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Bangladesh

Bangladesh's Incomplete Revolution

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The Left in Bangladesh has struggled for generations against Islamism and authoritarianism.

In 1968–69, Pakistan was rocked with protests. Tariq Ali described it as the “unfashionable” 1968:

[F]ar removed from the glamour of Europe and the United States,[i]t was also different in character. The gap between the actions of the Pakistani students and workers and the actual conquest of power was much narrower than in France or Italy, let alone the United States or Britain... The scale of the movement was breathtaking: during five months of continuous struggles that began on November 7, 1968, and ended on March 26, 1969, some 10–15 million people had participated in the struggle across East and West Pakistan.

Repression had been deadly, especially in the East, where almost two thousand were killed.

After the partition of India in 1947, Pakistan was an anomaly. It consisted of two geographically separate wings: West Pakistan, which became the political and economic center even though a minority of the population lived there, and East Pakistan, created from the Muslim majority eastern regions of Bengal. Pakistan was to be built around this shared Muslim identity, but there were few other bonds linking the East and West.

The West Pakistani language Urdu, was declared the official language. East Pakistani citizens staged large protests, and the police killed several demonstrators. West discriminated against East in other ways, as well: what would become Bangladesh had fewer representatives in the civilian and military hierarchy than their western counterparts.

By 1968, pro-independence sentiments in the East had been simmering for two decades. It took hold of the student and worker unrest to make itself into a potent force.

East Pakistan faced what amounted to internal colonialism. Economic exploitation extracted millions annually, and the Pakistani government still heavily discriminated against Eastern citizens. Badruddin Umar, active during this time in the East Pakistani Maoist movement, wrote that “the slogan of Independent Bengal had begun to be raised in the streets of Dhaka, especially by the workers belonging to the leftist students’ organisations during the 1968–69 movement. [1] At mass rallies, demonstrators chanted *Joi Bangla* (Long Live Bengal) and called for *Krishok-Sramik Raj*, “rule by peasants and workers.”

Fearing they would lose control because of pressure from mass movements, Pakistan’s generals demanded that dictator Ayub Khan step down. His successor, General Yahya Khan, declared martial law. But, in hopes of placating the protesters, he also announced the country’s first-ever general elections for December 1970. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Ayub Khan’s former minister of foreign affairs emerged victorious in the West. Bhutto came from an aristocratic and well-connected family and in 1967 had established the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). The PPP combined populist, even socialist rhetoric with Pakistani nationalism and alliances with sections of wealthy landlords. But in the East, the Awami League (AL) capitalized on the mass movement, winning 167 of the 169 seats allotted to the East in the national government. [2]

The AL held essentially conservative positions, oriented toward constitutional politics. It was the party of the urban petty-bourgeois and civil servants: lawyers, teachers, and merchants. But the AL also demanded respect from West Pakistan and regional autonomy, a platform that won it massive support.

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Though the East had stronger left-wing traditions than the West, Communist parties failed to lead the mass movement or profit from the elections. One reason for this was that both the most dynamic parts of the Left and Pakistan itself had strong ties to Mao's China. Most left-wing forces were in some way influenced by Maoism, and the government maintained friendly relations with China as a counterweight to their shared rival, India. Because of Ayub's "objective anti-imperialist characteristics," much of the Maoist left did not oppose his regime and avoided making demands that might weaken Pakistan's position in relation to India, including self-determination for the East.

During a visit to China in 1963, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, a peasant leader and one of the most prominent figures in the pro-Beijing left, praised the Ayub regime, saying he was "pleased" that "Pakistan's current government has already eliminated much of imperialism's influence on politics and the economy. Particularly fortunate is that they have developed friendly relations with China." Mao's Foreign Affairs Minister Zhou Enlai asked Bhasani not to put too much pressure on Ayub Khan in the future.

Not everyone heeded the request in the years to come. Inspired by the Naxalites in India, segments of the East Pakistan Maoist left radicalized in the late sixties, but they abandoned work in mass movements for small-scale guerrilla attacks and boycotted the elections. Despite the radical turn, most of the Maoist forces still rejected self-determination.

