

Volume 10
Number 2
Year 2008
ISSN 1529-0905



Journal of
**BANGLADESH
STUDIES**





Volume 10, Number 2

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As partners in knowledge generation and dissemination, JBS is supported by Pennsylvania State University-Erie, Bangladesh Development Initiative, American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, and Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.

Annual subscriptions of two issues are \$15 for individuals and \$50 for institutions in the United States. In Bangladesh, subscriptions are Tk. 300 per year. For individuals in all other countries, subscriptions are \$25 per year. Please contact *Dr. Sukomal Modak* (Sukomal_Modak@yahoo.com) for subscription inquiries.

Can Proportional Representation Help Stabilize Democracy in Bangladesh?

Nazrul Islam

Abstract

This paper examines whether a switch from the current Winner Takes All (WTA) system to the Proportional Representation (PR) system can help Bangladesh stabilize her democracy. It begins by considering the underlying reasons for unstable democracy in Bangladesh and in developing countries in general and the ways in which this instability can be overcome. Next it surveys the international experience with the PR system and identifies different channels through which the system can exert its stabilizing influence on Bangladesh democracy. The paper also discusses certain potential problems of the PR system and the ways to overcome them in the context of Bangladesh. The paper ends by emphasizing the need for an open public discussion in order to generate popular support for a switch to the PR system.

Introduction

This paper examines the question whether a switch from the current “Winner Takes All (WTA)” method of representation to the “Proportional Representation (PR)” method can help stabilize democracy in Bangladesh. The tumultuous political history of post-independence Bangladesh shows that democracy has been and still remains unstable in the country, even though independent Bangladesh itself was the result of a protracted struggle for democracy.

The problem of instability of democracy is not unique for Bangladesh and is rather a generic problem for developing countries. The root of this problem lies in the mismatch between the less developed economic base of these countries and democracy, which is the political superstructure of developed capitalism and took centuries to evolve. The long run solution to this instability therefore lies in overcoming the above mismatch through transformation of the economic base by rapid economic growth.

There are countries which have achieved rapid economic growth under authoritarian rule. However, more numerous are examples of authoritarian rule ending in economic failure. Moreover, Bangladesh’s history illustrates that it is difficult to subjugate its people to authoritarian rule for long, vindicating the reality that she has to achieve economic growth through democracy. This necessity however creates a “chicken-egg” problem for Bangladesh: On the one hand, she needs economic growth for democracy; on the other hand, she needs democracy to achieve economic growth. How can Bangladesh break out of this vicious circle?

Fortunately, the international experience shows that under certain specific circumstances even countries

with low per capita income can practice democracy, as the example of India illustrates. The question therefore is whether Bangladesh can create a configuration of institutions allowing her to have stable democracy, despite her low income level. Bangladesh has already shown some ingenuity by devising the system of Care Taker Government (CTG) for holding elections. However, the experience shows that CTG has not been sufficient to stabilize Bangladesh democracy.

The regime that took over on January 11, 2007 (popularly known as the 1/11 regime) tried to bring about changes in Bangladesh politics too. Unfortunately, many of its attempted reforms, particularly the “minus-two” idea, were ill conceived and ultimately backfired. As a result, no meaningful political reforms actually took place, and the election of the ninth Parliament is now being held (on December 29, 2008) under more or less unchanged political set up. This failure to bring about political reform has given rise to concerns as to whether the corrupt and criminal will again dominate Bangladesh politics and whether the country will again get embroiled in a rejection behavior by the losing side, leading to a boycott of the Parliament, street agitation, continuous *hartals* aimed at toppling the government before completion of its term. The future of Bangladesh democracy therefore still remains uncertain.

The main reason why the 1/11 regime failed to change Bangladesh politics was that its reforms were individual-focused. What is necessary instead is to adopt an institutional approach and think of reforms that are impersonal, hence democratic and impartial, and focused on process. Proceeding from such an institutional approach, Islam (2001) and others earlier suggested shortening of the government term as a measure helpful to stabilize Bangladesh democracy.

The current paper argues that a switch to the PR system, in addition to shortening of the government-term, may help Bangladesh further to stabilize her democracy. Contrary to the popular belief in Bangladesh, the PR system is actually widely prevalent in the world, particularly among developed countries, and the tendency towards the PR system is growing over time across the world.

In the particular context of Bangladesh, whose political scene is dominated by two political camps of roughly equal electoral strength, a close examination shows that a switch to the PR system may help to stabilize democracy in the following different ways: (a) preventing large and perverse fluctuations in electoral outcomes arising from small shifts in parties' vote shares, (b) reducing the objective scope and subjective incentives for manipulation and abuse of the voting process, (c) promoting better quality of candidates for the parliament, (d) making elections more educative and enlightening, (e) strengthening political parties, (f) creating better conditions for functioning of local governments, (g) being more inclusive of minority groups and small political parties, and (h) being more just and hence more conducive to peace.

One potential shortcoming of the PR system lies in ensuring geographic representation. However, given her small physical size and relatively homogeneous population, this shortcoming may be less of a problem for Bangladesh. Furthermore, additional measures can be taken to ensure geographical representation under PR, such as application of the system at the divisional (instead of the national) level and conferring some role in national governance to *Upazilla* chairpersons. A review of other contentions against the PR system shows that these are not that potent and apply equally, if not more, to the WTA system.

Despite its merits, it will not be easy to get the PR system adopted and implemented. It will face the hurdles of inertia, suspicion, lack of information, reluctance, and vested interests. Overcoming these hurdles will require broad popular support for the PR system. It is hoped that by facilitating an open public discussion of the merits and demerits of the PR system as compared with the WTA system, this paper will help to build up that support.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 portrays the unstable nature of democracy in Bangladesh. Section 3 discusses the underlying reason of this instability. Section 4 provides the international perspective on the PR system. Section 5 discusses the

specific ways in which the PR system can help Bangladesh to stabilize her democracy. Section 6 discusses the potential shortcomings of the PR system and suggests various ways in which Bangladesh can overcome them. Section 7 concludes.

Unstable democracy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is having problems in practicing democracy. During the Pakistan period, there was not much of democracy, and as a result the struggle for self-determination of the people of Bangladesh became intertwined with the struggle for democracy. In fact, the 1971 Liberation War, in its immediate sense, was a result of Pakistani ruling clique's unwillingness to accept the verdict of the 1970 elections. However, it is instructive that even independent Bangladesh, which was born as a victory of democracy, is now having problems in practicing democracy.

