

Bangladesh: Country Conditions



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RAIO Research Unit August 2020

Bangladesh: History and Geography



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Political Parties and Coalitions

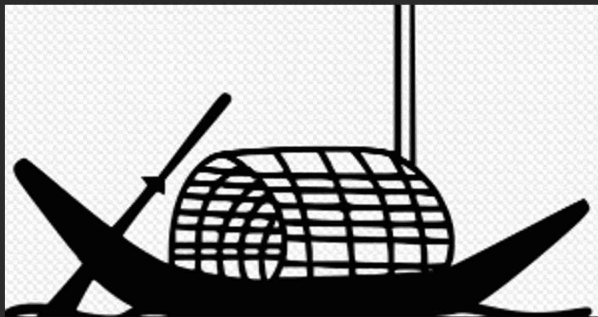
Awami League

14-Party Alliance



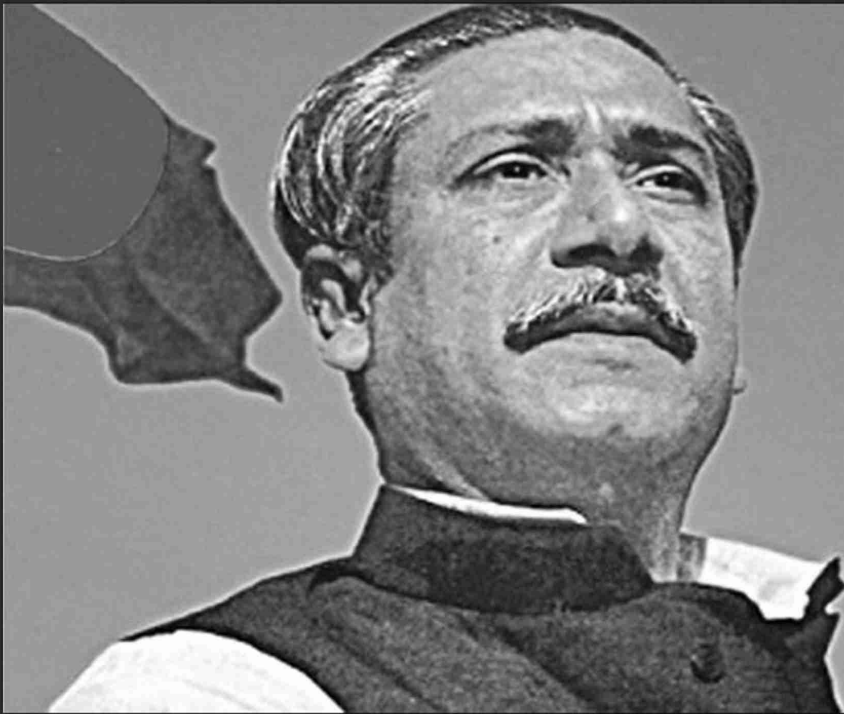
Bangladesh Nationalist Party

18-Party Alliance



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Political Parties: Origins



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Political Parties: Current Leadership



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Political Parties: Ideology

Awami League

- Center-left
- Secularism
- Bengali nationalism
(language and culture)
- Socialism