The pro-Moscow left was much smaller, but it enjoyed disproportionate representation in the press and academia. In both halves of Pakistan, these leftists focused on restoring parliamentary democracy so single-mindedly that they became almost indistinguishable from liberal forces. In the East, Soviet sympathizers supported self-determination but were little more than an appendage of the AL.

The AL's election victory entitled it to form the new government, but Bhutto "who had campaigned on the promises of a strong army, a strong central government, and used fiery nationalist rhetoric" refused to accept the results and boycotted the new parliament. Military commanders, a privileged clique that spent over half of the country's yearly budget, also rejected self-determination for East Pakistan. Even the AL's moderate platform threatened the ruling class's hold over the region's cheap resources and consumer market.

A new mass movement took shape, this time specifically around the issue of self-determination. AL leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for protests and strikes. Security forces killed several people, ramping up tension. At a huge rally, Rahman called on the government to lift martial law, investigate the murders, withdraw the army, and transfer power to elected representatives. Pro-independence sentiments were spreading and radicalizing, and even judges on the high court refused to work.

The Yahya regime entered negotiations with the AL, stalling so that it could move troops and weapons into East Pakistan. At midnight on March 25, 1971, the Pakistani army struck. Among its first targets were the dormitories at the University of Dhaka. Soldiers killed and raped hundreds of students and teachers, and Rahman was arrested the following day.

In classic colonial fashion, ethnic and religious bigotry motivated the Pakistani army and their supporters in Islamist militias, the Razakar. The fighters saw the Bengali people as weak and inferior. They especially targeted the Hindu minority: in Dhaka, soldiers burnt Hindu neighborhoods and killed people in the streets. One Pakistani officer promised that once the East was defeated, "each of his soldiers would have a Bengali mistress and that neither dogs nor Bengalis would be allowed in the exclusive Chittagong Club."

As violence spread, resistance took shape. Both pro-Moscow and Maoist groups organized militias, and Bengali soldiers and police rebelled.

But while the Pakistani army committed atrocities on a genocidal scale, Beijing remained quiet. [3] On April 12, 1971, the Pakistani press published a message from Zhou Enlai praising the government for its "useful work" in upholding the unity of the country and declaring that "what is happening in Pakistan at present is purely an internal affair of Pakistan." China provided more than verbal support for the Yahya Khan regime — in May, it gave the regime an interest-free loan of \$100 million.

Some Maoists inside Bangladesh and abroad denounced the independence movement as an anti-Chinese conspiracy of "Indian expansionists" aided by "Soviet social-imperialism." Others, disgusted by this analysis, joined forces with the AL. Bhasani, for one, called on his followers to fight for an independent Bangladesh. But one of the largest pro-Beijing factions, the East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) (EPCP-ML) directed its guerrillas to fight not only the Pakistani army but also the AL-led Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters).

At the end of the war, the EPCP-ML was marginalized. Though Maoist factions had played an important role in the struggle against Pakistan, Beijing's attitude severely harmed the movement.

For many of the same reasons as China, the United States wasn't excited to see the birth of a new state at the expense of its old ally. In his book *The Blood Telegram*, Gary J. Bass describes why President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger supported the Yahya Khan regime. They believed that India and, through it, the Soviet Union would enjoy a strong influence on the new state. "Bengalis," Kissinger opined, "are by nature left." After Archer K. Blood, the US consul general in East Pakistan, sent a telegram disagreeing with this policy and decrying Pakistani war crimes, he was removed from his post.

The total number of people killed in the war is unclear — many scholars estimate the number to be around half a million, and the Bangladeshi government claims that 3 million died.

India saw the crisis as an opportunity to weaken its rival and gain influence along the Chinese border. New Delhi provided shelter and support for the AL leadership, but the Indira Gandhi government worried about how the struggle was developing. The independence movement was becoming increasingly dependent on support from workers and peasants. Leftist ideas were gaining support, and, under pressure from its popular base, the AL was taking more and more radical positions.

To forestall a further leftward shift and ensure its influence, India decided to intervene directly. On December 3, 1971, its army went into Bangladesh. With help of the local population and the Mukti Bahini, Pakistani forces were routed within two weeks.

The defeat also meant the end of Yahya Khan's rule, and he handed power over to Bhutto a few days later. The following month, Mujibur Rahman was released from prison and became the first leader of an independent Bangladesh.

