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Outside the Institutional Box: Why Political Parties Use Pre-electoral Violence in Bangladesh

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

Committee in charge:

Pradeep K. Chhibber, Chair

Robert L. Powell

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Abstract

Outside the Institutional Box: Why Political Parties Use Pre-electoral Violence in Bangladesh

by

Nafisa Tahmina Akbar

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Berkeley

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Under what conditions do political parties use pre-electoral violence as a campaign strategy in Bangladesh? Pre-electoral violence has been a consistently regular precursor to each and every election in Bangladesh, with the most recent national election on January 5, 2014, being one of the bloodiest and most undemocratic. However, not all constituencies in Bangladesh experience the same level of pre-electoral violence. There are some like Dhaka - 8 that saw approximately 150 episodes of violence prior to the 2014 elections, while others like Gopalganj - 3 saw none. What explains this variation? In this paper, I argue and demonstrate using a negative binomial regression model as well as case study and interview data that the ways in which individuals interface with the state (either through the bureaucracy on their own or through the use of local leaders) and the level of information parties have on voter preferences impact the level of pre-electoral violence in constituencies across Bangladesh.

To Sumon, Inaya, and Nehan

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After I spent my first year in the program working throughout the day and at night, on the weekends, and during breaks, I quickly burned out and lost the ability to focus, think, and imagine. It was then that I started focusing on making some quality friends in California and actually enjoying myself. My friends have been integral to my work — it is because of them that I have been able to return to my dissertation with fresh eyes and a brain fully energized. But more importantly, these friends have helped me avoid succumbing to the depression that I experienced while in graduate school. I met you all at a time when I was very overwhelmed and could not help myself. Thank you for making me realize just how enjoyable life can actually be. A special thanks to Tanim Islam who bravely offered to read the first draft of my first chapter and then offered me critical feedback on work that was initially very poorly written.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Under what conditions do political actors use pre-electoral violence as a campaign repertoire? Bangladesh has been home to frequent episodes of pre-electoral violence perpetrated by political parties against either their opponents or the general public. On December 9, 2012, a local tailor named Bishwajit Das was brutally beaten and stabbed to death in Dhaka by cadres of the Chhatra League, the student arm of the Awami League. A skirmish had erupted between the Chhatra League cadres and members of their opposition, belonging to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led coalition. Seeing the public melee, Das attempted to run away, perhaps to find shelter and avoid getting involved or injured, like many others who were also standing nearby. Upon seeing Das run, the Chhatra League members started attacking and, eventually, killed Das thinking that the young Hindu man was running away because he was a supporter of the Jamaat-e-Islami, one of the opponents of the Awami League. Das' death later became the top headline on every news network in Bangladesh, which also brought to light the fact that members of the media as well as the police stood by and watched an innocent man die while political party members ran amok wielding weapons and attacking the very individuals who bring them to power – ordinary citizens.

And while Das' death is perhaps one of the most iconic recent acts of pre-electoral violence that occurred in Bangladesh, it is one of the more exceptional cases of pre-electoral violence. In general, pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh oftentimes comes in the form of political strikes, or *hartals*, where political parties protest in public spaces. More often than not, these *hartals* culminate in violent clashes between opposing party workers and law enforcement officers. The Awami League's primary opponent, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led a series of such *hartals* in 2013, claiming the lives of many Bangladeshis, including young children and injuring hundreds of others. During each *hartal*, members of the Jamaat-e-Islami, part of the BNP-led coalition, engaged in acts of violence that included arson, vandalism, and bombings, resulting in the injuries and deaths of many innocent individuals. When news reports of these violent *hartals* would subsequently break, the BNP would immediately claim that either the Awami League was responsible for these acts of violence to discredit the BNP or that the Jamaat had acted alone and without the BNP's consent. Regardless of who the primary perpetrator of any one particular act of violence was, *both* the Awami League and BNP, along with their respective coalition parties, participated in acts of pre-electoral violence all throughout 2013, repeatedly victimizing their own constituents and each other.

As a result, the most recent national election in Bangladesh, which occurred on January 5, 2014, was marked with unprecedented levels of pre-electoral violence, with acts of intimidation, arson, violent protests, kidnappings, and murders mottling the entire pre-election period.¹ However, these examples of violence are not unique to the most recent election. In fact, each of Bangladesh's elections have had their fair share of pre-electoral violence, making

¹ There are many forms of pre-electoral violence, and the purpose of such violence often differs depending on the type and timing of these acts of violence. This dissertation focuses on acts of violence that occur between the announcement of the election and the actual date of the election. Additionally, I use the term "pre-electoral violence" to mean episodes of violence (i.e. arson, vandalism, physical altercations, death, kidnappings, bombings, intimidation) that are perpetrated by political parties and used against either their opponents or the general public.

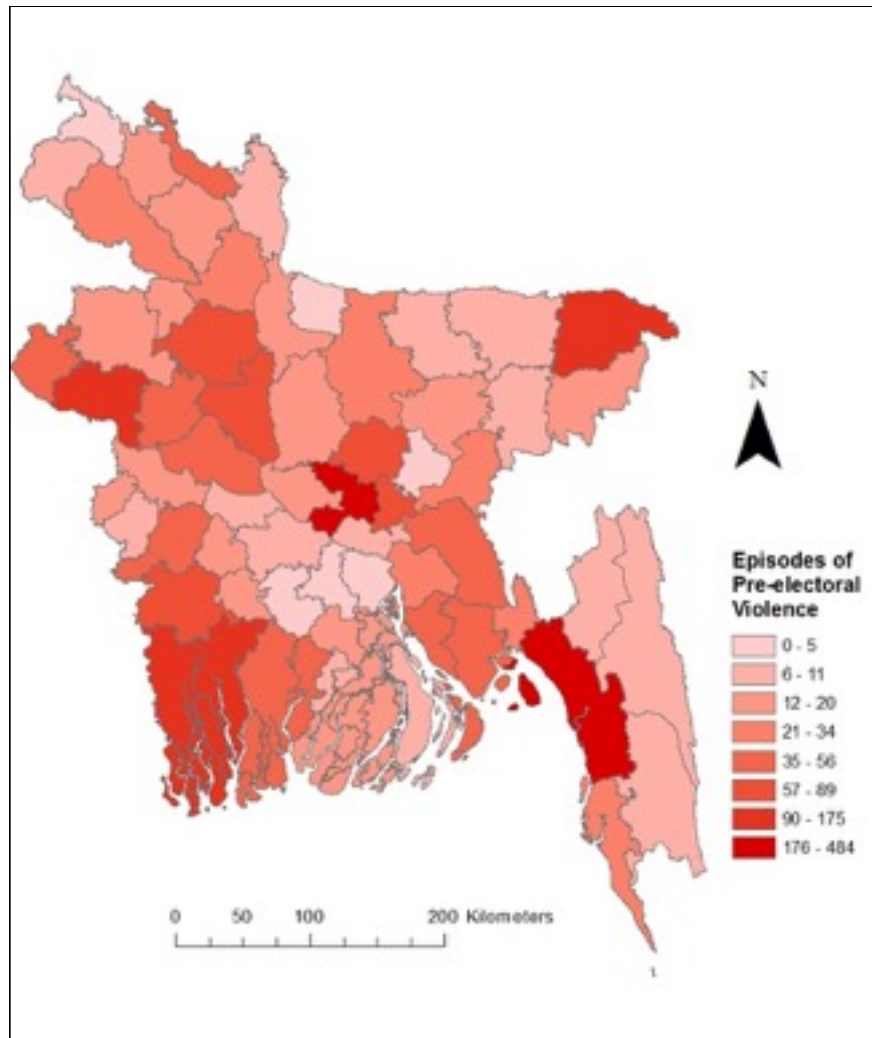
violence a regular opening act preceding elections in the country. Though the magnitude of violence was greater for this most recent election, Bangladesh has never seen a violence-free election and Bangladeshi political parties have not participated in an election *without* engaging in some act of violence, targeting their opposition as well as general voters. Since the country's independence in 1971, either the Awami League or the BNP have won the elections, all of which have had periods of violence as a precursor.²

Given the fact that elections are supposed to be a non-violent means to establishing power and resolving disputes in a democracy, the existence of pre-electoral violence is puzzling from a theoretical perspective. Unlike other regime types, democracy calls for systematic and institutional means of making political decisions through elections. And, as one of the basic requirements of democracy, elections replace the violent transfers of power found in more closed regime types. And so, if violence and elections are mutually exclusive, then why are Bangladeshi elections so violent? Despite the existence of a range of campaign repertoires such as patronage, bribery, propaganda, or others at their disposal, these two political parties have chosen to regularly use violence instead as a tool to campaign for elections. Pre-election violence is one of the most frequently occurring campaign tactics and both the Awami League and BNP have used aggression against voters to influence election outcomes consistently before each election. Why do political parties in Bangladesh choose to use pre-electoral violence to win elections when there are other campaign strategies at their disposal?

Pre-electoral violence, however, is not a phenomenon that occurs consistently across the various constituencies in Bangladesh. As the map below shows, some constituencies experience a much greater frequency of such violence while others witness little to none.

² Muhammad Hussain Ershad of the Jatiya Party served as president during the 1980s, which he was able to do through a bloodless coup that occurred on March 24, 1982. Thus, only the Awami League and BNP have actually won elections, democratic or otherwise.

Figure 1: Frequency of Episodes of Pre-electoral Violence in 2013 - 2014 across Districts in Bangladesh



Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Dainik Purbokone, Dainik Purbanchal, Dainik Sylhet, and Sonali Sangbad.

Therefore, pre-electoral violence, much like other forms of violence, is not a country-wide occurrence, but rather a subnational one. Take any case where pre-electoral violence occurs — such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, or India — and one will see that the frequency of episodes of violence varies throughout each case. Thus, in order to understand the conditions under which pre-election violence occurs, I aim to examine the variation within the case of Bangladesh to gain leverage on this subnational phenomenon.

In this dissertation, I argue that pre-electoral violence occurs in constituencies where there is a high level of uncertainty regarding voter preferences and the degree to which the

complexities of a cumbersome bureaucracy presents troubles to ordinary citizens. Moreover, I argue that, compared to other strategies, violence is an effective and efficient tactic to win votes when political parties face uncertainty. In the following pages, I outline the existing literature on the purpose of elections in a democracy, the relationship between parties and voters, and prior explanations of the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. Next, I explain the selection of Bangladesh and why it is an apt case for studying pre-electoral violence. I then articulate my argument and explain why some constituencies are more prone to pre-election violence. Following that section, I offer the important implications of my work. Finally, I finish the chapter describing my data and methodology and then outline the organization of the entire dissertation.

Literature Review

In the state regimes literature, democracy is often heralded as the more optimal alternative compared to its authoritarian counterpart. Instead of one particular individual or group of individuals who hold power, democracy allows the people to “rule” through either direct or indirect means. Based on the minimalist, procedural definition, a democracy is a system of governance where the people acquires the power to make political decisions and govern by struggling for the people’s vote (Schumpeter 1942). Thus, elections are one of the basic requirements of a democracy, through which the public determines representatives, policies, and makes other political decisions. As such, elections are what set democracies apart from authoritarian regimes by providing an institutional arrangement for decision-making and resolving political disputes (Bogdanor 1983, Katz 1997, Powell 2000).³ Therefore, elections are characterized by non-violence since they are the *alternative to violence* (Huntington 1968, Dahl 1971, Dahl 1989, Rummel 1995, Linz and Stepan 1996). Where there is democracy, there are elections and where there are elections, there should be no violence — at least in theory.

In reality, however, elections are not always free of violence. In particular, Bangladeshi elections are consistently violent, as I have described above. Similarly, in many other countries, the use of violence or coercion is a common occurrence prior to elections. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century U.S. and Great Britain, violence often marred elections consistently. Scholarship on Africa shows that Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe are just a few countries which political scientists have identified as suffering from pre-electoral violence (Boone 2011, Collier and Vicente 2010, Bratton and Masunungure 2006). Likewise, in India, elections are often characterized by the presence of political party *gundas* facilitating the voting process, the use of force or violence by parties against citizens, and the use of intimidation by parties to change

³ As these works also note, there are a number of different arrangements through which elections occur, some that require a majority vote, while others that require a plurality, and still other permutations related to procedure, system, and objective. While I have not focused on the various types of elections, the point to take away is that an election — the broad, general concept — is a tool used in democracies to allow citizens to come to political resolutions without the use of force or suppression.

voter preferences.⁴ So, while elections are viewed as integral to democracy, which supposedly allows for the civil, institutionalized settlement of political conflicts, evidence from across the world demonstrates that elections may actually be a focal point for the non-civil settlement of conflict.

In terms of party-voter relations, theories in political science have persistently outlined a symbiotic relationship, one where parties offer goods or services to their constituents in the hopes of being rewarded with votes in the subsequent election. If parties do not perform up to expectation of the general public, voters react by voting parties' representatives out and rewarding other parties that have performed or are offering some sort of benefit to voters. Based on this logic, we expect political parties to use positive incentives to lure voters, such as favorable policies and programs, goods or services, individual benefits, or even bribery. Conversely, the use of negative incentives, or disincentives, will only result in reprisal from the general public and parties and their candidates should not be voted in.

That the voter and the political party share a relationship of “give and take” is often an assumption used in some of the most significant works in political science. In their respective works on the processes of modernization and social mobility, both Karl Deutsch and Samuel Huntington discuss how modernization will ultimately lead to an electorate that not only participates politically, but will also be relevant enough to place pressure on government and express their political preferences through increased participation.⁵

Similarly, Robert Putnam's treatise on the demise of political involvement and strength of the US's democracy also makes the above assumptions on voting. Putnam writes that the American public no longer participates collectively, as evidenced by the decrease in the level of associations individuals make in society. It is due to this decrease in association that “social capital” — or public participation — has decreased in the US over time. What Putnam does not write directly is his assumption that society can influence government and achieve desired outcomes through participation and voting. Thus, according to Putnam, voting steers the government and elections are essentially in the hands of voters, not political parties or other agents of the state.

Others have argued that elections in democracies serve as a sort of “final exam” where the electorate can assess the performance of their representatives and make their preferences known. These elections allow the opposition an opportunity to step in should the incumbents fail to perform between elections (Campbell, Converse, and Miller 1966; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Shapiro 2014). Again, the assumption that underpins this very argument is the idea that the public can hold the political elite accountable, that they determine the terms of the voter-party/representative relationship, and that political leaders must take heed of what the public wants and needs. The same can be said for those who discuss partisanship, party cleavages, and the party alignment changes that occur over time (Duverger 1959; Campbell, Converse, and Miller 1966; Kitschelt 1995). In describing where parties stand in relation to one another as well

⁴ *Gunda* is a term used in both Bengali and Hindi that refers to thugs or gangsters, who are often active participants in the political arenas of Bangladesh and India.

⁵ Deutsch (1961), Huntington (1968).

as to their voters, the assumption is that voters place their desired representatives in power based upon promises or performance. So why do parties use violence as a campaign repertoire and how do they manage to emerge unscathed without being held accountable by voters?

The other, and perhaps more important, reason why the existence of pre-electoral violence is puzzling is because parties have access to a number of alternate campaign strategies. In Bangladesh, not only do political parties use violence as a campaign strategy to win elections, they often use violence *instead* of other campaign repertoires. Countless studies in the social sciences have articulated the attractiveness of various campaign strategies, or "non-programmatic strategies for winning and retaining office" that political parties use in the hopes of securing votes.⁶ Studies on countries in Africa, Latin America, and the rest of South Asia have described the very common practice of what is dubbed as "clientelism," where parties or particular politicians exchange goods or services with their constituents for votes. Most notably, Nicolas Van de Walle has written on the pervasive practice of clientelism in various countries in Africa, which keeps incumbents in power, regardless of their actual ability to provide for all constituents.⁷ Others have discussed the more direct buying of votes, which is also a common practice in new or weak democracies. Focusing on Latin America, scholars such as Susan Stokes and Simeon Nichter have debated who the beneficiaries of vote buying are among the electorate.⁸ Scholars have also studied programmatic campaigning, where politicians or parties will promise a better future to their constituents by outlining a set of policies that would benefit voters should they win the upcoming election. Each of these possible campaign tactics are examples of the number of alternatives to violence that are available to political parties.

If election outcomes are in the hands of the public and parties must cater to the needs of constituents, political parties must use positive incentives, otherwise voters will vote them out of office as a consequence. If the nature of the party-voter relationship is as such, then why do parties in places like Bangladesh use violence, intimidation, and threats? How do we explain this counter-intuitive behavior?

While not addressing why pre-electoral violence occurs, many scholars have, however, attempted to explain what pre-electoral violence causes. Michael Bratton studies what he coins "irregular modes of electioneering,"⁹ namely, vote buying and pre-electoral violence, and argues that violence can effectively depress turnout, as evidenced by his study on the 2007 elections in Nigeria. Specifically, Bratton identifies a dramatic reduction in voter turnout when party workers threaten voters with violence: when individuals are threatened with violence, their odds of voting are reduced by 52%.¹⁰ Similarly, in his study of the 2005 elections in Sri Lanka, John Hickman also argues that pre-electoral violence was effective in minimizing turnout in certain

⁶ Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco (2013), p. 6.

⁷ Van de Walle (2003), Van de Walle (2007).

⁸ Stokes (2005), Nichter (2008).

⁹ Bratton (2008), p. 621.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 626.

areas. In places where opponents were able to mobilize violence, candidates saw declines in their percentage of vote shares.¹¹ Others such as Toke Aidt, Miriam Golden, and Devesh Tiwari in their 2011 study discuss how criminal politicians who run for office often depress voter turnout in their constituencies. Criminal candidates are more adept when it comes to using intimidation as a means to sway voters, and as a result, such politicians are effective at reducing turnout rates.¹² Political machines may use violence prior to elections in attempts to manipulate election outcomes vis-à-vis voter turnout levels.

There are several important works in political science that have grappled with the causes of political violence. Some works, such as Varshney (2002), posit that a lack of social capital among groups often leads to violence, as can be seen in cases of Hindu-Muslim violence in India. Others, like Paul Brass, identify the critical roles political actors play in actually starting violence – what he terms as “institutionalized riot systems.”¹³ However, neither of these studies addresses the variation in terms of violence that political parties cause across cases in preparation for elections. In terms of understanding what causes pre-electoral violence specifically, a few scholars have argued that competition levels motivate political parties to use force. Focusing on violence that erupts between Hindus and Muslims in India, Steven Wilkinson has argued that political actors will use violence against Muslim minorities only in constituencies where such groups are not substantial in numbers to win candidates seats.¹⁴ Others, such as Ashish Chaturvedi, also posit that violence erupts only in cases of close competition among parties.¹⁵ And while these arguments make a case for underscoring the importance of electoral competition as an impetus for violence, they do not explain a) why parties use violence over other strategies and b) how violence works to help these parties win elections.

So why are Bangladeshi elections so violent when elections are the non-violent means to coming to political decisions? Why, when there are alternatives to violence, do political parties in Bangladesh use pre-election violence against voters and other parties as a campaign strategy to win elections? What makes these questions particularly interesting is that the existence of pre-electoral violence is counter-intuitive. If parties or politicians are at the mercy of voters before an election, should they not use positive incentives to acquire votes? Exactly how does harassing, threatening, scaring, and assaulting voters work in favor of parties? As mentioned above, theories on the party/representative and voter relationship do not explain why one would see pre-electoral violence in various parts of the world. We should see an amicable relationship between the two because each needs the other for their own benefit (i.e. votes, goods, services, preferable policies, etc.). And finally, what are the factors that account for subnational variation

¹¹ Hickman (2009), pp. 433-434.

¹² Aidt, Golden, and Tiwari (2011), p. 8.

¹³ Brass (1997) and Brass (2006).

¹⁴ Wilkinson (2004).

¹⁵ Chaturvedi (2005).

in terms of the frequency of episodes of pre-electoral violence? Why are some constituencies frequently home to such violence while others see very little?

In this dissertation, I argue that political parties use violence in constituencies where a) the bureaucracy presents significant hurdles to the ordinary citizen who interfaces with them for any number of tasks and b) where parties cannot obtain the necessary information on voters to determine their level of support. Because the state's bureaucratic bodies play a major role in administering services more in urban areas while informal institutions and interpersonal connections play a more important role in rural areas, I expect a greater level of pre-electoral violence in urban constituencies. Also due to greater population and the associated obstacles to pinning voter preferences down in these areas, urban constituencies are more likely to experience greater levels of pre-electoral violence for this reason as well. In addition, constituencies where one party dominates consistently will also see less pre-electoral violence because parties know exactly how the voters in that area will vote. Thus, in this dissertation, I offer the following three hypotheses:

H₁: Constituencies where the bureaucracy poses greater obstacles to voters will see greater pre-electoral violence.

H₂: Constituencies where parties cannot obtain information on voter preferences will see greater pre-electoral violence.

H₃: Constituencies where one party has established dominance will see less pre-electoral violence.

I outline the rationale for the expected outcomes as stated in my hypotheses in my argument below.

Case Selection

While there are other countries that also experience significant levels of pre-electoral violence, it is important to underscore how relevant a case Bangladesh is, especially given its most recent, and incredibly violent, national election in January 2014. From early 2013 to the actual day of election on January 5, 2014, Bangladeshis were witness to a series of *hartals* that resulted in the countless deaths of innocent victims; inter-party clashes that occurred on a regular basis in various districts; and intimidation by police, Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) forces, politicians, and local thugs or leaders. In addition, political movements, such as the *Gonojagoron Mancha* which supported the death penalty for all war criminals during the 1971 liberation war and their subsequent trials, fueled acts of violent protests from all ends of the political spectrum. During these particular episodes of violence, party workers destroyed buildings, set vehicles on fire, disrupted daily life, and injured dozens of bystanders. Pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh was not only a frequent occurrence, but was also one of the defining aspects of this most recent election.

