

Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Policy Choices and Rural Incorporation

Haroon K. Ullah

Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Dubai Initiative Fellow
University of Michigan, Department of Political Science and Public Policy
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Abstract

The literature of political development has long advocated the importance of integrating the rural countryside into mainstream political institutions. This paper argues that rural incorporation is best understood within the context of pro-peasant policy innovations targeting specific constituencies in an electorate. While there are important preconditions that set the stage for rural incorporation (legitimacy of the political party, party organization), rural incorporation is fostered when credible commitments are made to voter blocs. Combining case-study analysis and formal modeling, this paper focuses on the reasons pro-peasant policies lead to rural incorporation but not necessarily regime durability. Insights derived center on the importance of credible commitments to party dynamics, the path dependence of early elections, and the decision parameters of constituencies with limited information.

Introduction

Conditions for a stable political institution have often involved the subject of the rural countryside. Scholars have argued that when urban elites mobilize the countryside through support of the landed peasantry, the consequence is regime durability. The theory is that rural incorporation—a working coalition of urban elites and rural non-elites—will result in dislodging challengers, gaining support of the rural masses, co-opting or restraining labor, and isolating insurgents.¹ This combination of rural incorporation and rural coalitions has been cited (Huntington, 1968; Lipset & Rokkan, 1975; Moore, 1967; Waldner, 2004) as an important element in creating a stable political system such as a democracy.

Notwithstanding the debate about the sequence of political development, many agree that the absence of rural coalitions and patterns of integration make developing stable democratic politics difficult. The literature on rural coalitions and democracy cites the strength of the landed aristocracy, the potential coalition between aristocrats and merchants, and the commercialization of agriculture as factors or preconditions for the development of democratic institutions. However, aspects yet unclear are the type of pro-peasant policies, the motives for pursuing them, and the target constituencies most predisposed to rural incorporation. How do pro-peasant policies lead to rural incorporation? This policy paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the particular case of Bangladesh and how it demonstrates the type of pro-peasant policies that harness the countryside into a wider political system. Similar to many Muslim-majority agrarian nations, such as Pakistan, Egypt and Morocco, Bangladesh provides an ideal location to examine government responsiveness in the face of an urban-rural divide.

The region of South Asia provides a fertile ground to examine political development and rural integration. During the volatile time period of partition (1940-1950), the failure of the Muslim League in British India to incorporate the rural peasantry left it without a base at independence and thus dependent on landlords for rural support with resulting regime volatility in Pakistan. On the other hand, the Congress Party's successful mobilization of the landed peasantry at the expense of the landlord class paved the way for a durable democratic regime with a base in the countryside. Regime trajectories in these two post-colonial states, India and

¹ Waldner, David. *Democracy and Dictatorship in the Post-Colonial World*, 7-15.

Pakistan, seem to support the rural incorporation argument. The story of Bangladesh is more complicated, however. The missing factors in analyzing rural incorporation in Bangladesh are the government policies and the groups targeted by those policies that serve as a precursor to rural incorporation. These require closer examination.

The purpose of focusing on Bangladesh is to shed further light on the relationship between rural incorporation and regime durability, especially with regard to dynamics in Pakistan and India. In Bangladesh, the early Awami League—supported by a coalition of middle-class to rich peasants, labor, and urban intellectuals during the independence movement—held tenuous rule for three years before a coup dislodged it from power.² The subsequent regime saw a similar fate. Although each government has pursued policies, granted patronage, and built local-level infrastructure to garner rural support since being liberated in December 1971, none could adequately consolidate their regime so as to achieve regime durability.

In Bangladesh, the key pro-peasant policies that promoted rural incorporation revolved around their ability to target specific constituency's central to the Awami League and Krishak Awami Party. First, the land-holding limit (under the Bangladesh Land Holding Limitation Order Act of 1950) was revised in 1972, incorporating the state into the role of additional overseer, and making land tenure more affordable to small landowners. Second, while the implementation of policies lagged, the ability of the political parties to broadcast the easing of hardships on two main constituencies, agricultural laborers and the landless (*khas*), created a new coalition of politically active party members. In many circumstances, impositions of limits to family landholding would exclude the needs of landless farmers and cultivators. Provisions of the 1972 order attracted intense scrutiny and praise, drawing a number of formerly uninitiated or uninterested parties into the debates about land use, government involvement, and the effects on independent landowners³.

In this policy paper, I have selected two time periods, Mujib, 1972-1975 and Zia, 1976-1982, in Bangladesh's early history to illustrate how political parties pursued specific policy agendas in their attempt to consolidate party power and institutionalize rural incorporation. Based on my fieldwork, interviews, and archival research in Bangladesh, I will outline a rational-

² Sheikh Mujib, Prime Minister (AL), refashioned the regime from a parliamentary democracy to a one-party regime by constitutional amendment in January 1975.

³ Mukherji 459.

choice argument for rural mobilization based on the provision of social goods through specific pro-peasant policies. The basic argument is that in order to garner more votes and solidify their electoral power, political parties make strategic decisions to target new constituencies. However, because all parties can make promises to the general public, they also must devise ways to signal a credible commitment: one that will walk as well as talk. Provisions of specific policies, such as pro-peasant policies, serve as a costly signal of credibility. Political parties, like the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, are then faced with the credibility gap in subsequent elections, which opens up opportunities for opposition and newer parties to gain electoral power. The ability of political parties to effect rural incorporation increases their chances of withstanding the credibility check and thereby creates a loyal potential voter base. The case of Bangladesh provides some evidence to support this thesis and suggests avenues for further exploration of the links between party strategy and rural incorporation.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have argued that stable political regimes emanate as the end product of modernization (urban phenomenon) or as certain classes in the rural population are integrated into various coalitions. Focusing on the latter, Barrington Moore (1967) asserted that democracies are more likely to develop when landed aristocracies are weakened and types of commercial agriculture are developed. Moore's seminal work began to examine the types of coalitions between various groups, whether peasants, workers, or aristocrats, and the to identify resulting implications for political institutions and institution building. In Moore's model, there was a strong emphasis on the balance of power so that power was not too centralized (as in a crown) and/or through landed aristocracy.

Huntington (1968) extended Moore's analysis by focusing on regime stability. He asserted that regime stability requires mobilization of the countryside through rural institution building. The existence of rural majorities in the post-colonial world and a significant imbalance in the pace of modernization between the traditional countryside and politically unstable, oppositionist urban areas requires that regimes gain the support of the former in order to survive. Carrying forward his general argument that regime stability necessitates development of political institutions commensurate with political participation, Huntington argues that parties—whether

in single-party or multi-party systems—must recruit rural leaders into rural party organizations and, increasingly, into top political positions. Coaxing them to join such institutions requires an agenda responsive to peasant needs—such as moderate land reform that favors landed peasants, subsidies for agricultural inputs, and patronage.⁴

The political and economic demands of rural mobilization (Femia 1983; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) may be at such a cost that nationalist political elites cannot or refuse to mobilize the countryside. Nationalist movements, such as those in Pakistan and Morocco, failed to mobilize the countryside and did not endure.⁵ Due to their narrow support base, challengers capable of gaining greater physical power or mobilizing new groups against the regime are positioned to overthrow the incumbents whether by election, social movement, or coup.

Urban populations are perpetually unstable and anti-incumbent and the traditional values of the countryside hold more moderate expectations of the government than those of the cities. In a similar vein, Varshney (1995) explains the paradox of how, although the greater share of India's population is rural, it took decades for the government to begin effectively addressing agricultural concerns.

Varshney begins to integrate Moore's and Huntington's theoretical analyses with public policy implications. Much as in Bangladesh, it was not that politicians were unaware of or not actively interested in the concerns of their rural constituents. The fact was that in India, combined effects of British colonialization as well as significant population growth made it difficult to properly implement agricultural policy while maintaining the interests of those in power. Congressional leaders, typically white urban lawyers, had to rely on others to supply their intelligence about land holdings and crop prices. When an issue is not affecting a known constituency, leaders are unlikely to respond appropriately to needs that would otherwise prompt government intervention. Varshney states that the lack of a definable constituency made it difficult for party leaders to craft policy. In addition, party leaders were able to bypass accountability at the polls when they were unable to pass pro-peasant (or pro-business) policies.

While Varshney's analysis brings a policy (supply-side) rationale into the discussion of peasant politics, Waldner shifts the focus to coalitions (demand-side) explanations. Waldner

⁴ Huntington, Samuel. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968): 433-40.

⁵ Huntington also makes the assumption that nationalist movements that achieve independence but fail to mobilize the countryside are unlikely to mobilize the countryside after independence because they have already achieved power. Pakistan is one case. Ibid, 440.