These problems surfaced even during the times of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Immediately after the Liberation War Victory, many thought that the task of relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction was too urgent and daunting to allow concerns for parliamentary niceties. Indeed, some called for holding off parliamentary democracy for a while and for forming a national government headed by *Bangabandhu* and including members from different political parties, very much along the spirit of the Advisory Council set up by the provisional Bangladesh government during the Liberation War, to function until the country got on a sure footing. However, *Bangabandhu*, due to his attachment to parliamentary democracy and other reasons, did not heed to such calls, and instead devoted considerable time and energy in 1972 to draft a constitution enshrining parliamentary democracy, and then to hold another round of elections in 1973 to uphold the distinction between a Constituent Assembly and a Parliament. Yet in just over a year's time, *Bangabandhu* himself scrapped parliamentary democracy and introduced what he called "democracy of the exploited" in the form of the one-party rule by BAKSAL (*Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League*).¹

The tragic coup of August 1975 put an end to that experiment, and the country went under military and quasi-military rule. The multi-party set up was revived during the end of 1970s and several elections were held during 1977-1990. However, the legitimacy of those elections and the associated constitutional changes remain open to question to this day. A civilian uprising in 1990 put an end to the era

of quasi-military rule and ushered in a new phase of civilian rule in Bangladesh. Elections were held in 1991 under an interim, neutral government headed by the sitting Supreme Court Chief Justice. Drawing inspiration from this experience, Bangladesh in 1996 devised the innovative system of Care Taker Government (CTG) for holding elections. The subsequent elections in 1996 and 2001 were indeed held under CTGs.

Unfortunately, even the CTG innovation could not stabilize Bangladesh democracy. The Parliament did not function well, with the Opposition boycotting it for most of the time and engaging in street agitation and frequent calls for nation-wide work stoppage (*hartals*) aimed at bringing down the government ahead of its due term. Public bodies and institutions, beginning with the Presidency down to local school boards, were politicized and debased. Constitutional commissions, such as the Election Commission, the Public Service Commission, and the Anti Corruption Commission became prominent casualties of this debasement process. Corruption became rampant, and money and hired muscle-men became the mainstay for winning elections. Politics became just another line of (immoral and often illegal) business, a lucrative way of making money, misusing state and government offices.

By January 2007, this process of political degeneration led Bangladesh to a stalemate and deadly confrontation, prompting the armed forces to intervene, disband the incumbent CTG, and put in place a regime (on January 11, 2007 and hence popularly known as the 1/11 regime), with a wider agenda and a longer time frame. In addition to the task of holding elections, the 1/11 regime embarked on an anti-corruption drive, reform of constitutional bodies, and some other reforms (such as separation of judiciary from administration, improving transparency of governance, etc.).

Most importantly, the 1/11 regime took up the problematic task of reforming politics. To this end, it promoted formation of new parties and encouraged groups within existing political parties to initiate inner party reform, including disposing off their current leaders. To facilitate the latter task, the government also engaged in selective prosecution of political leaders for corruption. Unfortunately the political reform attempts by the 1/11 regime did not prove successful. In particular, its “minus-two” operations ultimately backfired and ended up making the regime itself a hostage in the hands of the two leaders it wanted to dispose of! Ultimately, the experience forced the regime to abandon its hopes for

political reform and to search for a safe exit for itself by holding an election keeping the political landscape basically unchanged.²

The failure of the political reform attempts by the 1/11 regime is however now raising concerns as to whether the same old corrupt and criminal forces will dominate politics again and whether the losing side of the upcoming (December 29, 2008) election will engage in a rejection behavior, involving boycott of the parliament, street agitation, and continuous *hartals*, aimed at toppling the government before its due term is over, as happened after previous elections. These concerns are valid and point to the fact that Bangladesh democracy continues to be unstable.

Underlying problem of democracy in Bangladesh

The problem of instability of democracy is not unique to Bangladesh. Looking across developing countries, we see most of them suffering from similar instability, the root of which lies in the basic mismatch between the economic base and the political superstructure of capitalism in these countries.³

What is generally known as “democracy” is actually “bourgeois democracy,” the political superstructure of mature capitalism developing over the course of several centuries in tandem with the development of the capitalist economy itself, beginning in England, and west Europe, and then the USA. Even in England, women attained franchise only in 1918, and in the US, the women had to struggle to get the same till the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was passed in 1920. This simple fact illustrates the long and arduous process through which democracy, as we know it now, came into being. In view of the above genesis of democracy, it is not surprising that developing countries, with their relatively undeveloped economic base, are struggling with democracy.

The corollary of the above diagnosis is that the ultimate solution to the problem of instability of democracy in Bangladesh and in other developing countries lies in eradication of the above mismatch between base and superstructure through rapid economic growth. In more prosaic terms, when the people are well fed and well read, it is difficult to preside over their lives in undemocratic fashion. This is borne out by the recent experience of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and some countries of Latin America, which graduated to some form of democracy from authoritarian rule after a certain degree of transformation of their economic

base through rapid economic growth.

This does not mean that Bangladesh should give up on democracy and accept authoritarian rule to reach a high level of per capita income. It is true that rapid economic growth can be achieved under authoritarian rule, as the experience of the above mentioned countries and more recently of Viet Nam and China testifies. However, there are more examples of authoritarian regimes ending up in economic failures. The key to economic growth therefore lies not in authoritarian rule *per se*, but in other features of the society.⁴

The authoritarian route to economic development is particularly unsuitable for Bangladesh because of her particular history and political culture.⁵ As already noted, the very birth of Bangladesh is rooted in a struggle for democracy. Bangladesh's post-independence history demonstrates that it is difficult to subjugate her people under authoritarian rule for a long time. Bangladesh therefore has to achieve economic growth via democracy.

This compulsion however creates a “chicken-egg” problem for Bangladesh. On the one hand, she needs economic growth to have stable democracy. On the other hand, she needs democracy to achieve economic growth. Can Bangladesh break out of this apparently closed circle?

Fortunately, the international experience shows that some developing countries have been successful in having stable democracy despite their low level of per capita income. India is a prominent example in this regard. The glorious tradition of India's independence movement, the survival of its leadership (except Mahatma Gandhi), the depth of human capital (though not widely distributed), etc. have enabled India to follow the democratic path, despite her low per capita income level.⁶ Similarly, the presence of a mature political party, namely the African National Congress (ANC), has helped South Africa to have a stable democracy when it has faltered in many other African countries. These experiences show that under certain particular combinations of factors it may be possible to stabilize democracy despite low per capita income. The question is what such a combination for Bangladesh can be.