Compounding factors made pre-electoral violence preceding the 2014 elections particularly large in scale as well as deadly. At the beginning of their most recent term starting in 2008, the Awami League and its leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed, had initiated a war crimes tribunal

(known as the International Crimes Tribunal, or ICT) to preside over new trials of those known as *Rajakars*, or accused war criminals of 1971. Since the Awami League was formed during the independence movement by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina is the late Rahman's daughter, many associate the punishment of war criminals closely with the Awami League and, hence, many saw the new trials as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's pet project. Additionally, many of the accused *Rajakars* have served as ministers and leaders belonging to the Awami League's main opposition, the BNP, and thus, the new trials were further politicized, pitting the Awami League against the BNP. After one of the first trials handed the death sentence to Abul Kalam Azad, many expected a similar fate for Abdul Quader Molla, who was the next to be sentenced. When the ICT gave Molla a life sentence, a large political mass movement known as the *Gonojagoron Mancha*, or the "People's Podium," began in protest of the sentence in the capital city.¹⁶ Similar satellite protests also erupted all throughout Bangladesh and in other countries, including the US. While the *Gonojagoron Mancha* was a peaceful protest that initially accrued support from supporters of both the Awami League and BNP, the movement quickly devolved into being associated with only the Awami League, with individuals chanting the party's slogan of "*Joy Bangla*" or "Hail Bangladesh."

In response to the gradually devolved Awami League-oriented movement, the BNP's ally, the Jamaat-e-Islami, initiated a series of counter-movements in various parts of the capital city, but unlike the people's movement, the Jamaat's counter-protests often involved violence and attacks on the police. As a consequence of their alliance with the Jamaat, the BNP found themselves linked to the Jamaat's protests, which further fueled acts of counter-protests between the Awami League and BNP, violence, and *hartals* across the country over the course of 2013. In addition to the rise of the Jamaat in 2013, the Hefazat-ul-Islam, an even more militant Islamist group, also rose to prominence, engaging in acts of vandalism, arson, and attacks on the police in even greater magnitude. As the governing party in power, the Awami League sent police and RAB forces to quell or counter these attacks, which further enraged their opposition. In response to the government's attempts to thwart their opposition's protests, the BNP-led coalition declared a series of *hartals* towards the latter half of 2013. With each *hartal* came a new bout of violence and renewed altercations between law enforcement and protestors, which further incited the BNP to declare even more *hartals*. Nearly the entire latter half of 2013 saw country-wide hartals in Bangladesh, essentially shutting down the economy, schooling, and daily life.

In this dissertation, I examine only the case of Bangladesh, despite the existence of other countries where pre-electoral violence occurs, because of the local nature of violence. It is a subnational phenomenon, where variation can be seen within countries, states, and even within constituencies. Studying pre-electoral violence from a cross-national perspective would not make any sense and would only further hinder our attempts to understanding the very basic microfoundations of why political actors initiate acts of violence against their voters in a *local* setting. Episodes of violence in Bangladesh are most often concentrated in particular constituencies, and each constituency varies in terms of the level of violence it experiences.

¹⁶ Though the *Gonojagoron Mancha* was a peaceful protest, it was a movement that primarily sought death sentences for the accused *Rajakars*.

Violence does not occur uniformly across an entire country. To pinpoint the conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs, I need to study within case variation.

Argument

So under what conditions do political actors initiate and use pre-electoral violence against voters in Bangladesh? And why do political parties prefer violence over non-violent campaign strategies? As I have mentioned previously, I am interested in understanding episodes of collective violence, where large, indistinguishable groups are victims, rather than specifically targeted individuals. Prior to each election, and certainly the most recent, Bangladesh has been home to both overt and covert acts of pre-electoral violence. With nearly every such case of violence, political party workers and leaders have been the perpetrators, often targeting the very individuals who put them in positions of power — members of the general public. Throughout 2013, as parties were preparing for the 2014 national elections, political actors from the Awami League, the BNP, and the Jamaat-e-Islami, engaged in a number of acts of pre-electoral violence, making the 2014 elections one of the most violent and undemocratic in the country's 45 year history. That political actors use violence as a campaign repertoire in Bangladesh is not disputed, but why such acts are a constant companion of elections and why there is great variation within the country has been left largely unanswered.

I argue that there are two important factors in determining where pre-electoral violence occurs: voters' unmediated access to an inaccessible and complex bureaucracy and the inability of parties to accurately assess their level of support from voters. To begin with, Bangladesh has a very large and complex bureaucracy, where the common person cannot get anything done by herself without struggle. Acts such as obtaining a business license, opening a bank account in state-run banks, or getting a passport requires an extensive period of time, knowing the “right” individuals, most certainly bribery, proper paperwork, and navigating the labyrinth-like nature of rules. Unlike politicians, bureaucrats in Bangladesh do not leave or enter office every five years due to an election. It is a static entity, where the actors are the same, but they must pledge allegiance to whoever is in control of the state. Who bureaucrats do not pledge allegiance to, however, are ordinary citizens. As a result, they often require bribes and the fear of punishment to comply with the requests of the general public who go to them for a variety of applications.

In Bangladesh, the experiences of those in urban constituencies tend to differ greatly from those who live in rural areas, especially when it comes to the ways in which individuals interact with the bureaucracy. Generally, urban constituencies are home to bureaucratic offices and are run by city corporations where individuals must go to apply for licenses, seek permissions for various tasks, and obtain official paperwork, among other services. These constituencies are also home to larger and more dense populations, where each individual must rely on herself to interact with the state to procure various goods and services. As a result, voters in these areas go to agency and bureaucracy offices on their own, often waiting in long lines in an attempt to meet a bureaucrat who may be out, asleep, or simply absent without any reason. The preparation before making this trip requires the necessary paperwork, documentation, and identification (which many Bangladeshis do not have readily available). Once a resident is successful in catching the correct person at an agency office, they may be told to make a number

of trips to other office locations in various parts of town, to complete a number of steps (sometimes arbitrarily made up ones conjured up by the bureaucrat), and, of course, pay a bribe to the official to ensure that her services are actually completed and done so on time.¹⁷

Now, while some may argue that in such contexts, bribes are used to overcome the other difficulties that individuals face when dealing with the bureaucracy, that is most certainly not the case in Bangladesh. Bribes do not make the process of obtaining goods and services easier or less confusing. As the author has been witness to in several instances, bribes are negotiated upon only *after* an individual has completed a number of steps (sometimes arbitrary ones), gone to a number of different offices, and waited in lines for a significant amount of time. By the time a bribe is negotiated between the bureaucrat and the individual, the latter has gone through a confusing and frustrating process that involves long durations of time, bureaucrats refusing to answer questions, and being told that they must produce more paperwork and identification. In sum, something as simple as acquiring a business license becomes a very confusing and frustrating task for individuals in Bangladesh. It is not straightforward, nor can uninstitutional and illegal methods such as bribery be used to make the process easier. For these reasons, Bangladeshis often, and openly, seek representatives — people who bureaucrats must listen to and obey — who can strong arm such uncooperative individuals into doing their jobs and serving the public.

However, the experience described above is not consistently the case for all of Bangladesh. Most rural constituencies see a very different system through which individuals interface with the state. In these areas, there may be a few bureaucratic offices or, sometimes, none at all. And because many residents in these areas are unable to travel a great distance to a neighboring town where there are such agency offices or are not literate and cannot do their paperwork themselves, they rely on local leaders to take care of their requests when dealing with the state. These leaders may often be simply those who have lived in the community for a long time and who have the general know-how and connections to take care of these tasks efficiently and without hassle. They may or may not be politically connected, but they often take on such a leadership role for a number of reasons, such as gaining influence, because they are one of the few educated individuals in their village, sheer altruism, or because they go to the town area on a regular basis and can easily take care of such matters without putting in any extra effort. Some of these local leaders inherit these roles from fathers and grandfathers who once served the same role before. Here, individuals go to their local leader, who then assists them with the required paperwork and obtaining proper identification. From there, this local leader serves as an agent for the individuals in their area, makes their way to the nearby town, and interfaces with the state on their behalf. Often, because these local leaders are familiar with the bureaucrats they meet (and because they do this on a regular basis), these local leaders face less confusion and lack of cooperation than those in urban areas, and can make their way through the process rather smoothly. Regardless, the individual who applied for the service or good in the first place deals with none of these matters at all. The moment the local leader takes control of their case is the

¹⁷ The author has been witness to such an incident where a bureaucrat informed a relative that they must complete a particular step at another location. When the author's relative went to this other location, the bureaucrat at this second location laughed and said that the relative did not have to make the trip to this location and was unsure why his colleague would have directed him to this particular office.

moment an individual in this area is done with dealing with the state. As a result, in these areas, one sees lower levels of cries for powerful and forceful representatives because the state is not as cumbersome as it is for those in generally more urban constituencies.

Based on this general distinction between urban and rural constituencies, one may wonder why local leaders do not emerge in urban areas, thus easing the process of interacting with the state for urban voters. There are two reasons for this. The first is that local leaders emerge in more rural areas because there is a greater need for them due to the fact that bureaucratic offices are often not located in these areas and many residents in rural constituencies do not or cannot travel to the downtown or district headquarters. Further, higher rates of illiteracy in rural areas also preclude individuals from comfortably interacting with the state and completing the necessary procedures to obtain goods and services. Because of these issues, local leaders play a prominent role in these areas as they are needed by residents. In urban areas, the state is ever present and transportation as well as infrastructure allow individuals to access the state more easily than those in rural areas. However, there is another reason why local leaders do not play an important role in urban constituencies, and that is because, unlike rural areas, populations in urban constituencies are far greater and much more dense. The emergence of a small number of well-connected leaders would simply not suffice for such large populations. Also, because of these large and dense populations, many, if not most, individuals are not as deeply entrenched in an extensive social network that may allow them the luxury of having a reliable local leader upon which they may depend for such services. For these reasons, local leaders are obsolete and non-existent in urban constituencies.

Now, in terms of the parties' perspective on why violence is appealing, parties will use violence where political parties face higher levels of uncertainty because they cannot ascertain who constituents will vote for and they must make a show of power and ability to win over the public in a short amount of time. While using positive incentives such as vote buying or patronage requires resources such as money, time, and actual things to give away, violence does not require such resources. Armies of young, unemployed men are easily accessible to parties and they are the only resources required to produce acts of violence. Additionally, a simple act of blocking an intersection, throwing one cocktail bomb, or bullying a group of police officers on one day are enough to make a quick statement to *all* voters.¹⁸

When a political actor uses violence to, say, block an intersection or injure law enforcement officers, she demonstrates her ability to achieve her objectives and get what she needs in an efficient manner. Further, violent parties can shut down the state and daily life – that is real, visible power that impacts the everyday ordinary citizen, thus also signaling the ability “to do.” In Bangladesh, many believe that only working via extra-institutional ways gets the job

¹⁸ Acts like blocking an intersection and stopping all traffic, or vandalizing shops and shutting them down for the day do not simply impact those who commute using that particular intersection or those particular shops' owners. When an intersection is blocked, there is a ripple effect which leads to heavy traffic elsewhere, impacting others. Additionally, images of blocked roads and delayed commutes make their ways to every household through news coverage. Similarly, while not everyone may need to use one particular store that has been vandalized and shut down, the idea that any one store can be any and all stores is a powerful image that is a constant reminder to the general public in Bangladesh of what political actors have the power to do. They can damage livelihoods, impact work and schooling, and most importantly, instill fear in the general public that violence *could* happen anywhere, including any intersection and any local shop.

done because institutional means do not work for the common person and violence is extra-institutional. As such, the use of violence signals to voters a party or candidate that will get the job done in a place where jobs rarely “get done.” So, of all campaign strategies available to Bangladeshi political parties, violence *wins* votes — this is because people see violence as a show of power and ability.

Essentially, pre-electoral violence is a signaling mechanism that parties use to persuade voters. When violence works to convince the public of the perpetrators’ ability and level of power, the public in general feels as if the party responsible is the only viable and potential winner. The occurrence of an episode of violence literally stops daily life, and the perpetrators are rarely ever punished. Through any one particular episode of violence, parties signal to voters that a) they are powerful and are able to work outside the bounds of the law, essentially doing whatever they like and b) they can avoid penalties or punishment in the process. For these reasons, voters view the use of pre-electoral violence as a tool used only by the powerful and capable in Bangladesh. Further, pre-electoral violence not only amasses popularity, but can also gain momentum for parties, thus winning more and more voters as the elections draw near. When individuals see these parties as being powerful and, as a result, popular among the masses, they too will also vote for those parties so as to not “waste” their votes. Many in Bangladesh do not like to “waste” votes or vote for the party that will most likely lose, as nearly all my respondents have shared with me, so they will vote for whomever they believe is winning over the masses. And because pre-electoral violence successfully signals an image of power and capability to voters, violent parties can accrue this kind of momentum among the masses.

In contrast, why are non-violent parties not associated with power and ability? Or, rather, why is it that doing good things for the public or providing positive incentives does not win votes in Bangladesh? In Bangladesh’s history, “good” parties have either a) not done much of lasting consequence and thus the public cannot draw on history to recall that leaders can do something positive for the masses, and b) signal slow progress, and/or the notion that nothing will happen through such parties. Good, law-abiding parties are associated with working within the institutional framework, which the general public believes does not work. To make positive policy or program changes such that a party makes an impact to win enough votes, parties need to do something highly significant to affect and persuade a large number of people. One not only needs a significant amount of time, she also needs to make a large enough impact for this “good” to be an effective strategy. If a candidate is an incumbent, then they have such time. However, challengers do not, and oftentimes prior to elections, *both* challengers and incumbents’ performances in the immediate period prior to elections make the most impact on voters. Thus, good deeds or positive incentives is too costly, requires a lot of time and planning, and is much too arduous a task for the campaigning period. It does not immediately yield popular support and requires that a substantial number of people be impacted, which is quite unfeasible for parties given that others are using violence to signal power and win votes from underneath their noses.

Violence, on the other hand, can impact a large number of people with one episode, a few injuries, or one day of protesting that blocks only one intersection. In contrast to the image of the violent, capable, and efficient party, non-violent parties are seen as being comparatively useless in a country that is forever saddled with a complex bureaucratic structure and where rules

are often ignored. As I have mentioned previously, many Bangladeshis believe the legal, institutional system rarely ever works in Bangladesh. There are many reasons why they perceive their system to be defunct. Criminals are rarely caught, and if they are, even more rarely punished, bribes can undermine any sort of rule of law, and justice is a dish served only to those well-connected. Politicians, parties, and all arms of the government are extraordinarily corrupt, demonstrating the government itself thumbing its nose at the rules and laws. And this corruption and lack of regard for the rule of law permeates all of society to the general public. Because rules are ignored and established institutions are disregarded, the public looks for representatives who will work outside of the bounds of the law. Since nothing functions within it, so must representatives if one is to expect them to truly do anything of importance to the Bangladeshi public.

Parties also have no motivation to work within legal and institutional guidelines; since violence wins votes, parties are locked in a game where either the equilibrium is to engage in violence or lose or be in a situation where no parties use violence at all. Where parties are using violence, others that choose to use positive incentives will, at least in the short run, incur losses. And no one wants to incur these short-term losses because there are no guarantees that these short-term losses will ultimately lead to victories in the long-run, and so no party in Bangladesh wants to break the equilibrium of violence. Additionally, the stakes in Bangladesh's elections are exceptionally high — when you win the election, you win everything from the judiciary to law enforcement to every other sector. Police officers I interviewed explicitly stated that they would not voice disapproval of the Awami League government currently in power because they are law enforcement's current employers. During *hartals*, the police act on behalf of those in power, currently the Awami League. The judiciary also falls prey to the incumbents in office; parties in power are easily able to get their men out of jail or prevent their imprisoned party workers from getting remanded. The bureaucracy also becomes yet another working arm of the party in power. As a result, victorious parties in Bangladesh not only win all parts of the state, but they also win the chance to punish and repress other parties while in office.¹⁹ No party is willing to risk losing the advantages and facing the disadvantages by losing elections in the short-run.

But if violence wins votes for parties, why do we not see pre-electoral violence across all of Bangladesh? Why are there only hotbeds of violence, namely urban centers? There are two types of constituencies where we should not see violence: constituencies where there is one-party domination and, generally, rural constituencies. Both of these types of constituencies are relatively violence-free because they lack the existence of my two independent variables. First, since violence wins votes, parties will use this tool in places where they *need* to win votes and they cannot win through other means. And where do parties need to win votes? Specifically, in places where parties do not have full and consistent dominance, but may potentially gain dominance, in a constituency, we should see violence. So the first type of constituency in which we should not see violence is in places where there are established patterns of dominance, we should not see violence. Parties in these areas have dominance and are established powers; there is no uncertainty whatsoever in terms of who the voters' in the area favor. These established powers do not need to resort to violence because they have already won over their constituents

¹⁹ I will elaborate further the consequences of election wins and losses later on in the dissertation.

and know exactly how they will vote. And losers know that violence will not win the elections in these constituencies because their opponents have already demonstrated power and ability by winning time and time again. In a constituency where a party has such comprehensive power, a challenger that uses violence to demonstrate ability will most likely be quashed and discredited within a short time span. If anything, the use of violence by a challenger will only demonstrate her inability and nothing more. *That* is the equilibrium in such constituencies. In places where there is a set winner all the time, more covert acts of violence tend to occur. Institutionalized or covert types of violence, such as intimidation or veiled threats in the form of political speeches occur to maintain the established equilibrium over time.

Further, because landslide elections occur in more rural constituencies, where informal networks and local leaders serve as the primary means through which individuals seek out the state, these areas also do not see the urge of voters to lend their support to violent parties. It is simply not needed for voters in such areas because they do not desperately seek representatives to tame an unwieldy and uncooperative state for them. Additionally, because there is one leading and established party that dominates in these areas, these parties often attempt to maintain this level of support by serving the public and ensuring the bureaucracy cooperates. Thus, in places where landslide victories occur, not only is there a high level of certainty regarding voter preferences, there is also low dissatisfaction with the state.

Generally, the occurrence of pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh is divided across rural and urban areas, where relatively less violence occurs in the former. And why are rural areas less prone to being the location of pre-electoral violence? To begin, the bureaucracy is not as present in rural areas and there are more informal means of obtaining licenses, getting various forms of permission for activities, etc. As a consequence, a party does not need to use violence to demonstrate that they can “get things done” because the common person can do so herself through informal channels and the assistance of local leaders. Further, because these are less densely populated areas, individuals are more likely to know one another, be acquainted with those in charge, and there is less waiting time for receiving services and goods. To clarify, I do not argue that the bureaucracy suddenly vanishes in rural areas, but instead, I argue that the bureaucracy is not as cumbersome in these constituencies because residents rely on local mediators. While buildings may not be present in rural areas, people still have to send their applications to agency offices. The difference here is that they may (and often) do so through someone who serves as an informal agent who navigates the system on their behalf, saving such residents from the hassles of dealing with the bureaucracy, unlike those who live in areas where they must face the bureaucracy completely on their own.

In addition, there is not much uncertainty in terms of who is voting which way in the election because these are more tightly-knit communities than the populations found in urban constituencies. Candidates and parties have a good sense of which candidates households will vote for and can ascertain how much support they have. As a result, parties can afford to use positive incentives or other non-violent means to sway a small margin of identifiable voters if necessary. If they face a large deficit in support, then the rule of landslides mentioned above applies. As with the case of areas where landslide victories occur, there are more covert acts of violence in rural areas also, which can be used to intimidate identifiable voters to swing one way or another. The main point to take away here, however, is that large scale, overt acts of violence

does not hold the same value in areas where the bureaucracy is not of issue and where parties can identify voter preferences. Because parties can identify preferences, they can use a number of other campaign repertoires as necessary for those particular voters.

But what about in constituencies where there is uncertainty regarding the election outcome? In many urban centers, where there are larger populations, informal methods of achieving ordinary objectives or receiving public services do not exist. Here, the bureaucracy is ever present and ever unwieldy as a beast as I have discussed above. The ways in which individuals in these areas must deal with the state lead to frustration and a viewing of the state as the general public's antagonist. As a result, individuals seek representatives who can potentially tame this uncooperative bureaucracy for their constituents. Thus, overt acts of violence occur more often in urban areas because in such places, violence does indeed signal power and ability. Additionally, parties do not have full dominance — there is not a single urban constituency that is home to landslide wins in Bangladesh. Victory is up for grabs by any party in places like Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, and other urban hubs. Further, parties cannot overcome this uncertainty by simply using the tightly-knit community structures in urban areas to find out voter preferences, because such social networks are not likely to exist in large urban centers. Many migrants, new families, and the sheer density of people preclude this from happening. Because the bureaucracy is complex and a part of urban daily life, and because parties require strategies that are efficient in winning support, overt acts of violence are more likely. And further, because any major party is likely to win since there is no one dominant party, all parties will gravitate towards the equilibrium of violence in an effort to achieve dominance through electoral victory.

Contenders in urban areas often do not know which way people will vote — not only is there high fluctuation in election results and a relatively larger number of constituents, but there is also a higher population of new residents who flow in and out of the city. Many of the party workers I interviewed explained how it is extraordinarily difficult to estimate whether their parties are favored to win because they cannot gauge voter preferences. “There are too many renters here in Dhaka, whose background I don’t know — I have no idea if they come from Awami League families or BNP families,” explained a neighborhood-level worker in Dhaka.²⁰ Uncertainty like this pushes parties towards the use of violence. Since they do not know who is going to win an election because of their inability to estimate voter preferences, they have to establish popularity among the masses and capture an electorate who may vote any which way. How do they do that? As my respondents have told me, naturally, through violence. No other campaign repertoire works as fast and effectively enough to impact a substantial enough portion of the constituency.

What is interesting to note is that political parties in Bangladesh are highly organized entities. There is a clear chain of command and a top-down hierarchy, and each rung of this ladder-like organization is monitored by higher-ups. In fact, some of my respondents who are party workers have related stories of top party officials either clearly commanding lower level workers to incite acts of violence or showing up to locations of violence to see whether their

²⁰ By “Awami League family” and “BNP family” this respondent meant whether the household as a whole tended to vote for one party or the other. As many of my subjects noted, individuals in Bangladesh often vote based on family preferences. So, if one’s parents supported the Awami League, they too were also likely to support the Awami League.

commands were fully executed to their satisfaction. It is because of this organized way of operating that parties are able to assess their popularity as they approach the elections. The implication of this flies against the arguments scholars like Samuel Huntington and Atul Kohli have made, where they argue that a lack of organization leads to disorder, and conversely, organized parties can create political order. To clarify, I am arguing that highly organized parties can *also* cause disorder. Where highly organized parties lead to political order, we have democracies that resemble that of the US. But there are also other democracies that resemble the one in Bangladesh, where highly organized parties use this advantage of theirs to create disorder.

