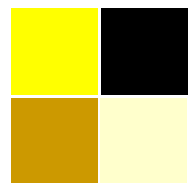


Refreshing BNP and the Nation: An Idea

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We have observed that our Bangladesh has long been divided into two confronting political-psychological blocs. One led by the ruling Awami League (AL) claiming itself as the secular and pro-liberation force, and the other could be identified as anti-AL force led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Both Awami League and BNP have ruled the country for several terms and were suppressed more or less by each other while in the opposition.

Their political confrontation has led to *hartal* (general strike), blockade, partisan use of state machinery, loss of lives, properties, and deprivation of citizen rights. Also, there are widespread allegations reported in the media that rampant politicisation of state institutions like Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and recruitment of Supreme Court judges have taken place during the rule of both the AL and BNP. It is understood that the politicizations were carried out fully or partially as part of the continuing fight between the two political-psychological blocs.

Under the rule of the AL, since 2008, the BNP has been squeezed and struggling for its survival in politics. Especially, its boycott of the 2014 parliament elections, flopped 'petrol bomb' programme and the AL's 'all-out dominance' in the recently held three City elections have aggravated the situation. Besides these, a national risk is that if the BNP fails to survive, Islamist militants might take over as the leader of the present BNP-led anti-AL political bloc.

Against this backdrop, it is noticeable that the country is in dire need of abolishing its longstanding political-psychological division while the ailing BNP is desperately searching for the right way to stage a strong comeback. Combining these two needs of the hour, I would like to outline a set of suggestions in this article.

The Axis of Balance

Use of religion has been a dominating factor in politics in the Indian Sub-Continent as well as in Bangladesh. If we want to have an idea about where the leading political parties in Bangladesh exist on a horizontal line in terms of their attachment to religion or secularism or, in other words, anti-

or pro-1971 Liberation War, we find the AL at one end and the Islamist extremist parties at the other end of the line (Figure 1).

The BNP, on the other hand, is identified neither as a complete religious party nor as a secular one at all. It makes a kind of balance between the so-called secularists and the religious extremists and, thus, the whole society as well.

With this balancing position, the BNP is supposed to win and enjoy support from the majority of the citizens. However, on the horizontal line, this party's position looks leaning to the extremist side that is threatening the party's existence nowadays.

To adapt to the changed national and international political environment, the BNP should move a bit towards the 'pro-liberation' side or should position itself at least in the middle of the horizontal line (Figure 1).

