Parties are a conspicuous and prevalent fact of modern political life. A political party refers to a voluntary association of people, organized in competition with other similar groups for the purpose of gaining office for their leaders through legal electoral procedures for the purpose of exercising political power (Hitchner and Levine. 1981, p. 127). The importance of the political party in modern democracy is enormous. As E.E. Schattschneider has remarked in his book, *Party Government*, "political parties created democracy…modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.'' What does a party mean? Contemporary scholarship views a party as a team of politicians whose paramount goal is to win electoral office. These teams make promises about what they will do if elected, standing for reelection based on their records of implementing their program. By holding entire parties rather than individual politicians accountable for what governments do, voters create an incentive for responsible governance that might not otherwise exist"(BawnKtlhleen and others, 2012, p. 571).There are four central functions of political parties in modern representative democracies: 1. to develop consistent policies and government performances (the interest articulation function); 2. to pick up demands from society and bundle them (the interest aggregate function); 3. to recruit, select and train people for positions in government and the legislature; and 4. to oversee and control government.*(Matthias Caton,2007, p-7)*

Political parties are of great importance in a democratic system, especially in a representative democracy. Bryce argued that parties are inevitable: no free country has been without them, and no one has shown how representative government could work without them (Bryce, J. 1921:119).However, though central in politics, parties have experienced a decline in importance in mature democracies. Parties around the world have suffered a crisis of confidence in recent years. The citizenry has become apathetic to politics because of corruption among party leaders who have more interest in their own advancement than in the good of those they represent. Those parties are "in deep trouble" as indicated by declining memberships and low electoral turnout. As Storm and Svasand

have noted, "doom and- gloom treatises on political parties have become a growth industry over the past two decades. However, this gloomy picture of contemporary parties is far from self-evident (Svasand and Storm 1997:4)". Party decline has been seriously discussed in the literature in some western democracies because of organizational, electoral, cultural and institutional challenges (Montero and Richard, 2003:6-8). Lawson and Merkl have noted, "It may be that the institution of party is gradually disappearing, slowing being replaced by new political structures more suitable for the economic and technological realities of twenty-first-century politics (Lawson and Merkl 1988:3)".

On the other hand, parties are central in new democracies. With the 'third wave' of democratization, party institutions have been born or reestablished in dozens of political systems that had either lacked a tradition of democratic stability or never experienced truly democratic governance. Not only do they have to perform the standard functions of political parties in established democracies (including the recruitment of candidates for public office, the mobilization of electoral support, the structuring of policy agendas, and the formation of governments), but have also been key actors in the establishment and consolidation of new democratic regimes, at the same time that they must institutionalize themselves as viable partisan organizations (Montero and Richard, p.3). After decades the recognition and effectiveness of parties once again prevailed- as "parties are alive and well within the governing process." In the words of Mair, "Parties continue to matter. Parties continue to survive (Mair, 1997:90)".

Indeed, there is widespread agreement on the vital role played by political parties in the democratization process though- parties and party system require being institutionalization for consolidating and advancing democracy (Randal, 2006).How can parties be institutionalized for democratic consolidation? Diamond asserts that democratic consolidation happens when democratic norms and behaviors become institutionalized on three levels: "the elite level of top decision makers, organizational leaders, political activists and opinion shapers; the intermediate level of parties, organizations and movement: and the level of mass public (Resul, 2011:14)".Leonardo Morlino also suggests that for consolidation of democracy, parties need to be developed organizationally- and form stable relations with other parties (Leonardo, 1994:583).Democracy cannot be consolidated without institutionalized parties.

In the case of Bangladesh, all the major political parties enjoy mass support, but the parties remain corrupt, are unresponsive to people's needs and demands, leadership remains stagnant, and a culture of violence has become a common place (Moniruzzaman, 2009:81-99).

## Democratization in Bangladesh

Bangladesh was founded on the principles of social justice, equality, and human dignity. Through a democratic government, these goals would be realized. After achieving independence, Bangladesh embarked on its path with four key state values, democracy being one of them. However, the initiative was soon hampered. After the rule of founding leader sheikh Mujibur Rahman who soon turned authoritarian, Bangladesh was to eventually witness military rule that would last until 1991 (Datta, 2003:233). In 1971, Bangladesh attained independence after a nine-month bloody liberation war against the then-united Pakistan. Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) fought for its rightful share of governance, politics, and the economy for 23 years, from 1947 to 1971, while it was a part of Pakistan. Socially, politically, culturally and economically the people of Bangladesh were deprived by the central government dominated by West Pakistan's elite. With the majority population (56%) of united Pakistan, Bangladesh did not receive proportional representation in government and politics. Pakistan was ruled by an authoritarian government backed by the military. The military bureaucracy was always the king maker in the whole period of united Pakistan.