Bangladesh has already displayed some ingenuity by devising the system of Care Taker Government (CTG) as a way of holding elections. However, as noted above, the CTG has a mixed record, and ultimately failed to hold acceptable election in 2007. On the other hand, vigorous efforts by 1/11 regime to

reform Bangladesh politics ultimately failed. The main reason for this failure was the regime's wrong approach, focused on individuals and thereby subversive to the very integrity of the reform process. What was instead necessary was an institutional approach and to think of reforms which were impersonal, and hence impartial and democratic, and focused on process.

Proceeding from the institutional approach, and observing continuing problems of Bangladesh democracy despite the CTG system, Islam (2001) and others suggested earlier shortening of government tenure as a helpful measure to stabilize democracy. That proposal still remains on the table for discussion. This paper presents the additional idea of switching to the PR system as a concomitant measure to stabilize democracy in Bangladesh. Before discussing the specific ways in which the PR system can be helpful, it is useful to have some international perspectives on this system.

Proportional representation system: The international perspective

Prominent features of democracy as a political system include: (i) multiple political parties, representing different class and interest groups, (ii) freedom of speech and assembly, (iii) regular change of government through elections on the basis of adult franchise (political egalitarianism), and (iv) existence of a free press and media to facilitate all of the above.⁷ Despite these common features, there are many concrete variations in the way democracy is practiced even in developed capitalist countries.

One of the important variations lies in the system of representation. While there are many different systems of representation, these may be classified broadly into two types, namely the “Winner Takes All (WTA)” system and the “Proportional Representation (PR)” system. In general, under the WTA system the party winning the highest number of votes gets all the seats. Under the PR system, the seats are allocated among parties in proportion to votes they receive.⁸

Wide prevalence of the Proportional Representation (PR) system

Table 1 provides a list of countries, indicating whether they practice the PR or the WTA system, and providing some information regarding their income level and economic growth rate. A perusal of Table 1 leads to the following broad observations.

First, countries following the PR system seem to

outnumber those following the WTA system, particularly among the developed countries. This may come as a surprise to many in Bangladesh, because the country has been used to the WTA system all along, largely due to the influence of the British parliamentary system, after which the political systems of the countries colonized by Britain were modeled. That is why a large number of countries practicing the WTA system are actually British ex-colonies. The impression of universality of the WTA system has been further fostered by the fact that the USA, the country that dominates the international scene in many respects, also follows the WTA system, at least in the general elections.⁹

Second, there is a growing move towards the PR system. Some developed countries practicing the WTA system so far, such as New Zealand, are now switching to the PR system. Most of the transition countries, after noting the international experience of PR and WTA systems, have opted for the PR system. Even in the United Kingdom, there are now trends away from the WTA system and toward the PR system. For example, the composition of the newly formed Scottish Parliament and of the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies and also of local government bodies of Scotland and Northern Ireland are decided according to the PR system. It thus appears that the PR system is emerging as the system of choice for the 21st century.¹⁰

Third, though the PR system is more prevalent among developed countries, many developing countries use this system too. As Table 1 shows, there are a large number of low income developing countries of Africa and Latin America also practicing this system. Close to Bangladesh, Nepal has now opted for a partial PR system.

Fourth, an interesting question is whether the economic performance of a country differs depending on whether it practices the WTA or PR system. To the extent that the PR system can help countries have stable democracy, and stable democracy can promote economic growth, it is likely to have a positive influence on economic growth performance too.¹¹

Variations of the PR system

The international experience also shows considerable variation within the PR system. The important dimensions of these variations are as follows.

The first dimension concerns whether the system is based on 'Closed list' or 'Open list.' Under the former, each party's list is determined entirely by the

party itself, and general voters cannot change the ranking of candidates within the lists through their votes. By contrast, the Open List variant allows voters to influence the ranking.

The second dimension concerns the level at which the PR system is applied. The simplest and more prevalent practice is to apply it at the *national level*, i.e. to consider the entire country as a single constituency to which all the seats of the parliament belongs. Under this system, the number of votes received by each party is tallied at the national level and the total number of seats of the national parliament is divided among parties according to their vote shares.¹² The problem with the national level PR system is that it may not be able to ensure geographical representation. Largely to address this problem, the PR system in many countries is applied at a *sub-national level* (e.g. province or district). Under this arrangement, votes received by parties are tallied at the chosen sub-national level and seats belonging to that level are allocated among political parties in proportion to their vote shares. The higher the level at which the PR system is applied, the truer it is to the spirit of the PR system. On the other hand, the lower the level at which the PR system is applied, the closer it becomes to the WTA system.¹³

There is some association between variations along the two dimensions above. For example, the sub-national PR system is usually associated with the "Open List" variant. This is because in order for voters to influence the ranking of candidates within the list, they ideally need to know well all the candidates within the list. This becomes difficult if the PR system is national, in which case party lists will be long, containing as many names as are seats in the country's parliament, making it difficult for voters to have information about all these candidates in order to rank them satisfactorily. Under a sub-national level PR system, party lists can be shorter, containing as many names as are seats belonging to a particular sub-national level, thus making it easier for voters to formulate their own ranking. Under the "Closed List" variant, however, citizens vote basically for the party, and hence it does not matter much whether the list is long or short, thus making it easier to apply the system at the national level.

A third dimension of variation concerns whether proportional representation is supplemented by the WTA system, so that what emerges is a combination (or hybrid) of both. Japan is a prominent example of such a hybrid system. Such supplementation, in turn, can be done in several ways. One is to have two chambers of the parliament with one elected

according to the PR system and the other according to the WTA system. The second is to stick to a single chamber parliament, but to have two types of members, some elected following the PR system and others elected following the WTA system. A third option is to combine the above two and have at least one of the chambers have both WTA and PR members. The latter in turn can be done in two ways. One is to have WTA seats added to the PR seats. This is supplementation in the form of *addition*. The second is supplementation in the form of *substitution*, so that the total number of seats in the Parliament is kept unchanged. It is interesting that Nepal has now opted for a hybrid system.

A fourth dimension of the variation of the PR system concerns whether the representation is implemented in the form of single transferable vote (STV) or single non-transferable vote (SNTV) and cumulative voting. These are more complicated systems, which may not be too relevant for Bangladesh and hence are not discussed in this paper.¹⁴

Thus it is clear that the PR system is widely prevalent, growing in popularity, and offers a wide range of variation and flexibility, so that a country can customize the system according to its conditions and needs. We may now turn to the question of concrete ways in which the PR system may help to stabilize democracy in Bangladesh.