Bangladesh Nationalist Party

- Center-right
- Islamic consciousness
- Bangladeshi nationalism
- Free-market



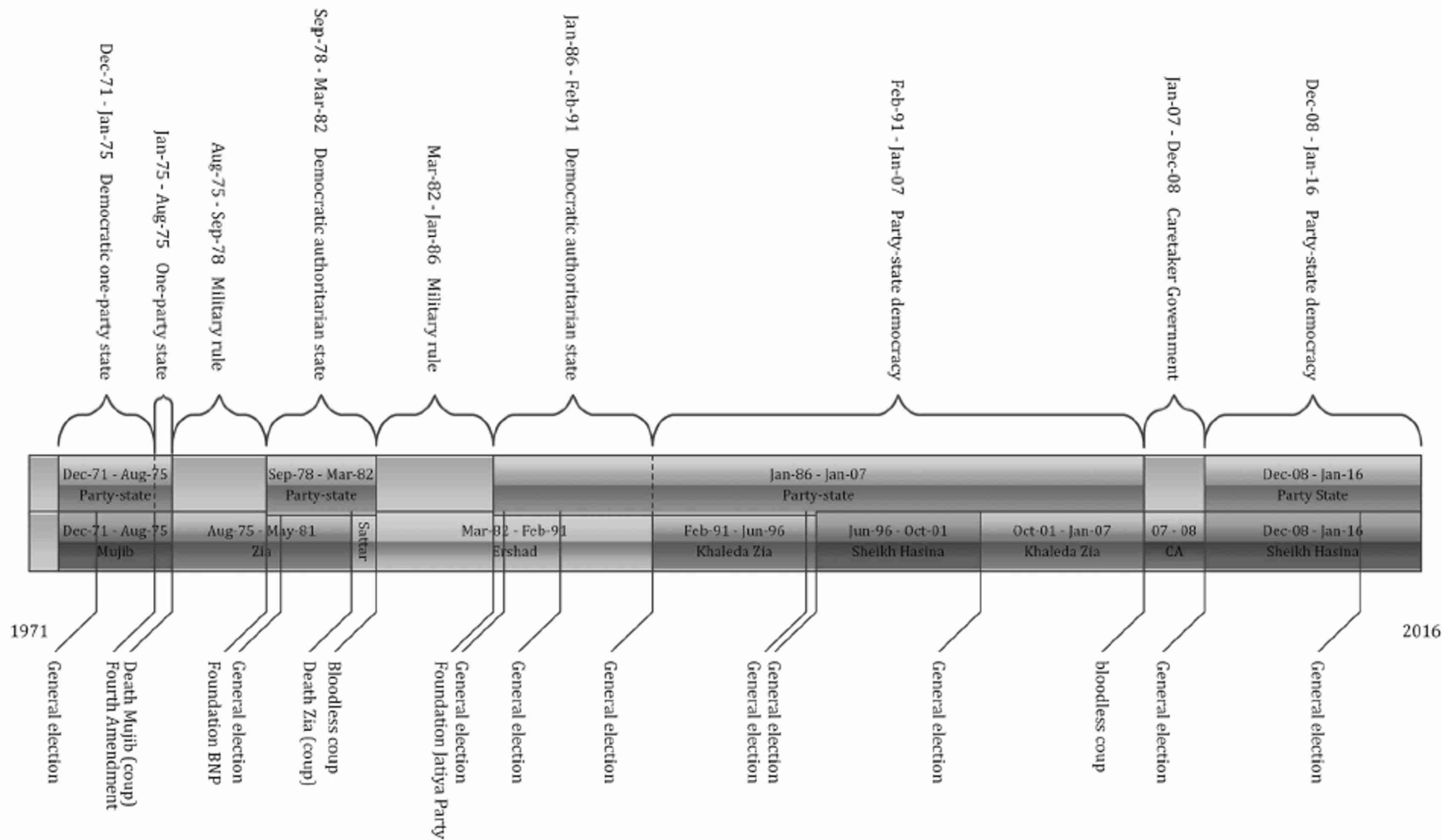


Figure 1. Timeline of party-state rule in Bangladesh.



Other Notable Political Groups:

Jatiya Party

Jatiya (Nationalist) Party (a 3rd major political party)

- In power from 1982-1991
- Main faction led by General Hussain Muhammed Ershad, until his death in July 2019
- Youth wing: Jatiya Chhatra Samaj



Flag/symbol of Jatiya Party



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Other Notable Political Groups:

Bangladesh Liberal Democratic Party



- **FORMATION:** The LDP was formed in 2006 by former leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) who separated from the BNP
- **LEADERSHIP:** In November 2019, LDP suffered a split as a group of its leaders announced a seven-member coordination committee dropping its President Oli Ahmad. Former whip of Parliament and LDP presidium member Abdul Karim Abbasi has been made president of the new committee, with Shahdat Hossain Selim as its member secretary
- **CURRENT ALLIANCE:** The LDP(B) is currently a part of the BNP-led, opposition alliance

