

FAMILIES AND POLITICAL RECRUITMENT IN MINOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Political dynasties play an important role in several modern states. There has been a remarkable increase in the role of families in political parties and politics not only in Bangladesh but also in the whole world. No country in South Asia is immune from the dominance of families in politics. Bangladesh is not an exception in this regard. More or less, each and every political party has a dynastic leadership. Families play a role in leadership recruitment not only in the major parties but also in the minor ones in Bangladesh. This paper assesses the role of families in leadership recruitment in the minor parties in Bangladesh. An attempt has been made here to give a description of recruitment of leaders of some minor parties in Bangladesh from the members of the families of the powerful leaders of those parties. This paper claims that control by families of most minor parties has its material, psychological, and anthropological roots as these parties are primarily an extended clan of the principal leader of these parties.

Keywords: *political parties, families, leadership recruitment, minor parties, dynastic leadership*

Introduction

The role of families in political recruitment in Asia in general and South Asia in particular is a matter of common knowledge.¹ It is now known that the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, Bandaranaike and Rajapaksa families in Sri Lanka, the Koirala family in Nepal, the Bhuttos

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and Sharifs in Pakistan, the Sheikh Mujib and Zia/Khaleda families in Bangladesh are the prominent and most dominant families in politics of these countries. These families lead the most powerful parties like the Congress Party in India, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and Sri Lanka People's Front (SLPF) in Sri Lanka, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Pakistan, Nepali Congress in Nepal and Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in Bangladesh. All these are large and major parties. Thus, there might be a perception that family plays role in recruitment of leaders only in major parties. Political observers and researchers have primarily focused on major parties and not paid adequate attention to the role the families play in recruiting leaders in the smaller or minor political parties. They have simply overlooked the role of families in recruiting leaders of the minor parties. This paper is a modest attempt to fill in this gap and to shed some light on the role of families in leadership recruitment in the minor parties in Bangladesh. Ideologically speaking, these minor parties range from hard-line communist parties to extremist Islamist parties.

In this paper, parties which have never gained more than 1 per cent of total votes cast in any parliament election and never won more than 5 seats in the Sangsad ever since the independence of Bangladesh and cannot make much impact on Bangladesh politics on their own have been defined as minor parties. This paper describes the role of families in leadership recruitment in the minor parties of Bangladesh. It is a descriptive and interpretive paper based on data collected from relevant books, newspapers, magazines, reports, and in-depth discussions with some party activists and experts.

Minor Islamist Parties in Bangladesh

There are numerous Islamist Parties in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Jamaat-i-Islami was the largest of all. Since it was a major party, it requires a separate treatment and is not included here in the category of minor Islamist Parties.² This section of the paper, thus, deals with

minor Islamist parties to see whether/or to what extent families play a role in leadership recruitment of these parties. One may commonly assume that the Islamist parties would follow the Islamist rationality in selecting their leaders and leadership will be selected on the basis of the strength of *Iman* (faith in Allah), *Taqwa* (fear of Allah), and leadership skill. Are persons with deep faith leadership skill recruited as leaders to lead the Bangladeshi minor Islamist parties? Unfortunately, the answer is 'No'. Family connections in many cases prevail over Islamist 'rationality'. The analysis below will bear this out.

Islamists, as legal political actors, emerged in Bangladesh under military regimes after 1975, as the generals lacked legitimacy and, thus, used religion as a tool to consolidate their power. Moreover, the military rulers removed the constitutional bar to form political organizations in the name of religion by amending the Constitution. Currently, there are at least 70 active Islamist parties, 12 of which are registered with the Bangladesh Election Commission (EC). They are: Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Bangladesh Muslim League, Jamiat-e Ulama-e Islam Bangladesh, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Bangladesh Islami Front, Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Muslim League-BML, and Zaker Party. "Indeed, a large number of these parties exist only as letterheads, but some of them have gained significant power and influence, not to mention mobilizational capacity. Although they haven't succeeded in garnering large support from the electorate, they have built up enough manpower to organize street agitations. On occasions, they have flexed their muscles as well."³

In 1979, only two Islamist parties participated in the general election. By 1991, the number of Islamist parties in Bangladesh had increased to 17, with one more party, Jamaat-e-Islami joining mainstream politics in 1996. But, in 2001, the number reduced to 11 and in 2008 to 10. Their share of votes also dropped from a little above

14 per cent in 1991 to around 6 per cent in 2008. One of the oldest Islamist parties, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, lost its registration following the apex court's order in 2013. It has been barred by the Bangladesh Election Commission from participating in the future polls. Many of its senior leaders were hanged after being convicted by the court for committing war crimes and for their crimes against humanity during Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971 and the 'legality' of the party is under threat. Bangladesh Jamaat-i-Islami bagged 4.7 per cent of the votes cast contesting in 39 constituencies in the 2008 election. In the 1996 national election, it contested in all 300 parliamentary constituencies and secured 8.7 percent of the total votes cast and won three seats.⁴

The role of family in leadership recruitment of the following minor Islamist Parties is discussed below.