Potential merits of the PR system for Bangladesh

A close analysis shows that the PR system can exert a stabilizing influence on Bangladesh democracy along the following channels.

a) Prevent large impact of small changes

Bangladesh's recent political history has been mainly a history of rivalry between two political camps led by *Awami League (AL)* and *Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)*.

Table 2 provides some information on vote shares of major political parties in Bangladesh's recent elections. It may be noted that although in the historic 1970 elections AL got 160 of 162 seats (98.8 percent) from East Pakistan, in terms of vote share, AL received 74.9 percent. The progressive *National Awami Party (NAP)* received 1.8 percent and Independents received 3.4 pct. The rest went to various religious and rightist parties. This shows that, even at the height of Bengali nationalism, there was about a quarter of voters who did not vote for AL.¹⁵ AL fell into a crisis in the post August 1975 coup

years, so that AL's vote share decreased to 24.55 percent in 1979 election. However, AL has since recovered and has increased its vote share in successive elections, reaching 33.33, 37.44, and 40.13 percent in 1991, 1996, and 2001, respectively. BNP, on the other hand, started off in 1979 with 41.16 percent of vote share, which decreased to 30.81 percent in 1991, and then increased to 33.61 in 1996. In 2001 BNP contested as a part of the 4-party alliance (*Jote*), which together won 47.03 percent of vote.¹⁶

The situation of roughly equal electoral strength implies that under the WTA system small changes in the vote share can lead to very large and unexpected changes in election outcomes. For example, between 1991 and 1996, BNP *increased* its vote share from 30.81 to 33.61 percent; yet its number of seats *decreased* from 140 to 116. More dramatically, between 1996 and 2001 AL's vote share *increased* from 37.44 to 40.13 percent, and yet its number of seats collapsed from 146 to 62! This illustrates two disturbing features. The first is the fact of *amplification*: Relatively small changes in vote shares can lead to very large changes in the number of seats. The second and more striking aspect is *reversal*: The outcome in terms of number of seats often moves in *opposite* direction to that of the outcome in terms of vote share. In short, the WTA system not only amplifies the impact of small changes in vote shares, it does so in such a violent manner that even the direction of outcome sometimes gets reversed.

By contrast, the PR system rules out any reversal, as it guarantees that the outcome in terms of number of seats will move in the same direction as do vote shares. Second, the PR system also rules out amplification. The changes in the number of seats will be exactly proportional to the changes in vote shares. Thus while WTA exacerbates instability, the PR system promotes stability.

Through this stabilizing influence, the PR system can also provide more predictability of the outcomes, allowing everybody to adjust their expectations and actions. In the context of Bangladesh this means that rival political camps can be sure of continued robust presence of each other in the national parliament, hence accept the reality that neither will be able to marginalize (let alone annihilate) the other. Accordingly, they may become more agreeable to sharing of power, sequentially, depending on election results, and also contemporaneously, within the framework of the parliament, through its various committees, as provided by the Constitution. Thus,

rival political camps may be forced to accept the necessity of cohabitation and cooperation rather than engaging in a fight to the death. The entire dynamic of Bangladesh politics may therefore change for the better.

The changed geo-political conditions have made it easier for such accommodation and cohabitation. Though the opposing political camps of Bangladesh differ with regard to their stance regarding nationalism and religion, they do not differ radically with regard to main economic policy issues. Hence succession of one by the other in power would not result in fundamental changes in the economic direction of the country. However, even within the broadly agreed parameters, opposing political camps can make a difference, and they can therefore engage in a healthy competition, and this competition can work for the betterment of the country.

b) Reduce objective scope and subjective incentives for manipulation and abuse

The very fact that the PR system prevents large changes in outcome arising from small changes in vote shares implies that it also reduces the objective scope for and effect of manipulation. In general, the marginal cost (broadly defined) of manipulation and abuse increases very steeply, so that the total cost of large changes in vote shares may prove to be prohibitively high. Yet, without large changes in vote shares it will not be possible to bring about appreciable changes in election outcomes. Thus the objective scope for manipulation and abuse of the election system will decrease.

Second, the subjective pressure for manipulation and abuse will also decrease. The PR system severs the direct link between the local vote outcome and whether or not local political leader gets elected to the parliament. Hence local political actors will not have as much stake in the local voting outcomes as they have now. As a result, they may not be as desperate to influence the local voting outcomes as they are under the WTA system.

The decrease in the objective scope and the subjective pressure for manipulation and abuse of the voting process will undercut the importance of muscle power and money. Elections under PR therefore may not be as dependent on *mastans* as they are now. Furthermore, under the PR system, there will be no scope and incentive to manipulate election through resetting the boundaries of constituencies (gerrymandering).

c) Improve the quality of election campaign

To the extent that the election will no longer be about local candidates, the quality of the election campaign will improve. The attention will now be focused on national issues and the role of particular parties with regard to national issues. In other words, while the WTA lowers the attention from the national to the local, the PR system may help raise the attention from the local to the national level.

Also, the WTA system creates pressures for formation of pre-election alliances, forcing political parties often to make compromises that are unwarranted from the point of view of both the political parties themselves and the nation. By contrast, under the PR system, there is no necessity for parties to form pre-election alliances.¹⁷ They can therefore contest on the basis of their distinctive platforms or manifestoes, and feel free to highlight differences among themselves and test their true strength without any restraint. Such a “clean” campaign, together with a focus on the national issues, is likely to lead to an improvement in the election campaign.

d) Promote better quality candidates

A switch to the PR system may also help nomination and election of better, more qualified candidates to the parliament. The essential function of the parliament is enactment of laws concerning national issues. This function requires certain special qualities, including breadth of knowledge, ability to engage in national level discussion, and conviction and capacity to defend national interests. Unfortunately, the current WTA system is often leading to nomination and election of parochial and wrong kind of people to the parliament. Political parties are often becoming hostages to local level *mastans* who are assuring “delivery” of their constituencies. The system has therefore promoted criminalization of politics in Bangladesh.

The PR system, by contrast, may create greater scope and justification for nominating better quality candidates. People all over the country will vote for the same party list. Hence parties will feel pressured to include in their lists people with national reputation. It is generally people with exceptional qualities who are likely to be nationally reputed.

Through a feedback process, the PR system may encourage people of better quality to join political

parties and be active in them, because it will be easier for parties to provide recognition to such persons by including them in their lists of candidates for the parliament. Thus, while the WTA system conduces to debasement and coarsening of candidates, the PR system may generate a reverse process, a process towards upliftment and refinement, and towards gathering in the national parliament national talent from different spheres of life.¹⁸

e) Strengthen political parties

The PR system may conduce to strengthening of political parties. Currently, the WTA system is exerting a *centrifugal force* on the political parties, often pulling them in as many directions as are there constituencies, and thereby weakening them. The PR system is likely to change the dynamics and generate a *centripetal* force strengthening the political parties.