Five decades after its independence Bangladesh is preoccupied with a number of challenges rooted in the lack of democratization. Bangladesh was liberated with a promise of a stable democracy and economic emancipation but after the authoritarian rule of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of Independence, Bangladesh experienced direct and indirect military rule until 1991. Military and quasi-military governments have ruled the country for 15 out of the 50 years since independence.

From 1991 through 2006, Bangladesh held periodic elections, however the 9th Parliamentary Elections were postponed in 2007 due to a severe political deadlock and violence. A state of emergency was declared in Bangladesh on January 11, 2007 and a military- backed government was installed and ruled the country for about two years. The 9th Parliament was ultimately held in 2008. The Bangladesh Awami League (AL) led a 14-party coalition to a resounding win and created a coalition government (Mohajote Sarkar- Grand Alliance). In June 2011, the AL administration removed from the constitution the provision for the Caretaker government system (a sort of transitional government for up to ninety days responsible for convening general elections). Despite opposition from all major political parties and civil society, the grand alliance government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is also the President of AL, enacted the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished the caretaker system. The caretaker system had been

instituted in 1996 in response to the statewide political stalemate created by AL, which was then the biggest opposition party. The AL government held the 10th legislative Elections in January 2014 in the midst of the greatest political violence ever witnessed in the country's history, without any compromise with the opposition and ignoring repeated international appeals. Months of political violence before and after the elections left hundreds of people dead and injured across the country (Human Right Watch Report, April, 29, 2014).The 10th parliamentary Elections were historic due to unprecedented election engineering, manipulation, foreign intervention, vote rigging and popular boycott. The ruling party won 153 out of 300 seats uncontested because the major opposition parties boycotted the elections(Asian Human Rights Commission Statement, 8 January, 2014).11th Parliament elections was held on December 30, 2018. AL won 258 seats and formed government under leadership of Sheikh Hasina. The main opposition party BNP got only 6 seats. They rejected the result stating that it was held creating an unprecedented war-like situation spreading panic and establishing a reign of terror through state-sponsored terrorism by using all the state machinery from judiciary to administration and law enforcement agencies. (Observer, 2018)

Political parties liberated Bangladesh from West Pakistan's misrule but whether the political parties have played an appropriate role in the realization of the aspirations of the people since independence is a legitimate question. It is commonly believed that political parties as a whole are incapable of fostering a democratic environment and internal party democracy. Political parties in Bangladesh tend to be organizationally thin, elite-based cadre parties. The leadership of the parties tends to be dynastic, with the children and grandchildren of the early leaders expected to follow in their parent's footsteps (The Asia Foundation, 2012:6).

**Internal Party Democracy**

There seems to be a broad agreement that internal party democracy requires openness and inclusiveness as well as voice and participation. Some scholars emphasize participation of the lower party structures and party members in party decision- making processes (Croissan and Chambers 2010:196-197). It has been argued repeatedly that internal democracy is necessary for creating a viable democratic culture within the party as well as in society at large. For those who believe in the merits of participatory democracy, internal party democracy is an end in itself. This is the 'school of democracy' argument: parties should be the incubators that nurture political learning, socialization and competence of citizens. Opportunities for participation in decision-making within the political parties can help citizens expand their civic skills (Scarrow,

2005:3). Inclusive parties can offer more acceptable policy packages and programs. Internally democratic parties have a greater likelihood of being open to new ideas and new personnel. For instance, democratic leadership selection can attract different and more capable people, and give broader social representation and a better representation of ideas (Mimpen, 2007:1). State regulation of internal party organization, internal party democracy, and leadership selection remains very weak in most developing countries (Amundsen, 2003: 3). Three areas of decision-making where it is possible to measure the degree of internal democracy are identified: leadership and candidate selection (-or election), policy selection and formulation, and coalition formation (Croissant and Chambers, 2010:195-197).