Khelafat Andolon

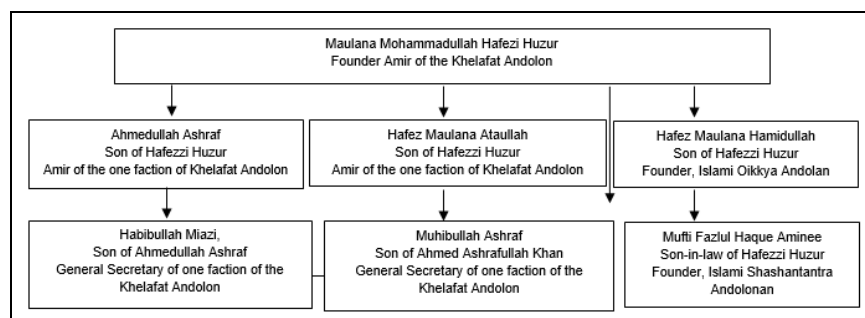
Maulana Mohammodullah Hafezzi Huzur, known as the Hufezi Huzur, a traditional Islamist representing the normally politically disinterested Quomi Madrassa variety of the Islamists, performed well as a presidential candidate in the 1981 presidential election and later formed the Khelafat Andolon (Khelafat Movement) on 29 November 1981. The party aims to contribute to the 'global movement for establishing *Khilafah* and to establish a '*Khilafah* in Bangladesh'. In a surprising result, he secured 3rd position with 388,741 (1.80 per cent) of the total votes cast and made the presence of his party felt in the political landscape of Bangladesh in the early 1980s. He formed and led the 11-party Sammilito Sangram Parishad (Combined Action Council) in 1984. Huzur participated in the 1986 presidential elections, boycotted by all major parties. He secured second position in this election. Three of his disciples, Allama Azizul Haque, also known as Shaikhul Hadith (meaning an interpreter of Prophet Muhammad's sayings) who once headed Jamiatul Ulama, Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini (his son-in-law), and Maulana Syed Fazlul

Karim (the late Pir of Charmonai) held senior positions in Khelafat Andolan. Upon Hafezi Huzur's death in 1987, all of these leaders left the party, presumably having fallen out with his sons and formed separate parties.⁵ Shaikhul Hadith Allama Azizul Haque's faction of the Khelafat Andolon formed the Khelafat Majlish by joining hands with the Islamic Democratic League (IDL) of Maulana Abdur Rahim and Islami Jubo Shibir led by Abdul Kader Bacchu (Ahmed Abdul Kader)—the two dissident variants of the Jamaat. The Majlish later joined the Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ-Islamic Unity Alliance) in December 1990.⁶

After the death of the Hafezzi Huzur, one of his sons, Maulana Ahmedullah Ashraf, became the Amir of the Khelafat Andolon. As he fell sick, his brother Hafez Maulana Ataullah Ibn Hafezzi was elected Amir of the party. While Zafrullah Khan was re-elected party's Secretary General, Ahmedullah Ashraf's eldest son Habibullah Miaji wanted occupy the post.⁷ Hafez Maulana Hamid Ullah, leader of the Khelafat Andolon and another son of Hafezzi Huzur formed the Islami Oikkya Andolan. In 2017, Khelafat Andolan split into two. One faction of the party declared Maulana Zafrullah Khan the Amir of this faction of the Khelafat Andolon and Muhibullah Ashraf, son of Ahmedullah Ashraf and grandson of the Hafezzi Huzur, was made the General Secretary of this faction of the party. Another split of the Khelafat Andolon took place when Hafez Maulana Ataullah Hafezzi, the youngest son of the Hafezzi Huzur, was made the Amir of the party and his nephew Habibullah Miazi, a grandson of Hafezi Huzur and son of Ahmedullah Ashraf, was made the secretary general of Khelafat Andolon.⁸ Yet, another faction of the Khelafat Andolon, led by Huzur's flamboyant son-in-law Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee left the party and formed the Islami Shashantantra Andolon (Islamic Constitution Movement) with the then Pir of Charmonai, Syed Fazlul Karim, one of the three major leaders of the Khelafat Andolon.

Table 1

**Hafezzi Huzur's Family in Bangladesh Politics
and the Khelafat Andolon**



Sources: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

The aforementioned table and discussion show clearly that family members played a major role in determining the leadership of Khelafat Andolon. The sons of Hafezzi Huzur treated the party as paternal property and divided the party as if to get their share of the family property. Other senior companions were not given a major leadership role in the party even though these leaders like Syed Fazlul Karim, Allama Azizul Haque and Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee were the three major leaders of Hafezzi Huzur's party, the Khelafat Andolon. There is no way to know on what religious ground the sons of the Huzur inherited the leadership of the Khelafat Andolon.

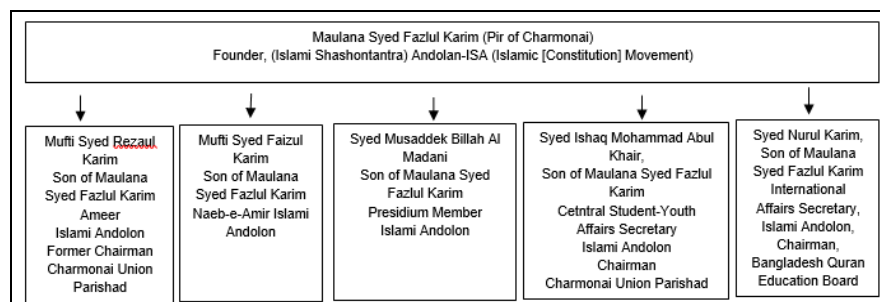
Islami (Shashantantra) Andolon

One of the three prominent leaders of the Khelafat Andolon Maulana Syed Fazlul Karim, the Pir of Charmonai, and Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee, the son-in-law of Hafezzi Huzur, left the Khelafat Andolon and formed the Islami Shashantantra Andolon or the ISA (Islamic Constitution Movement).⁹ 'Formulating an Islamic Constitution' and transforming Bangladesh into a "total Islamic State in the light of the experience of Khilafat" are the stated goals of the ISA. It later joined the IOJ and got split again in the year 2000. The Aminee

faction with the new name, Islami Morcha, remained in the IOJ and ISA led by the Pir of Charmonai, Syed Fazlul Karim formed the Islami Jatiya Oikkya Front (IJOFF) with the Jatiya Party (JAPA), led by former military ruler Lt Gen Hussein Muhammad Ershad.