As noted above in the theoretical background section, some have argued that political actors use pre-electoral violence primarily to suppress voter turnout in the hopes that the party who most successfully suppresses their opposition's voters will win. I argue that this is not a story about suppressing votes. High turnout in Bangladesh shows that. What pre-electoral violence does is signal to voters who can do what. Sure, some people may not go to vote, but that is a small margin of voters. Moreover, I differ from others in that I am attempting to explain acts of violence that affect large and indistinguishable groups, not specific individuals or groups. I do not attempt to explain targeted acts of violence in this chapter. How can a party use violence in so precise a way as to keep only their opponent's supporters at home? Oftentimes, voters are not identifiable in terms of their preferences, especially in urban, densely populated areas. On top of that, despite what may be said about the fallibility of the concept of the secret ballot, there are many instances where political actors simply cannot tell how voters have voted, even after attempting to pull every trick to determine vote results ahead of the count. Whichever party does a better job of using violence is the one who has done a better job of convincing the public of their power and ability and, therefore, will win.

Implications

This study is important because of its relevance to contexts across the developing world. As I have mentioned previously, Bangladesh is not the only country that is home to pre-electoral violence. Pre-electoral violence is a common, yet unexplained, occurrence upon which political scientists have shed little light. Further, because the occurrence of pre-electoral violence varies, and sometimes quite dramatically, across a case, my dissertation is important because it focuses on understanding this subnational variation and explaining why certain areas are more likely to experience greater levels of violence than others.

The implications of my argument impact political science theory as well as the daily reality of Bangladeshis and the state of their democracy. As discussed above, the use of pre-electoral violence is perplexing given that elections are supposed to be the non-violent vehicles through which political conflict is resolved in democracies. Therefore, the very existence of pre-electoral violence prior to each of Bangladesh's elections makes little sense. Thus far, there is no theory in political science that can explain exactly why parties not only in Bangladesh, but in other new or weak democracies across the world, choose to use violence as a campaign strategy. With my dissertation, I aim to fill this gap and provide an explanation for why we may see very violent elections in certain parts of the world. I also hope to be able to provide an understanding as to why voters are often not perturbed by the disruption, destruction, and lack of freedom that

comes from the use of pre-electoral violence, giving parties even greater reason to engage in acts of violence against voters. This dissertation is also important because it can help explain why political parties in Bangladesh have preferred violence over clientelistic practices, or the use of positive incentives during campaigning. My work speaks to the extensive literature on clientelism, its use in the context of elections, and why parties may choose not to use such practices.

By examining what underlies the decisions political parties make, especially with regards to the use of violence against voters, this dissertation may help identify possible avenues for improvement in electoral processes in weak or developing democracies across various regions. Solutions may come in the form rebuilding or strengthening existing institutions, or they may come from implementing development programs that help educate citizens. Regardless, these various solutions cannot be prescribed without first understanding what the causes of pre-electoral violence are. And, while it is important to understand how Bangladesh's democratic environment fits into political science theory, it is equally important to learn *why* elections are punctuated by such high levels of violence. By studying the causes of pre-electoral violence – or answering the “why” question – I hope to contribute to identifying ways to minimize parties' incentives to use pre-election violence, not only making the state of democracy healthier in Bangladesh, but also allowing Bangladeshi voters to enjoy the luxury of violence-free elections. Election violence affects daily life, education, the economy and growth, as well as the overall democratic environment in the country. Providing an answer to these puzzles may serve as a first step towards fixing some of the problems that mar elections and disrupt daily life in Bangladesh.

Methodology and Data

This dissertation includes original data I collected in Bangladesh from November 2012 to July 2013. During my time there, I conducted approximately 100 interviews of academics, journalists, politicians, party workers, student politicians, police officers, and the general public. Questions focused on my subjects' understanding of why parties use pre-electoral violence, why voters do not punish parties that use such violence, and what effect pre-electoral violence has on election results, among other topics. In addition, I also constructed case studies on various constituencies in Bangladesh based on their varying levels of pre-electoral violence. I identified constituencies that experienced little to no pre-electoral violence due to popular party domination, criminal candidate domination, or very close competition between two parties and constituencies with very high levels of violence due to criminal candidate competition and high electoral volatility competition. These case studies, as well as the in-depth interviews I conducted in conjunction, inform the detailed descriptions of what actually occurs on the ground in such constituencies, which are the focus of Chapters 3 and 4 of the dissertation.

I then continued my research upon returning to the US. From September 2013 to January 2014, I collected newspaper articles that focused on episodes of pre-electoral violence from six

national Bangladeshi daily newspapers.²¹ The articles allowed me to chronicle acts of pre-electoral violence, associated deaths and injuries, and those who were involved. The two primary components of my dataset for this dissertation include the newspaper data, as well as election data which I collected from the Bangladesh Election Commission's election reports and summaries. And finally, I conducted an experimental survey on campaign strategies in December 2013. This last survey examines an individual's willingness to vote after being prompted with a randomly selected campaign strategy. I use a wide range of data to understand a) why parties use violence instead of positive incentives as a means of winning elections and b) the conditions under which we should see the occurrence of pre-electoral violence.

I employ a mixed methods approach to answering the research question I pose in this chapter. While in Chapters 3 and 4, I rely on case studies of various constituencies and in-depth interviews to make my argument, in Chapter 5, I use statistical analysis to conduct a cross-national study of pre-electoral violence. I employ a negative binomial regression analysis to determine the magnitude of the relationship between my two independent variables and the number of episodes of pre-electoral violence, using election and newspaper data from Bangladesh.

Organization of the Dissertation

The objective of this dissertation is to explain the motivation behind why parties use pre-electoral violence as a campaign repertoire in Bangladesh. Pre-electoral violence takes many forms and can be used for various ends. In the following chapter, I explain exactly what type of pre-electoral violence this dissertation focuses on, as well as the effect it has on the general public and election turnout. Furthermore, I describe the production of this violence, identify who the perpetrators are, and how the party functions to produce this violence. In addition, I articulate my argument in this chapter providing the framework of my theory and explaining my two independent variables: a complex and inaccessible bureaucracy and the inability of parties to properly gain voter information. Chapters 3 and 4 each focus on where we should and should not see violence based on my independent variables. Chapter 3 explains why pre-electoral violence is primarily — though not entirely — an urban phenomenon, given my arguments in the previous chapter. I draw on election data and information gathered from party workers who work in urban neighborhoods across Dhaka. In Chapter 4, I outline conditions under which we should not see pre-electoral violence, generally rural areas, and in places where political dominance is in the hands of one party on a consistent basis. In Chapter 5, I conduct a cross-national analysis to test my hypotheses using election data and the pre-electoral violence data I collected from newspapers. And finally, in chapter 6, I conclude with thoughts on my findings, and what these results mean in terms of practical solutions to improving the state of elections in countries that experience high levels of pre-electoral violence, such as Bangladesh.

²¹ The six Bangladeshi newspapers are: *The Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo*, *Dainik Purbokone*, *Dainik Purbanchal*, *Dainik Sylhet*, and *Sonali Sangbad*. These newspapers are geographically dispersed, covering the areas of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet, and Rajshahi.

Chapter 2: The Production of Pre-electoral Violence

Introduction

Can we explain the causes of pre-electoral violence if violence is nothing more than a spontaneous and unplanned phenomenon? Some observers argue that most, if not all, forms of pre-electoral violence are spontaneous occurrences over which no one has control. For example, political party agitation during *hartals* suddenly erupts into melees when law enforcement naturally attempts to keep protests calm.²² Thus, these observers argue that there are really no greater “conspiracies” behind who is involved with pre-electoral violence, and that scholars such as myself are simply trying to find culprits where none exist. And while I agree that acts of violence often seem chaotic and unsystematic in nature, acts of violence do not “simply happen.” *Hartals* do not spontaneously form, vehicles do not spontaneously burst into flames, and the Biswajit Das’s of weak democracies do not simply “get killed.” In this chapter, I argue that in the case of many instances of pre-electoral violence, individuals make deliberate choices and take action to fulfill a range of immediate objectives. As my interview subjects have repeatedly emphasized, political actors plan, orchestrate, and execute pre-electoral violence. This chapter’s focus is on defining pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh, describing what it looks like on the ground, and explaining how parties use this violence to their advantage. Specifically, I argue that parties implement these planned acts of violence to ultimately demonstrate to the public that they are the only actors capable of serving voters by strong-arming an uncooperative and complex bureaucracy.

In the last chapter, I discussed how the occurrence of pre-electoral violence is counter-intuitive, given that elections are the non-violent means to resolving political disputes in a democracy. What will become evident as I describe the mechanics involved in producing violence as well as the various sub-types of pre-electoral violence, is that pre-electoral violence is not always a spontaneous phenomenon and is in fact a purposeful statement which parties make to the public. Indeed, pre-electoral violence is often a planned operation, one that involves political parties willfully using violence as a tool to manipulate voter turnout and election outcomes. It is purposeful and oftentimes orchestrated by those at the very top of the political party organization. What I intend to do in this chapter is articulate how the party functions to produce this type of violence and illustrate what such violence looks like on the ground in Bangladesh by describing each form of pre-electoral violence. Moreover, I pinpoint the focus of my analysis by specifying the subset of pre-electoral violence that I discuss in the overall dissertation. And finally, I explain how my two independent variables — reliance on the bureaucracy and low information on voters — contribute to the occurrence of pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, while pre-electoral violence is a regular occurrence prior to elections in Bangladesh, the most recent national election in 2014 was one of

²² *Hartals* are political strikes which political parties in Bangladesh often declare in protest of some issue, usually to make a statement against the actions or policies of their opponents. These strikes are frequent during the pre-election period and are almost always accompanied by violence between the political parties involved and law enforcement officers. This chapter defines *hartals* in greater detail below.

the most violent. The following table is a summary of the arrests, injuries, deaths, and episodes of violence perpetrated by political parties that occurred between September 1, 2013 and election day on January 5, 2014, in Bangladesh:

Table 1: Division-wise Summary Statistics of Pre-electoral Violence in Bangladesh in 2014

Division	Arrests	Injuries	Deaths	Number of Episodes
Barisal	87	740 +	5	97
Chittagong	572	2570 +	93	652
Dhaka	399 +	1931 +	49	786
Khulna	397	1404	65	495
Rajshahi	474 +	1392 +	45	474
Rangpur	119	1016 +	31	144
Sylhet	116 +	630 +	9	150
Total	2164 +	9683 +	297	2798

Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Dainik Purbokone, Dainik Purbanchal, Dainik Sylhet, and Sonali Sangbad.

And while the above table illustrates the level of violence that occurred during the most recent pre-election period, pre-electoral violence is not a new development in Bangladesh. Every election in Bangladesh has been associated with varying degrees of pre-electoral violence. Indeed, pre-electoral violence is one of the most common campaign repertoires of political parties in the country. Many of the local-level party workers, academics, and journalists I interviewed discussed the use of violence and its importance to party politics throughout the course of Bangladesh's history as one possible reason why pre-electoral violence is such a common and consistent occurrence prior to each election. Many pointed out how the brutal assassinations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family and then later Ziaur Rahman initiated an enduring cycle and culture of violence; because of Bangladesh's violent history, parties in Bangladesh are accustomed to sorting out political disputes not through institutional mechanisms, but rather through violent means and, thus, both parties and the public have normalized this use of violence. In other words, an election without violence would not fit into the norms of the political culture that has formalized over the years.

Nothing depicts this better than an examination of the 2008 national election, which took place while under emergency rule and army power, consequently being one of the least violent

elections in Bangladesh’s history. And yet, despite frequent curfews and the army’s tight control over political party activities prior to the elections, parties were still able to engage in acts of violence prior to the 2008 elections, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Division-wise Summary Statistics of Pre-electoral Violence in Bangladesh in 2008

Division	Arrests	Injuries	Deaths	Number of Episodes
Barisal	0	24	0	6
Chittagong	0	50 +	0	6
Dhaka	1	90	2	9
Khulna	0	78	0	5
Rajshahi	0	117	0	13
Rangpur	0	24	0	2
Sylhet	0	0	0	0
Total	1	383 +	2	41

Source: Data have been collected from The Daily Star.

Thus, even under the tightest of security and conditions where one would expect little violence, areas in Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, and Rajshahi saw numerous injuries and episodes of pre-electoral violence.

This chapter is divided in the following manner. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of the literature on electoral violence, articulating alternative hypotheses and providing my own argument. I then give a review of Bangladesh’s political history, explaining the roots of political violence and discussing what a few casual observers describe as Bangladesh’s “political culture.” In the following section, I discuss the party structure and organization in Bangladesh as well as who the violence-makers are. Afterwards, I describe the different forms of pre-electoral violence, identifying the perpetrators, victims, and objectives. I then explain how reliance on the bureaucracy and low voter information connect to the use of pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh before concluding the chapter.

Bangladesh’s History and the Formation of “Political Culture”

One of the rival hypotheses regarding whether pre-electoral violence is a planned procedure is the notion that such violence has become a normalized part of Bangladesh’s

“political culture.” A few of my subjects believed that political actors have used violence so much in Bangladesh that over time, pre-electoral violence has become simply another common practice of political behavior in the country, much like casting a vote on election day. It is not a deliberately orchestrated occurrence, but rather a more natural one that takes place as a normal and regular part of election time in Bangladesh. Thus, before I begin the analysis on present day pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh, it is important to examine the country’s history, with a specific look at the leaders who have not only left legacies behind, but also imprints on what many dub as the “political culture” of Bangladesh.

Even before Bangladesh came into existence in 1971, what was then known as East (present day Bangladesh) and West Pakistan were divided by not simply geography, but also political power as well as socio-economic factors (most notably and certainly most romanticized, language differences across both sides). Sectional tension between both parts of the country peaked when Pakistan’s General Yahya Khan postponed the convening of the National Assembly, which would have brought Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League to power in Pakistan, as they had won the majority in the elections in 1970.^{23,24} The Awami League, formerly known as the Awami Muslim League, was the political alternative to the Muslim League, which supported a centralized and powerful Pakistani government. The Awami League was a movement characterized by its roots in Bangladeshi nationalism, even more so when Sheikh Mujib propelled the cause for an independent Bangladesh further under the banner of the Awami League.²⁵

Sheikh Mujib’s movement for independence began with his Six Point Movement, which articulated six demands seeking to end the exploitation and domination of East Pakistan by the West, as well as the Non-Cooperation Movement. These mass movements eventually culminated in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, and with India’s assistance, Sheikh Mujib and his movement were victorious.²⁶ In many ways, one can look at the violent overthrowing of Pakistan’s domination over what is now Bangladesh as the very first episode of pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh. Once Bangladesh became independent, Sheikh Mujib was immediately named its first leader. Prior to this particular case of ascendance to power, Pakistan engaged in a systematic genocide of Bangladeshis, and then the liberation war saw Bangladeshis fight against their Pakistani counterparts to establish power. Thus, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League rose to power only after two competing groups engaged in violence.

Though Sheikh Mujib later won Bangladesh’s first national election in 1973, his popularity as well as his term in office did not last very long. The support Sheikh Mujib once enjoyed from the masses soon waned as he attempted to consolidate his power by forming the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), and virtually wiping out the existence

²³ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is often referred to as simply “Sheikh Mujib” by Bangladeshis. I will also use this nickname in the dissertation to avoid confusion since both he and Ziaur Rahman share the same last name.

²⁴ Hossain (2000), p. 510-511.

²⁵ Mollah (2011), p. 142.

²⁶ Hossain (2000), p. 511.

of any other political party.²⁷ The creation of BAKSAL also allowed the government to control the media, essentially centralizing power in Sheikh Mujib's hands. The formation of this new all-encompassing party ignited Sheikh Mujib's opposition and precipitated his, as well as the Awami League's, political downfall.²⁸

On August 15, 1975, amid increased dissatisfaction with BAKSAL's inability to govern, a famine that took the lives of over one million people, and poor industrial and economic growth, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family were assassinated in their family home during a military coup.²⁹ The only two survivors were Sheikh Mujib's daughters, Sheikh Rehana and Sheikh Hasina, who is Bangladesh's current leader. What ensued after the coup and Sheikh Mujib's death was a series of counter coups as well as the overthrowing of those involved in the first family's assassination. Eventually, a final coup in 1977 restored political stability when the army took control of government under the leadership of General Ziaur Rahman, who would then go on to become the next leader of Bangladesh. Yet another violent episode brought another critical turning point in Bangladesh's political history as well as another change in leadership.

Ziaur Rahman's tenure was also very storied and he too enjoyed a significant level of popularity among the general public, despite rising to power after the death of the nation's founding father.³⁰ Zia was known for his ability to connect with the ordinary citizen, often driving out to villages across the country and meeting with the public. Before he became a politician, Zia was a highly decorated military officer who had fought in the Liberation War.³¹ When he became president in 1977, Zia restored a multi-party democratic system and established the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which, along with the Awami League, is one of the two largest political parties in Bangladesh today. Zia's political ideology and actions while in office were quite different from Sheikh Mujib's. While the Awami League and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had forged a close tie with India due to the latter's support during the Liberation War, Zia sought closer relationships with the US and Europe. In addition, Zia shifted economic policies away from Sheikh Mujib's form of socialism and focused on liberalizing the economy.³² Zia also dismantled Sheikh Mujib's adoption of state secularism by introducing the Arabic phrase, "*Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim*," into the constitution, thus associating the Bangladeshi

²⁷ Rahman (2002), p. 51 and Westergaard (1985), p. 85.

²⁸ Zafarullah and Rahman (2008), p. 742.

²⁹ Rashiduzzaman (1977), p. 793-795.

³⁰ Similar to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Ziaur Rahman is also commonly referred to as simply "Zia," which I will employ throughout the dissertation as well.

³¹ In fact, it was Zia who announced the beginning of the Liberation War on March 27, 1971.

³² Hossain (2000), p. 512.

state with Islam.^{33,34} While both Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman were nearly equally popular among the public, and despite their involvement in the movement towards independence, both leaders governed Bangladesh in incredibly different ways.

Yet, despite their differences, Zia also faced an untimely and violent death like his predecessor. While in office, Zia was responsible for a number of controversial moves, including pardoning some of the military officers who were accused of assassinating Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family.³⁵ Additionally, his efforts to bring discipline back into the army also brought its share of anger and unrest within the military. In 1981, Zia made his way to Chittagong in an effort to help resolve ongoing intra-party clashes within the Chittagong branch of the BNP. Zia and those who accompanied him stayed at the Chittagong Circuit House. On the morning of May 30, 1981, a group of military officers killed Zia, his bodyguards, and aides. Thus, in the very beginning of Bangladesh's history, violence and assassinations brought about each change in leadership, which many of my interview subjects have argued established a violent political culture in the country.

One important point to note is the differences in Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's and Ziaur Rahman's policies and the tone of their tenures while in office. Because the Awami League and Sheikh Mujib's rise took place during the liberalization movement, both the party and its leader are very closely associated with Bangladesh's independence, and are consequently known as being both "anti-Pakistan" as well as "anti-*Razakar*."³⁶ Conversely, while Sheikh Mujib was seen as being "pro-India," Zia distanced his administration from the country's western neighbor. And, as mentioned above, Sheikh Mujib was associated with state secularism, while Zia was not. Lastly, and perhaps the one of the most important differences was in their handling of the economy. While Sheikh Mujib's policies reflected his socialist ideals, Zia favored economic liberalism and encouraged private sector development and avoided furthering ties with the Soviet bloc that Sheikh Mujib had previously established.³⁷ These differences are important to understand as they demarcate not only the differences between two of the most important leaders in Bangladesh's history, but also differences between the two major political parties in Bangladesh, the Awami League and BNP. The factors that distinguish these two parties from one another as well as their associations with their respective founders are oftentimes used to galvanize movements and episodes of violence as we will see later on in this chapter and the rest of this dissertation.

Though Zia's death was the last assassination which led to leadership change, most successions since his death have nonetheless been violent. While Hussain Mohammad Ershad

³³ Rashiduzzaman (1977), p. 798.

³⁴ *Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim* means "In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most kind," and is said before recitations of verses of the Quran.

³⁵ Rashiduzzaman (1977), p. 802-803.

³⁶ The term *Razakar* refers to those who actively opposed the liberation movement and engaged in violent crimes, such as murder, rape, assault, vandalism, and looting, against Bangladeshis during the war.

³⁷ Hossain (2000), p. 512.

came into power after a bloodless coup, he was eventually forced to resign in 1990 after a series of mass protests and a state of emergency in Bangladesh. In addition, the two elections held under his purview in 1986 and 1988 were both boycotted and violently protested by opposition parties. Ershad won these elections despite his opposition's claims that both elections saw high levels of election fraud.³⁸ Thus, while Ershad's time in office did not end with an assassination like his predecessors, his entire tenure was marred with violent protests and agitation, which finally culminated in his resignation. Again, a change in the leadership was brought about through force and not through a non-violent election (Schendel 2009, Ali 2010).

A few of my interview subjects explained to me how Bangladesh's history of violence helped establish a political culture that includes violence as a normalized repertoire of political behavior. At each and every critical juncture in Bangladesh's political history as well as at each change in leadership, violence has played a prominent role. Because of this political culture, these subjects argued that it is not only common for violence to resolve political disputes instead of the legal system and political framework, but that both political actors as well as the general public expect violence to accomplish this task. Thus, when violence occurs, the general public is not disillusioned with their representatives, nor do they seek to hold political actors responsible for violence accountable — violence has become so normalized, they argue, that the general public is now immune to acts of violence.

When I pressed my subjects to explain what they meant exactly by political culture, they articulated political culture as being another term for history, suggesting that the brutal killings which led to changes in power was enough to make all parties in Bangladesh inherently violent in nature. But if that were true, then all countries which have had bloody inaugurations should see pre-electoral violence. Obviously, that is not the case. There must be *other factors* that can explain the divergence between countries like the US that have also seen a violent history but do not have violent elections currently and countries like Bangladesh that do. Further, since political culture or history is something that characterizes an entire country, would not all parts of the country be home to pre-electoral violence? That is certainly not the case in Bangladesh as there is great variation across constituencies. Violence signals power and capability; when parties use violence, they demonstrate to the general public that they can accomplish their objectives effectively and efficiently in a country that is entangled in bureaucracy. Bangladesh's history reveals that, yes, violence has played an important role in any sort of political change that has occurred, but that does not mean it has created a political culture tolerant of violence which further leads to an apathetic public and political system. Instead, I posit that this common occurrence of violence has, over time, allowed parties to establish a firm association between violence, power, and the ability to resolve political disputes.