## Internal democracy in Bangladesh's political parties

There is an assumption that if parties are not democratic, then the country will not be democratic. Bangladeshi political parties have failed to foster a democratic culture inside their ranks despite the country's almost five decades of independence. Instead of being chosen by the membership at large, leaders are handpicked by the party elite. The election of the party chiefs does not take place once they assumed their positions in three major political parties in Bangladesh, i.e., the Bangladesh Awami League (AL), the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and the Jatiya Party (JP). The central councils of the parties are not convened on a regular basis. When a council is held, the party chief is elected without contest. There has been no change or competition for party presidency/chairmanship for nearly 30 years in the AL and BNP (The Daily Star, May 18, 20014).Party forums rarely provide meaningful dialogue about substantive policy or programmatic proposals. There is little consultative process or collective decision-making. Key decisions are often made by the party chief, sometimes rejecting the views of senior party leaders. Both the Awami League and the BNP failed to routinely convene their party councils and conventions. Even when councils and conventions were held, election of party leaders did not take place.  According to the clause- 21 of the constitution of Awami League, the President, Presidium members, General Secretary, Departmental Secretaries and Treasure shall be elected in the respective posts by the triennial council from among the councilors. But we hardly observe the practice of this constitutional rule in their leadership selection process. Bangladesh Nationalist Party also did not practice their party constitutional rule during leadership selection. As per constitution of BNP, clause-11, the National Executive Committee shall be elected by the National council. But we have never seen to exercise the clause in selecting their leadership. The National Executive Committee and Electoral College of the main opposition BNP depend fully on the party chairperson for supreme guidance. Similarly, the

Working Committee of the Awami League depends entirely on the party President for planning and other activities. As party decisions are in the hands of party chiefs, internal party organizational strength has been weakened and is reliant on one person. The BNP held its fifth annual convention after a gap of sixteen years in 2009. The Awami League did not hold district level councils for years citing a number of obstacles such as an unfriendly environment in those years, and need for preparation for national election later(The Daily Star, March,26, 20014).

## Leadership Selection

It is essential for parties to choose their leaders. Electing candidates for party and public office should be a transparent and inclusive process that is available to all members of the party. Candidates for political party and public office are chosen through a process known as "leadership selection" (nomination for general election). This raises a number of questions, as outlined by Croissant and Chambers: who can nominate, who can be elected, and who can elect? Do internal rules, regulations and procedures exist, and are these rules obeyed? At what level of territorial and organizational structure are the nominations, candidates and electors chosen? Are there any functional criteria, group quotas or veto powers (Croissant and Chambers 2010:197)?

Party leaders in Bangladesh, are to be elected at regular party conventions or conferences, according to the procedures laid down in party by-laws. In the case of both the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), however, leadership elections, including the selection of party leader, are decided beforehand and approval by the convention is a mere formality. In formal terms, the AL president and general secretary are elected by the tri-annual party convention, called the council, which is the party's supreme body. In reality, the party leader is elected at the party convention only through the formal approval of a single candidate. The leadership issue has always been settled informally before being formally endorsed by the council (by acclamation) (Amundsen, 2003: 6). Moreover, the members of the presidium, executive and advisory committees are chosen by the party president for all practical purposes (International IDEA (2007:93). Thus there is no real democracy in party leadership selection in the AL. The League is, like other parties, increasingly 'selling' nominations when it comes to nominating the party's candidate for parliamentary elections. 'You can buy yourself an MP nomination the same way as you buy an air ticket to Singapore: pay up and off you go' (Amundsen, 2003: 6).Even so, the final nominations are made by the party president, '-in consultation with the parliamentary board'.

Some observers have noted that the BNP's structure is even more centralized and informal than the AL's, despite the fact that the BNP's Chairperson, senior vice chairperson, and general secretary are legitimately chosen by the party convention (council). The BNP did not hold any convention between 1993 and 2008- and only three councils were due during this period. The 5th council of BNP held in 2009 after 16 years and Begum Khaleda Zia became the party chairperson without contest. Tarique Rahman, eldest son of Khaleda Zia made Senior Vice Chairman, next to Chairperson of the party. It's 6th National council held in 2016 after five years of 5th council. In both councils like before, members of the standing committee (the party's highest policy-making body) and advisory councils were all appointed by the chairperson in the BNP. Members of the executive committee are selected from the council representatives, ostensibly by the council but in practice by the party chair. Candidates for parliamentary elections are chosen by the BNP's senior leaders based on applications, 'fees,' and consultation with the party leadership, with ultimate approval resting with the chairman.

The Jatiya Party (JP) has a distinctly 'dictatorial' style: the JP founder Ershad declared himself party chairman for life in 2009, During his life time he was only man to appoint all posts, the central committee works under his direction and he dominates the decision-making process. According to article 39 of JP's constitution, the party chairman has the power to form, suspend or abolish committees at all levels, under the condition that he consults with the members of the presidium. Ershad was the formal and informal 'single man' dictatorship in the JP.