(2003) defines rural incorporation as “the construction of political alliances between urban political and economic elites and non-elite rural classes.”⁶ Elites refer to “those persons whose control over resources or organizational position allows them to compete to extract resources from non-elites.”⁷ Rural non-elites refer to landed peasants—particularly peasant-proprietors engaged in commercial agriculture using primarily family labor. The importance of the latter group for regime durability is also emphasized because it controls significant political and economic resources in their villages, but unlike landlords, lack wide enough economic or political scope of influence to directly challenge the regime. Members of this segment command significant hierarchy over the local population as leaders, command patron-client allegiances, and are likely to occupy government posts in the future through their university-educated children.⁸

Rural elites, on the other hand, emerge when peasant landowners practice the same repressive tactics as their urban elite counterparts. Coercive and unethical practices, including but not limited to feudal dues, obligatory serfdom, and even slavery, maintain landowners in power while working the land to their benefit. Instead of playing a part of the production system on a small scale, the landowners become entrepreneurs as sellers to a larger market. A weaker class often depends upon this unequal arrangement for the same reasons farmers work cooperatively against the urban elite.⁹

Waldner argues that elites are unlikely to defect from a regime that provides them economic (patronage and policy) benefits, political, and social status benefits--producing the consequence of mass support and regime durability.¹⁰ Bertocci’s (1984) historical analysis complements Waldner’s assertion by pointing out that Bangladesh’s government has seemed to assert self-governing autonomy since 1971 Independence, including adapting to political reform. Of course, this is because political parties, including the AL and BNP, have gained stable ground on which to consolidate their coalitions of party supporters. Political parties’ “rice roots” aid parties in working with rural communities. As elites and rural citizens attempt to cooperate, the groups also battle for position over one another. Bertocci’s analysis, however, does not specify

⁶ Ibid, 17.

⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁸ Ibid, 24.

⁹ Moore via Valenzuela, 7.

¹⁰ Ibid, 20-30.

why AL or BNP targeted certain groups, nor does it explain the ways in which pro-peasant policies were used to bolster rural incorporation.

Rural incorporation has rarely been invoked due to several factors: the high cost of populist policies, the potential for regime destabilization by uncontrollable demands made by newly mobilized groups, and the potential for repression (challengers) or significant economic loss (incumbents). Thus, the argument is made that rural incorporation will be a strategy of conflict resolution only when the fate of deeply held commitments and aspirations, including elite membership, are threatened by failure to achieve decisive victory.¹¹

This theoretical discussion now can start to address the economic, political, and institutional expressions of rural incorporation: rural institutional development and peasant patronage. Missing from the analysis is the idea introduced by Varshney, which focuses on what type of pro-peasant policies are connected to rural incorporation, and why certain pro-peasant policies are pursued in preference to others. Pro-peasant policies include government subsidies of agricultural inputs and outputs, non-radical land reform, and rural development initiatives. Rural institution building includes party organization building in the countryside, establishment of rural development organizations tied to the regime, and development of local government institutions that empower peasants or at least provide them tangible benefits.

I argue that each of these categories of observable outcomes and implications (specific pro-peasant policies, rural development initiatives) was found across both regimes (Mujib 1972-1975; Zia 1976-1982) in this study. What stands out in the Bangladesh case study are the methods by which political parties attempt to foster rural incorporation through specific pro-peasant policies. After providing evidence from the first period (Mujib 1972-1975), I lay out a rational-choice argument that outlines the dynamics of support mobilization and rural incorporation. Complementing the case study analysis, the game theoretic model is then used to evaluate the second period (Zia 1976-1982) and the various pro-peasant policies pursued by the political parties.

¹¹ Waldner, David. "Indian Exceptionalism in Pakistani Perspective," 12.

I. Buildup to Bangladesh Independence: The Awami League, elite conflict, and setting the stage for rural incorporation

The theoretical framework lays out potential preconditions for rural incorporation. Many scholars note that rural incorporation is a result of intense elite conflict that generally involves those dominant in the rural economy and their allies as positioned against urban political elites¹². This paper argues that while some elite conflict did take place, rural incorporation in Bangladesh did not result from that dynamic. The preconditions for rural incorporation are contained in the legitimacy of the Awami League as a voice for peasants, along with the penetration of party organization in the rural countryside. Rural incorporation began to take hold when the Awami League issued a credible commitment in the form of passing specific pro-policies aimed at incorporating new groups of voters into the party.

The *zamindari* (landlord) system essentially collapsed in East Pakistan by 1948 when landlords were dispossessed. Land reforms under the British in the late 1930s and 1940s, mass emigration of Hindu landlords to West Bengal at Independence in 1947, and Pakistani legislation allowing for expropriation of Hindu lands to rich Muslim peasants in 1950 largely eradicated the landlord class before the Awami League mobilized the countryside in the middle 1950s.¹³ On the other hand, Punjabi landlords and industrialists dominated West Pakistani politics and power at the center (1947-71), which marginalized East Pakistan in terms of economic development and positions in the civil bureaucracy-military power structure.¹⁴ The government recruited West Pakistanis far disproportionately to East Pakistanis in the army, civil service, and government

¹² Waldner, 4 “In virtually all instances [of rural incorporation], peasant dependence on agrarian elites is significantly reduced through the intervention of national political institutions and public policies, and the political power of agrarian elites is correspondingly attenuated, if not completely eradicated.”, Huntington (1968) and also suggested by Moore (1967)

¹³ In fact, a coalition of urban elites and peasants in Bengal dates back to the 1930s with the Krishak Praja Party. With demands for economic reform trumped by the Pakistan movement, the, KPP was absorbed into the Muslim League in 1946.

Rahman, Atiur. *Peasants and Classes: A study in differentiation in Bangladesh*. (London: Atlantic Highlands Zed Books, 1986). 90-100.

Stern, Robert. *Democracy and Dictatorship in South Asia: Dominant Classes and Political Outcomes in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*. (Westport: Praeger Press, 2001): 60-7.

¹⁴ 80% of the members of the Punjab Muslim League were landlords. The political economy of West Pakistan was dominated by landlords who controlled power in all institutions of the government. Their influence and the influence of Punjabi industrialists prevented isolated proponents of more equitable policies in East Pakistan.

Maniruzzaman, Talukdar. *Group Interests and Political Changes: Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982): 46-50.

bureaucracy, and also disproportionately directed domestic and international development funds to industrial development, particularly in the West Pakistan-based defense industry.¹⁵ Additionally, export profits from East Pakistani jute—which went through Karachi before provincial disbursement--were invested in the form of imports to become West Pakistani industrial inputs. Peasants also struggled. Following Pakistan's refusal to devalue its currency, which made imported industrial inputs less expensive, prices on agricultural goods were driven down in order to compete in the international market. Moreover, flooding in 1953-4 ruined that year's harvest and brought famine, for which the Pakistani government only reluctantly and belatedly provided aid under heavy pressure from Awami League leaders.¹⁶

One of the key strengths of the Awami League was its ability to reflect the latent frustrations of peasants in East Pakistan. Established in 1949 as an opposition party of progressive intellectuals and dissident politicians from the East Pakistan Muslim League., AL party workers consisted primarily of students, urban workers, and the recently urbanized petty bourgeoisie with ties to surplus farmers. The AL established its organizational roots initially when the Urdu-only language controversy reached its peak in 1952-3 following a speech by the then-Prime Minister reiterating Jinnah's earlier commitment to establish Urdu as the sole official language.¹⁷ During this time, large demonstrations occurred in the cities and villages of East Pakistan and mass opposition to the center was first organized. Nair argues that the language movement produced a mass secular movement, cutting across political and religious barriers in East Pakistan, and led to the consolidation of the East Bengali middle class.¹⁸ The movement provided the AL the opportunity to grow its middle-class base from students to a wider following of professionals, progressive intellectuals, labor, and landed peasants, with the latter forming the

¹⁵ A 1955 study showed that of 741 officers of the Central Secretariat, only 51 were Bengali. Punjabis also held 96% of Pakistani industrial investments.

Goodnow, Henry. *The Civil Service of Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 87. Maniruzzaman, 67-70.

¹⁵ Jalal, Ayesha. *The State of Martial Law: the Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defense* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 119.

Callard, Keith. *Political Forces in Pakistan: 1947-1959* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1959): 140-50.

¹⁶In the 1950s, Pakistan also failed to support significant rural development in East Pakistan even though over 80% in the province were engaged in agriculture yet the province needed to import 10% of its agricultural goods.

Sayeed, Khalid. *The Political System in Pakistan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967): 177.

¹⁷ Interview with Professor T. Munirzamman, Dhaka University, January 12, 2007.