Table 2

Maulana Syed Fazlul Karim (Pir of Charmonai) Family in Islami (Shashontantra) Andolon



Sources: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

Upon Mufti Syed Fazlul Karim's death, Mufti Syed Rezaul Karim, one of sons of late Pir of Charmonai, Mufti Syed Fazlul Karim, became the Amir of the Islami Andolon, who also served two terms as the Chairman of Charmonai Union Parishad in Barishal district beginning in 2003. He is still the Amir of the Islami Andolon. Another son of the late Pir of Charmonai, Mufti Syed Faizul Karim, is the Naib-e-Ameer (Deputy Chief) of the Islami Andolon. Three other sons of the late Pir of Charmonai are actively involved in various institutions led by the Charmonai Darbar Sharif (Court of Charmonai). One of them is Syed Musaddek Billah Al Madani. He is the Presidium Member of the Islami Andolon. Another son, Syed Nurul Karim, is the International Affairs Secretary of the Islami Andolon and Chairman of Bangladesh Quran Education Board, a Charmonai-directed Institution. The third one,

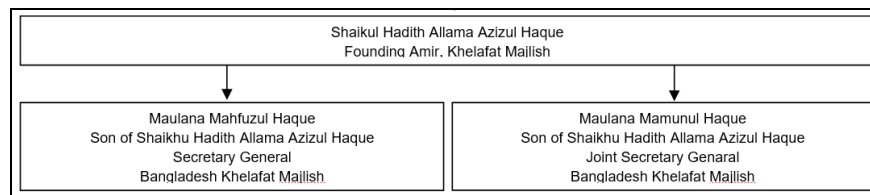
Mufti Syed Ishaq Mohammad Abul Khair, is the Central Student and Youth Affairs Secretary of the Islami Andolon and the current Chairman of the Charmonai Union Parishad.¹⁰

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish

Khelafat Majlish was formed with the Jubo Shibir, Islamic Democratic League (IDL), and a faction of the Khelafat Andolon led by Shaikhul Hadith Allama Azizul Haque on 8 December 1989. Both Maulana Mahfuzul Haque and Maulana Mamunul Haque are the sons of Allama Azizul Haque. They are the leaders of the Khelafat Majlish. In 2005, the Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish faced a split when its leader Maulana Azizul Haque insisted on appointing his son as the party secretary general. One faction of the Majlish is led by his son, Maulana Mahfuzul Haque. He is the general secretary of the 2019-20 committee of the Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish. Another of his son, Maulana Mamunul Haque was the secretary of the party's Dhaka city unit. He is the joint secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish and Central President of the Bangladesh Khelafat Jubo Majlish. Now, he is the acting general secretary of Khelafat Majlish. Earlier, Khelafat Majlish itself got split into the Shaikhul Hadith faction and Maulana Ishak-Ahmed Abdul Kader faction.¹¹

Table 3

Shaikhul Hadith Allama Azizul Haque's Family in Bangladesh Politics and Khelafat Majlish



Sources: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

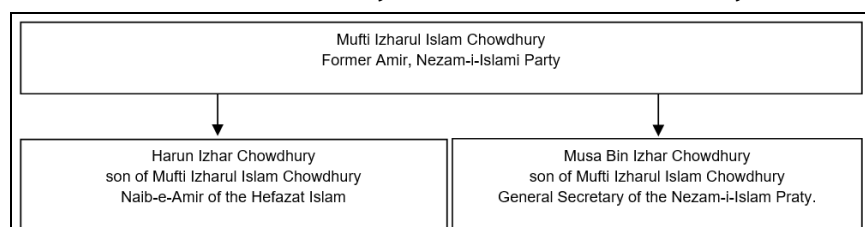
Khelafat Andolon, Khelafat Majlish, and Islami (Shashontantra) Andolon are the three parties led by the blood-descendents of senior non-blood companions of Khelafat Andolon’s founder leader, the Hafezzi Huzur. It seems that the kins of the Hafezzi Huzur claimed stake in the Khelafat Andolon and the ‘deprived’ senior non-kin companions of the Huzur left the Khelafat Andolon and formed their own parties. Their sons, in turn, claimed control over these parties as their paternal enterprises.