But before I develop this argument further, it is important that I establish that violence is not a spontaneous, accidental occurrence, but that political parties actually use violence for their own purposes. And while Bangladesh's history has seen violent changes in leadership initially, violence is not simply a natural repertoire of politics in Bangladesh. Pre-electoral violence is purposeful and meticulously planned, and is evidenced by the way in which the entire political party organization functions, the accounts of party workers on how they are recruited, the logic

³⁸ Kochanek (1997), p. 137.

behind violence's use, and the objectives violence fulfills. Below, I describe the data I collected and use in this chapter before I begin explaining the various forms of pre-electoral violence.

Data

I use original data from interviews I conducted while in the field in Bangladesh from November 2012 to July 2013. My subjects include politicians, party workers, academics, lawyers, journalists, police officers, and other bureaucrats, all of whom have either studied and/or have direct knowledge of pre-electoral violence in the context of Bangladeshi politics. The section on the production of violence draws on data from the constituency case studies I constructed, which focused on areas that have seen high levels of pre-electoral violence on a consistent basis. These areas are known for not only significant levels of violence, but also the presence of gangsters or local dons who run as candidates in the national elections. These "Robin Hood" type politicians, their (in)famous stories recounted by locals, and the ways in which they rule their constituencies form part of my analysis in this chapter.

The Party Structure: How It Operates to Create Pre-electoral Violence

The structure of political parties in Bangladesh reveals the level of involvement of the entire organization in creating pre-electoral violence. Many of the party workers who operate at the neighborhood-level, distributing leaflets, putting up posters, and, yes, engaging in acts of pre-electoral violence, discussed the chain of command related to episodes of violence. What they described to me was a very hierarchical party structure in which higher officials oversee the actions of their underlings, who oversee their workers, all the way down to the neighborhood-level workers. Through this structure, party officials at the very top of the totem pole may initiate and call for acts of violence by going through the intermediaries of the party organization. As one of my subjects explained,

"We were once asked to create ruckus on campus by an MP [member of parliament]. He told his staff, who then went to the ward-level guy, who then went to the union-level guy, and then finally to the *thana*-level person, who called us.³⁹ We were told that the MP needed violence to occur on campus; apparently, it would be very convenient for him."

Others also describe the involvement of MPs and how many acts of pre-electoral violence are undertaken at the behest of the very parliamentarians for whom the public votes. In addition, several of my subjects noted that the hierarchical party structure allows for easy supervision. For example, if someone at the union level engages in an act of violence that the party did not allow for, then the individual at the ward level is in charge of reprimanding those involved. Thus, acts

³⁹ Bangladesh is comprised of seven divisions: Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet. Within each division are districts, or *zilas* and within those are sub-districts known as *upazilas*. It is within *upazilas* that we see the wards, unions, and *thanas* that my subject describes in this particular quote.

of violence, no matter how locally they may occur, and no matter how low the individuals involved may be in the party organization, are all approved by party leaders. If not, the appropriate level in charge takes care of managing those who act outside of the bounds of the party's desires. Not only does this lend some support to my argument that not all acts of pre-electoral violence are accidental or unexpected occurrences, but these statements also demonstrate that the party structure carefully monitors acts of violence, uses them when such acts work for the party, and reprimands individuals who may engage in violence when said violence does not put the party in favorable light.

Violence-makers as Party Resources

So who are the individuals at the front lines of pre-electoral violence? As I mentioned above, political parties in Bangladesh maintain a very hierarchical and centralized structure that monitors actions taken at the ground-level. And as I also have shown using the previous interview excerpt, oftentimes, MPs, individuals very high up the party ladder, are those who request that acts of violence be produced. So who, exactly is doing the producing? Pre-electoral violence up until recently involved young men, though that is now changing as female politicians have also engaged in acts of protest and violence in the most recent pre-election period in 2013. However, since nearly all perpetrators of these acts of violence are indeed young men, I will refer to them as such. Most of these men are grassroots-level party workers who are often unemployed men that hail from lower socio-economic backgrounds with minimal levels of education. They are, in sum, the downtrodden, frustrated, and disenfranchised, easily susceptible to being scooped up by parties who are willing to take them in, mentor them, and provide a steady source of meals and something to do. They oftentimes work during campaign season in the very neighborhoods where they have grown up. Because party workers who operate at the neighborhood-level need to report to their superiors of how residents in the area will reportedly vote, and because political preferences are often uniform within families, having local area men campaign in any given neighborhood is always an advantage for the party.

Immediate higher-ups recruit these neighborhood-level party workers to monitor voter support levels and then employ a range of campaign tactics to secure support. When parties perceive violence or intimidation strategies as being useful, these higher-ups call on local party workers to do their bidding. Workers may create violence in a variety of arenas, ranging from the neighborhoods in which they operate, to university campuses, to intersections that see a heavy volume of traffic. Party workers then engage in acts that range from vandalizing property, to fighting with opposing party members, to provoking police officers during *hartals*. I describe the range of their actions, how they cause violence, and the varying objectives of pre-electoral violence in the following section.

In addition to these neighborhood-level party workers, political parties keep known criminals, local thugs and gangsters, and these low-level rabble rousers on their rosters. Moreover, these individuals are often protected by the parties. One of the lawyers with whom I spoke mentioned the ways in which parties attempt to bend the rules so that their workers are not only protected, but able to continue their involvement with violence:

“Sure, sometimes law enforcement rounds up these guys who create violence and sends them to jail. What parties don’t want is their men to be remanded — they really don’t want that. If their men are remanded then that means that these individuals can no longer participate in acts of violence on the streets. So what parties do is call up the judges who preside over these men’s cases and use their influence to get the judge to set a bail amount and not give remand.”

Even in cases when party workers are remanded, once these men are eventually released from prison, they are immediately taken back into the party apparatus. Sometimes, parties even reward these workers with a slight promotion, resulting in these workers being in charge of an entire neighborhood all on their own. Essentially, as the lawyer noted, these individuals are either protected or rewarded for their participation in violence, setting up a positive incentive structure for creating violence. Party workers, from their perspective, view their participation in acts of violence as a means for working their way up the party structure. Thus, violence is an act that is consistently rewarded and certainly not discouraged. If pre-electoral violence was merely an unfortunate, but accidental, occurrence of which political parties had no control, party workers would languish in jail while the party attempted to disassociate themselves from such individuals. Instead, party workers who incite violence prove to be an integral part of the party organization because of the crucial service they provide to parties: creating violence when it is of use to the political party. As one of my subjects, who spent his college years as a student party worker, described,

“I was an art student at Dhaka University — the arts department is kind of like the headquarters for student politicians. We’d often be asked by politicians to show up to some place on campus and create panic, start a fight. Sometimes, it would be to make a specific point, and at other times, it would simply be to show other parties that we were in charge.”

So, many young men are not only recruited by parties for general support, but they are also hired specifically to engage in acts of pre-electoral violence when parties need them to do so.

Below, I describe the different sub-types of pre-electoral violence, elucidating who the perpetrators are, what their objectives are, and who politicians target with these specific types of violence. These descriptions shed light on not only the way in which politicians produce pre-electoral violence, but also what they intend to accomplish.

The Many Faces of Pre-electoral Violence

What exactly do we mean by pre-electoral violence? I have used this term frequently in the last chapter, but a proper definition is in order before we can begin to determine the motivations behind the use of “pre-electoral violence.” Many may argue that, simply put, pre-electoral violence is a subset of political violence that occurs prior to elections. And while that is indeed accurate, it is also simply too vague, especially if we are to decode and understand why political parties perpetrate such acts against their constituents. What do these episodes of

violence look like on the ground? Who initiates these incidences of violence and who are the actors who actually perpetrate acts of pre-electoral violence? Who are the victims and why are they targeted?

As I have alluded to before, pre-electoral violence takes many forms and political actors use this repertoire of political behavior for a number of different objectives. Sometimes, pre-electoral violence occurs between candidate hopefuls of the same party in order to secure nominations for candidacy. At other times, parties use pre-electoral violence to intimidate voters and keep them from voting on election day. And, still other kinds of pre-electoral violence involve crowds of individuals who create public displays of violence to signal to voters that they are strong contenders for the elections. Thus, if we are to discuss the term pre-electoral violence and why it occurs, then it is imperative to outline the different categories of pre-electoral violence and pinpoint exactly which forms of this violence I discuss in this dissertation.

Perhaps the easiest way to identify and describe the different forms of pre-electoral violence is to take a chronological approach. As time passes from one election to another, the forms of pre-electoral violence also change in nature. With each form, the individuals involved, the victims, and the immediate objectives also change across time. The actors who perpetrate acts of violence range from political parties as a whole to candidates to local thugs and gangsters. Victims of these acts of violence include targeted minority groups, fellow party members, opponents, and, most often, the general public. And objectives include a wide array of motivations, such as securing candidacy, intimidating the public, keeping voters from election polls, and controlling territory, among many others. This dissertation focuses on *acts of violence prior to elections perpetrated by political parties and/or their candidates that victimize either opponents or voters*. Because pre-electoral violence comes in many forms, several types of violence that I describe below will not be of importance in my analysis later on in this dissertation. Below, I describe each type of pre-electoral violence in terms of chronology.

The first appearance of pre-electoral violence, oddly enough, occurs immediately after elections. This is what I would call pre-electoral violence under the guise of post-electoral violence. Now, while some may argue that these episodes of violence are, in fact, post-electoral violence, some of the party workers with whom I spoke at length (many of whom have actually participated in acts of violence themselves) have said that pre-electoral violence can indeed start as early as right after an election. In such incidences of violence, party workers will engage in acts that either intimidate individuals living in specific neighborhoods or create public displays of violence (i.e. tearing down local businesses, assaulting members of the general public, etc.) to signal to localities that their parties are powerful, present, and still functioning in those areas. In essence, these acts are meant to remind general voters from time to time (and starting from immediately after election results are announced) that these parties have not faded away and will continue to work in these areas as a way to stay a formidable contender for the *next* election.

Both parties that win as well those that lose the election can engage in this particular sub-type of pre-electoral violence. Incumbents use this type of violence to show their supremacy in an area and demonstrate to their constituents that they have the ability to maintain their monopoly over violence in between elections. Challengers, on the other hand, use this kind of pre-electoral violence in an attempt to demonstrate that they, too, are capable of creating violence, victimizing constituents, and even battling members of the incumbent party, if

necessary. While most often, general voters are the primary targets of this type of pre-electoral violence, parties may use such violence against their opposition to demonstrate comparative strength in front of voters.

A number of types of pre-electoral violence occur throughout the period between elections. The first sub-type is fights that occur between student wings of the various political parties on university campuses. Student branches of political parties in Bangladesh operate on campus grounds, attempting to build support blocs among university students and establishing a grassroots-level workforce for campaigns and elections. However, these student wings function similarly to their national-level umbrella parties by attempting to control the entire university campus, much like how national parties attempt to control entire constituencies to win elections. Thus, these student wings do not simply campaign on campus, they aim to dominate their university and quash all other political party activity. In order to do so, students wings mark their territory of domination across university campuses by controlling various buildings, namely dormitories. When political parties control dormitories, they also control these buildings' occupants, students who must show their support to the ruling student wing. If students want to acquire living quarters in the limited number of available rooms, they must pledge allegiance to the group who has managed to control the building. In essence, student party members attempt to ensure their parties the votes of these coerced residents. With the presence of so many student branches of political parties, student party workers engage in territorial disputes over these buildings from time to time, which often lead to physical altercations between these groups.

This is essentially, a grassroots-level attempt at acquiring support from potential voters on campus through intimidation and control. But when many parties attempt to do the very same thing using the same means, physical fights inevitably break out on campus. Victims are more often than not student party workers themselves, but also the hapless residents of the dormitories where these episodes of violence occur. Sometimes, these instances of violence spread to areas outside of campus, where student workers end up engaging in altercations with local business owners after fights escalate and grow outside of the bounds of campus or when student workers attempt to control local businesses like they do dormitories.

Chandabaazi, or rent/due collecting, is a political party activity that often leads to violence and also occurs throughout the duration of any given year. In basic terms, *chandabaazi* is a system of collecting money from local area businesses that political parties then use to line their coffers. With this particular type of violence, party workers (oftentimes local gangsters or thugs) attempt to gain control over a given locality by “offering protection” to businesses in the area. In return for this “protection,” party workers collect service fees from business owners on a regular basis. If business owners refuse to pay the demanded amount, party workers resort to forcefully extracting these rents. The entire system relies on the use of intimidation; since the party workers who collect these rents are oftentimes known criminals or local gangsters with storied reputations, business owners will often comply out of fear of reprisal. Moreover, since the most common form of punishment if business owners do not comply is some type of violent action taken against them, businesses rarely ever opt out of the regular payments. In one case, a business owner of a small tea stall had hot tea poured over his body by a local gangster and party worker because he had been unable to keep up with payments to the latter. With *chandabaazi*, usually local business owners are the primary target, but party workers will sometimes also

attempt to collect rents — and therefore use violence against — residents, hospitals, schools, or other establishments.

And while the previous two types of pre-electoral violence, student wing politics and *chandabaazi*, are not used directly to influence upcoming elections, another form of violence which occurs throughout the period between elections — “discrediting violence” — is used to do just that. “Discrediting violence,” is acts of violence that parties create and then name their opponents as being responsible for so that opponents are seen in a negative light by the general public. One interview subject who works for the BNP angrily explained to me how the violence responsible for taking the lives of many innocent bystanders during the BNP-issued *hartals* which were occurring at that time were really caused by the Awami League. He further noted how it was only the Awami League that benefited from the violence because the general public believed the BNP to be responsible for the deaths. Thus, according to my interviewee, the Awami League was the real culprit and was merely using the BNP’s name to place the blame on their opponents. Of course, many of my Awami League subjects also made similar claims, arguing that the BNP consistently and frequently used discrediting violence to give the Awami League a reputation of being comprised of only local gangsters. Regardless of who actually is responsible for each act of violence, the very fact that both parties have claimed that such strategies are used against them only further confirm that discrediting violence is indeed a type of violence in any party’s arsenal of strategies. Should parties want to discredit their opponents, they always have the option of causing an episode of violence, and then blaming other parties to rile the general public. The types of violence used to discredit opponents can range from incidences of high magnitude, such as bombings, or smaller episodes of violence like scuffles that result in a few minor injuries.

Once the election date is announced, parties prepare by selecting candidates for each of the 300 constituencies that are up for grabs in the national election. These nominations occur at the national party-level through a highly centralized process and not through primary elections. As nominations approach, candidates often engage in violence targeting their fellow party members to secure their party’s nomination in the constituency. By targeting their colleagues, candidates aim to demonstrate their relative power as well as keep competition at bay by physically limiting opponents. Intra-party fights also occur after parties announce nominations for each constituency. When nominee-hopefuls do not receive their party’s nomination for candidacy, they sometimes either engage in violence that targets the individual who has won the candidacy or attack party offices and hold public rallies to denounce the party. In most cases, such violence occurs within the party and the targets are potential candidates. In addition, targets also include office buildings and other property owned by political parties, as vandalism is a common form of intra-party fighting that occurs during the election nomination process. While this may seem to run contrary to the notion of the centralized parties found in Bangladesh, it is actually not so. Even though parties ultimately have the final say in who becomes the nominee for a particular constituency, that does not preclude candidate-hopefuls from defecting and/or expressing their outrage over being denied the ticket. And while candidate-hopefuls have the choice to show their anger, parties also have the choice to cut ties with such individuals who act out against the party.

Around the time of nominations begin various forms of campaigning, which also bring their share of pre-electoral violence. One such particular form of campaigning is what Bangladeshis call “missiles,” or political processions. During missiles, political party workers hold banners, chant slogans, and make announcements while making their way through downtown areas, neighborhoods, and some of the main traffic areas, often slowing down daily commutes. And while these missiles can be non-violent in nature, they are often accompanied by the eruption of a minor scuffle or bouts of vandalism which can potentially cause harm to bystanders, local businesses, and/or vehicles nearby. The purpose is to demonstrate power, much like most other marches.

The most common form of pre-electoral violence that often comes to mind when discussing election-related violence in Bangladesh is what are known as *hartals*. *Hartals* are political strikes that political parties call from time to time in protest of a policy or in response to something another party has said or done. When parties issue these *hartals*, they specify the duration, location, and reason behind the strike. These strikes are perhaps the most common means of creating and using pre-electoral violence as a means to influencing election outcomes. During a given *hartal*, parties take to the streets to decry the subject of their *hartal* and essentially put a stop to all economic and daily activity in the particular location of their strike. While it is not illegal to open up businesses, take children to school, or commute to work on the day of a *hartal*, many people abstain from their usual activities due to the high level of risk associated with these strikes as violence is a common occurrence during *hartals*.

Hartals are frequently violent because they are often a statement of disapproval and “one-upmanship” against opponents. For example, during the latter half of 2013, the BNP frequently issued a series of *hartals* in protest of a number of the Awami League’s actions, including their pushing forward of war criminals’ — or *Razakars*’ — trials, their disallowing the Jamaat-e-Islami from any political participation, and the death of Biswajit Das in early 2013. Since these *hartals* were issued in direct response to the Awami League’s policies and actions, the BNP’s *hartals* often led to Awami League and BNP workers engaging in physical altercations. And because the Awami League has been in power since the 2008 election, the police as well as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) are essentially part of the Awami League’s muscle power. Thus, BNP workers have found themselves on the receiving end of law enforcement’s rubber bullets and tear gas shells during their public protests. As a result, the BNP and law enforcement often engaged in attacks and counter attacks which escalated quite rapidly, putting bystanders, commuters, businesses, vehicles, and residences in harm’s way. So, although it is not illegal to continue daily life activity during these *hartals*, most people shy away from doing so out of fear of injury or even death.

Intimidation is also a very common strategy political parties in Bangladesh use during the campaign season. Many of my subjects who work at the neighborhood-level during the campaigning period recounted stories of how parties may intimidate pockets of opposition supporters that they eventually identify during the campaign. Hindu voters, for example have generally and consistently voted for the Awami League; several of my subjects recounted how in areas with a high proportion of Hindus, BNP workers and politicians will make veiled threats to Hindu voters by implying that they may be physically attacked should they decide to vote. In each of these cases, parties used various forms of intimidation — be it veiled threats or signals to

voters that they may be physically harmed or assaulted — to keep voters from voting for their opponents or at all. In most instances of intimidation, the target is the general voter, and either candidates or their ground-level workers are involved in the actual act of intimidating. And while intimidation does not necessarily always lead to injury or physical harm, it is a form of indirect violence perpetrated against the general public and thus counted in this list of pre-electoral violence sub-types.

Finally, the last type of pre-electoral violence that commonly occurs in Bangladesh is the episodes of violence that happen on election day as a means to stop voters from entering polling stations or casting their votes. These are last-ditch attempts at keeping voters out of polling stations when parties realize that support in their constituency swings in their opponent's favor. The most common election day violence includes vandalism on polling station grounds, stealing ballot boxes, party workers patrolling polling stations to intimidate voters, and intimidation near residences to keep voters at home on election day. Sometimes, party workers from different parties will engage in public melees, which also scare voters away from voting. Election day violence targets primarily voters, but parties also often victimize their opponents and their party workers as well.

Among these numerous sub-types of pre-electoral violence, I reiterate that my focus is on acts of violence that political parties perpetrate against either their opponents or members of the general public. Therefore, in this dissertation, I will most commonly discuss acts such as intimidation, discrediting violence, missiles, and *hartals*. However, I will also mention acts such as *chandabaazi* as these are forms of violence that parties use against members of the general public as well. Additionally, it is also important to note that while I have brought up the death of Biswajit Das as well as incredibly brutal acts such as burning individuals alive in vehicles, these acts are not particularly common, though they are slowly becoming more so over the past couple of years.⁴⁰ The most commonly occurring form of pre-electoral violence is the *hartal* where political party members will oftentimes clash with law enforcement officers, resulting in a few arrests, very little if any deaths, and many injuries.

The Logic of Pre-electoral Violence: Why Use it at All?

Throughout the many conversations I have had with politicians, many of these subjects had explanations of why “other” parties use violence readily prepared. Knowing that I would be dealing with an unresponsive subject had I asked why his party initiated episodes of pre-electoral violence, I asked why his *opponents* sometimes started pre-electoral violence. My subject immediately responded,

⁴⁰ At the time of writing, and well after the 2014 elections, the BNP were still issuing *hartals*, which included acts such as party members throwing cocktail bombs at vehicles that contained passengers. So while these acts are still not everyday occurrences, they are becoming more regularly used by parties. As a result, voters are even more scared than before to leave their homes, go to work, send their children to school, or open up their places of business on days of *hartals*.

“Oh that is simple. [Party X] uses violence before every election because they think that’s how they’ll win.⁴¹ They want to show their power to people and they do that by scaring them. Sometimes, it works because voters believe that the party that is the most violent is also the most powerful.”

Another subject, an academic, recounted a story of how parties use intimidation to keep their opponent’s supporters from voting:

“You know there is this village where many Hindus live, and, as you know, Hindus usually vote for the Awami League. So, on election day, some BNP workers stood outside this area and whenever a Hindu woman would try to make her way to the polling station, these men would lift up their *lungis*, expose themselves in front of the women, and then would just watch the Hindu women retreat back to their homes. It was all they had to do — no physical contact, nothing. By exposing themselves, they effectively made it clear to the women that there would be dire consequences if they chose to vote that day.”

If so many individuals belonging to parties across the entire spectrum (and even those who do not) argue that other parties are using and orchestrating acts of pre-electoral violence and clearly articulating the logic behind its use, someone must be doing so, regardless of who the culprit actually is.