Under PR, the election will be on the basis of party lists and not individual candidates in individual constituencies. The probability of candidates on the list getting into the parliament increases if the party as a whole gets more votes nationally. Hence the party as a whole has to work for votes, and the process is likely to lead to more cohesion within parties.

The PR system will also undercut the tendency towards running as renegades by people who do not get nomination (i.e. not included in party lists), because people wanting to do so will now have to form a party, get registered with the Election Commission in time, etc. It will be difficult and late to cross these hurdles by the time parties make up their lists. This feature of the PR system should also work to strengthen the parties.

It has been already noted how the PR system may give parties the scope to reassert their right to select candidates and not be hostages to local actors. With “right” however comes “responsibility.” While under WTA it is basically the responsibility of individual local candidates to come out as winners from respective constituencies, under the PR system, the responsibility falls more on the party leadership to make the party list win by garnering more votes. This two-fold necessity of selecting good candidates and having the entire party behind the chosen list is likely to force the party to promote inner party democracy, because without the list chosen through a democratic, fair, and transparent process within the party, it will be difficult to attain consensus and to mobilize the entire party behind the list.¹⁹

Though Bangladesh political parties have the unfortunate practice of concentrating all power in the hands of their supreme leaders, such a practice may not be sustainable under PR in the long run. Unless the entire party can participate in a meaningful and transparent way in preparing the party list of candidates, it will be difficult for the list to gain legitimacy and energize the rank and file. Also those wanting to be included in the party list will have to work harder for the party during the entire inter-election period so as to earn recognition and admiration within the party. The PR system may therefore empower party activists with a greater role in the party and in selection of party candidates for the parliament. The inner party life may therefore become more important. In particular, parties now may be forced to convene, at least once during every election cycle, their national conferences/congresses, in which the party list of candidates and party platform will be formulated. Holding party national conferences every election year will be a big improvement over the current practice of not holding such conferences for decades.

Thus, by making the party as a whole more responsible for election outcomes, by forcing the party to campaign as one candidate, and by promoting inner party democracy for formulation of party platforms and party lists of candidates, the PR system is likely to revive active party life and strengthen political parties.

f) Create better conditions for functioning of local governments

By ending the direct link between parliament members and individual constituencies, the PR system is likely to create more space and better conditions for the functioning of local governments.

One unintended negative consequence of the current WTA system has been weakening of local governments. The WTA system, by linking MPs to individual constituencies, imparts a *dual role* to MPs, because they are, on the one hand, supposed to deal with national issues, and on the other hand, represent particular constituencies. This dual role provides an objective basis for a conflict between MPs and local governments. While in more developed and law abiding countries, such duality may not be a problem, in countries such as Bangladesh, this dual role has become a serious hurdle to the development of local governments.

As Bangladesh’s experience shows, using their

leverage over the central government, MPs often marginalize local government, usurping the power that should belong, not only in theory but also in practice, to elected local government officials. During the *Jote* government of 2001-2006, this *de-facto* situation was to some extent even formalized and promoted through enactment of rules of business conferring much power to MPs over local affairs.

The PR system can bring about a radical change in this situation. By establishing a clear distinction between the roles of MPs and local governments, it will end the dual role of MPs, and thus ease the current conflict between MPs and local governments. The MPs elected through the PR system should assume more of a national personality, which actually accords better to their purported role of looking after national affairs from a national point of view. Local governments will be freed from the domination and suffocation by MPs, and get more space to function and flourish.

g) Be more inclusive

The PR system may also prove to be a more inclusive, because it will create a level playing field for minorities and small political parties to be represented in the parliament. The WTA system, by contrast, tilts the field in favor of larger groups and thus in a sense discriminates against small groups and parties.

For example, the current WTA system makes it difficult for various minority groups to be represented in the parliament, particularly if they are dispersed across the country. Similarly, the system prevents various small political parties from being represented, if they do not have geographically concentrated support base. The WTA system creates the “wasted vote” problem, which refers to the fact that under the system many do not want to vote for smaller parties because their candidates do not have a chance to get the highest number of votes in a particular constituency. Voting for such “unviable” candidates objectively amounts to wasting of votes. This deprives minority groups and small political parties from the opportunity to muster, test, and develop their electoral strength. The WTA system therefore reinforces the importance of the majority groups and handicap, diminish, or even exclude smaller groups of the society. Unfortunately, such exclusion in representation for a prolonged period may lead to socio-economic and overall neglect of these groups, which may in turn lead them to apathy and discontent.

Under the PR system minority groups and smaller

parties may represent themselves in the parliament in accordance to their numerical strength, no matter whether they are geographically dispersed or concentrated. These groups and parties can pursue their interests and demands more freely and directly, without having to depend on bigger parties. The PR system may thus encourage small groups and parties to channel their grievances and energy through the parliament rather than through un-parliamentary means. The national parliament can therefore be more truly national in terms of representation.

h) Be more just and conducive to peace

As a consequence of the features mentioned above, the PR system may prove to be more fair and just. First, as already noticed, the PR system reduces the role of chance or fluke in election outcomes. The actual outcome is firmly based on vote shares, and there is no scope for a party to lose out even after getting more votes. Hence, the outcome will appear to be fair and easier to accept. Second, PR provides everybody with equal chance to be represented, no matter whether s/he belongs to the majority or minority groups and to large or small political party. The system will therefore prove to be more just from this point of view too. A system that is more just is also likely to be more peaceful.

Overall, the PR system therefore holds considerable potential for stabilizing democracy in Bangladesh.

Potential problems of the PR system for Bangladesh

The above listed possible merits of PR system for Bangladesh do not mean that there are no potential problems with the system. In the following, we discuss some of these problems and what can be done to mitigate them.

Issue of geographical representation

One of the problematic features of the PR system, as mentioned earlier, concerns geographical representation. Although an individual party, in drawing up its party list, is likely to include candidates from different parts of the country, to draw votes from all parts of the country, it is not certain how many seats it will ultimately get. Hence individual political parties cannot guarantee uniform and comprehensive geographical representation through their lists. This applies no matter whether party lists are Closed or Open. It is quite possible that when elected MPs from all parties are taken together, the parliament may turn out to be geographically

quite representative. However, this outcome is not guaranteed.