Independent Bangladesh

Initially, the AL and Mujibur Rahman enjoyed massive support, but they faced pressure from their radicalized base. In keeping with a long tradition of tactical flexibility, as Badruddin Umar writes, "the Awami League took up the slogan [of socialism] and declared it as their own." The new state was officially a "people's republic," and its constitution described its founding principles as "nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism." The AL promised to nationalize all local banks and insurance companies, all jute, textile, and sugar mills, and major portions of foreign

trade as a first step to socialism.

But the new government quickly became mired in corruption and nepotism, and its radical promises went unfulfilled. Despite American opposition to the independence struggle, large parts of the AL leadership held fundamentally pro-US positions. The nationalization program avoided touching American or British interests, and the government tried to refrain from antagonizing the United States. Prices multiplied while wages dropped. The nationalizations that took place just allowed the politically connected to loot the expropriated companies.

The material demands of the uprising were lost – the Awami League only delivered on its more symbolic promises. In the sarcastic words of Bangladeshi writer Ahmed Sofa:

Our leaders are constantly talking about doing this and that [for] the Bengali language. The gist of their speeches is: O, Bengali people, you have suffered a lot to get an independent nation. Bangladesh is a beautiful country, that is why we call it the mother. Bengali language is the mother goddess's language. Those who speak against it, we call them collaborators and Pakistani spies. You have sacrificed a lot for this Bengali language. If independent Bangladesh cannot give you clothes to wear, cover up your privates with Bengali culture. And if you cannot get two meals of rice a day, chew on Bengali language with great relish!

As the AL lost support, it began to splinter. Parts of its student movement and a left-wing nationalist current organized the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD, National Socialist Party). Other left-wing parties gained strength. The Maoist Purbo Banglar Sarbahara Party (PBSP, East Bengal Proletarian Party), led by Shiraj Sikder, had fought the Pakistani army alongside the AL's Mukthi Bahini. [4] The PBSP's influence waned during Mujibur Rahman's heyday, but as the AL's popularity declined, the PBSP grew. It continued to wage low-level guerrilla struggles and began organizing mass strikes.

Pressured, Rahman became increasingly autocratic, and AL militias attacked opposition activists. On January 2, 1975, police killed Sikder, and Rahman taunted his opponents by asking in parliament; "Where today is that Shiraj Sikder?" Later that month, he declared one-party rule – still supported by the pro-Soviet Communist Party.

But while Mujibur Rahman repressed the forces to his left, the right wing brought him down. On August 15, 1975, pro-US officers murdered him and most of his family, marking the beginning of several months of political instability. Eventually, Major General Ziaur Rahman emerged as the new strongman.

After a counter-coup in early November 1975, Ziaur Rahman was put under house arrest, but a soldiers' revolt, which the JSD helped organize, freed him a few days later. Ziaur Rahman quickly turned on his allies, sentencing Abu Taher, a JSD leader and hero of the liberation war, to death in a secret trial. [5] Other JSD activists received long prison sentences.

From Dictatorship to Democracy

Ziaur Rahman turned to the West for political support and allied with Islamist forces at home. In 1977, he removed secularism from the constitution. He also rehabilitated the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), whose militia had sided with the Pakistani army and committed war crimes during the liberation struggle.

Eventually, Ziaur Rahman himself was murdered. His successor, General H. M. Ershad, presided over another authoritarian regime until 1990, continuing Ziaur's policy of complying with IMF demands by liberalizing trade and

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privatizing enterprises. The influx of foreign aid and development projects created a new Bangladeshi middle class, closely linked to NGOs.

Like Ziaur, Ershad used right-wing religious forces against the Left. Both regimes supported Islamist student organizations in hopes of balancing out leftist influences on college and university campuses. A 1988 amendment declared Islam the state religion, and the government supported militia attacks on Hindu businesses in hopes of diverting popular dissatisfaction with the government into religious conflict.

During the eighties, left parties lost much of their strength. Former leftists, opposed to the AL, ended up supporting the Ziaur and Ershad regimes, seeing the enemy of their enemy as their friend. The Communist Party continued to follow the AL's lead, but Maoist groups refused to work with those they considered "paid agents of Soviet social-imperialism."