Pre-electoral violence is also not simply a set of accidents that occur while parties compete with one another for voters’ support. Several interviewees described a number of different objectives that they believe pre-electoral violence fulfills. As Biswajit Das’ murder and the countless victims of the most recent election year’s *hartals* have shown, political actors sometimes use violence to inflict the greatest amount of damage to individuals and property to make their presence known. During 2013, the BNP-led coalition issued frequent *hartals* in protest of the Awami League’s policies and stances. During these *hartals*, the Jamaat-e-Islami — the BNP’s ally — took center stage and engaged in violence tactics that soon became their common modus operandi, including burning vehicles with passengers still inside, throwing cocktail bombs indiscriminately, and setting fire to state buildings. With each *hartal*, the Jamaat-e-Islami reminded the general Bangladeshi public of how formidable an opponent they were to the ruling party. Many also argued that the violence demonstrated how weak the Awami League was in comparison to their opponents as well as how impotent they were because they could not stop the violence.

The Bureaucracy and Its Relation to the Political Elite and the Public

Now that I have described the many faces of pre-electoral violence, how does one understand the relationship between these occurrences of violence and the bureaucracy in

⁴¹ To protect the identity of my subjects, I refer to any individuals and parties they mentioned in their interviews with relation to their identities with substitutes such as “Party X.”

Bangladesh? The bureaucracy in Bangladesh is not only large, but also quite complex (Younis and Mostafa 2000, Zafarullah and Rahman 2008). Comprised of a number of agencies, employing hundreds of individuals, and largely inaccessible to the average citizen in Bangladesh, the bureaucracy is associated with features such as, "...civil-military elitisms in bureaucracy, politicisation of bureaucracy, lax accountability, corruption..." among others, as noted by Md. Awal Hossain Mollah, who describes the growth and development of Bangladesh's bureaucracy starting with its colonial heritage.⁴² Unlike politicians, bureaucrats are not elected nor ousted every five years, though the longevity and advancement of their careers are dependent upon support for the ruling party. Thus, though the general public cannot hold individual bureaucrats accountable by voting them in or out, bureaucrats' salaries and opportunities for upward mobility are in the hands of political parties and individual politicians. Politicians can, and will often, threaten transfers, demotions, or termination of bureaucrats who do not cooperate.⁴³ As a result, bureaucrats are very wary of current political temperatures as well as who they must appease in order to keep their jobs (Zafarullah and Rahman 2008, Zafarullah and Huque 2001). When I began my interview of a detective in Dhaka of why political parties incite acts of pre-electoral violence, he immediately began by listing all the reasons why the BNP, specifically, used violence. When I asked if the Awami League — the current ruling party — was ever responsible for such acts, he looked at me blankly for a moment. Then, very carefully, he said,

"Look, I don't really know what you want me to say. Sure, if the BNP were in power today, perhaps you would hear something different from me today. Perhaps you would hear that the Awami League is responsible for all acts of violence and the BNP is trying to stop them — I don't know. What I do know is that the Awami League is my employer and I cannot say anything against them. You can't expect me to — what am I supposed to say? That they start acts of violence too?"

Thus, in terms of the political party-bureaucrat link, bureaucrats will often pledge their allegiance to parties in power, especially because parties and their individual politicians can punish bureaucrats and/or hold them accountable.

The relationship between bureaucrats and the general public, however, is quite different. Because bureaucrats are not elected officials, voters cannot hold bureaucrats accountable through institutional means. As I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, when the average Bangladeshi interfaces with any agency of the bureaucracy, she must engage in an elaborately choreographed sequence of paperwork, speaking with or mentioning knowing the "right" individuals, bribing officials, going to several different offices to get multiple signatures on their forms, and a number of other steps if required. For example, to obtain a trade license in Bangladesh, one must take the required documents (office space rental agreement, location map,

⁴² Mollah (2011), p. 151.

⁴³ Transfers oftentimes come in the form of a change in position to areas that are not as attractive to individuals. So, as an example, an uncooperative bureaucrat who works in Dhaka may find herself being transferred to a rural area far away from her hometown and family.

etc.) to their City Corporation or City Council office, which issues the licenses. Sometimes knowing what the required documents are in the first place can be difficult to find out. At other times, if individuals attempt to find out from bureaucrats what the required materials are, they may hear an inconsistent set of responses from various employees. If and when individuals obtain a list of required documents, they then need to fill out the proper paperwork and, due to high corruption and low transparency, offer a bribe to the official in charge or the officer who is working on their application. How much individuals pay can range quite a bit, especially considering that the amount is often negotiated between the payer and payee. This uncertainty related to how much one needs to pay for a license can often be a source of great frustration to the average citizen. Sometimes, the process of receiving a license can be made easier by having connections to politicians or high-ranking officials in the concerned agency. At other times, the socio-economic strata from which an individual comes can be either helpful or a great hindrance. Poorer individuals may not be given any attention when they show up at the correct office, have greater difficulty in managing a bribe, and/or be denied simply based on the whims of the officer with whom they interact. Working with the bureaucracy to receive services that should otherwise be accessible to all individuals can often be a frustrating, confusing, and lengthy process.⁴⁴ Moreover, sometimes individuals may not eventually be able to get the service that they had sought out in the first place. Because of the complexities of dealing with the bureaucracy, Bangladeshis often seek candidates who can demonstrate their ability to procure services, goods, and other benefits on behalf of their constituents, especially since most of them live in an environment where receiving these things can be nearly impossible.

Violent Parties and the Bureaucracy

So what connects the image of a menacing, violent politician with one of a politician who can help the common person obtain a trade license, a land title, or some other related service? Why does the use of pre-electoral violence signal to voters that these politicians are the only ones who can help them tackle obstacles posed by the bureaucracy and how does this happen? Because the public oftentimes faces great difficulty in working with the bureaucracy, they seek individuals who can help them achieve their objectives related to the bureaucracy — namely, politicians, to whom bureaucrats must pay deference. Many of my respondents described how they expect politicians to be able to help the public in this particular way. Parties must be able to demonstrate to the public that they can offer their help in getting the average person whatever service or good they may need. Thus, voters look to parties and their candidates as their personal liaisons with the bureaucracy. But the system when dealing with the bureaucracy — or, what has become institutionalized over time — involves going to multiple offices in different parts of town, bribing officials, and a great deal of uncertainty in whether a person's efforts will eventually lead to her achieving her objective. So to the ordinary citizen, the “system” does not work; they seek individuals who can work outside of this system and get bureaucrats to cooperate with members of the public.

⁴⁴ This is not always the case for Bangladeshis. There are some who are able to procure goods and services from the bureaucracy without hassle. I will discuss this further in later chapters.

But why does *violence* specifically signal to voters that political parties are capable of getting bureaucrats to cooperate? First, violence is outside of the system — formal or otherwise — no matter how common and regular an occurrence it may be, it is still a form of interaction that falls outside the boundaries of law, morality, and common decency. If violence were an accepted part of the system, parties would not shy away from claiming responsibility over any such acts. Thus, violence is outside of the system, and solutions outside of the system are what the public seeks when they vote for candidates. Secondly, and more importantly, however, when a political party shuts down stores, blocks intersections, vandalizes property, and sets buildings on fire, they show the public that they can get and do what they want. Moreover, law enforcement cannot stop them. Violence can impact a large number of people, get the entire country to sit up and notice, and rarely does the party responsible get punished for such crimes. Essentially, violence can get these guys what they want and no one can do a single thing about it. That is *exactly* what the average person seeks in a country that is hampered by red tape and complexities that often do not make sense to the average Joe or Jane.

Many skeptics may wonder why parties that use clientelistic practices do not signal to voters that they are powerful and can get the bureaucracy to cooperate. The first reason is simply a matter of numbers: clientelistic practices are targeted towards specific members of the public, not all. A party cannot simply give all constituents a job or bags of groceries — resources and money is limited and finite. A party can, however, impact hundreds of individuals who cannot take their children to school because a *hartal* has turned violent and has spread across an entire constituency or even an entire city, blocking many major roads. So when a party uses clientelistic measures, they are only signaling their power and ability to help to a few beneficiaries. That is certainly not enough to win an election. Further, if an individual needs a politician to force a bureaucrat to cooperate with a voter, *that* in and of itself is the clientelistic good that the voter is receiving. What signals to the voter beforehand that the politician will be able to do this for them? What demonstrates the party's or politician's power which she can then leverage against the bureaucrat to help the voter? With the use of violence comes a level of fear from the public and the bureaucracy. As a result, voters view the violent, thug-like politician as their only savior who can properly strong-arm a bureaucrat to do their job.

Areas such as Kalabagan and Lalbagh serve as perfect examples of the voter's perspective in Bangladesh. Both belong to constituencies that are located in south-central Dhaka, close to one another. In the former, the elected parliamentarian is Awami League's Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, the poster boy of the "nice, good guy" who wears a neatly pressed suit in all his poster photos and public appearances. Lalbagh, on the other hand, has seen its share of gangster parliamentarians rule the area, like Haji Selim and Naseeruddin Pinto. During my time in Bangladesh, I asked party workers and residents of these two areas to assess their parliamentarians, past and present. When I asked residents of Kalabagan what their impressions of Taposh were, they simply pointed to the roads outside their windows. One said, "Can't you see the mess he's made here? They keep cutting up our roads, pretending to fix them, and cutting them up again. Our rickshaws have to go around in circles just to get us out of the neighborhood." Others from Kalabagan similarly addressed the problems with the roads and placing the blame squarely on Taposh's shoulders. One said, "This guy can't manage to get the City Corporation guys to properly fix our roads. What good is he to us?" When I further pressed

on Taposh's clean-cut and polite image, this resident responded by saying, "This is exactly why he can't do anything — he's too good a guy. You need someone tough to push those City Corporation folks around and demand that the roads be fixed once and for all. Taposh doesn't have that in him."

Residents of Lalbagh tell a very contrasting story. The few individuals who were willing to openly speak about these candidates were quite defensive of their parliamentarians. One individual, a man in his 70s who has lived in Lalbagh through all of its elections, said to me,

"I know what you are thinking. You think that our politicians are nothing more than goons. Everyone says that about Haji Selim. But that's not true — he's quite a good man. Look around you, just take a look at everything. The roads are always well-maintained. And everything in this area has improved over the years. Lalbagh didn't look so well kept before, but now it is and it is all because of Haji Selim. He takes care of Lalbagh."

A prominent academic from Dhaka University, one of my interview subjects, explained to me the appeal of the Haji Selim's, criminal candidates, and "Robin Hood" parliamentarians.

"Haji Selim is a well-known criminal who has killed, beaten individuals, and broken a number of other laws for his own advancement. Everyone, including his own voters know this. First and foremost, this makes everyone scared of him — they know he can do whatever he wants and can get away with it. So, they better obey him. But on top of that, he takes care of his own. A main water pipe has burst in Lalbagh? No problem, Haji Selim will get whoever is in charge of fixing it to fix it. Someone needs to get a land title for their property? Go to someone who works for Haji Selim and they'll make sure no one in the bureaucracy hassles you too much — you'll get the title. See, because they're violent guys, voters and bureaucrats alike know that they shouldn't mess with these politicians. So people do as they wish — voters vote for them and bureaucrats bend to their every desire without any resistance whatsoever."

Later on in our conversation, the professor clarified that politicians who may be more approachable or those who rely on clientelistic practices to entice voters do not have the same impact because an image of violence produces both cooperation and intimidation. "People play by [these politicians'] rules because they know they have no choice."

Conclusion

As I have discussed in this chapter, parties often willfully plan and execute actions that lead to violence in order to influence election outcomes. While a few of my interview subjects have argued that pre-electoral violence is simply a part of a violent political culture that has developed throughout Bangladesh's history, I argue otherwise. If Bangladesh's political culture were to blame, we would not see such great variation across constituencies, all of which

share the same storied history and political culture. Political parties plan and orchestrate acts of pre-electoral violence and use this type of violence as a campaign repertoire. This can be seen by examining political parties' structure as well as how the organization functions, listening to the accounts of those who have engaged in these acts of violence, and studying the many objectives which pre-electoral violence fulfills. In addition, in all my conversations with political actors, while many offered explanations to why political parties — their own or otherwise — use pre-electoral violence, absolutely *no one* denied that parties create episodes of pre-electoral violence. That pre-electoral violence is not accidental is undisputed by the countless academics, journalists, police officers, lawyers, party workers, and politicians with whom I spoke. Further, political actors specifically use these acts of violence to show the public that they are capable of strong-arming an uncooperative bureaucracy, which the public finds appealing.

Revisiting the questions I ask in the first chapter, why do political parties opt to use pre-electoral violence as a campaign repertoire when other, non-violent strategies are available? To clarify, I am not asking why pre-electoral violence exists in general or why democracies in developing countries see episodes of pre-electoral violence from time to time. Many would argue that these are natural “growing pains” of newly formed or young states, though I am not convinced even this is an accurate assessment. What I ask in this dissertation is why parties use violence when they can use non-violence. How is it that parties defy commonly accepted notions of voter-party relations by victimizing the very people from whom they garner support and why is it that the public still supports parties that use violence against them *when non-violent strategies can be used to gain the voter's support?* This is an important distinction to draw because simply studying the existence of pre-electoral violence regardless of the existence of other election strategies would lead to very different conclusions that I will not discuss here. How and why pre-electoral violence is comparatively more useful or appealing than other, non-violent strategies is the focus of this research.

Chapter 3: Hotbeds of Pre-electoral Violence and Why Violence Occurs in these Areas

Introduction

So under what conditions do political parties use pre-electoral violence as a campaign strategy? As I have stated in the previous two chapters, pre-electoral violence is a common and regular occurrence prior to all elections in Bangladesh, both national and local. That political parties are the most common perpetrators of such violence is public knowledge. Media coverage, court cases naming specific party members, and witness accounts reveal a high volume of such offenses prior to elections. Often, political parties will attempt to place the blame on their adversaries, but none refute that parties are the ones to blame. And yet, despite the stubborn presence of pre-electoral violence in countries such as Bangladesh, not all constituencies see the same level of violence. Indeed, there are certain hotbeds of violent activity prior to elections, while other constituencies see virtually no episodes of violence. Several scholars have pointed to the greater frequency of the occurrence of violence in urban areas (Choucri 1974, Braungart 1984, Eyre 1984, Muller 1985, Goldstone 1991, Messner 1997, Moser and Holland 1997, Moser 2004, Della Porta 2006, Auyero 2007, Urdal 2008, Kunkeler and Peters 2011, Berman and Callen 2011) and pre-electoral violence is certainly no different. What conditions explain the disparity in levels of violence between urban and rural areas and determine exactly where pre-electoral violence does and does not occur in Bangladesh?

Table 1 below shows the variation across rural and urban constituencies in Bangladesh in terms of frequency and magnitude of pre-electoral violence that occurred prior to the 2014 national elections. As one can see from the table, there is a much greater frequency of violence in urban constituencies, with around four times as many episodes of pre-electoral violence happening in urban constituencies than in rural ones. The averages shown below are calculated averages per constituency in each category.

Table 1: Pre-electoral Violence in Rural and Urban Constituencies

	Rural Constituencies	Urban Constituencies
Average Number of Episodes	7.84	31.06
Average Arrests	13.93	21.57
Average Injuries	41.02	58.97
Average Deaths	2.59	2.19
Number of Constituencies	268	32

Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Dainik Purbokone, Dainik Purbanchal, Dainik Sylhet, and Sonali Sangbad. The time period for which these data were collected was from September 1, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

Note: Constituencies coded as “Rural” and “Semi-rural” are included under “Rural Constituencies” and those coded as “Urban” and “Semi-urban” are included under “Urban Constituencies.”

Reducing this disparity to “urbanity” as being the primary causal factor is too simplistic and rather vague. What is it exactly about urban constituencies that makes them more likely to be home to pre-electoral violence than rural constituencies? To explain this variation in levels of pre-electoral violence, I argue that in constituencies where the reliance on an inaccessible and complex bureaucracy is high and where information on voter preferences is low, parties will use pre-electoral violence more frequently. This, I believe explains the disparity between urban and rural constituencies as the bureaucracy (its offices, agencies, bureaucrats themselves, etc.) are more clustered in urban areas and because populations are generally higher and more concentrated in urban locations. I discuss these factors at greater length and explain the causal mechanism below in this chapter. The following figure is a visual representation of my thesis:

Figure 1: Conditions that Determine the Occurrence of Pre-electoral Violence

	<u>Low Reliance on the Bureaucracy</u>	<u>High Reliance on the Bureaucracy</u>
<u>Low Voter Information</u>	Some pre-electoral violence	High levels of pre-electoral violence
<u>High Voter Information</u>	Little to no pre-electoral violence	Some pre-electoral violence

In this chapter, I examine constituencies where there is a high reliance on the bureaucracy, where individuals must face the state on their own and without the help of intermediaries. With the primary focus of this chapter on constituencies where the reliance on the bureaucracy is high and information on voters is low, I take a look at two constituencies in particular: the areas of Lalbagh (Dhaka - 7) and Shahbagh (Dhaka - 8), both located in the capital city.⁴⁵ In both of these areas, the level of reliance on the bureaucracy is quite high, as both are located in the Dhaka metropolitan area and are home to many, if not most of the city's state buildings and bureaucratic agencies and offices. Here, people must approach the bureaucracy to seek services and goods independently. Additionally, parties in both these constituencies have very little knowledge of their constituents due to the large number of residents in the country's largest metropolis. Both of these constituencies represent areas that would fall within the top right quadrant in Figure 1. In the rest of this chapter, I use case study and interview data to describe these areas, the perspectives of constituents, as well as how the dynamics between the voter and the party play out to support my thesis. In addition, I will discuss constituencies that have a high

⁴⁵ Lalbagh is located in the constituency known as Dhaka - 7 and Shahbagh is located in Dhaka - 8. I will refer to these constituencies by these names in this chapter when discussing the violence these areas experience. Lalbagh and Shahbagh are more familiar names that refer to specific neighborhoods within these constituencies.

reliance on the bureaucracy and high level of voter information (the bottom right quadrant in Figure 1) and why we may see some episodes of pre-electoral violence in these areas.⁴⁶

It is important to note how the high presence of bureaucracy is quite often congruous with urban areas. It is in urban localities where agency offices and government headquarters are located. Most politicians themselves live in urban areas rather than rural areas, even if they represent rural constituencies.⁴⁷ On the other hand, because the opposite is true of rural areas, residents either must travel to the nearest urban area to interface with the bureaucracy or rely on many of the informal institutions set in place in their own localities to get the services they need. Thus, I argue, that it is not uncommon, nor particularly surprising, that the most violence-ridden areas in Bangladesh are urban constituencies rather than their rural counterparts.

The rest of the chapter is divided into the following sections. The next section is a brief overview of the extant literature on prevailing theories that explain why urban areas are home to more violence than rural areas. In this section, I explore previously stated arguments and then articulate my own. I then describe the data I use in this chapter as well as the methodology I employed while conducting my case studies and interviews in Dhaka from November 2012 to July 2013. The next section consists of my argument, including a thorough look at both Dhaka - 7 and Dhaka - 8, with a specific focus on the areas of Lalbagh and Shahbagh. In this section, I describe the two constituencies' political histories, a description of important political actors, how voters view their representatives, and their logic for why they vote for particular parties. Both these constituency case studies serve to shed light on how my two independent variables contribute to the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. I end my analysis by discussing constituencies that have both a high reliance on the bureaucracy as well as high information and what that translates into in terms of pre-electoral violence. Finally, I conclude with addressing other theories and thoughts on my argument's implications.

Literature Review and Background

That there is incredible variation in terms of where violence occurs is not new. Regardless of the type of violence discussed, violence often occurs much more frequently in some areas than in others. In some locations, violence may be continuous or unrelenting, while in other locations, there is absolutely no violence. As I have mentioned above, based on the two factors I have identified — high reliance on the bureaucracy and the lack of information on voters — urban constituencies in Bangladesh more often experience episodes of pre-electoral

⁴⁶ In this chapter, I examine the two quadrants underneath “High Bureaucracy Presence” from Figure 1. In the following chapter, I study constituencies with low bureaucratic presence and high voter information. The remaining quadrant left unexamined — where there is low bureaucratic presence and low voter information — is not likely to exist, as areas with low bureaucratic presence are usually either rural or remote areas with small populations and where parties can easily obtain information on their voters. As a consequence, I have not included this quadrant of cases in my analysis.

⁴⁷ It is actually quite common for members of parliament to not reside in the areas that they represent. In fact, most members of parliament live in the capital city of Dhaka.

violence than rural constituencies. Explaining the causal mechanism to elucidate how this relationship exists is the focus of this chapter.

A number of arguments have been offered to explain why urban areas are more often the locations of episodes of violence. The first group of scholars examines economic motivations behind why individuals may engage in acts of violence more in urban areas than in rural areas. They discuss the possibility that income inequality has a positive relationship with political violence because of the “relative deprivation” that those among the poor experience with respect to the middle and upper classes (Huntington 1968, Nagel 1974, Hardy 1979, Weede 1981, Muller 1985).⁴⁸ In urban areas, members of various economic and social strata cohabit in close quarters and are frequently exposed to one another. As a result, urban localities are much more likely to be home to political violence due to the friction caused by such exposure. Others point to specific elements of society as being the perpetrators of such violence due to economic reasons: unemployed, young men who are frustrated with the state because they either cannot use their degree to further themselves or simply cannot find employment and are left to their own devices (Becker 1968, Brainard and Chollet 2007). These scholars argue that, because these droves of young men blame the state for being unable to provide opportunities for advancement, it is no surprise that the primary perpetrators of violence are indeed young men, either who take to the street of their own volition or are swooped up by political parties to engage in violence.

And while I agree that urban areas do often see various forms of violence and rioting due to economic reasons, not all urban areas experience similar levels of violence. Furthermore, friction between the have’s and the have not’s does not explain why only certain, specific areas within cities like Dhaka see much more violence than others, with some areas seeing very little. The use of unemployed, frustrated, and disenfranchised men, who come in the hundreds in urban areas of developing countries like Bangladesh, is also a very compelling argument. It is true that part of what makes certain areas more violence-prone in Bangladesh is the presence of such young men. However, this alone again cannot explain why some parts of cities like Dhaka experience more violence than others. Is it that in only certain areas, unemployed men find it easier or compelling to agitate than in others? While these arguments that center on economic motivations certainly capture part of the problem that causes high levels of violence in urban settings, they do not provide full explanations for why we see variation across cases.