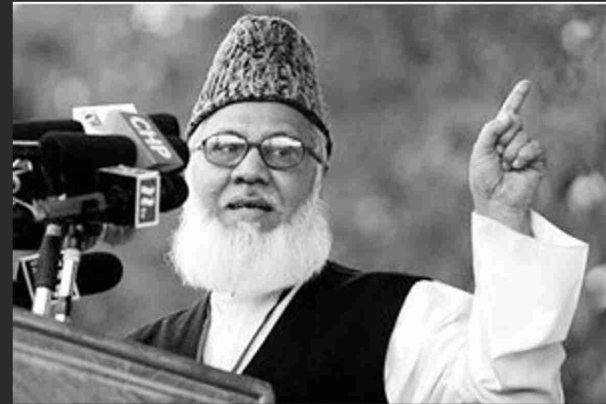


Current situation: origins

- 1991-2007: “rotating plunder” (Khan 2006)
- ‘1/11/2007’: Electoral crisis
- December 2008: AL-led government elected
- 2011: Replacement of Caretaker Government system with Election Commission
- 2013-4: Election boycotted by opposition
- Present – “vulnerable authoritarianism” (Khan 2017)



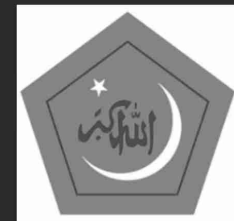
Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami



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Political Parties: Youth/Student Wings

- Jubo League (AL)
- Bangladesh Chhatra League (AL-affiliated)
- Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal (BNP)
- [Jatiotabadi] Jubo Dal (BNP)
- Islami Chhatra Shibir (Jamaat-e-Islami)



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What is the extent of violence in Bangladesh today?



- Low murder rate (per 100k):
 - Bangladesh: 2.2 (2017)
 - U.S.: 5.3 (2016)
 - El Salvador: 50.3 (2018)
- Armed *clashes between opposing groups* cause most politically motivated fatalities and injuries not attributable to state actors.
- Recent trend of targeted attacks on secular bloggers and activists.