Nezam-i-Islam Party

The roots of the Bangladesh Nezam-i-Islam Party can be traced back to the Jamaat-i-Ulema-e-Islam. In 1954, the Jamaat-i-Ulema-e-Islam, Pakistan, decided to name its parliamentary party as the Nezam-i-Islam Party. It joined the IDL in 1976 but later re-emerged as Nezam-i-Islam Party (NIP) and joined the Sammilito Sangram Parishad in 1984. It later joined the 7-party Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ) formed on 22 December 1990 with other parties such as Jamiat-e-Ulama-Islam, Faraezi Jamaat, Islami Shashontantra Andolon, Khelafat Majlish, and Khelafat Andolon. Mufti Izharul Islam Chowdhury was the long-time Amir of the Nezam-e-Islam Party. Harun Izhar Chowdhury, the son of Mufti Izharul Islam Chowdhury, became the Naeb-e-Amir of the Hefazat Islam and Musa Bin Izhar Chowdhury, another of Mufti Izhar’s sons, is the General Secretary of the Nezam-i-Islam Praty.¹²

Table 4

Mufti Izhar’s Family in the Nezam-i-Islami Party



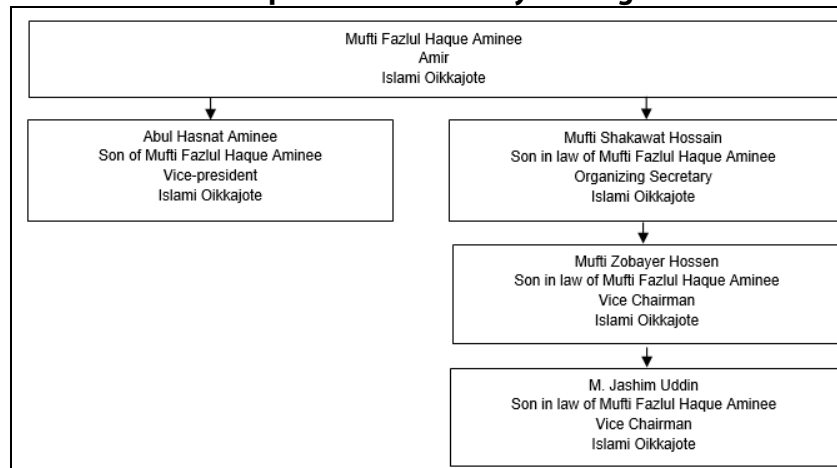
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Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ)

The IOJ first split between the Shikhul Hadith and Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee factions in 2001. In 2005, the Aminee faction split into the Aminee and Mufti Izharul factions and the Shaikhul Hadith faction split into Shaikhul Hadith and Maulana Ishaq factions. All four factions, however, stayed within the BNP-led-4-party alliance.

Abul Hasnat Aminee, vice-president of the Aminee faction of the Islami Oikkya Jote, is the son of Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee. Mufti Shakhawat Hossain (organizing Secretary, Islami Oikkya Jote), Mufti Zobayer Ahmed and M Jashim Uddin are the sons-in-law of Fazlul Haque Aminee. Respectively, they are the organising secretary and Vice Chairman of the Aminee faction of the IOJ.¹³ Aminee's son Abul Hasnat and his brother-in-law Shakhawat Hossain had a conflict with the party Chairman Abdul Latif Nezami and secretary general Mufti Faizullah. Abul Hasnat wanted to become secretary general. IOJ was the smaller partner of the 4-party alliance government during 2001-06.

Table: 5
Mufti Fazlul Haque Aminee's Family in Bangladesh Politics



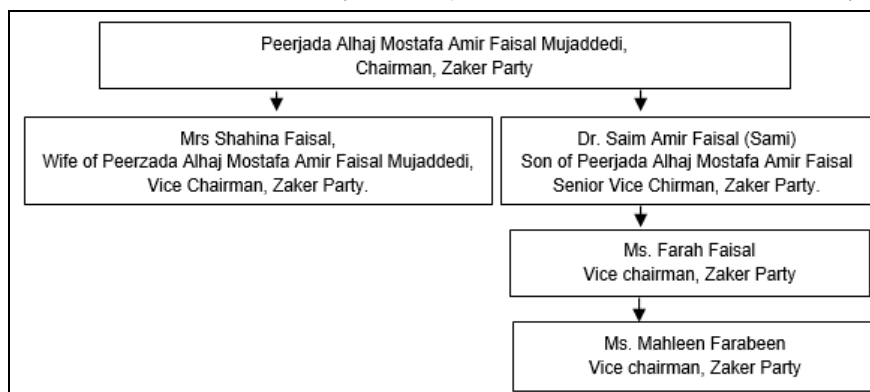
Sources: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books.

Zaker Party

According to its official version, the Zaker Party is “the symbol of divine peace, welfare and infinite justice.”¹⁴ Zaker Party officially launched its journey in 1989 with an aim to bring about a qualitative change in politics. Its Chairman Pirzada Mostafa Amir Faisal Mujaddedi has been the party Chairman since its inception in 1989 through his family connection. Dr Saim Amir Faisal (Sami), son of Amir Faisal, is the senior Vice Chairman of the Party. His wife Shahina Faisal is the Vice Chairman of the Party. Farah Faisal and Mahleen Farabeen are the Vice chairmen of the Party. Both are the family members of the party Chairman, Amir Faisal. It appears that all the senior positions of the Zaker Party are occupied by the family members of the Pir Saheb of Atroshi.¹⁵