¹⁸ Nair, M.B. *Politics in Bangladesh: a study of Awami League, 1949-58* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1990): 73-4.

largest bloc.¹⁹ By 1953, the Awami League joined the United Front (including all opposition parties in the province) in preparation for the 1954 election. Student activists engaged in the language movement mobilized support for the AL the following year, which sharply increased membership and helped strengthen organizations throughout the province.²⁰ Ultimately, the United Front won 210 of 237 Muslim Seats and the AL won all 120 seats contested. The Muslim League took merely ten seats in a humiliating defeat that Jalal marks as the collapse of the Muslim League.²¹

Despite sharp disparities between West Pakistan and East Pakistan and the Bengali mass movement, evidence suggests that intense elite conflict did not precipitate AL-led rural incorporation. Intense conflict would have required that AL leaders either understood that if they lost the election their organization would be left politically irrelevant, or that parliamentary democracy—and the AL's organizational status within it—would be in dire jeopardy given their loss.²² This scenario does not appear a likely one. First, the language movement mobilized by student organizations and the broad economic problems affecting all classes made the threat of Awami League defeat in the election extremely dubious. No available evidence suggests whether party cadres saw the election as a referendum on the civilian regime with a negative outcome spelling their permanent displacement from power; however, as this was not an issue on the AL 21-point manifesto, this is an moot case.²³

Intense elite conflict would have been more effective in raising awareness on rural peasant issues had it been invoked by the East Pakistan Muslim League under the direction of the central organization in Karachi (West Pakistan). The landslide victory for the United Front in 1954 not only dislodged the predominantly Urdu-speaking Muslim League elite from provincial power, but demonstrated to Pakistanis and the world that the Muslim League did not represent all Pakistanis, setting the stage for East Pakistani politicians to demand a more equitable share of state resources.²⁴ Further, the provincial election was fought on a platform of national

¹⁹ Molla, G. *The Awami League: From Charismatic Leadership to Political Party* (Dhaka: Praeger Publishers, 1997): 217.

²⁰ Detailed information on AL organizational capacity is not documented in the literature. It is only alluded to as present yet undisciplined, factious, and disorganized.

²¹ Jalal, Ayesha. *The State of Martial Law*, 119.

²² One way rural support was achieved came through Bengali language movement

²³ United Front 21 Points Manifesto (1954)

²⁴ Proclaiming the election victory as a vote of no confidence for the national as well as provincial governments, UF leaders demanded the resignation of members of the central government and constituent assembly (including 44 of 80 members representing East Pakistan) and called for new elections.

significance (provincial autonomy), and with the Muslim League loss in East Pakistan, the subsequent national election (scheduled for 1959 and later cancelled) posed even greater danger to the Punjabi-dominated center--such as forced Bengali integration into the Punjabi-dominated civil bureaucracy and army, and spending cuts on defense. In this case, the privileged positions of a large proportion of West Pakistani officials would have been threatened as would the patronage available for West Pakistani landlords.²⁵ Regardless, the Muslim League did not penetrate the countryside and the center only avoided these costs by dismissing the elected UF government less than one month after it assumed power.²⁶

Therefore, I argue that to better understand rural incorporation, we need to examine the policies of party politics and the necessities of nationalist movement organizing. Bangladesh was 94.8% rural (1961 figure) and suffrage in 1954 was universal. It is obvious that failure to mobilize the countryside in a rural—but not landlord-dominated—region would translate to a disastrous election and ineffectual social movement.²⁷ Moreover, the costs of rural mobilization were low in Bangladesh, making intense elite conflict unnecessary to stimulate it.

First, the AL alliance of students and petty bourgeois were primarily born in villages among descendents of surplus farmers. The Awami League followed a pattern similar to the new provincial elite of the Indian Congress Party instrumental in adopting a rural mobilization strategy. Urban elites could easily move between the countryside where they were born and cities where they worked and lived.²⁸ A *Holiday Weekly* report states, “Rich farmers aligned themselves with the AL; the latter were after all their sons who had been given a university education and who aspired to big jobs in the bureaucracy.”²⁹ Second, threats over control of the AL were insignificant. In the middle 1950s, Bhashani (leader of the populist faction), Suharwarney (leader of the urban elitist faction), and left-leaning student activists dominated the party. Despite mobilizing the countryside, the central party did not include leadership among peasants but recently urbanized intermediaries. Policy and patronage costs were also irrelevant

Richard Park and Richard Wheeler. “East Bengal Under Governor’s Rule.” *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol 23, No. 9 (Sept 1954). Ayesha Jalal argues that the Muslim League essentially collapsed following its defeat in 1954.

²⁵ Interview with historian R. Manukdar, Dhaka, January 19, 2007.

²⁶ Note that Waldner identifies such state coercion/repression of mass-supported challengers as a symptom of the absence of rural incorporation.

²⁷ 1961 Census of Pakistan

²⁸ Maniruzzman, Talukder. *Group Interests and Political Changes*, 110.

Various surveys of AL representatives in 1973 also show the trend that elites were born in villages, college-educated, and active in the language movement.

²⁹ *Holiday Weekly* (Bangladesh) 12/16/1972

for a movement for provincial autonomy where rural development support was demanded from the center and the idea of a sovereign Bangladesh had not yet emerged. It may be argued that failing to incorporate the countryside was the one way that urban political elites and their supporters--including students aspiring to bureaucratic positions and businessmen and labor in need of government patronage—would have guaranteed political irrelevance.

To summarize, unlike the situation in India, Indonesia, and Turkey, existing evidence suggests that intense elite conflict did not cause rural incorporation in Bangladesh. Both Huntington and Waldner asserted that intense elite conflict was a precondition for rural incorporation. If intense elite conflict did not lead to rural incorporation, that what might have spurred the mobilization of the rural areas into a new coalition? Under the assumption that elites and institutions are rational actors capable of cost-benefit analysis, I argue that one instead needs to examine the types of policies enacted by the party to attract and solidify its constituencies. The Awami League had the advantage of being the party at Independence which was at the helm of a large opposition movement. Not only did AL members have ties to influential *kulak* families, but the AL was able to benefit from student language movement mobilizations in the late 1940s and early 1950s, before party workers emphasized the importance of the countryside.

I infer that the Awami League laid the groundwork for rural incorporation by virtue of the rural origin profiles of the majority of its leadership and membership, establishment of party branches in rural areas (although organizationally weak within themselves), constant campaigning in villages in 1954, and populist rhetoric.³⁰ The ability to solidify its support among the rural constituency came from the enactment of specific policies during the Mujib period. Rural incorporation was expressed politically through peasant support for the opposition movement, institutionally through inclusion of rich peasants in local party organizations, and most importantly, in the form of pro-peasant policy demands.³¹

II. Bangladesh Period One: Mujib's rule (1971-1975) and Key Pro-Peasant Policies

³⁰ Jahan, Rounaq. "Members of Parliament in Bangladesh." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Aug., 1976). See also Maniruzzman, Talukder. *Group Interests and Political Changes*, 1982. Bhuiyan, Abdul Wadad. *Emergence of Bangladesh and role of Awami League*, 1982.

³¹ The AL could not implement policy until liberation because it did not have political power (with the exception of its coalition government in East Pakistan with the Muslim League (1956-7) when little was accomplished. Therefore, I use AL manifestos to determine its policy objectives.

At the outset of the nation's independent state, Bangladesh's first regime faced multiple problems. Leading these were: a debilitated and ideologically divided military that did not claim a monopoly on violence; both leftist and rightist insurgent groups that refused to surrender arms and conducted constant acts of terrorism in villages and upon AL members; a war-ravaged economy; millions of displaced people lacking food or shelter, and rural population growth without available land.³² Further, the majority of high-ranking Bengali military personnel and bureaucrats did not return from their posts in West Pakistan until 1973, at which time they found junior officers stationed in East Pakistan and veteran freedom fighters demanding superior rank for their sacrifices.³³ Despite these difficult conditions, Mujib and the Awami League were able to solidify support for the Awami League. I argue that much of this success has to do with the way the Awami League strategically targeted new groups of voters and began the process of rural incorporation.

Under land ownership laws previous to 1950, *zemidar* (the traditional land owner) would always work in his own best interests, often at the expense of cultivators. After the East Pakistan State Acquisition and Tenancy Bill was enacted in February 1950, intermediate states of cultivators were placed under state observation, replacing the landlord class. This led to an overabundance of sharecroppers and increased vulnerability of the working poor. The previous system elevated the status of these intermediate cultivators.

Under a precarious position as the new party leading a fragile independent nation, Mujib realized that he needed to solidify support among previously disaffected groups of voters. The first group of voters to be targeted was a critical constituency of the Awami League: small land owners.

One of Mujib's first policy provisions was the 1972 Bangladesh Land Holding Act. First, to provide relief to small farmers, anyone with landholdings under 25 *bighas* (acres) would be exempt from payment on land revenue. The government was expected to lose taka 68 million (\$5.6 million) annually but justified for the relief and benefit of small farming families.³⁴ In the way of further aid, it was also decided that some agricultural families would be exempt from

³² In 1974 Mujib reported that 3,000 AL members were killed by insurgents. Armed gangs also launched repeated attacks on villages across the country. Rashiduzzman argues that this had some effect in decline of rural support for the regime evident by the silent reaction of the country to Mujib's assassination.

³³ Rashiduzzman, M. "Changing Patterns in Bangladesh: Internal Constraints and External Fears." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (Sep 1977): 793-9.