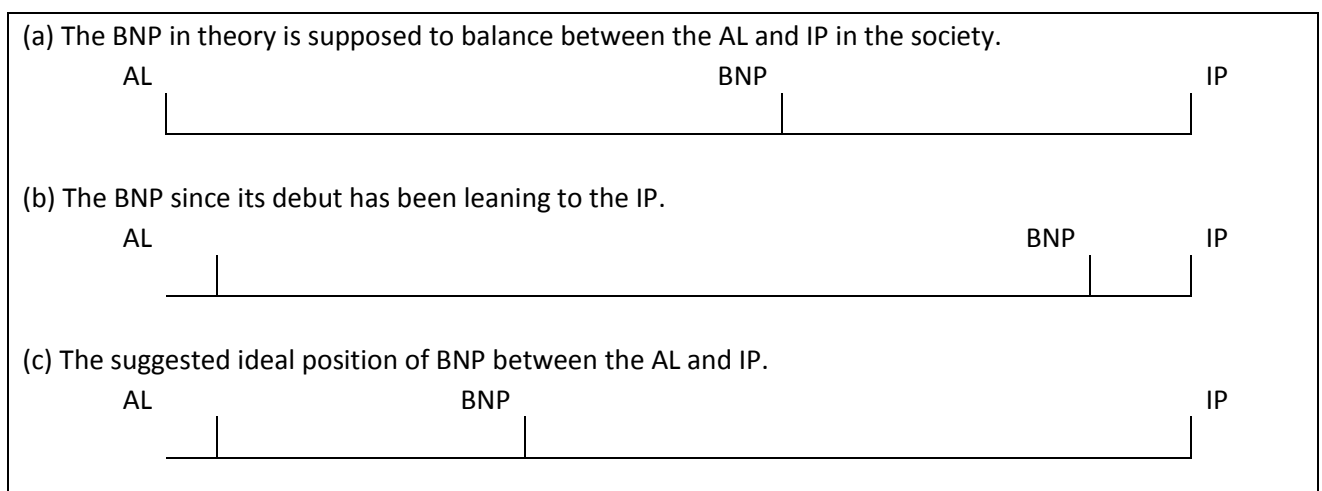


Figure 1. The positions of Awami League (AL), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and extremist Islamist parties (IP) in terms of their attachment to religion or secularism or anti or pro-1971 Liberation War.

The Suggested Changes

To secure such a new position on the horizontal line, the BNP should:

- Say what the ruling Awami League says about political history, heritage, and symbols of Bangladesh; chant slogans like *'Joy Bangla'*, *'Joy Bangabandhu'*, and place the portrait of Bangabandhu above any other leader recognising him as the 'Founder of the Nation';
- Prioritise India over other nations in foreign policies, but still stay more religious than the AL;

- Authentically support the ongoing trial of the 1971 war criminals;
- Demand trial, and challenge the citizenship of all the Razakars, Al-Badr, Al-Shams, Peace Committee Chairmen and members and all other people who collaborated with the then Pakistani occupation forces (because the people who fought to prevent the birth of Bangladesh cannot become citizens of Bangladesh);
- Demand banning the of politics of ideological successors of the collaborators;
- Keep protesting against alleged politicisation, corruption, nepotism, misrule, and excesses of the AL government, and
- Campaign for reform to establish fairness in the state machinery and the constitutional institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission, the whole electoral system, including election time government, the Election Commission, Public Service Commission, and the judiciary.

The BNP may launch its new beginning by announcing the proposed changes at a national Forum. The Constitution of the Party, declaration and all other documents should also be amended accordingly.

End Note

A change in the party policies or ideologies is not new. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, for example, Bangladesh's Awami League and Indian National Congress gave up their ideology of so-called socialism and accepted the then globally flourishing free market economic policy.

With the proposed changes, the BNP may lose some of its leaders and workers, but at the same time, will be able to woo and gain many newcomers. Also, the change will eliminate the AL's monopolistic use of the key national political properties of Bangladesh such as 'Bangabandhu', 'Joy Bangla', and the 'Spirit of Liberation War'.

Should the changes take place these ways, the Cantonment-born Party is expected to be salvaged from its current state on one hand, and on the other, the country could be able to get rid of the longstanding political-psychological national division, and thus the nation would step forward into a new robust lifeline.

About the Author



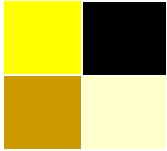
Dr Abul Kalam Azad is an independent researcher currently based in Sydney, Australia. He has written a number of research papers in some international peer-reviewed journals. His notable published papers on Bangladesh are “*Bangladesh: An Umpired Democracy*” and “*Updating Umpired Democracy: An Idea of A Key Political Fix for Bangladesh*”.

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Earlier he worked as Lecturer at Queens Academic Group, Auckland, New Zealand, and as an Editorial Assistant for the New Zealand Journal of Applied Business Research, Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), Auckland, New Zealand.

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He has done his PhD from the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. His PhD thesis dealt with comparative political economy in Asia. His areas of research interest include threats to the citizenry and international peace, i.e., terrorism and nuclear war; comparative politics; social and political engineering, and economics of education. The author can be contacted at kazad9@gmail.com.



IDEAS FOR DEVELOPMENT (IFD)

IDEAS FOR DEVELOPMENT (IFD) is a virtual think-tank. This initiative was first conceptualized through an email on January 18, 2007. This think-tank does not have any office; its website and email address are its identity. Mr Mabroor Mahmood, an expatriate Bangladeshi national living in Saudi Arabia, is the founder of this think-tank. IFD is his brain child.

The prime objective of this think-tank is to ensure the welfare of the humanity through the exchange of development related ideas with the help of the Internet. This is the mission statement of this think-tank.