Table 6

Pir Saheb Atroshi’s Family in Bangladesh Politics and Zaker Party



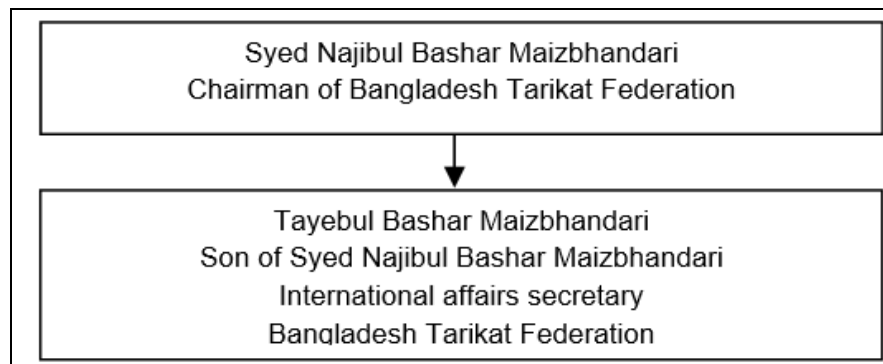
Source: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

Bangladesh Tarikat Federation (BTF)

Bangladesh Tarikat Federation (BTF) was founded in 2005 by Syed Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari, a leading member of the Maizbhandari Sufi tradition based in Chittagong. Bangladesh Tarikat Federation contested the general Election in 2014 and won two parliamentary seats. Najibul Bashar is a Member of Parliament (MP) from Chittagong-2 Constituency. He was elected in 2014 as a candidate of Bangladesh Tarikat Federation. He was elected MP with Awami League nomination in 1991 and joined the BNP in 1995. He was also elected MP in the 15 February 1996 election. He resigned from the BNP, accusing BNP's major partner in 4-party alliance, Jamaat-i-Islami of being linked to bombings at shrines throughout the country. He told the reporters at that time that, "I do not want to be in a party which is influenced by the Jamaat".¹⁶ Now, he is the Chairman of the Sufi-oriented Bangladesh Tarikat Federation. He belongs to the Naksbandia tradition of Sufi stream. His son Tayebul Bashar Maizbhandari has been made the international affairs secretary of this party.

Tables 7

Syed Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari's Family in Bangladesh Politics and Bangladesh Tarikat Federation



Source: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

Minor Leftist Parties

The leftist parties in Bangladesh also have experienced the influence of families in recruiting their leaders, even though it could quite expectedly be assumed that these parties would recruit their leaders on the basis of the leaders' ideological commitment and leadership qualities. Here also, ideological commitments to Marxism-Leninism, dedication, etc. are given lesser importance than to be the members of the 'right' families in reality in selecting the leaders of these parties. Discussion below shows the presence of family connections in recruitment of leaders of the parties on the left. There are about two dozen leftist political parties in Bangladesh, though, there are only nine leftist parties among 40 parties registered with the Election Commission. They are Bangladesher Sammoyabadi Dal (ML), Bangladesher Communist Party, Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP), Bangladesher Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal –JASOD (Inu), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal –JSD (Rab), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal –BASOD, Bangladesh National Awami Party-Bangladesh NAP, and Bangladesher Biplobi Workers Party.¹⁷ Of these parties, the following parties would be discussed here.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)

Polarisation in Bangladesh Chatra League, AL's student front in May 1972 caused a split in the Chatra League and its breakaway faction formed the first opposition party in independent Bangladesh. The name of the new party was Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal. It became popular among the restless young generation very quickly. The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) was founded in 1972 under the leadership of Sirajul Alam Khan by the breakaway faction of Bangladesh Chattra League. A convening committee was declared on 31 October 1972.

Officially JSD as a political party started its journey, seven-member convening committee was formed: two of the joint conveners were Major (Retd) Mohammad Abdul Jalil and ASM Abdur Rab. Five other members of the convening committee were Shahjahan Siraj, Bidhan Krishna Sen, Sultanuddin Ahmed, Nur-e-Alam Ziku, and Rahamat Ali. The “nucleus” within Chatra League was formed in 1962 and through the formation of the JSD, the “nucleus” reached to its logical conclusion.¹⁸

The first council of JSD tenuit on 23 December 1972 at Sohrawardhy Uddhyan. The council formed a 51 member of executive committee. Major (Retd) Mohammad Abdul Jalil, ASM Abdur Rab and Shahjahan Siraj were made the President, General Secretary and Joint Secretary respectively.

During Ziaur Rahman’s rule, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal split twice. ASM Abdur Rob and Shajahan Siraj were heading two separate groups. Khalequazzaman Bhuiyan broke away and formed Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) in 1980.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob)¹⁹

The next major crack came in 1985. Rab and his followers left the party and formed a new party Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, known as JSD (Rob). He is the founder general secretary of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

JSD (Rab) and JSD (Siraj) participated in the third parliament election in 1986. They got four and three seats in the parliament respectively. They also participated in the fourth parliament election in 1988. They got 19 and 3 seats respectively. ASM Rab served as a minister in 1996 first Sheikh Hasina government. Rab became the leader of the opposition in 1988 and also served as a minister under Sheikh Hasina's cabinet during 1996-2001. Tania Rob is the vice president and standing committee member of the Rab faction of the JSD. She is the wife of JSD (Rob) faction president ASM Abdur Rob.²⁰

JSD (Rab) boycotted the election. Now, JSD (Rab) is the alliance partner of Jatiya Oikkyafrot along with 20 party alliances.