In a similar vein, other scholars point to population density and resource management as the primary reasons for why urban localities are home to violence more than their rural counterparts. These arguments center around the notion that urban populations are not only larger, but also more dense, thus causing a number of problems such as scarce resources, pressure on local governments which are unable to properly serve their constituents, and other such resource struggles and constraints. As a result, urban populations are far more likely to be in greater need of services, goods, and other requirements, such as water and electricity, medical attention, and even employment. These populations are more likely to lash out and take to the streets and, if parties need manpower, be willing participants in political violence. In his study of

⁴⁸ While some of these scholars have discussed the “relative deprivation” argument and studied the relationship between average income more broadly with violence (such as Weede 1981), not all of these scholars have supported the “relative deprivation” argument. For instance, the findings in Nagel (1974) suggest a lack of relationship between income inequality and the occurrence of armed attacks.

India and examination of armed conflict, political violence, and Hindu-Muslim riots, Henrik Urdal argues that not only do resource constraints lead to these forms of political violence, but that what he coins as “youth bulges,” or large populations of youth, also cause increases in levels of violence.⁴⁹ Thus, according to Urdal and many others, the presence of youthful populations compounded by income inequality and a struggle for resources explains the occurrence of violence in urban areas.

Still other scholars have pointed out how certain urban areas see more violence because state buildings, the very physical symbols of state presence, are located in these areas. When individuals agitate, riot, or engage in other forms of violence, they do so in these areas because state buildings provide the most appropriate settings to lash out, protest, and appeal to the government because *the government is located there*. Moreover, when voters or the opposition want to demonstrate their desire to fight against or take down the government, these state buildings serve as the perfect targets that come under the attack of arson, brick bats, and other forms of vandalism. Thus, such scholars argue that not all urban areas, or areas simply by virtue of being considered urban, are home to violence, but some in particular are because they are home to the visible and physical forms of government — state buildings. As Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard, and Kristin Sziarto argue in their 2008 study on contentious politics, “Social movements often seek to strategically manipulate, subvert and resignify places that symbolize priorities and imaginaries they are contesting; to defend places that stand for their priorities and imaginaries; and to produce new spaces where such visions can be practised, within that place and beyond.”⁵⁰ The spatiality of urban areas matters and serves as an important factor in explaining the occurrence of violence in such areas.

Again, these arguments also fail to address why there is variation within urban areas. What is important to take away from these arguments, however, is that they address the importance of the link between the state and voters as well as the frustration that the public feels when the state does not perform as expected. These arguments also approach the subject of populations’ needs and interfacing with government through bureaucracy in order to acquire goods and services. This is paramount to understanding the party-voter dynamic and why violence is often a frequently used outlet of expression for both parties and voters. I refer to the above mentioned arguments as “demand-side” perspectives, by explaining the public’s logic for and willingness to engage in violence.

And not all acts of violence are spontaneous occurrences orchestrated by the public. Often, as empirical evidence suggests from cases like Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, political elites are the ones who precipitate acts of violence. So what explains their logic for doing so? Given the large, dense populations, resource constraints, and general lack of ability of the government to address constituent needs, I argue that urban areas generally do see more pre-electoral violence than rural areas because parties can utilize their voters’ frustration and show that they can face off with an uncooperative and inept bureaucracy — or, the face of “the state” — on behalf of their constituents.

⁴⁹ Urdal (2008). “Population, Resources, and Political Violence: A Subnational Study of India, 1956-2002.”

⁵⁰ Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto (2008), p. 162.

Data and Methodology

In this chapter I rely on qualitative data I gathered while conducting fieldwork in Dhaka, Bangladesh from November 2012 to July 2013. I spent a significant amount of time in both the Dhaka -7 and Dhaka - 8 constituencies, constructing detailed case studies on both these areas with a specific focus on the Lalbagh neighborhood as well as Shahbagh Square area within these constituencies, respectively. During this time, I spoke with residents, business owners, party workers, and those who commute into the area regarding their thoughts on the constituencies' politicians, what motivates them to vote, their thoughts on the upcoming elections, and the general conditions of their constituencies. Their insights into what makes their politicians so alluring and why violence occurs in certain areas inform a substantial part of this chapter's analysis. In addition, I also conducted another case study in the Dhaka - 10 constituency, with a specific focus on the area of Kalabagan. This constituency and the data I collected from this area serve as a contrast to both Dhaka – 7 and Dhaka – 8. While I selected the Dhaka – 7 constituency for its well-known history of storied criminal politicians and violence, I chose to study Dhaka – 8 because of the high frequency of pre-electoral violence that occurs there. In the pre-election period prior to the most recent national election, Dhaka – 8 was home to 147 episodes of pre-electoral violence, the highest among all constituencies across Bangladesh. Dhaka - 7 was also the location of frequent episodes of pre-electoral violence, well above the national average. The following table shows summary statistics of pre-electoral violence in both constituencies.

Table 2: Pre-electoral Violence in Dhaka – 7 and Dhaka – 8

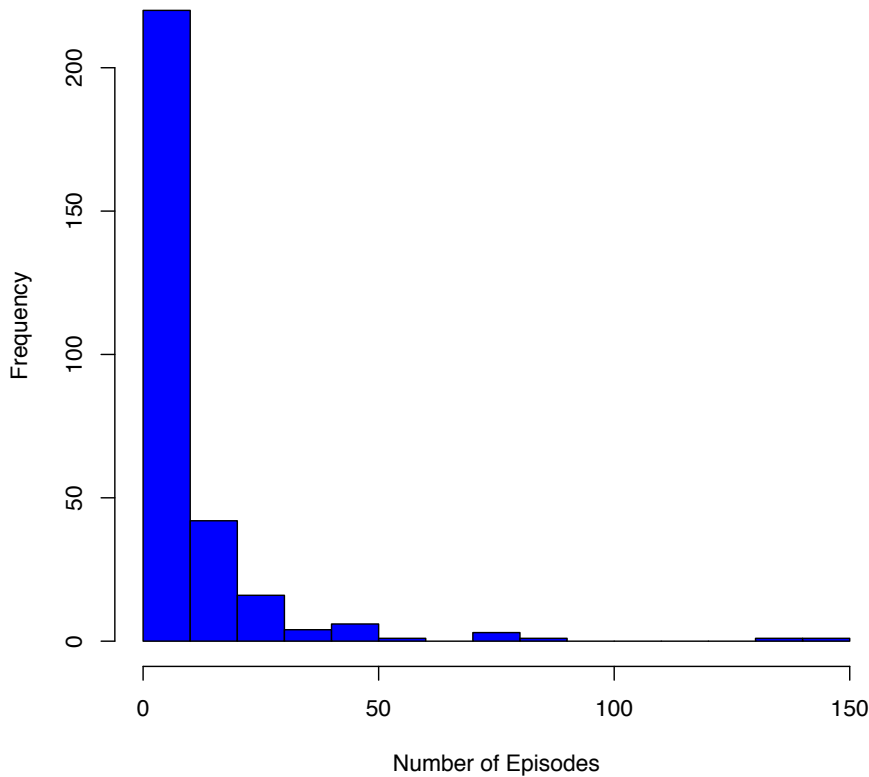
Constituency	Episodes of Violence	Arrests	Injuries	Deaths
Dhaka – 7 (Lalbagh)	45	15	34	1
Dhaka – 8 (Shahbagh)	147	110 +	204 +	9
National Average	10.68	14.82	41.14	2.52

Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Dainik Purbokone, Dainik Purbanchal, Dainik Sylhet, and Sonali Sangbad. The time period for which these data were collected was from September 1, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

While the above table shows a disparity in terms of the number of episodes between Dhaka - 7 and Dhaka - 8, that does not mean that Dhaka - 7 is relatively “violence-free”; rather, Dhaka - 8 is quite exceptional in terms of the frequency of violence. Both constituencies experienced

heavy levels of violence, as the national average of episodes of violence suggest. Figure 2 below shows how rare a constituency like Dhaka - 8 is. Additionally, one can see that the more significant gap in terms of frequency actually lies between the constituencies where there are 0-10 episodes of violence and those with 11-20.

Figure 2: Histogram of Episodes of Pre-electoral Violence



I included Dhaka – 10 in my study when I started noticing that subjects from the other two constituencies used Dhaka – 10 and its parliamentarian, Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, as a frequent comparison and talking point. Another note of consideration that went into the selection process of these three constituencies is that all three are located in the south-central Dhaka metropolitan area. These three constituencies, despite their close proximity to one another, experience differences in levels of violence. I added the Bogra - 6 constituency to my analysis when, upon collecting quantitative data on episodes of pre-electoral violence, I noticed that this semi-urban constituency also experiences a great deal of violence. Thus, this constituency shows what may happen in constituencies where *both* information on voters as well as the reliance on the bureaucracy are high. The following table summarizes my argument and comparison of the four constituencies:

Table 3: Bureaucratic Reliance and Voter Information in Case Study Constituencies

Constituency	Individual Reliance on the Bureaucracy	Voter Information	Level of Violence
Dhaka - 7	Somewhat High	Low	High
Dhaka - 8	Very High	Low	Very High
Dhaka - 10	Somewhat High	Somewhat Low	Somewhat High
Bogra - 6	High	High	Somewhat High

Note: I have indicated that voter information in Dhaka - 10 is “Somewhat Low” due to party workers in the area expressing a greater level of success in obtaining this information as compared to Dhaka - 7 and Dhaka - 8 workers.

Thus, I focus on constituencies in this chapter where individuals must interface with the state on their own, which more often than not leads to extreme frustration with an inaccessible and uncooperative bureaucracy, and where parties have very little information on voter preferences. Oftentimes, this low level of information on voters is due to the sheer volume of individuals who live in the area, and as a consequence, party workers have little time or resources to be able to accurately assess the level of support their parties enjoy. Both of these conditions generally tend to appear in urban constituencies more than in rural constituencies, but they can be present in places that are not large cities, such as the case of Bogra - 6, which is a semi-urban constituency in a district that is overwhelmingly rural. And while I have denoted each of the following sections by specifying the particular constituency which I have studied, the focus is on the appearance of my two independent variables, not the specific constituencies themselves. Rather, they should be seen as being mere examples of constituencies that have a high individual reliance on the bureaucracy and low voter information. Specifically, the area of Lalbagh has been included to discuss how voters in such constituencies view criminal and violent parliamentarians favorably, while the inclusion of Shahbagh in this analysis sheds light on the frustrations and challenges parties face when they cannot ascertain voter support in an area.

Lalbagh: Power of the Gunda Raj

Lalbagh is perhaps best known for being home to the famous Lalbagh Fort and popular Old Dhaka restaurants, such as Royal and Nanna. In the heart of what is known as “Old Town” or “Old Dhaka,” Lalbagh is littered with a multitude of old bungalows and tall apartment buildings that share space with narrow and winding roads that lead to a maze of more residences. It is a constituency that is densely populated, with party workers who face great difficulty in ascertaining which party voters support. It is also a constituency where there is some bureaucratic presence as agency buildings and offices are located near and/or around the constituency, and where individuals must seek out the state on their own. Tiny shops that sell

Old Dhaka favorites like *bakorkhani* and *jilepi* host long-time locals who sit in these stores and spend their days reading the paper and smoking a *beedi*. Mosques line the streets as well, and you can hear numerous *azhan*, or calls for prayer, from any corner of the neighborhood. More generally, the Old Dhaka area is home to a mix of cultures, where Muslim cuisine is heralded as being the finest, and the Hindu celebrations during Durga Puja are known as being the most vibrant. There is constant activity with Chowk Bazaar's numerous shops selling an assortment of items all day, everyday, as well as with the thousands of residents who go about their day-to-day tasks in the cramped and narrow streets. It is, in sum, what one imagines when they think of the hustle and bustle of Dhaka city.

And while Lalbagh is quite popular among both the locals and ex-pats for its sight-seeing and food, its parliamentarians enjoy a different sort of popularity amongst the area's residents. Since the 1990s, the likes of Mohammad Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pinto, commonly known as "Pinto Bhai," Haji Mohammad Selim, known as "Haji Selim," and Sadeq Hossain Khoka, or simply "Khoka," have served as parliamentarians for the constituency.⁵¹ All three of these men have spent their share of time in prison, with Pinto having passed away while in jail near the time of writing.⁵² Many refer to these three as thugs or even dons, and romanticized stories of their criminal activities or general trouble-making have been a part of normal Bengali conversation. In fact, one of my subjects who is an academic in Bangladesh and a resident of Lalbagh regaled me with stories of the legendary Haji Selim and his daring attitude in public. While this scholar expressed his disdain for the level of pre-election violence as well as disappointment with the governance system in Bangladesh, he nonetheless enjoyed telling me his share of Haji Selim stories that ranged from how Selim would openly declare just how dangerous he was to anyone who would listen to how Selim would engage in violence without any fear of going to prison.

Not only do these parliamentarians have a known criminal background and have spent time in jail, but their illegal actions have also been witnessed by the general public. Often, politicians like these rely on their colorful reputations to make threats and intimidate others into acting according to their will. Party workers and voters alike have described to me the ways in which these parliamentarians, as well as other representatives of the Lalbagh area have used force and veiled threats to either get voter support or services for their area. As I discuss further below, voters view these types of politicians, with these three in particular, as "Robin Hood" types, or individuals who may work outside of the law, but for the good of the poor and general public. During my time in Lalbagh, many explained to me how their representatives may be rough around the edges, but they "do a lot of good for the people of Lalbagh." According to my subjects, such politicians use their power, ill repute, and ability to use force to take care of their constituents and the constituency as a whole. Thus, despite their awareness regarding these

⁵¹ Though there have been delimitations that have changed the shape of the constituency over the years, Dhaka – 7, previously known as Dhaka – 8 at one point in time, has roughly covered nearly the same Old Dhaka area and Lalbagh.

⁵² Around the time of writing, a leaked phone conversation between Sadeq Hossain Khoka and Nagorik Oikya leader Mahmudur Rahman Manna revealed that the latter had asked the former to engage in violence — and possibly kill students — on Dhaka University's campus in a bid to shake up the current AL-led government. Manna was later arrested on February 24, 2015 for this correspondence.

politicians' criminal backgrounds, voters generally revere these political actors and view them as saviors.

So why do voters associate these politicians, who are known to use force and engage in acts of violence with capable, powerful candidates who take care of their constituents? In my conversations with residents of Lalbagh, there were two consistent sets of responses. The first was hesitation. Initially, when I started conversations with locals — tea stall owners, passersby, customers in shops, etc. — everyone was quick to discuss Lalbagh, what they thought was unique about the area, and what I should definitely see during my time there. However, the moment I brought up anything that remotely touched on the topic of the upcoming elections or candidates, these very individuals who had spent several minutes describing Lalbagh in minute detail immediately responded by saying that they were not voters of Lalbagh. They were either “new residents” or “not from the area.” One subject was quite enthusiastic in his description of the food one can find in Lalbagh. Upon mentioning that I wanted to study the pre-election period in the area as well as the candidates, and without asking him any questions, this subject said, “Oh, actually I don't vote here. I vote in my home district, which is very far away. I really don't know anything about who runs here.” After promptly telling me that he was very busy and had to leave, I realized the conversation was over. Several others responded in a similar fashion and I soon became nervous that my case study would end right there as no one seemed willing to discuss anything related to politics in Lalbagh. That being said, my subjects' hesitation to speak did not escape me — fear was undoubtedly a currency used in Lalbagh. That some individuals in the area were afraid to speak up about the elections and politicians reflects the ability of parties and politicians — as distant as they may be from the common person — to instill a sense of fear in voters should they want to disclose any unflattering information.

Despite this initial setback, I managed to speak with a second set of individuals from residents to party workers who were willing to say a few words on the parties and their candidates of the Dhaka – 7 constituency. One individual was an elderly man who boasted of how he was an “original Lalbagh resident” who had seen many politicians come and go in the area and could explain why the Pinto's, Haji Selim's, and Khoka's were so popular in Lalbagh. He said,

“Take a good long look at our roads. They're always paved. We never have to deal with the nonsense of our roads being cut up and facing difficulty with getting around. That's what Pinto Bhai does for us. He gets the job done. If he wants something for Lalbagh, who is going to deny him it? That's why we love him so much here in Lalbagh. He's a good guy.”

After hearing so much of the folklore that surrounded Pinto, I was actually a bit stunned to hear this subject refer to him as a genuinely good person. But others around him echoed the same sentiments. According to these individuals, it is precisely *because* politicians like Pinto, Haji Selim, and Khoka are known criminals and openly engage in violence, that voters feel a sense of faith in these politicians, and thus, they vote them into office. Voters believe that these

politicians can use their might to interface with the bureaucracy on the constituency's behalf and as many of my subjects put it, "get the job done."

In the above quote, my subject mentioned how the roads were always paved in Lalbagh. Roads are one of the most visible signs of what politicians can and cannot do for their constituents. In particular, Dhaka city is constantly undergoing major construction projects, with neighborhood roads being dug up and re-dug up to install either a pipe for water or gas. At the time of writing, the AL-led government had executed an order to install new pipes for water all throughout Dhaka, with residents in areas like Kalabagan, Banani, and Mirpur desperately finding themselves having to navigate roads that have either been drilled or completely shut down. Because this is a common frustration of the general public, my subject's words made a deep impression on me. He chose to discuss a service that impacts all and describe how this service was always managed for residents of Lalbagh. That, unlike other residents in other parts of Dhaka, Lalbagh residents did not have to suffer. Now, it could be that this individual's and other's perception was actually, in fact, inaccurate. But what I found much more significant was that, according to these subjects, they perceived politicians like Pinto as being able to provide for their constituents and that too because they were politicians known for using force. The image of being a violent, criminal, or thug-like politician conjured up images of the able politician who could get an uncooperative bureaucracy to cooperate for the residents of Lalbagh.

The idea that voters look for candidates or parties that are able to offer a forceful representative to take care of constituents came up time and again in these conversations. Several individuals compared the accomplishments of Pinto, Haji Selim, and Khoka with the general failure of Kalabagan's Taposh. Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, who is serving his second term as MP (member of parliament) for the Dhaka – 10 constituency, is the exact opposite of Pinto, Haji Selim, and Khoka, in terms of image. Regularly pictured in a suit, Taposh projects an image of being an educated "gentleman," one who is not very often seen in the more traditional *panjabi kurta*, a garment associated with the popular image of gangster or criminal politicians like Pinto, Haji Selim, and Khoka. As one of my respondents described, Taposh is a, "polite, well-mannered, and good guy." But the praise ended there for Taposh among my subjects. After describing this parliamentarian with the above phrases, my subjects began to tell me that good men like Taposh are rather useless as politicians. A party worker I spoke with pointed to the roads — again — in Kalabagan as a sign of Taposh's lack of efficacy. "Do you see what is going on here in Kalabagan? That Taposh, he's too soft. Nothing will get done with him around. We need someone to tell WASA or whomever is responsible to finish things up quickly and properly. I have a difficult time just trying to get out of the neighborhood."⁵³ This subject then proceeded to tell me how gentlemen like Taposh are only good on paper, and that while Bangladeshis think they want these gentlemen-types in office, the truth is that, "if given the choice between a criminal who we know will use force or a good guy like Taposh, Bangladeshis will pick the criminal everytime." To this subject, it seemed quite evident that politicians like Taposh work within the institutional boundaries, which, according to this subject, was not the best way to do things in contexts like Bangladesh. He, instead, argued that criminals or politicians with reputations for using violence become the saviors or guardians of their

⁵³ WASA stands for Water Supply and Sewerage Authority.

constituents because voters know that they can use force and have everyone — other politicians, party workers, bureaucrats, and other residents — obey their every demand. This party worker then claimed that, based on his experience with working on campaigns at the neighborhood-level, all voters wanted such qualities in their representatives. An additional point to clarify is that it is not only criminal politicians who use violence and force — *nearly all* parties and politicians, even those who do not have criminal backgrounds, have been identified as having used violence or force either through witness accounts or through news reports. To say that *only* criminal politicians make appealing candidates to voters would be incorrect.

So how do parties signal to voters that they are more powerful and capable through violence? Why do voters associate bad guys with being good representatives? To begin, Bangladesh's state is riddled with loopholes and/or, simply gaping holes in terms of governance. Criminals are arrested, sent to court for a trial and sentencing, but if they know or have influence over the right judge, then one can go free on bail and not be remanded, or be released from prison after being sentenced. The Election Commission regularly finds irregularities in terms of campaign spending, yet candidates are rarely punished. A woman files a report of sexual assault, but instead gets taunted by the police and then turned away. In sum, "the system" does not work for Bangladeshis, and in fact, many have brought up how extra-institutional solutions are the only ways in which Bangladeshis can mitigate their problems. Thus, politicians who work within a system that seems to be non-functional are of little value to the common Bangladeshi. As one of my subjects put it, "I need someone to work outside the system because that's just how it works here. There's no use in working within the law — no one gets anything to work by doing something legally." Criminal politicians, student leaders, and parties that use force, represent the strong individuals who are willing to work outside the system, given that they shun the law and law enforcement every time they take to the streets. The image of the violent party is closely associated with an image of a representative who can grab a bureaucrat by the collar and pave neighborhood roads, limit load shedding in the area, and procure business licenses for constituents. And because of this association and the fact that voters admire their *gunda* politicians or parties that use force, parties often use violence knowing that they will face very little public backlash. They use violence because the image of violence conjures up an image of power in the public's eye. As a consequence, violence becomes a valuable tool for a political party in the context of Bangladesh. To project an image of strength, power, and ability, parties vie to come out as the victors in any violent clashes. If the opposition issues a *hartal*, the opposition wants the *hartal* to be successful with law enforcement officers drawing back, unable to fight with agitators. On the flip side, the party in power wants law enforcement officers to engage with agitators and emerge victoriously. Regardless of which political side a party is on, each wants to be seen as having a monopoly over violence and as "winning" any and all conflicts so that voters understand who is more powerful. It is, essentially, not only a game of monopolizing violence on the ground, but also establishing that monopoly in the minds of voters.