³⁴ Mukherji 556.

taxation within certain landholding limitations. The government would continue to lose [exponentially?] but in the name of relief for poor farmers whom they hoped to represent and build a credible commitment.³⁵

Part of the Act placed ceilings on every family in the nation, limiting each to 100 *bighas* (33 acres) of agricultural land. The policy measure sent a direct message to large landowners that the Awami League wanted to be viewed as the party of the small landowners and not the *zemidars* (traditional land owners). The 1972 act differed greatly from that of 1950 in part due to the revised definition of “family.” Subject to scrutiny, the new act put more broad limitations on the use of that language, whereas previously anyone living under the same roof could qualify as a family unit by law. Under the Bangladesh Land Holding (Limitation) Order, all members now had to be proven legal family status to prevent illegal land transfers between family members to avoid surplus land surrender.

The second major policy innovation of Mujib and the Awami League was the redistribution of land and targeting of the constituency of the *khas*—the landless farmers. While involved in the buildup to independence, the *khas* did not typically vote in elections or formally participate in party activities³⁶. Fallow land was reappropriated in several major districts, and a board of reclamation, improvement, and utilization established. Because the State Acquisition and Tenacity Act of 1950 prohibited mortgaging land for agricultural loans, an amendment was necessary. Diluvial or recessed land submerged or taken over by riverways for less than a 20-year period could still be claimed by a tenant if it reemerged within that time, but under the new provisions, these provision clauses were abolished. Because Bangladesh is situated on the water, reclaiming land had become an annual event dominated by scavengers, and this would free up and provide additional land for poor, underprivileged farmers to cultivate in line with the government’s law. The distribution of acreage to the landless would also have set criteria and a hierarchy of need. Preference would be given to families with no land at all; families with no land other than their homestead; families with a homestead but no additional land beyond 1.5 acres; those whose land had flooded and become unusable; farmers dependent on the family’s

³⁵ Mukherji.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 558

active freedom fighters who had since died or been severely disabled in combat; refugees willing to cultivate the land themselves, and all other agricultural family units.³⁷

Khas land would be settled in large blocks for cooperative farming, and in these cases, an additional acre of land would be given to each family member. *Khas* land was thereby given special attention and cooperative farming special standing. If families did not join a cooperative society as agreed, the land agreement (lease) would be subject to forfeiture.

Hoping to strengthen the country's infrastructure, the Mujib and the Awami League immediately established the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) and village cooperatives consistent with the recommendations of the 1959 Comilla model of rural development.³⁸ Zafarullah and Mohammed argue that Mujib's first five-year plan, begun in 1973, was designed to build a sound institutional base in the development process targeting the rural population.³⁹ Mujib's government undertook efforts at building rural institutions, re-established the rural works program (which coordinated public works projects in the countryside with local labor), raised agricultural output prices, provided subsidies for agricultural inputs and technology, and initiated a cooperative-run credit program through which loans were awarded without collateral.⁴⁰ These programs were used as tools for the AL to strengthen its base in the countryside and overwhelmingly benefitted rich peasants. Rich peasants obtained most IRDP credit, dominated village cooperatives and other development organizations, and obtained most government-procured agricultural inputs including modern agricultural technologies.⁴¹

Further, the AL placed rich peasant supporters on interim relief committees immediately after liberation and held local elections in 1973 for Union Councils, also dominated by rich peasants.⁴² These elections were held on a non-party basis, yet the AL overtly supported its candidates and prevented other elected leaders from pursuing their agendas through AL control

³⁷ Mukherji data, pp. 461.

³⁸ Established in 1959, the Comilla model of rural development was the first grassroots rural development system applied to East Pakistan and met significant although limited success in increasing rural output.

³⁹ Zafarullah, Habib and Mohammed Mohabbat Khan. "The Politics of Rural Development in Bangladesh." *Asian Journal of Public Administration*. (1984)

⁴⁰ The rural works program consisted of public works projects that employed the rural poor and lower classes. Ibid, 7-8. It should also be noted that elections were never held for other branches of local government despite Mujib's promise to do so.

⁴¹ Since surplus farmers make up the rich peasant category, rich peasants were the primary beneficiaries of subsidized procurement prices. Also, mild land reform programs did not affect rich peasants.

Osmani, S.R. and M.A. Quasem. *Pricing and Subsidy Policies for Bangladesh Agriculture*, 5-20.

Rahman, Atiur. *Peasants and Classes*, 215-22.

⁴² Mujib dissolved the Union Parishads created as party of Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies and replaced it with relief committees held by kulak AL members.

of the administration.⁴³ Because AL-supported candidates sitting on relief committees from 1972 to 1973 were overwhelmingly rejected at the polls,⁴⁴ the relief committees themselves were discredited as corrupt and inefficient, and Union Councils were scrapped a year after they were put in place when Mujib introduced a one-party system, none of these schemes for government decentralization consolidated. Nonetheless, they served their function as conduits for patronage distribution to rich peasants.⁴⁵

Thus the AL targeted new constituencies in the rural countryside by means of public policy, distributed resources and positions to its rich peasant base, and established rural infrastructure in the countryside that empowered this base. Its monopoly on resources for patronage and state building were predictably employed to win peasant loyalty, which contributed to the 1973 AL parliamentary victory with 291 of 300 seats won by the party.⁴⁶

III. Challenging the connection between Rural Incorporation and Regime Durability

A contention of scholars, including Moore, Huntington, and Waldner argue that rural incorporation enables regime durability through management of conflict, coalitions, and institutions. The case of the first period in Bangladesh (1972-1975) demonstrates that while rural incorporation can solidify support within a political party, it does not lead directly to regime durability. Victors of intense conflict control state resources and are invulnerable--at least for a long time--to challenges from the losers in matters of development and nation building. The regime's rural base provides resources to co-opt labor, reconcile with capitalists, and isolate insurgents, creating a conservative (pro-property) interclass coalition that benefits from the regime. In this environment, insurgents and labor will fail to find allies or be co-opted into corporatist institutions; radicals and capitalists will compromise their demands, and the policy environment will be stable. Finally, the regime will entrench its incumbency through

⁴³ 1973 parliamentary election results suggest that this was effective. Rahim, 112.

⁴⁴ As a failed scheme to build AL power in the countryside, Mujib left the Union Council system stagnant. International observers also assert that the 1973 parliamentary elections were not free or fair.

⁴⁵ Interview with A. Rehman, Dhaka University, January 21, 2007.

⁴⁶ Following the 1975 constitutional coup, Mujib scrapped elected local government, but still planned to incorporate peasants through Maoist-style mass organizations. Rahim, 115-25.

incorporating influential members of its coalition into party and state institutions. The end result is durable elite support for the regime.⁴⁷

Using 1975 as a measure, however, rural incorporation did not meet these expectations. The AL under Mujib was the hegemonic party in Bangladesh with near- absolute control of resources; the AL was employed to pursue rural development, nationalize industry, and build a political base in the countryside through local government institutions and policies that offered patronage to rich peasants. Nevertheless, the legacy of the liberation war, a history of economic underdevelopment and exploitation, intra-party divisions, and state weakness prevented the AL from consolidating power.

First, the defeated challenger was the Pakistani state. It did not reemerge against the AL after liberation; however, guerilla war left the pro-Pakistan non-Bengali minority-- armed by the Pakistani military during the war-- and Maoists armed and mobilized against a Bangladeshi state too weak to subdue them.⁴⁸ In 1974, Mujib estimated that insurgents murdered 3,000 Awami League members including members of parliament. Rashiduzzaman also argues that attacks in the countryside by militias contributed to the drop in rural support for the AL.

In the months following the 1973 election, opposition to the regime mounted and threats and counter-threats of civil war and class struggle became frequent...From the middle of 1973 the regimes authority in the countryside was threatened by rising incidences of armed attack on local law enforcement agencies [and local government offices].⁴⁹

A state of perpetual terror across the country contributed to Mujib's decision to modify the political system in 1975 in an effort to attract radicals to the ruling party. Further, factionalism within the AL raised challenges to Mujib's economic and international policies. For example, a faction of leftist students organized against a capitalist economic policy, western parliamentary rule, and dependence on foreign aid led the AL to form the Socialist Party (JSD) in 1972.⁵⁰ Sections of the party set against the economic and political system itself continued to destabilize the party itself for the duration of the regime. Thus, conflict over the character and structure of

⁴⁷ Waldner, 35-40

⁴⁸ The liberation war lacked central authority. Students active in leftist politics mostly led militias and these groups were further radicalized through the war. Mujib's call for disarmament in January 1972 brought surrender of 50,000 weapons

⁴⁹ Jahan, Rounaq. "Bangladesh in 1973: Management of Factional Politics." *Asian Studies*. (1973).

⁵⁰ This pro-Moscow social party, along with the National Awami Party (also pro-Moscow), provided the greatest challenge to AL among the legitimate opposition.

economic and political development continued, and the state could not successfully co-opt these destabilizing groups.