The problem of geographical representation may not be that serious for Bangladesh, given its small physical size and relatively homogenous population. The PR system applied at the national level can therefore work quite well for her. However, if necessary, further measures may be taken to address the issue of geographical representation. One of these, as mentioned earlier, is to apply the PR system at a sub-national level. In Bangladesh, for example, such a sub-national level may be the former divisions, namely Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, and Sylhet. Assuming that the divisions are of equal size in terms of number of voters, and assuming a parliament of 300 members, each division will have 50 seats. The votes can then be tallied at the division level and 50 seats of each division may be apportioned among parties in accordance to their vote share in the division. Such a system will guarantee 50 representatives from each division. To the extent that the divisions also represent Bangladesh's regions, such a system may go a long way to ensure geographical representation in the parliament.

One may feel tempted to go further in this direction and take districts as the sub-national level. However, with about 60 districts, each will have just 5 seats. Application of the PR system to such a small number of seats will result in serious "rounding" problems and hence not prove satisfactory.

More importantly, as mentioned earlier, the smaller the sub-national unit chosen for application of the PR system, the more of its merits is lost. For example, the smaller the unit, the more tied the candidates become to the locality and the outcome of local votes, and hence stronger becomes the incentive for local political actors to manipulate, and to resort to money, muscle power, and other malpractices necessary for such manipulation. Similarly, the smaller the sub-national unit, the more limited becomes the system's capacity to create space for effective functioning of local governments, to be inclusive, etc. Thus application of the PR system to sub-national level as a way to ensure geographical representation has its own problems.

Another way to ensure geographical representation, as mentioned earlier, is to opt for a hybrid variant that combines the PR system with WTA system. Essentially there is a trade-off between the WTA and PR systems, and different hybrid variants discussed earlier represent different compromise points along this trade-off. The more the system leans towards

WTA the more it gains in terms of geographical representation but loses the benefits of the PR system. The converse is true when the system leans towards PR system applied to the national level. It is for individual countries to take stock of their respective situation and decide.

So far as Bangladesh is concerned, a switch to the PR system as a way to elect the main chamber of the parliament may indeed be counter balanced by introduction of another chamber that will be elected following the WTA system. However, this may undercut many of PR's stabilizing influence that provides the rationale for the switch away from the WTA system in the first place. Hence instead of creating a separate chamber and/or adding WTA members to the PR members in the single-chamber parliament, Bangladesh may think of other options. One such option may be to create a *National Forum of Upazilla Chairperson* and use that forum as a counter-weight to a parliament elected through the PR system. For example, the budget may require the approval of this Forum. Such an arrangement may be more expeditious than creating a new chamber of the parliament. This option may help strengthen local governments and not create ambiguities in the role of MPs.

Thus, though the PR system has an issue with respect to ensuring geographical representation, there are many ways around this problem, and Bangladesh can apply its own ingenuity and find the solution that is most appropriate for her local conditions, taking relevant international experience into account.

Issue of frequent changes in the government (instability of the government)

Another contention that is often made against the PR system is that it may lead to unstable governments. This contention refers to the fact that by being more inclusive the parliament elected through the PR system may also prove to be more fractious, with many small parties, and no party gaining absolute majority. Such a fractious parliament will have several consequences. First, only coalition governments will be possible. Second, such coalitions will collapse frequently because of switch of allegiance by parties. Third, large parties will become hostage to small parties, whose support they will need to form government.

However, these consequences cannot be avoided even under the WTA system, if the underlying political realities promote them. An example is provided by neighboring India, which used to have

strong single party governments for a long time, but now has a fractured parliament and can therefore have only coalition governments, and is also witnessing frequent collapses of government. All these changes came about even though the Indian parliament continues to be elected following the WTA system as before. Thus the reason for the changes lies not in the election system, but in the fact that the underlying political landscape of India has changed.

Similarly, political “horse trading” is endemic to the WTA system too. In Bangladesh itself, we saw in 1996 AL offering cabinet posts to two very small parties in order to forge a majority and form a government. Similarly in 2001 the BNP forged a pre-election coalition with religious parties to win the election. Also, parties can switch allegiance and cause coalition governments to collapse under the WTA system too, as happened in India several times in recent years.

The good thing about PR, as noted before, is that there is no necessity for pre-election political horse trading. Instead, such trading under it can take place after accurate values of “horses” (political parties) have been revealed through the vote shares received by them. Also the inclusiveness of the PR system means that there will be more “horses” for trade. By contrast, the WTA system, as noted earlier, by encouraging pre-election coalitions, often leaves true values of individual “horses” murky, and it also bars many smaller “horses” from entering the trade altogether! So even horse trading under the PR system will be a better one than it is under the WTA system.

Finally, it should be noted that *unstable government* is not the same as *unstable democracy*, and the former may be better than the latter. The best example is probably provided by Italy, where collapse of coalition governments is a frequent (almost annual) phenomenon. Yet the Italian democracy is stable; the rise and fall of governments does not harm the general functioning of her economy and society. It should be noted that rise and fall of coalition governments at least imply that all political parties are using the parliament as the main theater of action. In Bangladesh we have the unfortunate situation where the opposition boycotts the parliament and resorts to harmful for the economy and the society street agitation to topple the government from outside. The PR system can do a great service to the nation if it can bring all parties to the parliament and keep them there.

‘Nomination trade’

A third contention against the PR system is that it may encourage people to buy their way into party lists. In other words, the worry here is that PR may intensify “nomination trade.” We already noticed nomination trade that occurs under the current WTA system. However, under the WTA system there is an outside check. The people “buying” nomination have to prove their “worth” by actually getting elected from respective constituencies. By contrast, the PR system lacks such a direct outside check, because a person making his or her way into the party list can just piggy back on the entire party. This opportunity to piggy back may strengthen incentives to buy nomination and thus debase the PR system.

However, PR also has some antidotes that may help to prevent “nomination trade.” As noted earlier, the PR system increases the responsibility of the party leadership in making the party list win. A failure by the party list to garner expected share of votes will signify a failure of the party leadership in a much sharper way than it does now, where the responsibility of winning falls on the shoulder of individual candidates. Therefore, under the PR system, the party leadership will feel compelled to share this responsibility with the entire party. This necessity, as noted earlier, is likely to force the party leadership to follow a transparent and democratic inner party procedure for formulation of the party list, rather than to engage in nomination trade.

For this antidote to work, however, it is necessary to have frequent elections, so that the party leaderships can be held accountable. That is one reason why shortening of the government tenure is necessary. The current five year term is too long. Such a long term delay accountability and makes the opposition impatient and encourages it to look for extra parliamentary ways to bring down the government before completion of the term. A shortened term will encourage the opposition to have patience and stay with and work through the parliament. A switch to the PR system, together with more frequent elections, is therefore likely to help stabilize Bangladesh democracy in more than one ways.