Shahbagh: Of Too Many Voters and Too Much Violence

Now, one could argue that parties could easily persuade voters to believe that they would help their constituents by using clientelism as a strategy instead of violence. So, why do parties

choose violence instead of clientelistic practices if they could accomplish the same with the latter? There are a couple of explanations for why violence is far more appealing to parties. The first is that winning voters over is a numbers game. To win an election in a constituency, one needs to win a simple plurality of votes. And to do that, one must mobilize more voters than any other candidate. Thus, parties aim for strategies that can help them gain the most support within a short period of time, one that is cost effective and efficient. Clientelism simply cannot achieve those things. With clientelism, parties dole out various benefits to *specific* individuals. Given political parties' finite and limited resources, it is nearly impossible to provide goods and services to as many voters as possible to win over an entire constituency. This problem is even more severe in urban constituencies, where populations are quite high.⁵⁴ How many constituents can one party give benefits to given their financial and time constraints? And would those constituents be enough to swing an entire constituency in favor of said party? Based on what party workers and top-tier politicians in Bangladesh have told me, political parties do not have the required resources for such a task nor are able to motivate the required number of voters within the campaigning period through clientelistic means. Many of my subjects with some sort of political experience noted how even the wealthiest of candidates could not possibly use their personal wealth for clientelistic practices and sway the required number of voters to win. And with parties fielding candidates in several or even all of the 300 constituencies in the country, parties in Bangladesh are oftentimes incredibly constrained in terms of campaign spending.

Furthermore, in areas where populations are quite high, parties have very little knowledge of who voters support. One such area is Shahbagh Square, also located in south-central Dhaka, connecting the commercial areas of Elephant Road and New Market to the very busy Motijheel. Like Dhaka - 7, Shahbagh Square and the overall Dhaka - 8 constituency also has a high population where party workers have complained to me about their lack of knowledge on voters. And here, the presence of the bureaucracy is quite high as it is home to most agency buildings and offices. It is, essentially, the home of the bureaucracy within the district of Dhaka. Here, individuals must request the state for goods and services on their own.

Around the square, one can see large commercial buildings where people run in and out, Dhaka University rallies that pour into the roads during festivals, and traffic jams that seem to go on for miles. It is one of the busiest areas in Dhaka. But unlike Lalbagh, Shahbagh is not particularly known for any one leader who has served as the face of violence over the years. It is home to, however, the Dhaka University campus, where much of the pre-electoral violence that occurs in the constituency takes place. As mentioned in Chapter 2, student politicians are extremely active during the pre-election period, which often culminates in numerous physical altercations, episodes of vandalism, and rioting on campus. Student politics in Bangladesh is notorious for the level of violence associated with it. In trying to build grassroots organizations and a strong local support base for their parties, student politicians often engage in acts of violence to either influence fellow classmates, take control over dormitories to house their headquarters, and establish dominance throughout the entire campus. Student leaders and

⁵⁴ Many rural constituencies have a population density of somewhere between 500 to 900 people per square kilometer, while many urban constituencies have population densities of 1200 or more people per square kilometer, with some reaching 72,000 people per square kilometer. And while there are certainly more party workers who operate in urban constituencies, there are not enough party workers to overcome such a large difference.

politicians significantly contributed to the 147 episodes of pre-electoral violence in the four months preceding the elections in 2014.

In addition, Shahbagh Square itself as well as the surrounding areas that make up the Dhaka – 8 constituency, such as New Market, Elephant Road, Paltan, and Ramna, are common grounds of pre-electoral violence. Either because of their convenient and central locations, or because they are home to state buildings and monuments, these areas see frequent episodes of pre-electoral violence, thus making the overall constituency an exceptionally violent one. Specifically, prominent buildings such as the Supreme Court, the National Press Club, and Baitul Mokkarram Mosque are also located in the constituency. These buildings have commonly been home to or have been popular targets of pre-electoral violence. During the pre-election period in this constituency, pre-electoral violence led to 9 deaths, over 204 injuries, and over 110 arrests. And lastly, further compounding matters is that Dhaka – 8 is also one of the most populous constituencies in the Dhaka metropolitan area.

But why might a dense population be a factor for parties to incite acts of pre-electoral violence? I spoke with a party worker who spent his early years working at the very grassroots-level in neighborhoods such as Dhanmondi and Kalabagan in Dhaka. He is now in charge of organizing and delegating instructions to and organizing neighborhood-level party workers. Through my conversation with him, I discovered that many party workers *outside* of urban areas know exactly how individuals are going to vote on election day. He explained,

“See, parties pick [neighborhood-level] workers who are from the area. And since most people in Bangladesh vote according to how their family votes, you can basically identify household voting patterns. People are likely to say things like, ‘I come from an Awami League family, so I vote for the Awami League,’ and so on. If our workers are from the area, chances are they know the family and can tell us how the family will vote. That is very useful for parties — in fact, parties use this information to create lists of households in the area with information on how these households vote so they can target families with leaflets or try to convince others to vote for their parties.”

But party workers generally do not experience such luxuries if they work in urban areas. The above subject then said,

“And while we could do this in Dhaka before, now it’s much more difficult. In fact, in places like Dhaka or Chittagong, no one knows how people will vote! There is no point in coming up with a list. There are a lot of people who live in these cities now. Plus, I would say a good number of these people have moved to the city from rural areas. There are lots of renters now in Dhaka. Not a whole lot of people who own their homes — just a lot of outsiders who come to the city and rent. They are not permanent residents — they may leave eventually. So we don’t know their family histories, how they vote, and who they will vote for. We know nothing about them.”

Because parties that operate in urban areas cannot fully ascertain how much support they have in an area, they cannot target voters with a variety of strategies based on support level. So, for example, a party cannot use clientelism for those who are uncertain about a party, intimidation for those who do not support the party, and simple leaflets for those who are already supporters. Instead, parties must rely on strategies that will impact all voters in the area and motivate everyone to support the party. Clientelism, as I mentioned above, is not efficient, nor cost effective. Violence, and especially collective violence such as pre-electoral violence, on the other hand, is. By inciting an act of violence in one particular area of the neighborhood, party workers can spread the image of violence and power to the entire neighborhood — no bags of groceries or *saris* and *lungis* needed. Additionally, parties do not need any extra resources other than what they already have. To create violence, start a protest, or engage in agitation during *hartals*, one simply needs manpower, which parties have plenty in supply. While the act of violence in one part of a neighborhood may actually intimidate and terrorize those who are nearby or are involved, what this one act of violence does is to project an image beyond the borders of the particular act. It attaches a label of power to the responsible political party in the minds of those who hear about the episode of violence. Furthermore, because those who initiate these acts of violence are rarely punished, the general public sees a political party that is fearless in the face of law and able to have their way with anyone.⁵⁵

Some of my subjects discussed how understanding voters was particularly difficult in Shahbagh and its surrounding areas, with hundreds of high-rise apartment buildings that housed thousands of voters. Party workers expressed frustration over not being able to accurately assess the level of support for their parties. While none of the party workers I spoke with admitted to their parties' involvement in acts of pre-electoral violence, they did stress the importance of using efficient strategies that persuaded as many voters as possible with very little effort and extra resources. And while none admitted to their parties' involvement in pre-electoral violence, nearly all discussed how this was one of the reasons that motivated *other* parties to incite acts of violence.

Skeptics may argue that violence does not motivate voters to vote for a particular party, but rather causes voters to be *intimidated* by the party into obedience or to stay at home and not vote at all. There is no doubt that intimidation is partly what makes violence so valuable, especially as we have seen with the case of Lalbagh. But if intimidated and subdued voters were the only by-product of pre-electoral violence, parties would find themselves facing low turnout where only ardent supporters of parties make their way out to vote. And if this were truly the case, in areas where parties are desperately vying to defeat the incumbent or general favorite within an area, parties would *not* opt to engage in violence for fear that their opponents would have more ardent supporters than they have. Thus, while I agree that violence leads to intimidation, I argue that such explanations do not fully capture what happens in the minds of the Bangladeshi voter. Based on such a logic, parties in Bangladesh would be disinclined to use

⁵⁵ Though there were arrests reported in nearly all the constituencies where pre-electoral violence occurred, they were not a regular consequence during such episodes of violence. In fact, many episodes that included attacks on police, assaults, and murders resulted in no arrests. Further, many of those arrested during these acts were also reported as being released soon afterward. So while pre-electoral violence is certainly a frequent occurrence in Bangladesh, punishment is not and the Bangladeshi public is well aware of this.

violence, which empirical evidence disproves. It is also important to note that pre-electoral violence is not used to simply repress voters. While acts of violence can intimidate and suppress turnout *to an extent*, evidence from countries like Bangladesh — where turnout is quite high — prove otherwise.⁵⁶ Further, many of my subjects repeatedly emphasized how violence may keep them at home for fear of personal injury, but that does not mean that episodes of pre-electoral violence leads to their fearing any one particular political party. In fact, many subjects seemed quite immune to the image of violence in Bangladesh.

And finally, my readers may note that while the number of episodes in Dhaka -7 is high, especially compared to the national average, it is not as high as it is in Dhaka - 8. One reason behind the discrepancy is that there is less of a presence of the bureaucracy in the former as there is in the latter. Another possible factor is that because criminal politicians like the Pinto's, Khoka's, and Haji Selim's have so successfully monopolized violence and projected an image of power in the minds of voters, they do not need to engage in very frequent episodes of violence. Rather, they perpetrate acts of pre-electoral violence from time to time in order to maintain the status quo and send reminders to the public that they are still powerful.

Constituencies with High Bureaucratic Presence and High Voter Information

In this chapter, I have discussed at length the reasons why generally urban constituencies tend to see greater levels of violence or, in other words, why the occurrence of pre-electoral violence and urbanity tend to overlap. However, that is not to say that pre-electoral violence does not occur in rural constituencies across Bangladesh. In fact, there are some places, like Bogra - 6, that also see frequent episodes of violence, though the area is not comparable to constituencies in cities like Dhaka and Chittagong. So how do we understand the level of violence in such constituencies that may be semi-urban or completely rural? Bogra - 6 is what one would call semi-urban, covering the area of Bogra *Sadar*, or town, and is the center of activity for this particular district. Though the constituency includes the town area, because of its smaller population (relative to bigger cities like Dhaka and Chittagong), collecting information on voters is rather easy, as party workers operate within a tight network consisting of close, informal relationships and low migration. As party workers have described to me, it is in constituencies like these where party workers and the upper-echelons of the party organizations can collect information on voter preferences and assess the level of support the party has rather easily. As many party workers have told me repeatedly, Bangladeshis tend to vote not based on their own individual preferences, but rather that of their families. So, if one belongs to an “BNP family,” one will most likely vote for the BNP. While this is not universally and absolutely true in every case, it is more the rule than the exception, and so party workers gather information on voters using this assumption. And because areas like Bogra - 6 have small, contained populations, party workers can even figure out individual vote choices during the campaigning

⁵⁶ The 2014 election saw very low turnout due to the BNP's boycott of the election, which resulted in 153 constituencies having candidates who ran uncontested. Thus, since nearly half of the constituencies' election results were already decided, turnout for the most recent election was unusually low. The previous election, in 2008, saw a turnout rate of approximately 85% nationwide.

period to get a more accurate picture of where their parties stand. Political parties will recruit neighborhood-level workers from each neighborhood, thereby ensuring their workers personally know voters. Using the workers' local knowledge of their neighbors, parties collect information on voting patterns and behavior. As a result, these areas are where there is high level of voter information.

But because the town area falls within the borders of Bogra - 6, the constituency is home to offices and buildings like the police commissioner's office, city corporation office, state-run hospitals, and the post office. In fact, those who live throughout the district of Bogra may find themselves traveling to Bogra - 6 just to interface with the bureaucracy because their villages may not house these agency offices. Essentially, Bogra - 6 is the bureaucratic hub for the entire district, so to say that there is a bureaucratic presence in the constituency would be, perhaps, an understatement. And because there is such a high bureaucratic presence, individuals must rely on themselves to interact with the state and receive goods and services.

So while party workers may indeed be able to ascertain the level of support that they have in the constituency, the presence of the bureaucracy may still lead to the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. This is because the frustrations caused by the bureaucracy makes the image of violent parties appealing to the public for the reasons I have mentioned above, which allows for pre-electoral violence to be a viable option among parties' arsenals of campaign repertoires. Thus, if parties find themselves in a situation where they have gathered information that suggests that they are neck and neck with their opponents or that their support is actually quite low, parties may resort to using violence, demonstrations, *hartals*, etc. as a way to demonstrate their power and ability in an unfavorable environment. In fact, it is in these areas where one may see a greater frequency of using mixed strategies, where party workers combine clientelistic practices because they have information on voters, with violence in an attempt to quickly win over constituents.

Conclusion

That urban areas in any given country tend to be the locations of violence far more than rural areas is not a new observation. Many before me have offered their various insights into why this may be the case (Choucri 1974, Braungart 1984, Muller 1985, Goldstone 1991, Messner 1997, Della Porta 2006, Auyero 2007, Urdal 2008, Berman and Callen 2011). But how do we explain greater violence in urban areas without explaining away violence that may occur regularly in a few, perhaps exceptional, rural areas? How do we explain variation within any given urban center? In this chapter, I offer an explanation as to why certain constituencies in Bangladesh see greater levels of pre-electoral violence. While this does mean that most oftentimes, pre-electoral violence does indeed occur in urban areas, my argument allows for understanding why such violence may occur in areas that are not as large or densely populated as cities like Dhaka and Chittagong, such as Bogra – 6, a semi-urban constituency where pre-electoral violence prior to the 2014 national election was a very common occurrence. As I explained above, in constituencies where individuals must deal with an uncooperative bureaucracy on their own, one will see parties use pre-electoral violence. The other factor I identify is the ability of parties to obtain information on their voters. Where they can ascertain

the level of support among voters, there will be less violence, and where there is little information on voter preferences, there will be higher levels of pre-electoral violence as a means of establishing a reputation of power and capability in the constituency.

This dissertation speaks to a number of important issues that are related to the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. The first is that the bureaucracy is, in many ways, the face of the state in the eyes of the public, and as such, it is important to have a bureaucracy that the public finds accessible. When discussing the relationship between the state and the public, it is important to identify the very outlet at which the public regularly interfaces with the state. Often, our work points to particular actors or branches of the government to assess the impact these bodies have on the public while ignoring the very agencies and offices of the bureaucracy that the public seeks access to for a number of different reasons. The public does not meet with the prime minister or president or even go to their offices, rather they interact with bureaucrats at a number of agencies. Also, while my dissertation is certainly not the first to engage in this issue, it touches on a point that political science theory has seemingly missed: democracies can in fact be quite violent and political parties may use violence because the public views violence not in an alarming way, but with acceptance. In many ways, my work disputes the arguments offered in Arendt (1970) and Kalyvas (2006); while my predecessors have argued that violence does not create power and is counter-productive, I demonstrate that in certain contexts, violence allows parties to achieve certain objectives which makes it a very valuable tool in both the short- and long-term. As I have explained in the previous chapter, various sub-types of pre-electoral violence are often orchestrated to demonstrate power to voters. This signaling between parties and voters often translates into voters perceiving violent parties to be more powerful than the state and other parties. In other words, violence is a tool that is often used by parties in a very precise manner to project an image of power. And finally, this chapter's content also speaks to the extra-institutional methods that *both* parties and the public rely on to get by. Why extra-institutional means are appealing to the public is an important matter for further study.

Finally, it is important to identify the causes of violence before one can even begin to address the policies, institutional changes, or other ways in which governments can minimize pre-electoral violence. In this chapter, I have identified two factors: individual's reliance on the bureaucracy and level of voter information. Based on this, one can make suggestions such as the usage of pre- and post- election polling — which is essentially non-existent in Bangladesh — as a means of increasing knowledge of voter preferences countrywide. In addition, the bureaucracy must become transparent, more simple, and accessible for the public. It is perhaps only then that the public will stop looking to violent politicians as their only choice as a representative. And because the public views violent politicians as being more capable, perhaps the Taposh's of Bangladesh could make efforts to provide services and goods for their constituents through institutional means, thus changing the images of the “good guy” as being a weak representative and institutional solutions as being “useless.” There are a number of possible solutions that may minimize levels of pre-electoral violence, but these solutions begin with the proper identification of the causes of such violence and understanding exactly where these episodes of violence occur.

Chapter 4: Variation Across Rural Areas and Home Base Constituencies

Introduction

So where in Bangladesh does pre-electoral violence *not* occur? In the last chapter, I discuss the types of constituencies where one should see violence as well as identify the two specific independent variables that impact the level of pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh: reliance on an inaccessible bureaucracy and the lack of information on voter preferences within a constituency. But as I have mentioned previously, the phenomenon of violence does not consistently span across an entire nation. There is great variation in Bangladesh, as I have shown in the previous chapter, with some constituencies seeing no episodes of violence, to constituencies like Dhaka - 8, that saw nearly 150 episodes of pre-electoral violence. Many scholars have discussed intra-case variation in terms of the level of violence (Muller and Weede 1990, Besley and Persson 2011), some citing a greater frequency in urban centers as opposed to rural areas (Choucri 1974, Braungart 1984, Eyre 1984, Muller 1985, Goldstone 1991, Messner 1997, Moser and Holland 1997, Moser 2004, Della Porta 2006, Auyero 2007, Urdal 2008, Kunkeler and Peters 2011, Berman and Callen 2011). Like these scholars, I also address cross-national variation and argue that in constituencies where there is not much reliance on the bureaucracy and where parties have a keen understanding of their constituents' preferences, there is little pre-electoral violence. Much of this chapter focuses on rural areas where these conditions generally exist and also on constituencies where one political party has complete political dominance.

Out of the constituencies where there were absolutely no occurrences of pre-electoral violence, all were either "rural" or "semi-rural" areas, meaning these constituencies have smaller populations as well as low population density, and there are no *sadar*, or town, features, such as administrative offices and buildings. In fact, only three of these constituencies (Rangpur - 1, Rangpur 2- 2, and Madaripur - 2) are semi-rural, while all the others are rural. These constituencies do not serve as a political or bureaucratic hub for their districts and infrastructure is quite minimal and unlikely to be updated. The following table shows the difference in the number of episodes of violence between rural and urban constituencies in Bangladesh:

Table 1: Episodes of Violence in Rural and Urban Constituencies

	Rural Constituencies	Urban Constituencies	<i>t-statistic</i>
Average Episodes of Pre-electoral Violence	6.73 (N = 268)	31.06 (N = 32)	4.5032 ****

Note: * Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%, **** significant at 0.1%.

Source: Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: *The Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo*, *Dainik Purbokone*, *Dainik Purbanchal*, *Dainik Sylhet*, and *Sonali Sangbad*. The time period for which these data were collected was from September 1, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

Note: The category of “rural constituencies” include those with urbanity scores of 0 and 1, or those that are “rural” and “semi-rural,” respectively. Similarly, the category of “urban constituencies” include those with urbanity scores of 2 and 3, or “semi-urban” and “urban,” respectively. Urbanity scores took into consideration whether constituencies included sadar, or town, areas, meaning if they housed the primary administrative, political, and economic centers of their districts; population; and population density.

More generally, constituencies with either no or very few episodes of violence either fall into one of two categories: a) constituencies that are rural or semi-rural or b) constituencies where one party consistently wins landslide victories in elections and has complete dominance in the political arena.⁵⁷ Why these types of constituencies are generally violence-free forms the bulk of this chapter’s analysis.

The rest of the chapter is divided into the following sections. The next section reviews the literature on variation in violence briefly. I summarize arguments regarding this variation and then explain why certain constituencies see little to no pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh. After the literature review, I describe my data as well as the procedures I employed to construct the case studies and conduct interviews of my subjects for this chapter. The following section is an articulation of my argument with an in-depth examination of two adjacent, but different constituencies in Khulna, as well as Bogra - 7 and Gopalganj - 3, which are constituencies where one political party has complete political dominance. In this section, I use case study and interview data to explain exactly how bureaucratic presence and the level of voter information influences a party’s decision to incite pre-electoral violence within a constituency. Finally, I conclude the chapter.

⁵⁷ The most recent national election in 2014 was an unusual case, with 88 of the 148 constituencies that actually had vote margins of 50% or higher. Many more beyond these 88 constituencies also had large vote margins that were in the 30% - 40% range, signifying very substantial wins for the victors. Due to the BNP and their coalition parties boycotting the election, either constituencies had no contested election or they saw elections with very little competition due to the lack of participation from the main opposition of the AL. Thus, for the purposes of my analysis, I examine the 2008 election to explain what happens in constituencies where landslide victories occur.

Literature Review

I have reviewed the extant literature on variation in levels of violence in the previous chapter, where I discuss why urban areas see more violence. These same studies can help us understand the converse: namely, why rural areas tend to see less violence. The first reason deals with the concept of “relative deprivation,” and how, when individuals of various class strata are placed in close proximity to one another, we may see violence due to those of the lower economic rungs of society fighting or taking to the streets to demand more services, goods, and other financial resources or assistance (Huntington 1968, Nagel 1974, Hardy 1979, Weede 1981, Muller 1985). In rural areas, with less dense populations with individuals who comprise similar socio-economic ranks in society, one sees less friction across classes, and thus, less violence. Similarly, as Becker (1968) and Brainard and Chollet (2007) indicate the influence of young, unemployed men on levels of violence in urban centers, one can say that perhaps rural areas see less violence due to there being a smaller concentration of such a demographic in these areas. In urban areas, because the number of youth oftentimes outnumber the employment opportunities in the area, there are large, significant groups of unemployed, disillusioned, and frustrated youth. By contrast, because the economies of rural areas are oftentimes agriculture-based, many youth, and especially young men, may be already employed in farming or related labor. As a result, the crucial demographic required for violence to occur is already preoccupied in rural constituencies.

In terms of areas where landslide elections occur, some scholars have discussed the relationship between levels of electoral competition and levels of violence. These scholars note how in places of higher competition, or in other words, where vote margins are relatively lesser, there are greater frequencies of violence (Manor 1992, Ferme 1998, Akhter 2001, Villareal 2002, Wilkinson 2004, Chaturvedi 2005, Hickman 2009, Collier and Vicente 2010, Boone 2011, Aidt, et. al. 2011). For example, in his study on Mexico, Andres Villareal finds evidence of the impact of increased competition on homicidal violence in societies where there are established patronage systems.⁵⁸ Therefore, one could take the converse as true about areas where there is little competition or where there is one established and dominant party: political violence will occur less often because of the lack of need to establish power and control since the parties in power do not face any sort of competition.