Second, by 1975 policy patronage through rural development policies and state industries failed to quell guerilla warfare and the disintegrating state of law and order. Rising agricultural prices benefited rich peasants but hurt the remainder of the rural and urban population; state-owned industries run by inexperienced party elites stagnated or declined; and floods, famine, and violence left the population insecure. Under the stresses of breakdowns in law and order and the economy, AL rule became untenable by 1974. Subsequently, Mujib's decision to create a one-party state in 1975 and establish mandatory collective farming threatened peasants as well as urban elites dependent on rural rents, bureaucracy and army officers resistant to further party subordination, and pro-democratic elements within the AL.

To conclude, the Mujib regime was built on a legacy of rural incorporation and an inter-class coalition from the pre-liberation period onward. A set of specific rural policies and institution-building efforts galvanized the Awami League's rich-peasant base during the parliamentary phase of Mujib's rule. And the nationalization of industry was expected to build an urban support-base of workers and professionals for the regime through patronage. By 1975, the AL had retained its new peasant base through patronage, but overt failures in economic development and state building posed an acute and immediate threat to the regime. Mujib could not avert economic decline, while the state was too weak to suppress the extra-constitutional opposition.

While scholars have asserted the rural incorporation allows for regime durability, this may not always be the case. This is an important distinction because while rural incorporation may lead a political party to solidify and expand its base, it may not contribute to overall government stability. The analysis above also shows the high costs of rural incorporation and the risks involved with attempting to build new cross-cutting coalitions. In the next section of this paper based on Bangladesh Period One, I will introduce a formal model that will further probe the reasons to explain why political parties pursue certain policies, such as pro-peasant agendas, and the consequences of those choices over the long term.

IV. Signaling Credible Commitments: A rational-choice explanation for pro-peasant policy provision

It is clear from the above that the Mujib regime and the Awami League took strategic steps to increase mobilization after independence through specific policy choices. Political parties, however, can and often promise many kinds of policy provisions to court constituencies or solidify their base. Based on this logic, a political party in the run-up to an election could offer pledges to all constituencies. However, parties also know that they will potentially be held accountable for delivery whereas they cannot practically deliver on all promises.

The question that arises in this context is why political parties end up supporting certain types of provisions and not others. A rich history of work in the political economy literature is done on the provision of social goods, ‘pork-barrel’, and patronage to reward or to woo specific constituencies. Building on the work of Strom (1990), Ostrom (1998) and Berman (2003), I attempt to sketch out the dynamics and strategic choice sets available to political parties as they decide which constituencies they would like to target with their policy preferences.

I provide a rational-choice explanation that helps illustrate this dynamic and complements the qualitative analysis on Bangladesh Period One. The value of the model is that it will bring up key questions and propositions that can be evaluated in the section on Bangladesh Period Two (Zia 1976-1982). I will outline the assumptions of this rational-choice explanation, and introduce the framework of the game-theory model. The model itself is mathematically solved in the appendix. The model does not show how all political parties operate in a democratic context or how political parties contribute to regime durability. Instead, it focuses on the limited ways political parties can signal a credible commitment to the population in order to gain support, together with the consequences of those policy decisions in future elections.

The Policy Choice model

The basic framework of the game-theory model is as follows. Two political parties (Party 1 and Party 2) in a democratic system are competing for the votes of two blocs (Constituency A and Constituency B) prior to an election. Constituency A is more numerous

than Constituency B, so Constituency A's votes will be decisive in the upcoming election. In the Bangladesh case, the two constituencies are represented by an agrarian constituency and a business/merchant constituency. While simplified, there is evidence that Bangladesh can be validly viewed through this prism. Bertocci (1984) states that there were two major constituencies, the larger one that combined middle-class peasants, small land owners, and the landless; and a far smaller one that combined [with who else?] the upper-middle-class, merchants (with foreign capital)⁵¹. Here are a few operating assumptions driving the framework and context of the model:

Assumption 1—The state is newly formed, and is fragile and finds it difficult to equally distribute social goods.⁵²

Assumption 2—Political parties have limited resources in their efforts to support constituencies.

Assumption 3—Political parties are interested in maintaining their influence and power.

In order to curry favor with specific voter blocs, each party will attempt to pass legislation through a parliament (where both parties are currently represented). There are two pieces of legislation that either party may support. One is more favorable to Constituency A and the other more favorable to Constituency B (each constituency dislikes the alternative legislation). Once they choose which piece of legislation to sponsor, each party will visibly support it and its representatives will attempt to enact it prior to the election. The model assumes that whether successful or not, this support will be noted by voters.

Party 1 favors Constituency A and intends to support policies favorable to that constituency if elected. The opposite is true of Party 2: it supports Constituency B and if elected intends to support policies favorable to that constituency (and unfavorable to Constituency A). The parties' discrete utilities are based on two factors: they increase when the party is elected but decrease if the party supports legislation that contradicts underlying preferences. Since both parties care most about the larger Constituency A for the purposes of being elected, only Party 2 faces a dilemma when choosing which legislation to support (Party 1 will have a dominant

⁵¹ Bertocci, pg. 991.

⁵² Social goods are public and club goods provided to citizens that include education, tax relief, transportation, welfare services, law and order, and other social services.

strategy of pursuing a policy favoring Constituency A). The crux of the model (Fig. 1) is this decision for Party 2 (the opposition).⁵³

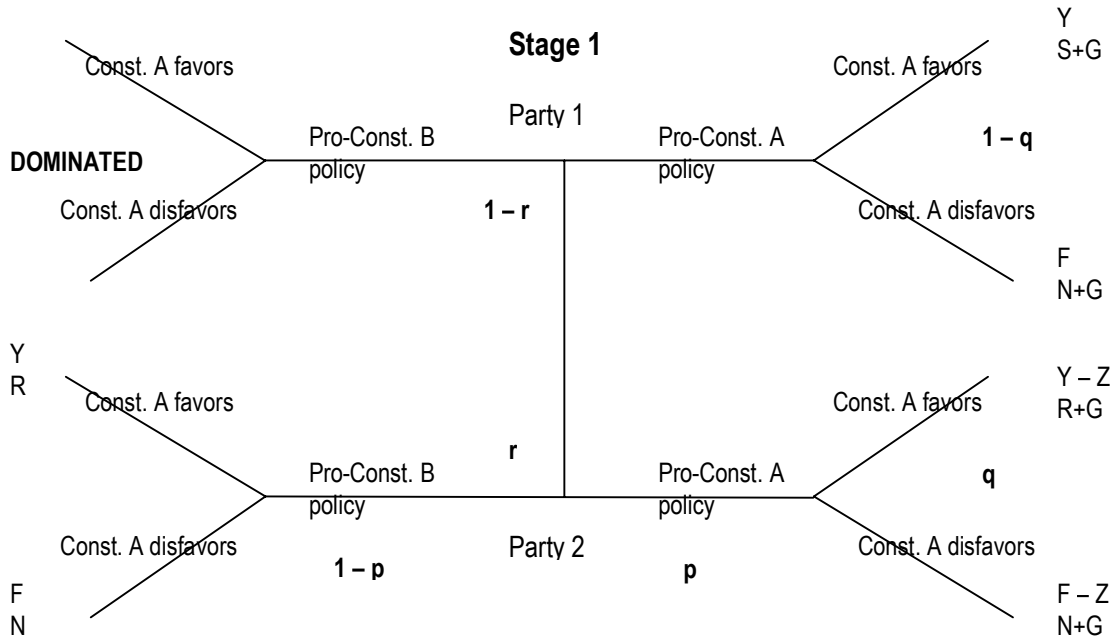


Figure 1: Policy Choice model

This model parallels major aspects of Bangladesh Period One, Mujib and the Awami League. The major constituency (Constituency A) was the large agrarian voter base, which includes middle-class farmers, small land owners, and the landless. The Awami League (Party 1) knew that it wanted to gear its policies towards mobilizing Constituency A, and offered specific targets through the 1972 Act and other noted land redistribution measures. The smaller constituency (Constituency B) is the pro-business/merchant class that wanted Bangladesh to liberalize its trade policy and open its markets to attract investment by foreign capital. In the 1973 election, the opposition was very small, winning less than 10% of the Bangladesh

⁵³ The voters' utility functions are specified as discrete payoffs for each possible scenario (e.g., Party 2 wins the election but passes unfavorable legislation). The voters will try to maximize payoffs given incomplete information regarding what "type" each party represents (it is presumed that the voters have no prior information about party type). As shown later, three possible equilibria may result from this model: separating, partially separating, and pooling. These will be discussed later.

parliament. The Bangladesh opposition (Party 2) decided to not publicly oppose the 1972 legislation for fear of reprisals from Constituency A.

The diagram above illustrates the importance of the first stage--i.e., the first election--and its possible path dependence. The voters do not know party type, but they do know that each party favors either Constituency A or Constituency B. The probability that a party favors Constituency B is represented here by r (with Party 2 as the example), meaning that a party favors Constituency A with probability $1 - r$ (with Party 1 as the example). Values for r are not provided here, but it might be reasonable to assume that r is equivalent to the proportion of voters favoring Constituency B.