Concluding remarks

This paper argues that a switch to the Proportional Representation (PR) system, combined with shortening of the government tenure, holds the key to stabilization of democracy in Bangladesh.

The PR itself has many variants. The one to be chosen for Bangladesh has to be simple and potent. This suggests that the PR system of the “Closed List” variety and applied to the national level (i.e., treating the entire country as the single constituency) may be more suitable for Bangladesh. However, the issues of customization of the PR system to Bangladesh’s conditions can be discussed in more detail when the necessity for a switch to this system in principle is agreed upon.

There is a view that PR may be difficult for Bangladesh voters to understand and follow because of their long familiarity with the WTA system. However, Bangladesh voters are also known to have generally voted going by party symbols. In that sense, the switch to the PR system may not present as big a psychological barrier as it is presented by this view. Voting for party-lists may not be all that different from voting for party symbols, and in fact, party-lists will come with party-symbols. Thus the PR system may be more in synch with what the people of Bangladesh actually want to practice.

The change from the WTA to PR system has two aspects. The first concerns the “form” or the formal aspect of it, namely the necessary changes in the Constitution and the People’s Representation Order (PRO). This is more easily done. The second aspect concerns the “content,” which will be determined by how political parties and the people through their own actions make use of the newly created form. Bangladesh’s own experience with the CTG illustrates this distinction. The introduction of CTG created a new form, which had the potential to hold a new content. However, actions by political parties

debased the content and thus frustrated the purpose of this form. Furthermore, validating the law of unintended consequences, the introduction of CTG led to a process of politicization of the top judiciary. The history with CTG therefore illustrates that design of a process is important in determining the direction it will take and the outcome it will produce.

The formal switch from the WTA to the PR system will create a form which the political parties and people will have to supply with necessary content through their own conduct. Of course, it cannot be expected that political parties and political culture of the country will change overnight. What is important is that steps such as shortening of the government-term and switch to the PR system will trigger some processes which will force the political parties to respond in such a way that over time will change their conduct for the better.

It would have been better if the two proposed reforms, namely shortening of government term and switch to the PR system, were discussed and adopted during the 1/11 regime so that the ninth Parliament could be elected under these reforms. Unfortunately that did not happen. The best thing now to do is to lay out the rationale for these reforms, so that the people can see it more clearly as they experience the upcoming election (of December 29, 2008) and its aftermath. Many in Bangladesh have already rallied behind the demand for a shortened government term. The support for the PR system is also becoming discernible.²⁰ It may be hoped that with more information, clarification, and advocacy, the popular support for the switch to the PR system will grow and lead to its eventual acceptance.

Table 1

Representation systems across the world

<i>Country</i>	<i>Representation System</i>	<i>Initial per capita income</i>	<i>Per capita income in 2000</i>	<i>Average annual growth rate</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Algeria	PR	3,843	5,753	1.01	Party list
Angola	PR		1,975		Party list
Antigua and Barbados	WTA	5,143*	14,065	3.41	
Austria	PR	8,444	27,000	2.95	Party list
Argentina	PR	7,838	11,332	0.93	Party list
Bahamas	WTA	16,911*	19,088	0.41	
Bangladesh	WTA	1,348**	1,851	1.60	
Barbados	WTA	7,039	16,086	2.09	
Belgium	PR	8,070	24,662	2.83	Party list
Belize	WTA	3,439*	6,015	1.88	
Bhutan	WTA	227*	828	4.41	
Bolivia	PR	2,431	2,929	0.47	Mixed
Botswana	WTA	1,168*	7,257	6.28	
Bulgaria	PR		7,258		Party list
Burkina Faso	PR	768	933	0.49	Party list
Burundi	PR	677	699	0.08	Party list
Cambodia	PR	1086*	514	-2.46	Party list
Canada	WTA	10,576	26,821	2.35	
Cape Verde	PR	1,417	4,983	3.19	Party list
Chile	PR	5,086	11,430	2.05	Party list
Colombia	PR	2,819	6,080	1.94	Party list
Costa Rica	PR	4,513	8,342	1.55	Party list
Cyprus	PR	5,413*	20,457	4.53	Party list
Czech Republic	PR	13,447***	13,617	0.13	Party list
Denmark	PR	11,438	27,827	2.25	Party list
Dominica	WTA	4,356*	8,197	2.13	
Dominican Republic	PR	2,080	6,497	2.89	Party list
Equatorial Guinea	PR	970	6,495	4.87	Party list
Estonia	PR	11,380***	11,081	-0.27	Party list
Ethiopia	WTA	400	725	1.50	
Finland	PR	7,785	22,741	2.72	Party list
Gambia	WTA	722	954	0.70	
Germany	PR	13,686*	25,061	2.04	Mixed
Ghana	WTA	412	1,392	3.09	
Grenada	WTA	2,937*	5,896	2.35	
Guinea-Bissau	PR	493	762	1.10	Party list
Guyana	PR		3,733		Party list
Hungary	PR	5,721*	11,383	2.32	Mixed
Iceland	PR	8,381	25,795	2.85	Party list
India	WTA	892	2,644	2.75	
Indonesia	PR	1,071	3,772	3.20	Party list
Ireland	PR	5,294	24,948	3.95	Preference voting