Political Violence: Statistics

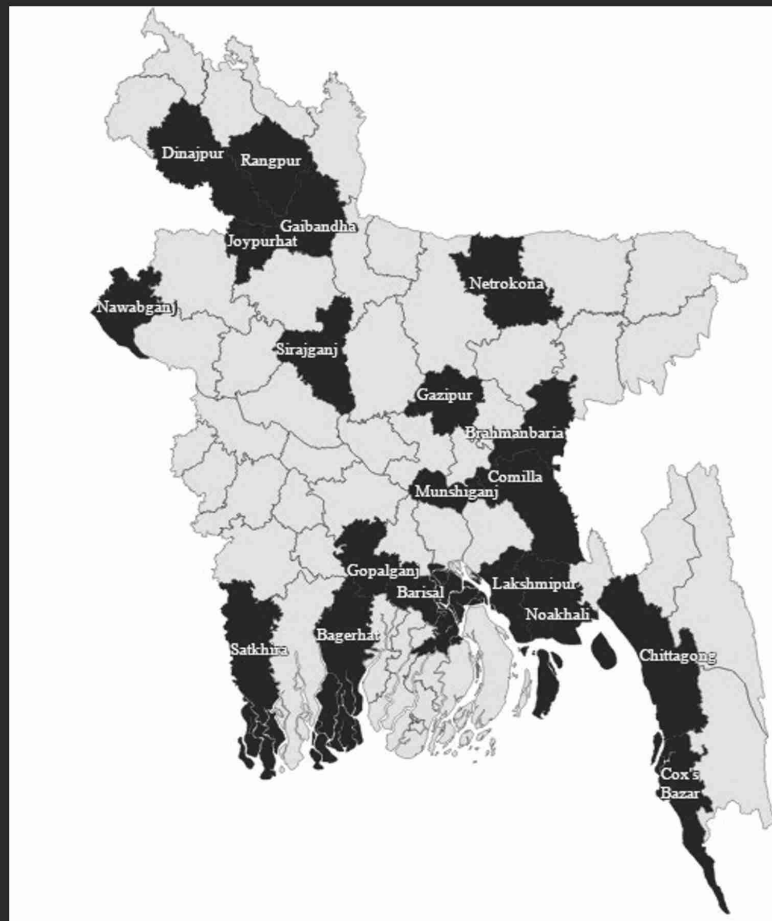
Political Violence: 2001 - 2019

Year (s)	Killed	Injured	Total
2019	70	3467	3537
2018	120	7051	7171
2017	77	4635	4712
2016	215	9053	9268
2015	197	8312	8509
2014	190	9429	9619
2013	504	24176	24680
2012	169	17161	17,330
2011	135	11,532	11,667
2010	220	13,999	14,219
2009	251	15,559	15,810
2008	50	3,185	3,235
2007	79	2,688	2,767
2006	374	21,265	21,639
2005	310	8,997	9,307
2004	526	6,235	6,761
2003	436	6,281	6,717
2002	420	8,741	9,161
2001	656	25,770	26,426
Total	4999	207536	212535

- Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)
- November 2012 -- November 2017
 - 1,028 killings
 - 52,066 injuries
 - 3,540 instances



2013 Violence: Attacks on Hindus



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2013 Violence: Election Protests



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Political Violence: Hassan and Nazneen (2017)

- “Violence used in politics in Bangladesh has specific features: the armed clashes are largely between the political, the youth and student cadre of the parties, and the targets of political violence are largely low and mid-ranking political party members.”
- “Both parties, when in opposition, have enforced general strikes and transport blockades to push their demands.”
- “The ruling party has also used the police and security agencies to arrest opposition party activists and harass opposition party leaders.”



Political Violence:

Hassan and Nazneen (2017)

- “As the BNP faces further marginalization and harassment in the political arena, their willingness to break the implicit norms of engagement and escalate the use of violence will increase.”
- “Along with the security apparatus, the AL has extensively used violent elements of its student and labour wings against the opposition in 2013, 2014 and 2015. The recent disappearance of a senior BNP leader signals AL’s willingness to break with the implicit understanding between the two parties that the senior leaders are not physically harmed.”



Political Violence: Khan (2017)

- Intra-party violence
- “Newspaper reports suggest sustained and growing violence, often lethal, between competing factions of the ruling party over contracts and positions.”

Year (s)	Killed : Intra party clash		Injuries: Intra party clash			Total Incidents of Intra Party clash		
	AL	BNP	AL	BNP	Others	AL	BNP	Others
2019	39	1	2826	62	23	234	6	3
2018	53	3	3225	115	0	281	14	0
2017	66	0	3327	225	10	314	22	1
2016	73	3	3586	232	5	335	15	1
2015	40	2	3884	157	12	364	11	1
2014	43	2	4247	397	119	374	39	6
2013	28	6	2980	1592	68	263	140	3
2012	37	6	4330	1619	47	382	146	5
2011	22	3	3770	1234	20	340	104	4
2010	38	7	5614	1146	60	576	92	9
2009	38	2	6092	865	0	663	75	0
Total	477	35	43881	7644	364	4126	664	33



Jackman 2018

- “The need for intermediaries to access resources, seek opportunities and mitigate risks has been observed in societies across the world. In poor people’s lives such actors are often violent, however why this is the case remains under examined. This article offers a response to this question from Bangladesh based on an understanding of political order. When violence is not consolidated by a central state, political order stems from balancing the interests of diverse violence specialists dispersed throughout society. In such contexts mediating access to resources can be a means by which these actors accrue power and wealth, helping explain the link between intermediation and violence.”



Lewis 2017

- Competitive clientelism therefore created a political settlement based on a pyramidal structure threatened by antagonistic competition between party elites and their supporters. The parties did not offer distinct political agendas but operated as vehicles for elite competition by distributing resources and enforcing loyalty to their patronage networks using strategies of co-optation, violent intimidation and vote buying.



Lewis 2017

- Thus NGOs in Bangladesh operate in what Douglass North called a “natural state”, where “organisations are not free of the state, whether represented by key overbearing individual rulers/personalities, or by a more generalised social persona or political class – or more likely a mix of both”. They cannot escape local cultures of power or the tendency for their own leaders to use their resources to create their own clientelistic networks in which “those seeking [their] support . . . aim to contrive a personal relationship, in the context of which they can advance their specific claim”.