JSD (Siraj) had only the elected parliament member in the 5th parliament in 1991. Then Shahjahan Siraj joined the BNP, held the post of vice chairman and was a state minister in the 1991-96 BNP government and a minister in 2001-06 BNP-led four party alliance government. Rabeya Siraj, wife of Shahjahan Siraj, was a leader of women's movement and former president of the BNP's Dhaka city women's front and a member of the BNP national executive committee.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal–JASOD (Inu)

Hasanul Huq Inu joined the 14 party alliances. In 2008, the Inu faction of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal–JASOD got three seats in the ninth parliament. In 2014, JASOD (Inu) got five seats. JASOD-Inu is a key component of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance.²¹ Afroza Haque Rina, wife of Inu, is the central leader of the JSD and the convener of Jatiya Nari Jote. Professor Syed Anwar Hossain, brother of Col Abu Taher is the Standing Committee Member of the JSD. Col Abu Taher's wife, Lutfah Taher, was the MP in the 10th Parliament. She has been made vice-president of the Inu-led JSD. Selina Moinuddin, widow of former MP Moinuddin Khan Baddol sought nomination in her husband's constituency. Thus, the family members of major leaders of the party have clear edge in leadership recruitment in the Inu faction of the JSD.

Bangladesher Workers Party

Rashed Khan Menon, who has been the president of the Bangladesher Workers' Party (BWP) for long, has siblings who were active in politics of other parties. His sister, Selima Rahman, was a minister in the BNP government and is at present a member of the National Standing Committee (NSC) of the BNP. Journalist Enayetullah Khan, brother of Rashed Khan Menon was the owner-editor of the influential weekly *Holiday* and was well known for his Pro-Beijing and

anti-Indian views. He was a minister in the 1970s in the Zia government. Another brother of Rashed Khan Menon, AZM Obaidullah Khan (former secretary and poet), was a minister in the Ershad government. All of them are the sons and daughters of Speaker Abdul Jabbar Khan who was a former Speaker of the then Pakistan National Assembly and former president of East Pakistan Muslim League. Rashed Khan Menon's wife, Lutfun Nesa Khan is a leader of the Workers Party. She is an elected MP of the 11th Parliament from the Reserved Seats for Women. Workers' Party is an alliance partner of the ruling AL-led alliance.²²

Other Minor Parties in Bangladesh

Some other political parties in Bangladesh also follow the same dynastic pattern where party leaders are recruited from the family members of the powerful party leaders.

Jatiya Party-JP (Monju) and Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP (Naziur): Breakaway faction of the Jatiya Party (JAPA)

Anwar Hossain Monju was a former minister in Sheikh Hasina's cabinet (1996-2001, 2009-18) and for long he was the influential secretary general of the Jatiya Party of General H M Ershad. He left the Jatiya Party (JAPA) of Ershad and formed his own faction of the Jatiya Party (JP). Tasmima Hossain, wife of Anwar Hossain Monju, was an MP of the 7th Parliament. He arranged for his wife a seat in the Parliament through a bi-election. His brother, Barrister Moinul Hossain, was a former MP of the 1st parliament. He was an advisor in charge of the Law, information and land affairs under Fakhruddin Ahmed's caretaker government. They are the sons of famous Tofazzal Hossain Manik Miah, editor-owner of the Daily Ittefaq. Sheikh Shahidul Islam, Sheikh Hasina's first cousin is the general secretary of this party.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) is another breakaway faction of the Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JAPA). It's Chairman and freedom fighter Naziur Rahman Monzur was an alliance partner of the BNP-led 4 party alliance. After his death, his son Barrister Andaliv Rahman Partho has

been leading the BJP as its new Chairman. Ashikur Rahman Shanto, another son of Monzur, is also active in politics. Andaliv, along with his brother Ashikur Rahman Shanto, contested in the 9th parliamentary election respectively from Bhola-1 and Bhola-2 constituencies. In May 2019, the party left the BNP-led 20-party Alliance. They are the nephews of Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and, for that matter, Sheikh Hasina.²³

Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL)

The Siddiquis of Tagnail is an influential family in their locality. There are four brothers of this family in active politics in Tangail. Bir Uttam Abdul Kader Siddiqui, popularly known as Bangabir Kader Siddiqui is a former leader of the Awami League. During the Liberation War, he formed formidable Kaderia Bahini to fight against the Pakistan Military. He was elected to Parliament as a Bangladesh Awami League candidate in 1996. He was expelled from Awami League in 1999. He formed his own party Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL). Nasrin Siddique, wife of Kader Siddique, had submitted nomination in bi election which felt vacant after Latif Siddique, brother of Kader Siddiqui, resigned from parliament in 2015. Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kadesr Siddique's daughter Kuri Siddique had submitted nomination form for the 11th general election on December 2018.

Abdul Latif Siddiqui, brother of Kader Siddiqui, was former MP, Minister and Awami League (AL) presidium member. His wife Laila Siddiqui was a Jatiya Party MP from Tangail-4 under the women's reserved seat in 1988. Latif Siddiqui was widely criticized for his remarks criticizing the Muslim Pilgrimage, the Hujj, in September 2014. Latif was sacked from the cabinet on 12 October and from the AL Presidium, the party's highest policy making body. He was expelled from the party for hurting religious sentiments of the Muslims on 24 October 2014.

Besides Latif and Kader, their youngest brother Azad Siddiqui had submitted nomination paper for Tangail-4 (Kalihati) constituency as KSJL candidate in the 2008 election. Another brother of the family Murad Siddiqui had also submitted nomination paper for Tangail-5 (Sadar) constituency as a KSJL candidate in the 2008 election. He was the joint conveners of the Tangail district KSJL.²⁴

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Bikalpo Dhara Bangladesh: Breakaway factions of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

Colonel (retired) Oli Ahmed was a former senior BNP leader and one of the founding leaders before quitting the BNP in 2006. He formed a new party named the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He made his wife the Member of the Parliament through bi-election when he was the law maker of the BNP.

AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury was one of the key founding leaders of the BNP and a former President of the country. He was forced to resign from the post of president on 21 June 2002 after encountering criticism in the BNP parliamentary party meeting for not showing “due” respect to the memory of the party’s founder, Ziaur Rahman (Zia’s widow Khaleda had inherited the party leadership and was the then prime minister).²⁵ He formed a political party of his own named the Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh. He was the son of Kafil Uddin Chowdhury who was former minister of Jukhtofront government in 1954. His son, Mahi B Chowdhury, is the important leader of the party. His party is an ally of the current ruling party; AL. Mahi was elected MP from his father’s constituency in Munshiganj.

Jatiya Gonotantik Party (JAGPA)

Shafiul Alam Prodhan was the son of East Pakistan Provincial Assembly speaker Mr Tamizuddin Prodhan was involved in politics during his student life and became the general secretary of the Chhatra League (1973-74). He formed the JAGPA on 6 April 1980. JAGPA is a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance. Rehana Prodhan, widow of late Shafiul Alam Prodhan, was the acting

president of JAGPA after the death of the party president Shafiul Alam Prodhan on 21 May in 2017. Later, Rehana was made president on 28 November 2017. Barrister Tasmia Prodhan, daughter of Shafiul Alam Prodhan, and also vice-president of the JAGPA is the acting president of JAGPA after the death of her mother.²⁶ Rashed Prodhan and Tasmia Prodhan are the son and daughter of Shafiul Alam Prodhan. They sought nomination in the 11th Sangsad elections in December 2018 as JAGPA candidate from Jatiya Oikya Front (Front of National Unity) from Panchagarh-1 and 2 constituencies. Here too, party leadership appears to be the territory of the family members of Shafiul Alam Prodhan.

Some Important Leaders and their Families

Abu Naser Khan Bhasani, son of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, founder president of Awami Muslim League, was active in politics. He was a minister in Zia's cabinet.

Faezul Huq was a Bangladeshi politician, lawyer, and columnist and the son of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq. Faezul served as a member of parliament on three occasions and held various ministerial portfolios. Faiyazul Huq Raju, son of Faezul Huq and grandson of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq is also active in politics. He is a member of International affairs sub-committee of the Awami League.

Mashiur Rahman (1924–1979), also known as Jadu Mia, was the senior minister with the rank and status of Prime Minister. Before joining the BNP, he was the general secretary of National Awami Party by Maulana Bhashani (NAP-B). Shafiqul Ghani Swapan, was the eldest son of Mashiur Rahman Jadu Mia. He was a state minister in the government of President Ziaur Rahman and President Hussain Muhammad Ershad.

Conclusion

The discussion above shows that family-based political recruitment is not the trait of big and major parties only which are

controlled by the families of major leaders of national, regional, and global stature. The parties with smaller/minor stature and influence also have family-based leadership recruitment process. The leaders of these minor parties treat these parties as family-owned private enterprises which can be allocated among the descendants of the leaders. This is more prevalent among the Islamist parties in general and the Pir/Sufi-based Islamist parties in particular. As regards the Pir/Sufi-based parties, it is considered 'natural' as it is taken as a given that the Pir's son (Pirzada) would inherit the deceased Pir's place and will replace his father as the new Pir. Thus, naturally, leadership of any Pir-led party gets transferred to the Pir's sons, ensuring the family-based leadership of these Islamist parties. Other non-Pir-based minor Islamist parties are no exception in this regard. Khelafat Andolon is an ideal example in this regard. The Hafezzi Huzur founded Khelafat Andolon as a new formation and without depending on family members. Rather, three major non-kin leaders/companions of the Khelafat Andolon were the major leaders of the party. But after the death of the Huzur, his sons began scrambling for the leadership of the party as if they were scrambling to get the maximum 'share' of the 'party enterprise'. The 'money rush' from Iran after the Iranian revolution made the 'Islamist-politics-business' a lucrative one. Thus, family control of the party was used for increasing family wealth and influence. Non-Islamist minor parties also followed the same path of recruitment of leaders from the family members of the main leader of the party. 'One family one party' concept works for the family as the family-led recruitment ensures a tight grip of the family on the party. It ensures various incentives for the party leadership. With the rise of growing importance of coalition politics in Bangladesh and dependence of the AL and BNP on the support of the minor parties as alliance partners, the political value of these parties has grown. As the influence of these parties has grown, so have the efforts of the families

of the major leaders to establish and maintain monopolist control over them.