Israel	PR	6,745	22,237	3.03	Party list
Italy	PR	7,167	22,487	2.90	Mixed
Jamaica	WTA	3,477	4,521	0.66	
Kenya	WTA	1,179	1,268	0.18	
Latvia	PR		8,998		Party list
Lesotho	PR	576	1,834	2.94	Mixed
Liberia	PR	2,004*	472	-4.71	Party list
Liechtenstein	PR				Party list
Luxemburg	PR	12,920	48,217	3.35	Party list
Malawi	WTA	461	839	1.51	
Malaysia	WTA	1,801	11,406	4.72	
Malta	PR	2,997*	18,863	6.32	Preference voting
Mexico	PR	3,719	8,082	1.96	Mixed
Micronesia	WTA	2,297*	3,782	1.68	
Moldova	PR		2,218		Party list
Morocco	WTA	1,299	3,720	2.67	
Nepal	WTA	800	1,421	1.45	
New Zealand	PR	12,063	20,423	1.33	Mixed
Namibia	PR	5,256*	5,269	0.01	Party list
Netherlands	PR	10,463	26,293	2.33	Party list
Netherlands Antilles	PR	11,965*	14,014	0.53	Party list
New Caledonia	PR				Party list
Nicaragua	PR	4,428	3,438	-0.63	Party list
Nigeria	WTA	1,106	1,074	-0.07	
Norway	PR	9,473	33,092	3.18	Party list
Pakistan	WTA	801	2,477	2.86	
Palau	WTA	8,692**	9,357	0.37	
Papua New Guinea	WTA	2,150*	4,355	2.38	
Paraguay	PR	2,510	4,965	1.72	Party list
Peru	PR	3,129	4,205	0.74	Party list
Poland	PR	3,973*	8,611	2.61	Party list
Portugal	PR	3,689	17,323	3.94	Party list
Romania	PR	1,276*	5,211	4.80	Party list
Saint Kitts and Nevis	WTA	3,757*	14,393	4.58	
Saint Lucia	WTA	2,877*	6,839	2.93	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	WTA	2,540*	7,672	3.75	
Samoa	WTA	2,591*	3,071	0.57	
San Marino	PR				Party list
Sao Tome and Principe	PR	1,006	1,300	0.86	Party list
Singapore	WTA	4,219	29,434	4.98	
Slovakia	PR	9,874	9,697	-0.18	Party list
Slovenia	PR	15,202	18,206	1.82	Party list
Solomon Islands	WTA	1,988*	2,013	0.04	
South Africa	PR	4,927	8,226	1.29	Party list
South Korea	WTA	1,458	15,702	6.12	
Spain	PR	4,880	19,536	3.53	Party list
Sri Lanka	PR	866	4,047	3.93	Party list
Suriname	PR	3,704	4,753	0.84	Party list

Swaziland	WTA	2,785*	8,517	3.80	
Sweden	PR	11,065	25,232	2.08	Party list
Switzerland	PR	15,253	28,831	1.60	Party list
Tanzania	WTA	502	817	1.23	
Tonga	WTA	1,054*	3,398	3.98	
Trinidad and Tobago	WTA	6,274	14,770	2.90	
Turkey	PR	2,250	5,715	2.36	Party list
Tuvalu	WTA				
Uganda	WTA	873	1,058	0.48	
United Kingdom	WTA	10,323	24,666	2.20	
United States	WTA	12,892	34,365	2.48	
Uruguay	PR	6,143	10,740	1.41	Party list
Venezuela	PR	6,092	7,323	0.46	Mixed
Wallis and Futuna	PR				Party list
Yemen	WTA	974***	1,082	1.06	
Zambia	WTA	910	866	-0.12	
Zimbabwe	WTA	2,298	3,256	0.88	

Sources:

1) Information regarding income is from Penn World Tables, Version 6.2 compiled by Alan Heston, Robert Summers, and Bettina Atten at Center for International Comparison of Production, Income, and Prices at the University of Pennsylvania, September 2006 (http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt62/). Growth rates are calculated by the author. Information regarding representation system is taken from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plurality_voting_system and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional_representation_system) as of November 22, 2007.

Notes:

- 1) PR and WTA stand for 'Proportional Representation' and 'Winner Takes All.'
- 2) Per capita income refers to the RGDPCH variable of Penn World Tables and refer to real GDP per capita measured as chain series in constant prices in terms of \$ of 2000.
- 3) Initial income refers generally to that of 1960. However, for some countries it refers to income in 1970, 1980, and 1990, and these are marked by *, **, and ***, respectively.
- 4) The growth rate is average annual compound growth rate for the respective periods.
- 5) Comments are mainly with regard to the type of Proportional Representation practiced in particular countries.

Table 2

Percentage of votes and number of seats received by major political parties in recent elections in Bangladesh

Year	Awami League (AL)		BNP		Jatiyo Party (JP)		Other	
	Vote (%)	Seats	Vote (%)	Seats	Vote (%)	Seats	Vote (%)	Seats
1979	24.55	39	41.16	207			34.29	54
1991	33.33	100	30.81	140	11.81	35	27.30	25
1996	37.44	146	33.61	116	16.23	31	12.72	7
2001	40.13	62	47.03*	216	7.25	14	5.59	8

Source: Choudhury (2006a, and 2006b)

Endnotes

1. See Islam (1980) for a more detailed discussion of these issues.
2. See Sobhan (2007a and 2007b) for some *ex-ante* discussions of exit problems of the 1/11 regime.
3. See Islam (2007) for a more detailed discussion of this issue.
4. See Islam (2004) for a more detailed discussion of this issue.
5. This dependence of the current and future on the past and on slow- or unchanging characteristics of a country is often referred to in the literature as *path dependence*.
6. Many argue that democracy has cost India in terms of economic growth. However, democracy has helped India to hold together, and is now not preventing India from enjoying growth acceleration when necessary global opportunities have presented themselves at India's doorsteps. Nevertheless, even the Indian democracy remains far from perfect. See Sen (1999) for an evaluation of the role of democracy in India.
7. There are limitations to each of these under prevailing democracy, though that is not the main issue for this paper. Also, as mentioned earlier, the democracy under discussion is capitalist (or bourgeois) democracy.
8. For general discussions on the WTA and PR systems, see Amy (2000 2002), Barber (2000), Colmer (2003, 2004), Cox (1997), Hill (2003), Linton and Southcott (1998), and Loenen (1997).
9. It may be noted that the USA itself was, in a sense, British colony.
10. The primaries of the US Democratic Party actually use the proportional system, and that was one reason why the Democratic Party primaries of 2008 proved to be more interesting than primaries of the Republican Party, which still uses the WTA system
11. A more firm answer to this question however requires a more thorough investigation.
12. Of course, rounding is an issue, and there are many methods of rounding and allocation

from which to choose.

13. In the extreme case, when single seat constituencies are chosen as the sub-national level, the PR system becomes equivalent to the WTA system!
14. Interested readers can see the references cited in the previous footnote.
15. See Wikipedia (2008) for details.
16. See Choudhury (2006a, 2006b) for more discussion of Bangladesh's recent vote arithmetic.
17. Parties can always think about forming alliances after the elections are over when everybody knows everybody's true electoral strengths.
18. Put differently, it may be said that under the current WTA system in Bangladesh, "bad politicians are driving out good politicians," an outcome that is analogous to what happens in the currency market where "bad money drives out good money."
19. The PR system may therefore generate a process something similar to that of party primaries in the US. However, unlike the US, where primaries are held to choose only the party candidate for presidency, in Bangladesh the party primaries will have to focus on the entire list of candidates for the parliament.
20. See for example, Rashid (2007).

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