Abuses by state actors: extra-judicial killings



Total Extra-judicial killings from 2001 - 2017

Year(s)	RAB	Police	RAB-Police	Joint Force	Cheeta-Cobra	Ansar	Army	BGB (Former BDR)	Police-BGB (former BDR)	RAB-Coast Guard	RAB-Police-Coast Guard	Coast Guard	DB Police	Police-Forest Guard	Forest Guard	Coast Guard-Forest Guard	Police-Coast Guard	Jail authorities/Police	Navy	Police and Armed Police Battalion, RAB, BGB	Joint Force	Drugs and Narcotics	Armed Battalion	BGB-RAB	Railway Police	Grand Total
2017	33	116					2	1					2													154
2016	51	118	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	4															1	178
2015	53	126		1				5															1			186
2014	29	119		11		1	2	5				3												2		172
2013	38	175	1	8	0	0	0	11	32											64						329
2012	40	18	2			3		2		4								1								70
2011	43	31	4							4								2								84
2010	68	43	9					1		3	3															127
2009	41	75	25			2	3	5				1			1			1								154
2008	68	59	15	1				2				4														149
2007	94	64	3	7			7	1				1			1			1	3					2		184
2006	192	144	1					6				7	4		1											355
2005	111	258			4	1							5			2	15									396
2004	77	133		15	3	1	1	6	3					1												240
2003	0	57		6		2	2	4					3					6	1							81
2002	0	33				4	39	4					1					2								83
2001	0	33		1					9				1													44
Total	938	1602	60	51	7	14	56	55	45	15	3	16	16	1	3	2	15	13	4	64	0	2	1	2	1	2986



Abuses by state actors: enforced disappearances



Enforced Disappearances (2009 - 2017): State Agencies Responsible

Year(s)	No. of the disappeared persons	Allegedly disappeared by						
		RAB	Police	RAB-DB Police	DB Police	Industrial Police	Ansar-Police	Other Law Enforcement Agency
2017	86	13	21	1	18	0	0	33
2016	91	27	15	2	23	0	0	24
2015	66	24	6	3	24	0	1	8
2014	39	25	2	3	8	0	0	1
2013	54	23	1	0	17	0	0	13
2012	26	10	1	2	6	1	0	6
2011	31	14	2	0	11	0	0	4
2010	18	14	2	0	2	0	0	0
2009	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	414	153	50	11	109	1	1	89



Dec 30, 2018 – Election

- The 2018 election campaign was characterized by a crackdown on dissent that saw thousands of people and several political candidates arrested.
- Governing Awami League wins landslide victory in parliamentary election, but the campaign was marred by reports of violence, intimidation, and vote-rigging.
- There were also a number of acts of violence committed against opposition figures. At least 17 people died in clashes between Awami League and opposition supporters.



Crime, Political Parties, and Law Enforcement

- Increased use of law enforcement for political suppression of the opposition has inhibited legitimate crime fighting functions, as well as efforts to curtail violence by extremists.
- Thousands of criminal cases have been lodged against political opposition members.
- Some of the most influential criminals have been taken down, but criminal activity, often involving violence, continues to be a part of the political process through which individuals and organizations seek access to resources.