Party 1, as mentioned, will always attempt to pass legislation favoring Constituency A; therefore, the upper left path is a strictly dominated strategy. This is akin to the Awami League pushing for pro-peasant policies during the early part of its parliamentary control. Party 2 will choose between a policy that favors either the majority constituency (selected with probability p) and one that favors its true constituency (selected with probability $1 - p$). In this case, the smaller opposition in Bangladesh chose the former.

Constituency A voters, therefore, face a dilemma when $p > 0$ (when $p = 0$, there is a separating equilibrium). In other words, they must decide how likely the chances that a party passing favorable policies will truly support their interests when in office. The party may be lying (probability q) or telling the truth (probability $1 - q$). This raises the issue of how voters are able to trust that a political party will enact those policies promised during the election cycle, such as the 1972 buildup to elections in Bangladesh. Voters have incomplete information, so political parties need to overcome the issue of false promises. One way political parties like the Awami League are able to overcome this issue of false promises is to issue a costly signal of credible commitment. For example, in the Awami League's case, the government gave up a tremendous tax base by forgiving past land dues in order to signal a credible commitment. The Awami League also made a public demonstration of land redistribution to the *khas* (landless).

As noted, the model is designed to explore the consequences of certain policy decisions and how these affect the learning curve of the electorate. Depending upon the result of the first stage (first election), the voters will have different preferences for the two parties in the second election, and this shift will result in a consequently different utility-maximizing behavior by

Party 2 in stage two. This dynamic illustrates the principal insights needed to examine Bangladesh Period Two.⁵⁴

In solving the model (working out its various scenarios), there are three equilibriums: a separating, partially separating, and pooling equilibrium. One of the pooling equilibriums occurs in stage two (second election). First, the electorate learns whether Party 1 and Party 2 followed through on the promises made in the beginning (first) election. Second, political party 2 has now to make a choice of where to position itself to favor either Constituency A or Constituency B. Even though its latent preferences would be for Constituency B, the only way Party 2 can increase its overall support is to go further (beyond Party 1) in providing policy provisions that support Constituency A. If it simply matches the policy provisions of Party 1, voters will still be inclined to go with Party 1, since they have little incentive to switch their allegiance.

The other observable implication (separating equilibrium) of the model is that there is some constant proportion of the population that will tend to vote consistently with one party. This seems to be due to incomplete information and the strength of the initial identity and the momentum of allegiance to the original party. This partially separating equilibrium suggests path dependence and first-mover's advantage to the first election.

To summarize the Policy choice model in the context of the Bangladesh case, the following propositions are made:

Proposition 1: Party 2 (BNP) faces a strategic decision in the second election, since voters will be trying to understand what its underlying preferences are.

Proposition 2: Party 1 (Awami League) could retain core support regardless of whether it supports policies for Constituency A (pro-peasant) or Constituency B (pro-business).

Proposition 3: The key learning aspect for voters (who have incomplete information) is whether they can trust Party 1 or Party 2 to follow through on the promises they made regarding policies for their respective constituency.

In the next section, I will examine Bangladesh Period Two, showing how the propositions of the Policy Choice model illustrate politics leading up to the second election, policy provisions, and parliamentary activity.

⁵⁴ The formal mathematics and proof are found in the appendix.

V. Bangladesh Period Two: General Zia, the opposition, and model implications

Following a succession of coups, counter-coups, and a period of jostling for power within the military ranks after the assassination of Mujib, General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) took control by 1976 and formally assumed the presidency by national referendum in 1977. Evidence of rural incorporation under Zia and his Bangladesh Nationalist Party or BNP (established in 1978) is pronounced, sometimes referred to as the “Zia Restoration.”⁵⁵ Zia increased patronage to rich peasants through development programs, establishing elected village councils called *gram sarkars* in each village by 1981, set up party organizations in rural areas, increased the powers of elected local government, and established village defense forces.⁵⁶ As a result, Zia’s BNP built a support base in the countryside through its monopoly on patronage, yet these efforts failed to consolidate the regime. Zia was assassinated in an abortive junior officers’ coup in 1981 and Sattar, his successor, elected President with 66% of the vote in November 1981, was deposed in a bloodless military coup in 1982.⁵⁷ In this section, I argue that the observable implications for rural incorporation were in place under the Zia regime, as the BNP made a strategic decision to exceed the Awami League in mobilizing the peasant class.

When Zia assumed power, insurgent violence, now including forces loyal to Mujib, was constant, and Zia became the target of numerous abortive junior officers’ coups led by former liberation fighters. Insecure about his support in the military, he resigned from his military post in 1977 and pursued popular support as a civilian politician.⁵⁸ That year, he held non-party local elections and a referendum on support for his rule, reporting 98.9% support in a flawed poll. Although approximately 47% of those elected were affiliated with the AL and 23% with the Muslim League and other right-wing parties, Zia used the local elections to build a support base in the countryside prior to his election as President, supported by a coalition of pro-Beijing communists, the pro-Pakistan Muslim League, and Zia’s party JAGODAL (to become the BNP). In addition, the BNP took the parliamentary election the following year with 207 of 300 seats.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Bertocci 995.

⁵⁶ A newspaper recorded as many as 26 coups against Zia by 1980. Cited in Haque (1981): 191.

⁵⁷ Zafarullah, Habib. *The Zia Episode in Bangladesh Politics* (South Asia Publishers, Delhi, 1996): 1-20.

⁵⁸ In his first address to the nation, Zia said that he would make agriculture a top priority as an effort to make Bangladesh self-sufficient. He argued that this could be accomplished by decentralizing local government, strengthening local government institutions, and enabling grassroots participation in development at every stratum. Zia’s 19-Point Program Manifesto, 1977.

⁵⁹ Baxter, Craig. *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State* (Westview Press, Oxford, 1997): 90-100.

From a policy standpoint, Zia and BNP raised agricultural subsidies above the Mujib and Awami level, initiated a massive canal-digging project that employed poorer sections of rural society, and distributed patronage to rural leaders through leadership positions and agricultural subsidies. As the model suggest, in order to make a firm credible commitment, the new party has to go further than the original party in order to provide enough incentives for voters to swith allegiance.

Part of this strategic policy choice was his most ambitious project which pertained to building rural infrastructure with the *swarnivar gram sarkar* program. *Gram sarkars* were village councils that coordinated development projects through planning and implementation by council leaders. Representatives elected by village consensus included men and women, artisans, landless peasants, businessmen, and peasant-proprietors who were given authority over rural development, dispute resolution (judicial), and administration. Zia used *gram sarkars* and other rural development programs to build ties with the rural grassroots for BNP mobilization and planned to replace the AL-dominated Union Councils with the former to further solidify BNP support in the countryside. As was the case with Mujib, rich peasants benefited most from these programs, and although they failed to significantly increase agricultural output or achieve their goal to uplift the rural poor, patronage benefits brought the BNP support as an institution of patronage. Thus the Zia regime aggressively pursued pro-peasant policies and a program of institution building that sought to establish village-level government for the first time in Bangladesh's history.

Zia and BNP made strategic decisions of what groups to support. The natural constituency of Zia would have been building on the original opposition (constituency B). Instead, to garner support, Zia and BNP built a mass coalition of peasants, bureaucrats, and workers that appeared durable on the eve of his death. And his ambitious rural institution building and development initiatives, including political-party building, entrenched support for the regime from the grassroots. As the model indicates, Zia and BNP had to go further than the Awami Leauge in attracting Constituency A, which, again, would have little incentive to switch their allegiance to a new party.

Zia's regime was also more encompassing than Mujib's. He included pro-Beijing communists and the pro-Pakistan right in his coalition, and pursued a state-building and economic-development agenda that attenuated violence and grew the economy. As a patronage

body, the BNP lacked ideological cohesion, but the literature suggests that Zia's core agenda was not threatened but carried by his leadership charisma and unifying Islamic message. Zia's state-building efforts involved more than doubling the military budget, combining the Mukkhi Bahini (pro-Mujib paramilitary force) with the regular army, and reforming the administration. When he could not make these institutions cohesive, he gave them more responsibilities and higher salaries. In addition, he developed the military into a force sufficiently strong to confront insurgents and established village defense forces—comprising 150 residents in each village-- to complement local security forces at the grassroots level while empowering and paying villagers. It can be argued from this evidence that the removal of major conflicts over political and economic development allowed for a more stable political environment and additional rural incorporation.

Zia's decision profile demonstrates the tension noted in the possibility of going with a mixed strategy in stage two (second election). Zia's original preferences were to include a broader coalition, one that also developed a broad coalition of pro-capitalists that wanted foreign investment, and emphasized growth of the private sector and privatized many industries nationalized under Mujib. This allowed for reconciliation with the professional class, business community, and industrialists. Moreover, he raised the wages of urban workers and garnered the support of rich peasants. Institution building under Zia was far more comprehensive than under Mujib. Zia established 65,000 *gram sarkars* and built a BNP organization in the countryside. He also allowed AL-dominated institutions in the countryside to stagnate, providing for BNP domination of all viable rural institutions.