**Setting party policies**

One way to figure out how democratic a party is on the inside is to ask who helps decide what is on the party's platform. Individual party members may be asked to vote on specific policy positions in the most inclusive of parties, more typically, parties have chosen the less-inclusive option of asking party conference delegates to endorse a set of commitments prepared by a platform committee (Scarrow, 2005: 10). All over South Asia, including Bangladesh, policies, programs and election manifestos of parties are generally worked out by the top party leadership. Party programs are discussed in the highest decision- making bodies before they are made public or presented before the party conventions for approval (-which usually means- unanimous approval without any substantial discussion or changes (International IDEA , 2007:96).

Decisions involving coalition building are made at an even higher and more casual level of decision making. Although consultations are held informally with party dignitaries and factions, the formal decision is

made by the presidium when the subject of whether a party should enter a coalition arises (this is usually the case). There is no formal endorsement by the national convention or council, and there is no written agreement on terms and conditions (Amundsen, 2003: 7).

## Political Dynasties in Bangladesh

When the party itself is run in a democratic fashion, it inspires more trust in the voters. Participation of grassroots workers in the selection of leadership and formulation of programs consolidates the party. The internal democratic practice of political parties in Bangladesh is low. The role of members in the selection of leadership in parties is very insignificant. There is not much opportunity for the views of the grassroots workers in formulating the policies. Due to the lack of proper democratic practices within the party, the party leadership becomes disillusioned and the party is deprived of proper leadership. It damages the overall democratic process. The stagnation of democracy in Bangladesh may be traced back in large part to undemocratic party politics. Although the party's constitution stipulates the selection of leadership in the election process and the participation of workers in party activities, it is not followed in practice. Due to the lack of democracy in parties, political dynasties emerge. There is a strong aspect of patrimonialism in Bangladeshi party politics, which impedes the development of democratic parties.

Due to Absence of internal party democracy, the parties suffer from a number of problems such as dominance of personality rather than rules; the maintenance of leadership so that it tends to be lifetime position; and finally, the dynastic nature of party leadership. (Moniruzzaman, 2009)

The two major political parties in Bangladesh- Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party suffer from lack of internal democracy. The failure of democracy in the state as a whole seems to have been caused by absence of democratic political culture within the political parties. (Rahman, 2010:3) The internal structure of the most parties is far from democratic. There is no free play of diversity of opinions that reach a consensus on policy issues through a process of dialogue and debate within the individual party forums. The decisions are made by the party leaders and are carried out by the rest. (Islam, 2007:7)This democratic deficit causes serious problems including making the parties leadership at different levels unresponsive to demands of the rank and file (Ahmed and Siddique, 2013:381).More importantly, there is a tendency toward dynastic rule in the two main parties of Bangladesh. As Jahan (2007) observes: ……the trend toward dynastic succession is rapidly spreading from top to mid to lower level of political leadership. Nomination to parliamentary seats is being increasingly given to people with dynastic

connections: wives succeeding husbands, sons succeeding fathers in different constituencies. Women seats at various level from parliament to local bodies are being used for candidates with familial connections.

**The Sheikh Mujib Dynasty**

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 'father of the Nation' was the President of Awami League and first President of Bangladesh. Awami League experienced an internal leadership crisis following the gruesome 1975 killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Finally, Sheikh Hasina Wazed, daughter of Bangabandhu, was requested to return home and take over the leadership of the party to keep the divided Awami League united. Sheikh Hasina returned to Bangladesh in 1981, at which time she assumed leadership of the Awami League and worked to bring the party together. In the years that followed, her helped the party become well-organized, and after 21 years of political ups and downs in Bangladesh, the Awami League once again held the reins of power. After Sheikh Hasina's reign ended in 2001, she spent one term as the leader in the opposition. After that, Awami League has been in power for 14 years since 2009. Sheikh Hasina has served the Awami League as its President since 1981. She was elected president unopposed in all the National Councils held after her arrival. She has absolute dominance in Awami League. Her family and relatives continue to enjoy political benefits. Her close relatives are well placed in government and party. There are about two dozen Mujib family members working in high-ranking positions in the government and the party.