Awami League Organization

Bangladesh Awami League^{bd}

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Join Us

Full Name*

Gender*

Date of Birth*

Mobile*

Email*

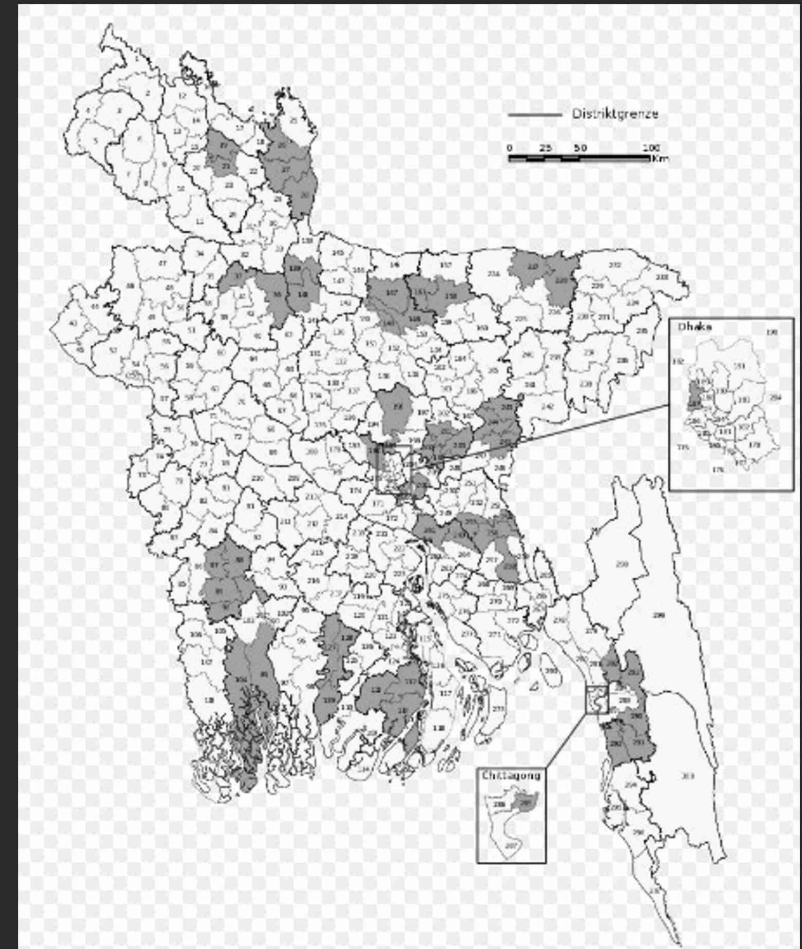
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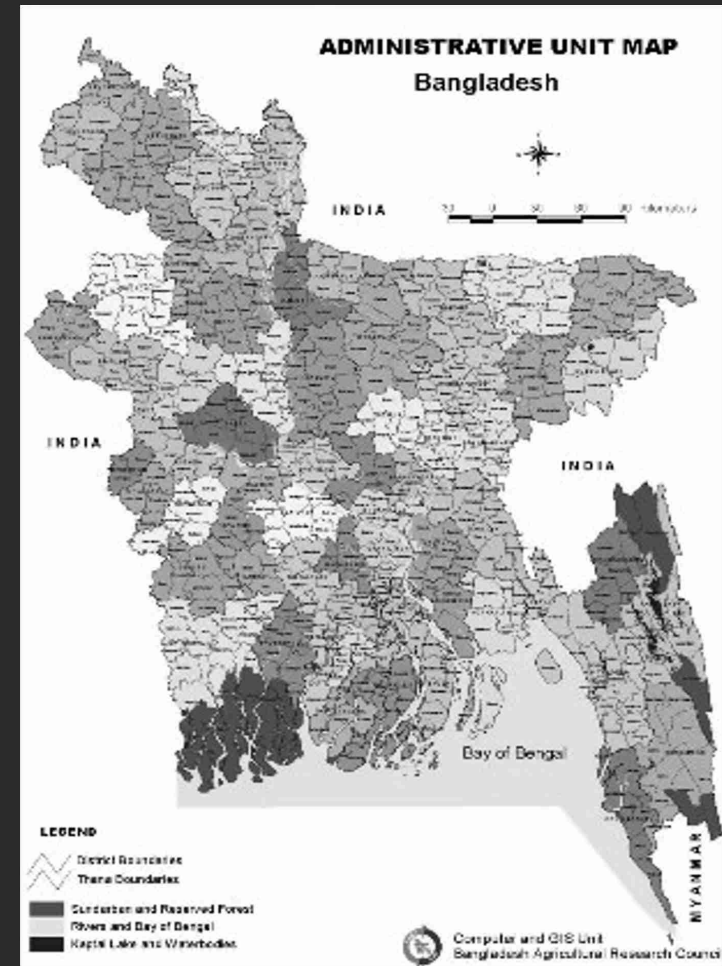
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Conclusions

- Political activity and party affiliation in Bangladesh, at the local level, involve the use of connected “intermediaries” to access basic goods and to improve one’s conditions.
- Violence between local party organizations -- including student, youth, and labor groups – is an integral part of how the system functions.
- The party in power, since 2008 the Awami League, increasingly makes use of police and security forces to prevent opposition groups from organizing and mobilizing through protests and work-stoppages.
- Despite alarming trends, the level of violence in Bangladesh on the whole is still relatively low. There is little or no independent evidence external flight of opposition party members.