Fortunately, leftist ideas found fertile ground in various opposition groups and movements. Women's organizations took the lead in challenging the religious drift of the Bangladeshi state. Both independent groups and organizations linked to different left parties formed, including the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, which started as an offshoot of the pro-Soviet CP.

Though right-wing forces depicted their activities as primarily "anti-religious," these feminist organizations also criticized the state's development policies and opposed discriminatory inheritance and divorce laws.

Students also resisted Ershad's regime. The government met their demonstrations with violence, which only increased public support for the students. In November 1982, police and militia invaded Dhaka University, savagely beating students and faculty. During a protest the next February, government forces killed at least four people when shooting at student protesters.

Women and students weren't the only ones who took to the streets during the Ershad regime. In 1984, the trade union federation Workers-Employees Unity Council called a two-day *hartal*. More involved than a strike, a *hartal* is a mass protest often involves shutting down not only workplaces and shops but also schools and roads. The protesters demanded that the government allow the organization of independent unions. Hundreds were arrested and several killed. Peasant and agricultural workers, lawyers, teachers, doctors, and cultural workers joined the movement.

In October 1990, the regime once again met protesting students with deadly force. In response, tens of thousands swore they would not give up until Ershad resigned. The following month, pro-government militias attacked Dhaka University, but, after hours of fighting, they were driven off campus. Militant demonstrations and *hartals* spread throughout the country. Faced with continuing protests, Ershad finally resigned in December 1990.

Since then, Bangladeshi politics has been a game of musical chairs. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Ziaur Rahman's widow Khaleda Zia, and the AL, led by Mujibur Rahman's daughter and current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, hand power back and forth.

The party's ideological differences extend back to the Liberation War. The BNP still has close links to the army officer corps and to right-wing Islamist forces, and the AL still claims the mantle of secular nationalism. As a result, it enjoys particularly strong support among non-Muslim minorities.

But the AL is not a consistent defender of secularism or democracy. It restored the principle of secularism but retained the wording on state religion. In fact, hoping to capture the BNP's base, Sheikh Hasina has adopted

increasingly reactionary positions, promising “stern action” against anyone “defaming Islam.”

The AL allies with Islamists when it sees an opportunity. In 2006, it promised to give certain Islamic scholars the right to issue *fatwa* and to punish blasphemous statements. It also said it would reject any laws that contradict the Quran or *Sunnah*. It has even joined forces with Ershad's Jatiya Party (JP), which calls for “bringing existing laws into line” with the Quran, punishing blasphemy, and providing compulsory religious education.

The restoration of democracy did not end political violence. According to the human-rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra, over a thousand people were killed in political clashes during the last five years.

The army also continues to play an important role in politics. It took direct political control of the country in 2007–9 and has significant economic power thanks to the dozens of companies it owns. Leftist academic Anu Muhammad said in a 2010 interview that “elected and nonelected, military and nonmilitary governments made no difference in the realm of government policy.” [\[6\]](#)

Today's Social Struggles

Of Bangladesh's over 160 million citizens, more than 40 percent lives on less than \$1.25 per day. The IMF ranks Bangladesh as among the thirty poorest countries in the world, while the World Bank praises the country for its “competitive wages.”

A majority of the labor force works without contracts or any kind of social protection. The size of the informal sector makes it hard for trade unions to organize workers, but, more important, the three biggest trade union federations, which represent some two-thirds of industrial workers, are actually fronts for the three biggest parties: the AL, BNP, and JP. The parties use these unions to campaign or to attack their rivals. When the AL was in opposition from 2006 to 2009, its federation called more than 170 days of strikes.

Despite the low unionization rate and the politically connected federations, the Bangladeshi working class regularly organizes militant actions such as *hartals*. Most left-wing sentiment is now channeled into social struggles. For example, the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power, and Ports has fought against privatizing utilities, open-pit mining, and coal-fired power plants.

Several left parties, such as the Revolutionary Workers' Party and Revolutionary Democratic Party, have managed to build unions in the textile industry. Organizing in this sector represents both a difficult and an urgent task.