Notes and References

- ¹ The present author has already written papers on family-based political recruitment in South Asia and major parties in Bangladesh, titled respectively, "Family-Based Political Recruitment in South Asia: A Descriptive Study," Accepted for publication in *Asian Profile*, (Canada) and also "Families and Political Recruitment in Bangladesh: A Study of Major Political Parties." Accepted for publication in *Regional Studies*, (Islamabad).
- ² Jamaat-i-Islami got more than five (5) seats in the 3rd and 5th Jatiya Sangsad and as such, it is not included in the category of minor parties according to our own operational definition.
- ³ Ali Riaz, "'God Willing': The Politics and Ideology of Islamism in Bangladesh", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. 23, No. 1&2, 2003.
- ⁴ Ali Riaz, "Why Bangladesh's mainstream parties rely on Islamists", *DW*, 19 December 2018; Prof. Sarwar Md. Saifullah Khaled, "Islamic parties and elections," *The Independent* (Dhaka) 31 May 2017.
- ⁵ Nazmul Ahasan, "What Rocks Hefajat's Boat?," *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 9 November 2018.
- ⁶ Bhuian Md Monoar Kabir, *Politics and Development of the Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asian Pub. House, 2006), 3-18; Bhuian Md Monoar Kabir, Mustafizur Rahman Siddiqui and Md. Bakhtear Uddin, *What Do The Bangladeshi Muslims Think? A Religio-Cultural Politico-Strategic Study* (Dhaka: A H Development Publishers House, 2014).
- ⁷ *Prothom Alo* (Dhaka), 27 August 2015.
- ⁸ "Abar Vanghlo Khelafat Andolon," *Prothom Alo* (Dhaka), 7 April 2017. [The Khelafat Movement split again.]
- ⁹ Kabir, Siddiqui and Uddin, *What Do The Bangladeshi Muslims Think? A Religio-Cultural Politico-Strategic Study*, 39.
- ¹⁰ Kabir (Ref. 5), 13-18; also see, Salman Tarek Shakil, Chowdhury Akbar Hossain, "Vote Politics: The Silent Rise of Islami Andolon," *Dhaka Tribune* (Dhaka), 20 May 2018; Fer Islami Andoloner Amir Mufti Rezaul Karim, *Manabjamin* (Dhaka), 2 January 2021. [Mufti Rezaul Karim is the Amir of the Islamic Movement once again.]
- ¹¹ Ali Riaz, "'Dynastic Politics' and the Political Culture of Bangladesh," *In Inconvenient truths About Bangladesh Politics* (Dhaka: Prothoma

Prokhason, 2012), p.236; also see, Kabir, (Ref 5), pp.13-18. Kabir, Siddiqui and Uddin, (Ref. 5); "Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish er Notun Committee", *Naya Dighanta* (Dhaka), 2 February 2019 [New Committee of the Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish]; also see, "Hothath Hathazari Madrasai Mamunul: Babu Nogory soho tin netar sathe sakkhath," *Jughantor* (Dhaka), 9 December 2020 [Mamunul is on a sudden visit to Hathazari Madrasa: Meeting with three leaders including Babunagari].

- ¹² Ali Riaz and Christine C Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*, (London; Routledge., 2010), 55.
- ¹³ Chitta Ranjan Sarkar, "Bangladesher Rajnitive Poribartantra and Songskar," *Banik Barta* (Dhaka), 13 August 2007 [The Dynastic Politics in Bangladesh and its reform].
- ¹⁴ Zakerpartybd.com
- ¹⁵ Riaz and Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*; Kadir Kallol, "Bangladesher Pir Sufider Rajnitiveer Vobissyot," *BBC Bangla* (Dhaka), 6 December 2019 [Future prospects of politics of the Pirs and Sufis in Bangladesh].
- ¹⁶ See Riaz and Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*.
- ¹⁷ Bangladesh Election Commission
- ¹⁸ Mohiuddin Ahmad, *Jashoder Utthan Poton: Osthir Somoyer Rajniti*, (Dhaka), Prothoma Prokhashan, 2014, 87, 92-93 [The Rise and Fall of the Jasod: Politics of the Turbulant Time].
- ¹⁹ The JSD led by ASM Rob got more than five (5) seats in the 4th Jatiya Sangsad election held in 1988 and as such, it is supposed not to be included in the category of minor parties according to our own operational definition. But since that election was boycotted by all other parties and the election was neither inclusive nor representative, we can have made an exception and include JSD (Rob) in the category of minor parties.
- ²⁰ "Hasina's cabinet sets a record," *Gulf News*. 24 October 2018; Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee, "Inu fails to convince dissidents: Election to GS post led to JSD split," *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 14 March 2016.
- ²¹ Mohiuddin Ahmad, *Jashoder Utthan Poton: Osthir Somoyer Rajniti*, 262-263.
- ²² Rounaq Jahan, Political 'Parties in Bangladesh: Challenges of Democratization,' *Prothoma Prokhasan* (Dhaka), 2015, 119.

- ²³ Riaz and Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*, 235.
- ²⁴ "Kader Siddique and daughter submit nomination forms in Tangail-8," *Dhaka Tribune* (Dhaka), 28 November 2018; "Kader Siddique's Nomination cancelled his party calls Tangail shutdown for Wednesday," *bdnews24.com* (Dhaka), October 13, 2015; "Latif Expelled from AL," *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 25 December 2014; "Latif Siddiqui bids farewell to elections," *bdnews24.com* (Dhaka), 11 June 2013; "Four Siddiqui brothers ran in Tangail-3, 4, 5, 8 constituencies," *The Daily Star*, (Dhaka) 4 December 2008.
- ²⁵ Rounaq Jahan, "Bangladesh in 2002: Imperiled Democracy," *Asian Survey* Vol. 43, No.1 (Jan-Feb, 2003), 226.
- ²⁶ "Jagpa president Shafiul Alam Prodhan dies," *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 22 May 2017; "Jagpa president Rehana Prodhan dies," *New Age* (Dhaka), 23 October 2018.