They have held positions as ministers, members of parliament, mayors, members of the party presidium, the presidency of the Associate organization, and so on. Some of the notable ones are. Some of the notable ones are:

1. Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed Joy, son of Sheikh Hasina, Information and Technology Adviser to The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.
2. Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (SheikhSelim), Cousin of Sheikh Hasina, a member of the Presidium, Member of Parliament, and former minister,
3. Sheikh Fazle Noor Tapos, son of Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni (nephew of Sheikh Mujib), former M.P and present Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation.
4. Sheikh FazleSamsParosh, another son of Sheikh Moni, the president of AwamiJubo League.
5. Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddiqui, brother- in- law of Sheikh Rehana, Sheikh Hasina's security adviser.

Sheikh Hasina is not the only one who has entered politics from the Sheikh Mujib family. A host of members of the 2nd, 3rd, and even 4th

generations of Sheikh Mujib family got involved in the AL politics and have assumed important positions(Uddin2020: 7)

A number of members of the Sheikh family and extended family have high-ranking government and party roles, including:

1. Sheikh Rehana Siddique – Younger sister of sheikh Hasina. Her 'informal' advisor and confidant and companion on state visits and functions.
2. RadwanMujib Siddique Boby – Son of Sheikh Rehana and in charge of Awami League's research wing.
3. Engineer KhandakarMusharrof Hussein – brother in law of Sheikh Hasina. Ex. Minister and M.P.
4. Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Maruf – Brother of Sheikh Moni – Presidium member of AwamiJubo League-
5. AbulHasnat Abdullah – Son of Mujib's brother in law AbdurRabSerniabat. Running M.P and former Chief Whip of the Parliament.
6. SherniabatSadik Abdullah – Son of AbulHasnat Abdullah. Mayor of Barisal City Corporation.
7. Sheikh Helal Uddin – Son of Late Sheikh Abu Naser, brother of Mujib. M.P in 11th Parliament.
8. Sheikh Jeweluddin – son of Sheikh Naser, M.P.
9. Sheikh SarhanNaserTonmoy – Son of Sheikh Helal. An M.P of running 11th Parliament.
10. Noor- e -Alam Chowdhury Liton – The chief Whip of the 11th Parliament. Nephew of Sheikh Hasina.
11. Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury (Nixon Chowdhury) - Nephew of Sheikh Hasina. An influential leader of Jubo League and running M.P.


The family of four national leaders is second only to the Sheikhs in Awami League's importance. The four national leaders are respectively Syed Nazrul Islam, Acting President, Expatriate Government during the Liberation War; Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister of Expatriate Government; Captain M Mansur Ali, Minister, Expatriate Government. AHM Kamruzzaman, Minister, Expatriate Government. They were killed in jail on November 23, 1975. Later on, the families of the four national leaders were also given special status inside the Awami League. Members of these families hold prominent roles within the Awami League administration and party. Syed Nazrul Islam was a trusted associate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. His son Syed Ashraful Islam was Awami League General Secretary, Minister and MP. After his death, his daughter was elected MP on Awami League nomination (Daily Star,

February 16, 2019). Tajuddin Ahmed's widow Zohra Tajuddin led the Awami League after the assassination of *Bangabandhu* and four national leaders. His son Tanzim Ahmed Sohel was a minister and MP. Another daughter, Simin Hossain Rimi, is an Awami League MP and party presidium member.

One of Bangabandhu's trusted associates, Captain M. Mansur Ali's son Dr. Mohammed Selim was MP. Another son Mohammad Nasim was a minister and party presidium member. After Mohammad Nasim's death, his son Tanveer Shakil Joy was elected MP from his seat in the 9th Parliament. National leader AHM Kamruzzaman's son AHM Khairuzzaman Liton is currently the mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation.

## The Zia dynasty

General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) became prominent during the turbulent political situation after the assassination of Bangabandhu. After November 7, 1975, he came to the scene of power. After assuming power, Zia adopted various approaches to civilianization. He organized elections and formed political parties to civilianize his military rule. He was elected president as the candidate of the Nationalist Front. After becoming president, Zia formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and in 1979 organized the elections of Parliament. But he could not stay in power for long. He was killed by some members of the military in May 1981. After his tragic death, when the BNP fell into a leadership crisis, the party leaders called on Begum Khaleda Zia to take over the leadership. The party was reorganized under her leadership and she gave strong leadership in the democratic struggle against the Ershad government. After the fall of the Ershad government, BNP won a single majority in the parliamentary elections held in 1991 and formed the government with the support of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Khaleda Zia was a housewife. She had no prior political experience. As Zia's wife, she had to enter politics for the sake of party unity. During Begum Khaleda Zia's second term as Prime Minister (2001-2006), her eldest son Tarique Rahman came to scene of power. In June 2002, he was directly nominated as the joint general secretary of the party. After short time he was nominated Senior Joint General Secretary. After that he was selected as the senior Vice Chairman. Tariq Rahman was made acting chairman due to Khaleda Zia being convicted in a case and going to jail. Exiled BNP leader Tariq Rahman currently serves as the organization's structural head. Tarique Rahman was very influential during the four-party coalition government led by BNP. Khaleda Zia's brother Major (Retd) Syed Iskandar was BNP Vice Chairman and former MP. Her sister Khurshid Jahan was an MP of BNP and minister. She was also the convener of the Nationalist Women's Party. Khaleda Zia's