Garment manufacturing has grown rapidly since the late 1970s. In 1984, Bangladesh had 177 factories; by 1992, that number had ballooned to over a thousand. [\[7\]](#) Now, garments make up about three-quarters of Bangladesh's exports, and the nation is second only to China in apparel exports for western brands. Most factories are owned by Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, but orders come primarily from large retail firms based in the United States and Europe. Factory owners routinely violate the already limited legislation around working conditions and wages. [\[8\]](#) For example, most bosses pay less than the legal minimum wage of \$68 monthly.

As Dutch activist and academic Peter Custers writes, the rise of the garment industry means that, “for the first time in Bangladesh's history, [women] have been recruited in large numbers to toil as collective workers in factories.” [\[9\]](#) But women's work is still considered “unskilled,” and the “skilled” positions often go to men. Women face sexual violence on the shop floor, not to mention on their way to work. Factory owners are legally required to provide childcare

facilities, but, in reality, they fire women who get pregnant.

The “capitalist exploitation of [women’s] labour,” Custers writes, “is interwoven with the patriarchal oppression that pervades the entire fabric of Bangladesh’s society.” Though the majority of garment workers are women, they have been historically underrepresented in labor leadership, which means the unions often ignore the needs of female workers. Fortunately, this seems to be changing, as women labor activists like Kalpona Akter and Mushrefa Mishu are becoming more prominent. Two-thirds of factory-level leaders are now women.

Other important struggles are unfolding in the countryside. Bangladesh’s rural sector continues to play an important economic role. Around two-thirds of the population lives in the countryside, and, out of a total labor force of about 75 million, 32 million work in agriculture. A large majority of this population is land poor, meaning they either own no land or have insufficient land to sustain themselves. Moreover, public facilities are lacking, and struggles for such resources can escalate into violence. In 2004–5, almost two dozen people were killed in the course of a peasant movement demanding electricity.

One of the largest peasant organizations, the Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF), was established in 1976, originally as the peasant wing of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) (CPB-ML, the new name of the EPCP-ML). In the eighties activists started occupying land and distributing it to peasants. Typically, the lands they occupied were legally supposed to be left fallow, but local businessmen were using them to grow cash crops. The occupations at times provoked harsh clashes with goons who are paid to drive away the peasants, attacking activists with acid and sometimes murdering them. Despite this, the BKF distributed tens of thousands of acres to tens of thousands of the poorest people in Bangladesh. Successful occupations are only the first stage of the struggle, which then calls on the government to provide public facilities such as schools, storm shelters, and drinking water. BKF thrived as a social movement even as its associated party declined. The CPB-ML is now trying to re-organize, linking up with the Fourth International and reevaluating its previous ideology.

The BKF is now focusing on climate change, which would have damaging effects on Bangladesh. The changing weather hurts agricultural production, and increasing incidences of cyclones and flooding threaten people’s lives and subsistence. Two-thirds of the country is less than fifteen feet above sea level, so a three-foot ocean rise would submerge almost 20 percent of the nation and displace more than 30 million people. The BKF demands sustainable agricultural practices and food sovereignty in order to help peasant communities mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Another part of the Left still continues to support the AL; the only nominally left-wing parties with parliamentary representation are part of the government coalition. Much of the nongovernmental left, over ten parties, is part of the Democratic Left Alliance. Social movements have become the leading edge of struggles in the country while the leftist parties lost influence and strength.

Opposing Fundamentalism

The other significant vector of opposition has been against Islamic fundamentalism. As with many other political conflicts in Bangladesh, this too is linked to the legacy of the Liberation War.

In early February 2013, Abdul Kader Mullah, the assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, the country’s largest Islamist party, received a life sentence for crimes against humanity. Specifically, he was sentenced for the massacres he committed during the Liberation War, which earned him the nickname “butcher.”

Emerging from court, Mullah smiled at the cameras and made the victory sign. The previous month, another JI politician, Abul Kalam Azad, had been sentenced to death for the atrocities he committed during the Liberation War. Azad, who is still in hiding, had been tried in absentia. Islamists had organized a campaign of violence and intimidation in the weeks leading up to Mullah's trial and saw his life sentence as a victory.