Finally, although Zia and the BNP were successful in going beyond the pro-peasant policies, as predicted by the model, a sizable core remained loyal to the Awami League. Despite being in power and controlling forms of patronage, the Awami League was still able to win upward of 30% in the parliament. This suggests that identification with the party (emotional attachment as party of Independence) was viable enough to overcome the weight of possible incentives and benefits of voting for the new party.

VI. Alternative Explanations: Looking beyond the model, pro-peasant policies and rural incorporation

The regimes of Mujib and Zia were built on pro-peasant policy choices and rural incorporation. Both regimes emphasized rich peasants as politically important allies and pursued pro-peasant policies, rural institution building and patronage distribution. And both leaders were brought down by narrowly supported military coups led by veterans of the liberation war. Comparing these regimes, it is possible to establish productive sources of explanation for volatility across regimes and to dismiss those that apply in one case and not the other, since both must share the same rationale of regime collapse. Having already demonstrated that rural incorporation does not cause regime durability in Bangladesh, I use this section to review alternative explanations as well as further examination of the validity of the Policy Choice model.

First, economic decline occurred under Mujib, whereas economic growth occurred under Zia. If economic decline predicts regime collapse and economic growth predicts regime durability, Zia's regime should have been durable--but was not.⁶⁰ Second, the political parties dominant under both regimes during their respective democratic phases were sharply ideologically distinct, held together only as patronage bodies. Intra-party divisiveness persists under the current democratic regime. Party factionalism-- also evident in the Congress Party in the mid-1960s—cannot explain regime volatility.⁶¹ Third, political competition has never been institutionalized, conceptualized as operating within established rules governing political competition. Mass movements, violence, and parliamentary boycotts continue to pervade in the political process and were factors of both regimes under study.⁶² Fourth, levels of military funding do not have a relationship; Zia increased military funding to nearly three times its Mujib level in his first budget (1976) and continued an agenda of military modernization throughout his tenure.

⁶⁰ Ershad's regime (1982-91) also saw economic growth.

⁶¹ Brass, Paul. *Factional politics in an Indian state: the Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

⁶² Some scholars speculate that the current regime is stable, yet Bangladesh remains a typical case of Huntington's praetorian state. Extra-constitutional tactics have surrounded every election in Bangladesh since its birth. Rashiduzzaman, M. "Political Unrest and Democracy in Bangladesh." *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 3. (Mar., 1997), pp. 254-268.

Despite achieving a degree of rural incorporation, political parties were unable to deal with the military factionalism. The military accounts for an area directly implicated in the collapse of both regimes. In both cases, the military was politicized and divided between veteran liberation fighters (patriots) and more senior personnel stranded in West Pakistan during the war and repatriated in 1973 (repatriates). Mujib favored the former during his regime. Zia favored the latter and pushed the former group to retirement or had them transferred to more peripheral positions. Mujib was killed in a narrowly supported and weakly organized coup of patriots, as was Zia. Once Ershad took office after deposing Zia's elected successor, the patriot group was dislodged from power, with many of their more senior members executed for their involvement in military coups; such coups have not recurred since 1982. Civil-military relations were also a major problem for Mujib and Zia. Mujib distrusted the military following his experience with Pakistan's military government before liberation. He developed a counterweight paramilitary force loyal to the AL and much better funded. The civil-military relations literature argues that creating paramilitary forces--as Mujib and Bhutto of Pakistan had--threatens the military and often leads to coups. Zia absorbed this force into the army but alienated the patriot group. Therefore, the problem of military cohesion permeated both intra-military and civil-military relations.

Examining the Policy Choice model illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of its insights. The strengths of the model center on the importance of credible commitments to party dynamics, the path dependence of early elections, and the decision parameters of constituencies with limited information. The model is a simplified version and does not incorporate additional factors that have shaped the Bangladesh case, such as the role of extra-military forces (noted above). Also it is difficult to break down the entire population into two main constituencies (although largely valid) as there exist other more nuanced coalitions that may not be adequately represented in Constituency A or Constituency B.

This policy paper has focused primarily on how strategic policy choices made rural incorporation possible and that the generalized connection between rural incorporation to regime durability did not occur in Bangladesh. The role of civil-military relations is an important factor that was not directly dealt with in this paper or the Policy Choice model and remains an area of further research.

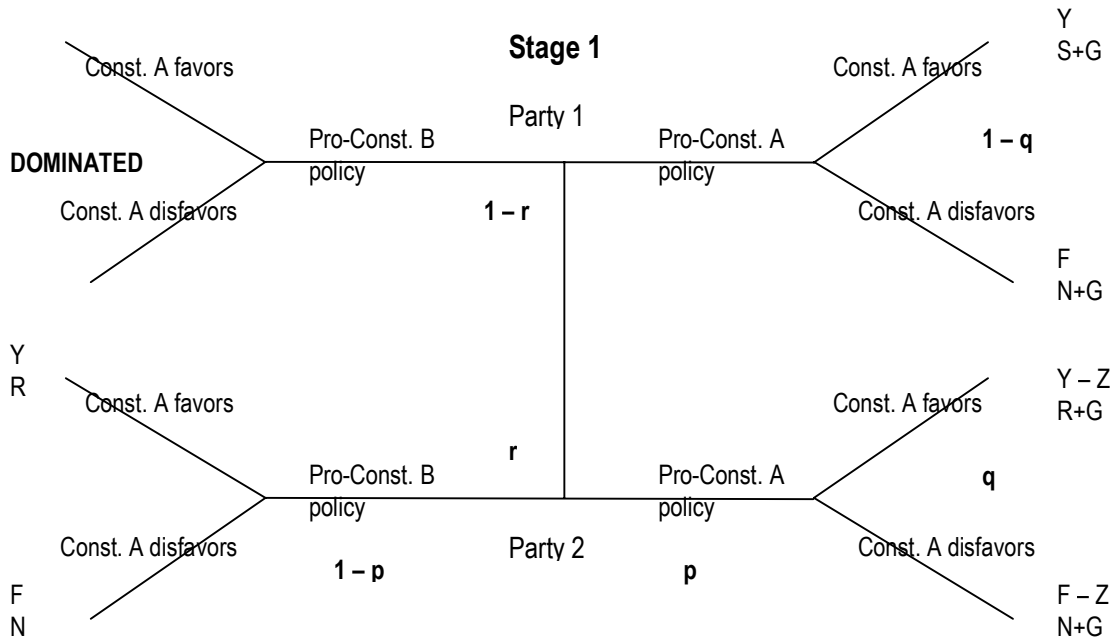
VII. Conclusion

I have argued that rural incorporation is best understood in the context of policy choices that target specific constituencies in an electorate. While there are important preconditions that set the stage for implementation (legitimacy of the political party, party organization), rural incorporation is fostered when credible commitments are made to voter blocs. The literature on political development has long considered the importance of integrating the rural countryside into mainstream political institutions. The literature's focus, however, has not centered on what types of policies and pledges might be most effective in solidifying a political party's base. This paper suggests that rural incorporation is most effective when policy choices target new constituencies of voters to integrate into the party organization.

The Policy Choice model highlights the importance of credible commitments to party dynamics, the path dependence of stage-one decisions (first election), and the decision-making of constituencies given limited information. The case of Bangladesh provides a rich narrative to test the model and its implications, and enriches the larger body of work on political development in Muslim-majority nations and in developing countries in general.

This paper proposes potential avenues of research that require multiple levels of analysis (domestic, institutional, international, etc.). An interesting avenue of research would be test the model's implications on the rural dynamics in other Muslim-majority nations with strong agrarian links, such as Pakistan, Egypt and Morocco. For example, in Egypt the agrarian legislation has created new coalitions in the legislature and often led to non-state violence. The Egyptian Agrarian Reform Corporation models many of the aspects in the Policy Choice model with respect to signaling to future constituencies and large scale owners. This paper is part of a larger project to develop case studies on these countries. I argue that careful and multi-factoral analysis of internal party dynamics, policy platforms, and organizational development will continue to yield key insights. The analysis of government responsiveness and examining specific policies suggests that it has far more to offer in the study of national development and policy change.

Appendix



The diagram above illustrates the first stage (i.e., the first election). The voters do not know party type, but they do know that each party favors either Constituency A or Constituency B. The probability that a party favors Constituency B is represented here by r (with Party 2 as the example), meaning that a party favors Constituency A with probability $1-r$ (with Party 1 as the example). Values for r are not provided here, but it might be reasonable to assume that r is equivalent to the proportion of voters favoring Constituency B.

Party 1, as mentioned previously, will always attempt to pass legislation favoring Constituency A; therefore, the upper left path is a strictly dominated strategy. Party 2 will choose between a policy that favors the majority constituency (selected with probability p) and one that favors its true constituency (selected with probability $1-p$).