This mission statement is also reflected in its logo. The logo comprises four colored blocks, denoting four dominant races in the world. IFD believes that the persisting inequality amongst nations is the root of continuing global tension and absence of peace all over the world. So IFD believes that such tensions will be significantly reduced if this inequality can be resolved.

But we need new development ideas to resolve such inequality. At present, the developed nations are consistently formulating new ideas with the help of research and moving forward through their successful implementation. However, the less developed countries are lagging behind due to either the lack of resources or indiscriminate wastage of such resources. This phenomenon causes the gradual expansion of inequality between the developed and less developed nations, and as a result, poverty and exploitation are increasing all over the world.

IFD has been created with a noble aim to reduce this disparity amongst nations with the help of generating new ideas. IFD wants to be the platform for exchanging ideas of all thinkers and creative people of the world. We expect the thinkers all over the world would exchange their ideas through this platform.

A potential thinker will receive some specific benefits if he/she exchanges his/her ideas through the IFD.

First of all, the generation of an idea only is not sufficient to ensure development; in fact it is only the beginning of a long process. A thinker should not stop after generating an idea, rather he also needs to describe in detail the solution of the problem in the form of a model. This model has to be implementable as well. Otherwise, this idea won't have any value.

We actually don't have any shortage of people having new ideas. But we really lack people who can provide us a nicely presented idea, which is also worthy for implementation.

To resolve this problem, IFD would guide a potential thinker on how to present an idea in a logical fashion. IFD will also give necessary guidance in this respect, and provide the required assistance to make a potential yet immature idea presentable.

Secondly, one does not need any qualification to send an idea to IFD. Any person can send an idea to IFD from anywhere with the help of any medium.

Thirdly, although IFD is temporarily focused on exchanging economic ideas only, eventually its activity would also expand to cover other disciplines as well.

Fourthly, if an idea is publicized by the IFD, everybody would be ensured of its reliability and its power to change the society in the right direction. It will enhance the credibility of the idea itself. It has to be highlighted that IFD will not publicize any idea that it will receive. The selection of an idea for publication would entirely depend on its ability to contribute to the welfare of the society.

And fifthly and the most important benefit is that, the potential thinkers won't have to spend any money for sending an idea to IFD, except for the charges for email or postage. He/she won't also have to give any money to IFD if the idea is eventually published in IFD website.

One might ask, if a potential thinker gives us a valuable idea, it might eventually be stolen. As a result the true inventor of the idea would lose his/her proper recognition. Then what is the protection for the owners of the idea?

In this connection, we assure you that we won't publish your idea anywhere else under a different name without your permission. We strongly believe that an idea generator can be properly valued only by another idea generator.

IFD believes that an idea is properly valued when it is implemented, either partially or completely, and benefits the people. IFD has a limitation from this perspective. It is because in order to implement an idea successfully, one needs assistance from Government bodies or other organizations. Therefore, IFD cannot guarantee that the circulation of an idea through the IFD would ensure its successful implementation.

IFD intends to act as a platform for circulating and publishing the ideas only. IFD will not be responsible for implementing these ideas.

But IFD's activity will not be limited only to generation and publication of an idea. In order to generate new ideas and ensure its successful implementation, we not only need prospective thinkers, but also need proper political leadership, strong Government apparatus, modern education system, and above all, a peaceful political and social climate.

Prospective thinkers will not be born unless proper environment is ensured, and their ideas will not be properly valued and implemented in an unstable social and political atmosphere.

So besides circulating development related ideas, IFD would also act to ensure an environment where the number of prospective thinkers will increase, they will be properly valued, and their ideas will be successfully implemented. To serve this purpose, IFD will publish special articles highlighting various social issues.

At last, we want to say if you are confident on any prospective idea, and firmly believe that this idea, if implemented, would benefit the society to an extent, then we request you to send us this idea. You can primarily send us an email in our address. You can also visit our website to know more about us.

We believe such exchange of ideas would help to develop prospective thinkers all around us. Everybody would also be benefited if their ideas are eventually implemented successfully. So we need cooperation from all for moving forward. We thus welcome any cooperation in order to exchange these development related ideas through the IFD.

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