When Mullah's sentence was announced, over one hundred thousand people gathered in Shahbag Circle in Dhaka. [10] None of the established parties called this demonstration. Rather, young activists organized it in opposition to Islamic fundamentalism and communalism. The protesters chanted that they were Bangladeshi first, and Muslim, Hindu, or Christian only second.

Politically, the demonstrators were diverse. Many supported AL, but other leftist groups endorsed the mobilization as well. One observer noted that the protest marked "the first time in decades [that] twelve of the fourteen student organizations were gathered for a single cause." The activists drew up a charter demanding the death penalty for all war criminals and the banning of the JI, its associated social organizations, and media outlets. Mullah was sentenced to death on appeal and executed in December 2013.

The Shahbag mobilization provoked a violent response from Islamist groups. One protester was murdered shortly after the demonstration began. Violent clashes between Islamists and the police took place after another JI leader was sentenced to death that month.

Throughout the country, Islamists organized protests and strikes; they attacked journalists and other civilians, especially Hindus; they vandalized and destroyed Hindu places of worship and nationalist monuments. In May, the Islamist organizations mobilized tens of thousands in Dhaka, demanding the death penalty for atheists and anyone accused of "blasphemy." They also called for further restrictions on women's rights and a government declaration listing the Ahmediya minority as "non-Muslim."

Even before the protests, international human-rights organizations were warning of violence. On May 5, Islamists set up barricades and demanded that the government step down. When the police dispersed them, they killed dozens. The exact number of people killed by police is unknown and investigations into the violence were blocked.

Political support for religious fundamentalism remains limited; JI won less than 5 percent in the 2008 elections when it allied with the BNP. But these groups have gained support in social organizations, as the size of their mobilizations shows. By framing the conflict as a battle between believers and blasphemers, Islamist leaders can draw more people into the streets than they can convince to support their political program.

A crucial base comes from schools and universities, both religious and public ones. The number of religious schools "at times the only way poor people in remote locations can access education" has grown since the 1980s, often thanks to foreign support. School leaders called on their pupils to attend the May protests and organized transportation; these students formed the bulk of the crowd.

The JI leaders describe their long-term strategy as a "silent revolution." Through activity in schools and universities, they aim to change the nation's elite and transform society from above. JI leader Maulana Delwar Hussain Sayeedi claims "most Bangladeshis are not genuine Muslims. They venerate gurus, *pirs* [Sufi spiritual guides], they kneel before tombs, they worship idols like Hindus... [O]ur work consists in Islamizing this society."

The Islamist movement owes its current strength in part to the support it has long enjoyed from the government. Ziaur Rahman and Muhammad Ershad laid the groundwork. Rahman replaced secularism in the constitution with "absolute trust and faith in the almighty Allah"; he also made Islam part of the compulsory curriculum. Ershad

continued this process, declaring Islam the state religion. When Khaleda Zia's BNP governed from 2001–6, it allied with Islamist groups, including the JI. The BNP has used Islamist militias to silence its political opponents, including a 2004 attack on AL leaders that killed twenty-two.

But fundamentalists aren't the only political actors resorting to violence and repression. The police response to the May protest offers evidence of what some have called the AL's authoritarian drift. Sheikh Hasina also used the war-crime trials to weaken her rivals, and before the 2014 elections, the government cancelled the JI's electoral registration. The BNP boycotted the elections, calling them illegitimate. As a result, very few people voted, and the AL won 280 out of 300 seats.

The government has also cracked down on opposition media, filing cases against journalists critical of the government. Matiur Rahman, editor of the liberal daily *Prothom Alo*, was charged with defamation and "hurting religious sentiments" in February 2016. Arrests of editors and journalists signal a climate that's increasingly difficult for the independent media.

Bangladesh has made considerable improvements in access to health care, and poverty has declined. Economic growth is considerable: around 6 percent. The AL is betting that enough people will be willing to trade democracy for such material advancement. Party leaders openly discuss the "example of Malaysia," which supposedly proves that one-party rule is preferable for developing countries.

Bangladesh was created thanks to a war for national liberation that had a deep, radicalizing impact on the people. Its working class has a long and militant tradition of social struggles, as peasants, garment workers, and others fought for a better life. Today, left ideas still resonate with those poised to push back against religious and governmental authoritarianism and secure the unfulfilled promises of 1971.

[Jacobin](#)

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