Constituency A voters, therefore, face a dilemma when $p > 0$ (when $p = 0$, there is a separating equilibrium). They must decide how likely it is that a party passing favorable policies will truly support their interests when in office. The party may be lying (probability q) or telling the truth (probability $1-q$).

The terminal nodes are labeled with payoffs for parties (top) and Constituency A (bottom). The payoff variables are defined as follows:

Y – payoff to winning party	G – benefit to Constituency A if policy passed in its favor prior to election
F – payoff to losing party	R – payoff to Const. A if it elects Party 1
Z – cost to Party 2 of supporting Constituency A	S – payoff to Const. A if it elects Party 2
	N – payoff to Const. A if it abstains

$$Y > F \text{ and } S > N > R$$

There are three equilibria in Stage 1: partially separating, pooling, and separating. We solve first for the partially separating equilibria, where Party 2 mixes strategies.

$$(0.1) \quad q = \frac{pr}{pr + 1(1-r)}$$

Rearranging, we get:

$$(0.2) \quad p = \frac{1-r}{r} \left(\frac{q}{1-q} \right)$$

Now, set the payoffs to Constituency A for supporting a party favoring its policy equal to the payoffs for denying support to such a party.

$$(0.3) \quad q(R + G) + (1-q)(S + G) = q(N + G) + (1-q)(N + G)$$

This equation reduces to:

$$(0.4) \quad q^* = \frac{S - N}{S - R}$$

Plugging (1.4) into (1.2), we get the optimal mixing probability of Party 2:

$$(0.5) \quad p^* = \frac{1-r}{r} \left(\frac{S - N}{N - R} \right)$$

Next, we look at the pooling equilibrium, where both parties always support policies favoring Constituency A. In this case, $p^* = 1$, so $q^* = r^*$. We are left with:

$$(0.6) \quad r^* = \frac{S - N}{S - R}$$

If $r = r^*$, Constituency A is indifferent between supporting and not supporting a party that signals favorable policies before the election.

If $r > r^*$, Constituency A will decide not to support either party. This will lead Party 2 to defect and signal a strategy favoring Constituency B.

If $r < r^*$, Constituency A will always support a party that signals a favorable policy. Thus, Party 2 will only defect when the payoff to losing (with no Constituency A support) exceeds the payoff to supporting Constituency A and winning. In mathematical terms:

$$(0.7) \quad F > Y - Z \text{ or } Z > Y - F$$

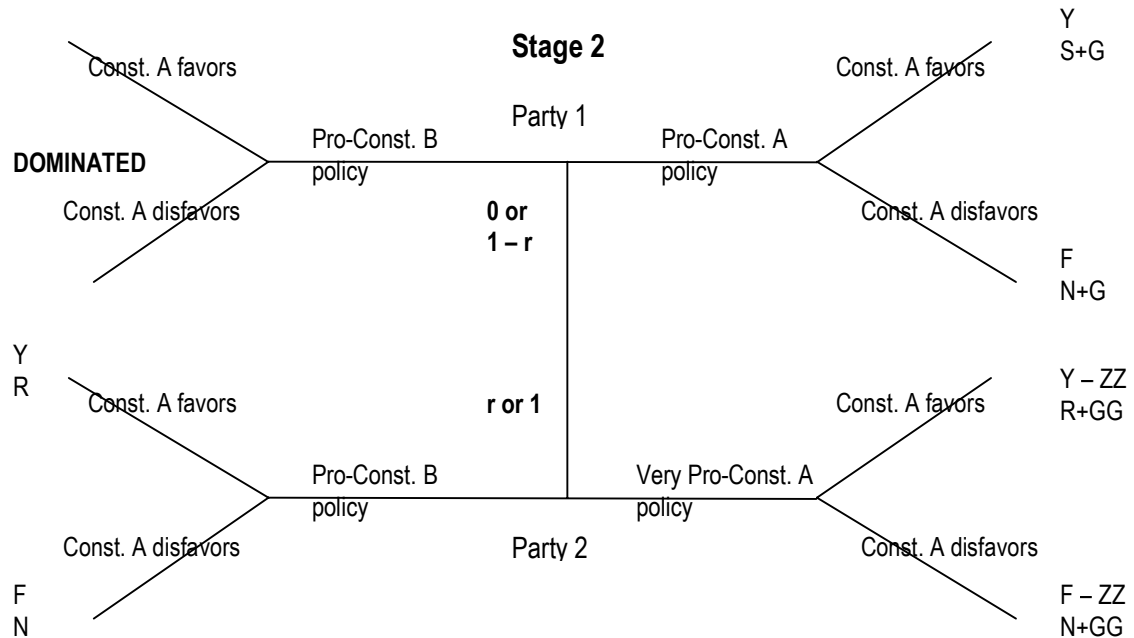
For a separating equilibrium, the voters have full information. In other words, $r = 0$, which must be below r^* by construction. This is identical to the previous situation, and Party 2 will defect when the condition in (1.7) holds.

Two-Stage Game

Introducing a second election complicates the analysis slightly. There are two scenarios. In the first, Party 1 won the election and presumably carried out policies favorable to Constituency A. In the second, Party 2 chose to support Constituency A's policies before the election but then betrayed Constituency A while in power. In both cases, Party 2 is now at a disadvantage (presuming that the populations of the two constituencies remain unchanged).

Party 1, if elected, is a known supporter of Constituency A (it has probability 0 of favoring Constituency B). Party 2, in order to be elected, must send an even stronger signal to Constituency A that it will introduce favorable policies. This stronger signal will be more costly.

Party 2, if elected, is known to favor Constituency B. Party 1 is still an unknown, but it does not have to go very far to be perceived as better than Party 2. Once again, Party 2 must send a strong signal to Constituency A that it will change its ways. This signal will be more costly.



Here, ZZ represents the cost of the stronger signal Party 2 must send, and GG represents the larger gain that Constituency A receives from the stronger signal.

Since one party's type is known in this second stage, the character of the game changes significantly. We will deal with the two scenarios in turn.

Scenario 1: Party 1 elected in the first term

Constituency A voters will not choose to abstain here. They are choosing between a sure thing in Party 1 that they will be happy with and an unknown in Party 2. In order to choose Party 2, they must get a higher payoff to take the risk of being disappointed. Assuming Constituency A is risk neutral, they choose Party 2 when:

$$(0.8) \quad r(R + GG) + (1 - r)(S + GG) \geq 1(S + G)$$

Rearrange to get:

$$(0.9) \quad GG \geq G + r(S - R)$$

Therefore, Party 2 must offer an additional policy benefit upfront to Constituency A that exceeds the benefit offered by Party 1. Party 2 will offer this benefit when its cost does not exceed the utility difference between winning and losing the election.

$$(0.10) \quad Y - ZZ > F$$

The key, therefore, is what cost ZZ accompanies the policy GG in (1.9). This will determine which policy Party 2 chooses. The minimum utility for Party 2 in this scenario is F , and the maximum utility is $Y - ZZ$, where ZZ is determined by GG in (1.9).

Note that, just as in Stage 1, the condition $r > r^*$ must hold for Party 2 to be elected.

$$(0.11) \quad r(R + GG) + (1 - r)(S + GG) > N + GG$$

Reduces to:

$$(0.12) \quad r > \frac{S - N}{S - R}$$

Scenario 2: Party 2 elected in first term

Constituency A voters may choose to abstain here. Party 2 is known to be traitorous, and Party 1's type is still unknown. At first glance, it appears that Constituency A could still vote for Party 2 if Party 2 sends a strong enough signal before election. Constituency A could support Party 2 over Party 1 if:

$$(0.13) \quad R + GG > (1 - r)(S + G) + r(R + G)$$

This reduces to:

$$(0.14) \quad GG > G + (1 - r)(S - R)$$

However, since Party 2 is known to be traitorous, Constituency A will always favor abstaining over voting for Party 2, since $R + GG < N + GG$. Whether Party 1 is then elected is irrelevant to Party 2's utility. Party 2, recognizing this, will always choose to favor Constituency B and receive utility F .

Combining the two stages:

Will Party 2 act differently in Stage 1, given the possible results in Stage 2? As shown above, Party 2 is guaranteed a utility of F in Stage 2 when it wins in Stage 1. When Party 2 loses in Stage 1, it receives a minimum utility of F in Stage 2 and may receive higher utility, depending upon the parameters r , S , and R , as well as the relationship between ZZ and GG .

So should Party 2 be more likely to cede the election in Stage 1? While it depends on the precise numbers, it seems unlikely in most cases. Party 2 will apply a discounting factor to the utility in Stage 2. This discounting factor will reduce any utility difference between the two scenarios.

Stage 2 is most likely to matter in cases where $F \approx Y - Z$ (see equation (1.7)). In these cases, where Party 2 is on the fence about choosing one policy or another, it may lean toward its underlying preference in hopes of getting a higher utility from Stage 2.

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