personal secretary Saiful Islam Duke and Shahreen Islam Tuhin MP were Khaleda Zia's nephews. Family members of other BNP leaders are also occupying important seats. Due to their familial links to the party's top brass rather than their own abilities, these individuals have significant influence inside the organization. Some examples are given below.

1. Shama Obaid – An Organizing Secretary. Daughter of KM Obaidur Rahman, former Secretary General of BNP and Minister.
2. Hummam QuaderChowdury – Member, Central Executive committee. Son of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Standing Committee Member and M.P.
3. Gias Uddin Quader Chowdhury - Vice Chairman of the party. Brother of SalauddinQuader Chowdhury.
4. Nawshad Jamir - International Affairs Secretary of BNP. Son of Jamir Uddin Sircar, Standing committee member
5. TabitAwal – Member, Central executive committee. Contested Dhaka North Mayoral elections. Son of Abdul Awal Mintoo, Vice Chairman BNP.
6. Engineer Israq Hossain - contested Mayoral elections, Dhaka North City Corporation. Son of Sadek Hossain Khoka. He was Minister and the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation and Vice Chairman of BNP.
7. Hasina Ahmed – FormerM.P. She is wife of Salauddin Ahmed, former MP and State Minister. And was also member of Standing Committee.

If we generate all of the names, the resulting list will be lengthy. The offspring and relatives of Central officials, especially those on the Standing Committee, have been granted prominent roles inside the party.

**Ershad dynasty (Jatiya Party)**

On March 24, 1982, The then Army Chief General Hussain Mohammad Ershad took power from the then popularly elected President Justice AbdusSattar. He was in power till 1990. He attempted to build political parties in an effort to civilianize his military rule, just like his predecessor Ziaur Rahman did. As part of the foundation of the Jatiya Party in 1983, Ershad invited the country's then-president, Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury, to create the Jan Dal. Finally, on 1 October 1985, Ershad formed the Jatiya Party and became the chairman. He led the party as chairman until his death. GM Quader, his brother, succeeded him as party chairman after his passing. Roshan Ershad, Ershad's wife, served on the party's presidium while he was alive. In the current 11th Parliament, she is in charge of the opposition as its leader. Ershad's brothers, sisters and their children and relatives occupy important leadership positions in the Jatiya Party (Independent, January 19, 1920).

## Conclusion

Substantive democracy, which include intra-party democracy, is the fundamental set of values necessary for a healthy democracy to function. Parties in politics are vital to the functioning of a representative democracy in the modern day. Despite their flaws, no other organization can replace them in the roles they play. Party politics is a necessary aspect of the democratic process. Throughout history, political parties have been instrumental in a wide range of democratic activities, from the language movement to the liberation war in Bangladesh. But the parties could not succeed in establishing a democratic society as a whole. A functional democratic system requires the adoption of some fundamental ideas. To this end, it is crucial that the political party itself is run in a democratic fashion. Democracy is not just an election or party system of government. Instead, democracy consists of safeguarding a set of principles. Conducting transparent and impartial proceedings within the party strengthens the democratic environment. If political parties are not committed to democratic principles inside their own organizational frameworks, it will be impossible to build and grow democracy on a national scale Institutions structured in a fundamentally undemocratic way are incapable of making a democracy work. It is impossible for democracy to thrive if the political parties that support it don't uphold democratic ideals in their own internal operations.

To improve intra-party democracy, rank and file members should be involved in the elections of party leaders. Similarly, transparent procedures for selection and nomination can reduce opportunities for corruption, confrontations, criminalization, nepotism, Patrimonialism are major obstacles to democratization in Bangladesh. As a result of patrimonialism, the strength of systematic party creation and growth is eroded, and this has an influence on the government system. To ensure political stability, hereditary leadership should be eliminated from political parties. By practicing internal democracy in the party, patrimonialism can be eradicated resulting in efficient and proper leadership in politics.

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