Related to the idea of political competition is the changing of predominant power structures in a given area. When established powers and institutions change due to regime change, or as a result of a power struggle, or any number of other possible causes, violence will be a frequent occurrence due to new and perhaps weak institutions that cannot police violence properly or because those who were once in power are not fully willing to relinquish their monopoly of domination and violence (Huntington 1991, Tarrow 1994, Sahin and Linz 1995, Hegre, et. al. 2001, Villareal 2002). Thus, it is not simply a matter of vote margins and whether or not parties face stiff competition in elections. The real issue is that parties want to establish and/or regain a complete monopoly over power and attempt to achieve that using violence. Once power is fully established like it is in areas where one party dominates, the need for violence lessens. In this chapter, I argue that in constituencies where landslide elections occur, since these

⁵⁸ Villareal (2002).

constituencies in Bangladesh are all rural, a dominant party often serves constituents on an informal and interpersonal level where they are the state, bureaucracy, and all other limbs of the government. So the bureaucracy is neither inaccessible nor confusing and complex for such constituents. In addition, since voters consistently vote for the established, dominant party, parties have information on voter preferences based on consistent election results.

But this does not mean that violence only occurs in urban areas and not in rural ones, as I have mentioned before on a number of occasions. In Villareal's study, he finds a connection between competition and violence specifically in rural areas of Mexico.⁵⁹ My analysis should not be seen as an explanation of why urban pre-electoral violence occurs. In fact, I argue that while there is indeed variation in levels of violence, and that much of the pre-electoral violence occurs in Bangladesh happens in urban areas like Dhaka and Chittagong, there are still rural constituencies that also experience frequent episodes of pre-electoral violence. Instead of arguing a strong urban-rural divide as an explanation of the variation, I argue that the degree to which one interfaces with the state on their own and the lack of voter information that parties have at their disposal are conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs. These two variables help us identify where pre-electoral violence occurs, which means that even certain rural areas where these two factors are present may see significant levels of pre-electoral violence, as in the case of Bogra - 6.

Data and Methodology

Like the last chapter, in this chapter I use qualitative data I gathered while conducting fieldwork in Dhaka, Bangladesh from November 2012 to July 2013. I conducted case studies in Khulna - 2 and Khulna - 3, the former being a semi-rural constituency, while the latter includes the downtown area of the district. The reason I selected Khulna - 3 is because it is an example of constituencies which have very low bureaucratic presence — in fact, in this constituency, party workers explained how local leaders or “*bhais*” or even party heads that operate in the area serve voters on an informal basis.⁶⁰ Everyone knows one another and when a voter needs a good or service, license, or some other official paperwork or permission, they approach local leaders who they personally know to accomplish their objectives. No agency offices or unfamiliar people are involved in directly handling voters. In addition, because “everyone knows one another,” as many of my subjects have said to me, there is a high level of understanding regarding voter preferences. Such populations are small and are comprised of tight networks of individuals, many who have lived in the area for generations. Khulna - 2 serves as a contrast case to show how violence spikes in a nearby area where individuals interact with the bureaucracy independently and where parties have less voter information.

In the Khulna - 3 constituency, I did my primary case study work in the Khalishpur area, where I spoke with party workers, voters, and politicians. I was also in the constituency during

⁵⁹ Ibid .

⁶⁰ The term, “*bhai*,” literally means brother, and is usually used to address older brothers or elder brother-like figures. Bangladeshis also use this term to refer to local leaders who serve as community representatives. These “*bhai*” figures oftentimes have criminal backgrounds and are often local thugs or gangsters.

the middle of the campaign season for the 2014 elections and was able to observe the various campaign strategies parties used in the area. Similarly, I observed campaign strategies in the Khulna Sadar, or downtown area, in the Khulna - 2 constituency and spoke with residents, though I was unable to speak with parliamentarians of the constituency. I did, however, manage to speak with party workers who have worked throughout Khulna and were able to inform me of the variation across the district in terms of voter-party relations, campaign strategies, and elections in general. These two constituencies show variation across rural constituencies which are located adjacent to one another, but vary in terms of the level of reliance on the bureaucratic and parties' knowledge of voter information.

Constituencies where a certain party wins landslide victories regularly are perhaps the purest example of constituencies where voters face the bureaucracy very little and where parties have high voter information. Because only one party dominates over a relatively smaller population and has built a strong relationship with constituents that is based off of patronage politics and personal relationships, there is very little need for interacting with the bureaucracy. Dominant parties, in essence, take care of their constituents' needs on their own to maintain their monopoly of power in the area. If they did a poor job of tending to their constituents, they may run the risk of losing their stronghold over the constituency. Further, because voters vote for the one established party at every election, parties — both incumbents and challengers — have a clear understanding of how constituents will vote in the area. I examine the constituencies of Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7, both rural areas, but are more importantly known for being the constituencies where party leaders Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Begum Khaleda Zia have historically run for office and have won by major landslides. In the last election, Sheikh Hasina won with 98.72% of the votes. And while Khaleda Zia boycotted the last election, her election wins in Bogra - 6 and Bogra - 7 in 2008 were no less impressive. She won 70.95% and 70.85% of the votes in those constituencies, respectively. Both Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7 are the most appropriate examples of where one party dominates in the area and leaders have an established monopoly over the voters' favor. Because these two candidates also run their parties and have run the country at various junctures, they enjoy a significant amount of popularity which no other candidate in Bangladesh enjoys. Research on these constituencies is based on secondary sources and data I collected from party workers, academics, and other subjects who spoke about the historically dominant parties in these areas. The following table shows summary statistics of pre-electoral violence in the selected constituencies.

Table 2: Pre-electoral Violence in Case Study Constituencies

Constituency	Episodes of Violence	Arrests	Injuries	Deaths
Khulna - 2 (Downtown Khulna)	72	22	188	2
Khulna - 3 (Khalishpur)	18	11	46	0
Gopalganj - 3 (Sheikh Hasina's constituency)	0	0	0	0
Bogra - 7 (Khaleda Zia's constituency)*	14	0	53	2
National Average	10.68	14.82	41.14	2.52

Source: Data have been collected from newspaper articles taken from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers: The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Dainik Purbokone, Dainik Purbanchal, Dainik Sylhet, and Sonali Sangbad. The time period for which these data were collected was from September 1, 2013 to January 5, 2014.

**This constituency, along with Bogra - 6 has historically been known as Khaleda Zia's constituency, though she did not run in the 2014 election due to the fact that she boycotted the election. Thus, I will draw upon data from the 2008 election to reflect violence in the constituency under the normal political conditions.*

As one can see, Khulna - 2 saw very high levels of pre-electoral violence when compared to the national averages, which makes sense given the downtown area's location within the constituency and the fact that Khulna - 2 houses much of the bureaucracy in the district. It is also home to a relatively larger and denser population where party workers may face great difficulty in ascertaining their voters' preferences. Khulna - 3, on the other hand, saw less violence, though was not completely free from pre-electoral violence. Gopalganj - 3 had absolutely no episodes of pre-electoral violence, as my argument predicts, while Bogra - 7 saw some pre-electoral violence. I explain why this may be the case in my analysis below.

Politics in Khulna: Variation within the District

Khulna district, located in southwestern Bangladesh, is home to the city of Khulna, the third largest in the country after Dhaka and Chittagong.⁶¹ The district has great variation in terms of the rural-urban texture: while most areas in the district are rural with agrarian-based economies, other areas, like Khulna city are more urban, once housing large jute mills and currently serving as a major port city for Bangladesh. Specifically, the Khulna - 2 constituency houses the main, downtown area of Khulna city, which I have coded as "urban," based on

⁶¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2009).

population density, the fact that the town area is located in the constituency, and the fact that government facilities and large companies are housed in the area. The constituency is the primary hub for all things official: government offices and agency buildings are located in Khulna - 2, for which residents or local leaders from all other parts of the district sometimes travel to interface with a government agency. The population in the constituency is far higher and more dense. Party workers expressed similar frustrations regarding their inability to determine who voters favor, much like party workers in Dhaka. Khulna - 3, on the other hand, is semi-rural. While adjacent to the Khulna - 2 constituency, Khulna - 3, which houses towns like Khalishpur, is semi-rural. Abandoned old jute mills reflect what was once a thriving area that had the potential to grow further. Today, the constituency is a mix of residential areas that include a few large bungalows, tin shed homes and clay houses, and a scant few schools, mosques, and NGO offices. The area is not home to much activity, with roads infrequently occupied by cars, unlike the cows and their farmers that make their way daily. Many of those who own larger homes or live in apartment buildings in the constituency earn their livings in small businesses in the area, local NGOs or schools, or have businesses in the downtown area. Most other residents rely on poultry farming, selling dairy products, or their living off of their small farms. Both Khulna - 2 and Khulna - 3 serve as a clear illustration of how constituencies located next to one another but differ in terms of bureaucratic presence and voter information can experience differing levels of pre-electoral violence.

And while I have made it a point to identify these areas as either being rural or urban, I want to emphasize that these categories alone cannot explain the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. Other factors, that are perhaps highly correlated with the rural-urban divide are at play here, namely, as I argue, reliance on the bureaucratic and level of voter information. I further argue that the variation in my two independent variables explains the variation in the level of pre-electoral violence. Referring back to Table 2, while Khulna - 2 had 72 episodes of violence, Khulna - 3 saw only 18 episodes of violence. How do we explain such a stark difference in the level of violence experienced by two neighboring constituencies?

The first is that the experiences of political parties differ across these constituencies. Many party workers who have worked in Khulna - 2 explain how the constituency is turning into “another Dhaka.” With a rising population, new and unknown families from other parts of the district moving to the city, and a more highly educated society in the constituency, party workers face higher levels of uncertainty in terms of voter preferences in Khulna - 2. Many have explained that there is great difficulty in determining whether their parties stand a chance for the election. As one of my respondents who serves as a party worker said, “We can go by the past election results, I suppose, but a lot changes within five years. Within five years, we get new residents, higher population, and more confusion. How are we supposed to know what the voters like? What do we tell our bosses?” Many others echoed similar sentiments, stating that while campaigning and garnering support was one of their main tasks, party workers must also report to their higher-ups about whether or not voters seemed inclined to vote for the party. When party workers are unable to do so, parties face great difficulty in determining what kinds of campaign strategies they must use to secure a significant number of votes in the constituency.

Many party workers explain how the downtown Khulna area has rapidly changed over the past decade, thus dramatically altering the political terrain as well. “Nowadays, we have

large, high-rise buildings that house university campuses, and the national cricket team stays here in the new, big hotels when they come to play in our stadium. There's a lot of traffic in the area now." With comments like these, my subjects explained how overwhelming these changes are for parties because of the lack of aggregate information on voters. If parties are to determine which campaign strategy is useful for them based on the level of support they enjoy in a constituency, then it is important to understand just how much support they have from the voters in the first place. When they cannot do that, parties must turn to tactics that impact a significant number of voters and establish a reputation of power within the constituency in the few months they have leading up to the elections. It is for this reason that party workers become violence-makers and use scuffles at rallies, *hartals*, public displays of vandalism and arson, and other forms of violence to show voters who has control over the area.

Voters connect the image of violence, as I have argued before, with the image of a capable and powerful party. When a party is violent, they can force individuals to behave in a particular way, stop daily activities, and achieve their objectives with relatively less difficulty than others. A violent party is the party that can do whatever it wants, especially if that party has a complete monopoly over violence-making. So seeing violence through this lens allows us to understand how pre-electoral violence itself can be a useful tool for parties in Bangladesh. Other strategies that use positive incentives, like clientelistic practices, vote buying, or programmatic politics, cannot ensure parties of success on election day. As one party worker in Dhaka noted "Voters across Bangladesh are very savvy now. They take our gifts and walk away. They don't vote for us if they don't want to. Nothing in the world can change that." Violence, on the other hand, either impresses individuals who see a violent party as being powerful, or intimidates voters who then vote for the party or abstain out of fear. Therefore, in places where there are high levels of uncertainty regarding voter preferences, one will see a high level of pre-electoral violence, as parties in the constituency clamor to establish a violent and powerful image of themselves in the voters' eyes.

But in places where the population is not very large nor dense, party workers are far better able to understand their voters, like in the Khulna - 3 constituency. One party worker with whom I spent an extensive amount of time showed me just how well he knew nearly everyone in his village and beyond. He was on a first name-basis with everyone, and when he went outside of his village to other parts of the constituency, either he knew of residents' families, or family members of these other voters knew of his family. It is through these informal networks that "everyone knows everyone," and within all that one knows of others is always the way in which a family votes in Bangladesh. This particular party worker explained that it was easy to determine the level of support his party enjoyed and reporting to his bosses was never a difficult task:

"We determine the best way to move forward with the election once we get a sense of how people vote. But since things don't change a whole lot in this area, we have a good handle on information - it doesn't really change from election year to election year. Families are the same, and so are their voting patterns. We pretty much do the same thing nearly every election year. When elections are unusually competitive, then we may have to change our strategy."

For the most part, parties in Khulna - 3 rely on posters and fliers, oftentimes over-saturating roads, as shown in the image in Figure 3.

Figure 1: Election Campaigning in Khulna - 3



Residents of Khulna - 3 walk through the roads literally covered in political posters of candidates in late 2013, prior to the January 2014 national election.

There are a few rallies and missiles where party workers chant slogans, but parties do not engage in large-scale violence on a frequent basis in the constituency. “If anything, we’ll sometimes go to families who don’t really support us that much and promise them something that they may need to get their votes — seems to work for us,” noted another party worker. Needless to say, without knowing how inclined the family was to vote for his party, this worker may have never promised anything at all to them. Thus, knowledge on voter preferences oftentimes determines the strategy parties will use to win elections.

But Khulna - 2 and Khulna - 3 do not differ simply in terms of how much parties can gauge voter support. As mentioned in many of my respondents’ statements, these two constituencies also differ in terms of the presence of the state. In Khulna - 2, any residue of the state can be seen primarily during election season, with posters and fliers plastered on every

street. Outside of the election period, there is barely an imprint of the state. When I visited the area on several occasions outside of the pre-election period, I noticed that there were no political posters anywhere, unlike Khulna - 3 and the greater Dhaka and Chittagong areas. In fact, I could not find any visible state offices when I went on various tours throughout the constituency. Even more interesting is that when I scheduled an appointment to meet up with a party chairperson in the constituency for an interview, I discovered that he was a close family acquaintance of mine. When I expressed my surprise at finding out about his involvement in politics, he shrugged his shoulders and simply stated,

“I’m considered a leader in our village not because I’m an *upazila* chairman, but because I’m just a leader. It’s how my family has been seen in the village for years. When there’s a family problem, we go to help and resolve the issue. When neighbors need something fixed, we find the right people to fix their houses. Things work differently in the village — it’s not like the city [Khulna]. We take care of each other and help each other out. That’s probably why no one knows I’m a chairman — it’s not important. Nobody comes to me because I’m involved in politics and can take care of particular tasks. They come to me because I can help them.”⁶²

When I pressed the issue further by suggesting that it was indeed because he was a chairman that others viewed him as someone who could help, he vehemently refuted my line of thinking. He indicated how there were others in the village who were not involved with parties in any way, yet were also seen as leaders or people who could help others out. In many ways, these leaders served as agents who took care of things like obtaining permits, building roads, and providing goods because they had the connections and had an extensive network of contacts. From my conversation with this subject, it became clear to me that the state, and specifically, the bureaucracy, were not of great importance in Khulna - 2. And even though this subject was involved with political parties, other community leaders are just ordinary citizens who have the know-how to take care of residents’ everyday demands for a variety of service and goods. This was also echoed by a party worker from the area who also asserted that he, along with an uncle who is not involved with any party-related work, would often help community members and that the state was not needed as much in the area. When I asked this subject why, then, would anyone in the constituency vote since they do not need the state, he replied, “Well, in Bangladesh elections are like festivals — everyone participates. We get dressed up, we vote, but we don’t really think about it that much. If you ask anyone on this street, they’ll say the same thing. It’s election day, everyone dresses up and votes and so must I.”

Thus, the bureaucracy has very little presence in Khulna - 2, especially so because of the informal social networks that manage community needs throughout the year. In the minds of my subjects, elections are mere formalities where one votes for a parliamentarian because there

⁶² An *upazila* is a geographic unit in Bangladesh. The largest unit, comparable to a state or province, is called a division. Bangladesh has seven divisions: Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet. Within these divisions are districts, or *zilas*, and within *zilas* are *upazilas*. Within *upazilas*, there are other, smaller geographic divisions.

needs to be a parliamentarian from every constituency. There was very little discussion on ideology, policy, or simple preferences regarding voters. In fact, no one even mentioned a parliamentarian, past or present, by name. In Khulna - 3, however, the voter-state relationship is very different in nature. While informal social networks exist and some residents do rely on these networks minimally, residents in this area directly interact with the state through the bureaucracy, party workers, or other state agents. Land titles and home ownership procedures are taken care of not through some community leader, but rather through the city corporation office located within the constituency. When there are disputes within a family or a financial dispute or other sort of conflict, individuals report these problems to authorities like police officers. So, unlike in Khulna - 2 where residents relied on each other for everyday situations, in Khulna - 3, residents rely on state authorities for nearly all their problems and/or needs. In terms of the physical, Khulna - 3 even looked different because while in Khulna - 2, there were no visible state office buildings, the downtown Khulna area housed a number of them. For residents in the Khulna - 3 constituency, interfacing with the bureaucracy for services and goods is necessary, meaning that their reliance on the bureaucracy is far greater than in Khulna - 2.

And voters' experience with the bureaucracy in Khulna - 3 is certainly no better than what it is in Dhaka. Some residents expressed high levels of frustration when discussing the difficulties associated with starting a business in the constituency. One individual said,

“I just wanted to start a tiny little shop by the bus stand, you know? I mean, I sell a few, common household products and some snacks and drinks. What harm can I possibly do? When I went to get a business license, I was treated as if I was going to create a huge problem for the government. As if my one business was the cause of all their problems!”

Another individual brought up another common complaint I heard during my interviews: bureaucrats in Bangladesh were terrible workers who were disinclined to do their work and often openly displayed their laziness.

“I had to get a bank statement for a visa application and the embassy had only given me a week to take care of a number of formalities. I walked into a government bank and asked the security guard if he could refer me to the right individual. He says, ‘See the man sleeping at his desk over there? That’s the person you need to see.’ I gave the guard a surprised look and then went over to the man at the desk. It took me at least ten minutes just to wake him up and once he was awake, he made several mistakes writing down my application number!”

For these residents as well as those in other areas where the bureaucracy and the state are ever present, the bureaucracy is not only inaccessible, but when accessed, the bureaucracy is inefficient and ineffective. Many subjects have expressed how these frustrations often culminate in a desire to have someone who can help them jump past such red tape and related hurdles, especially given how simple they perceive their requests, demands, and needs to be.

Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7: Historical Domination of the Awami League and BNP

Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7 are a particular subset of constituencies that do not see very many episodes of pre-electoral violence. Further, they belong to a unique set of constituencies in Bangladesh for a number of reasons. First, these are constituencies where former and/or current heads of state run for parliament — Sheikh Hasina in Gopalganj - 3 and Khaleda Zia in Bogra - 7. Secondly, not only have these women run for election in these constituencies, they do so rather consistently at nearly every election. These are their home districts and are so because of the constituencies' close connection to their parties. Gopalganj is where Sheikh Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of the Awami League, was born. Most Bangladeshis, and especially those in the Gopalganj district, closely associate the area and identify with the Awami League and their leaders. Similarly, Khaleda Zia's late husband and the founder of the BNP, Ziaur Rahman, was born in Bogra. Thus, the area is closely associated with the BNP and especially its founding leader. For these reasons, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia run in these constituencies and treat these areas as symbols of their parties. The third quality that makes these constituencies unique is that because the leaders of the two largest parties run in these areas, elections are always won by landslide victories. The Awami League has complete and utter dominance in Gopalganj - 3 just like the BNP has political dominance in Bogra - 7. The following table shows the election results in these constituencies from the past several elections:

Table 3: Election Results in Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7 since 1991

Constituency	Election Year	Winning Party	Winner	Vote Share	Vote Margin
Gopalganj - 3	1991	Awami League	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	72.20%	53.86%
	1996	Awami League	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	92.18%	89.87%
	2001	Awami League	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	94.74%	90.30%
	2008	Awami League	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	96.73%	94.02%
	2014	Awami League	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	98.72%	97.44%
Bogra - 7	1991	BNP	Begum Khaled Zia	66.88%	47.13%
	1996	BNP	Begum Khaled Zia	72.08%	55.12%
	2001	BNP	Begum Khaled Zia	78.95%	59.87%
	2008	BNP	Begum Khaled Zia	70.85%	42.59%
	2014	Jatiya	Mohammad Altaf Ali	63.89%	27.78%

Source: Bangladesh Election Commission.

As Table 3 demonstrates, these two constituencies are extraordinarily associated with both party and candidate, with nearly all elections having some sort of landslide result for the victors. While Sheikh Hasina has enjoyed vote margins of over 90% in many of these past elections, Khaleda Zia has also won by more than substantial margins as proof of both of these leaders' complete political dominance in their respective constituencies. The only election that presents slightly weaker evidence is the most recent one that occurred in 2014. Khaleda Zia did not run as she and the greater BNP coalition boycotted the national election. Thus, a Jatiya Party candidate, Mohammad Altaf Ali, was able to enjoy a perhaps rare win in the constituency, though he did not win by as large a margin as Khaleda Zia is used to in the area. In fact, the runner-up was Aminul Islam from the Awami League, and because many voters in the constituency are firmly tied to the BNP and against the Awami League, one may argue that Mohammad Altaf Ali enjoyed a rather high vote margin due to his opponents' general lack of favor in the constituency.

As shown in Table 2, both these constituencies saw relatively less pre-electoral violence than others during the pre-election period preceding the 2014 election. Why might violence be low in these types of constituencies? To begin, constituencies where there is one party that enjoys complete political dominance are constituencies that are rural. There is not a single urban constituency in Bangladesh where any one party has consistent political dominance over others from election to election. Thus, the populations in these areas are relatively much smaller and easier to monitor for party workers. Both Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7 are rural constituencies, where there are no downtown areas and populations are quite low and not very dense. One can imagine that maintaining political dominance in areas where populations are very large can be quite difficult. But where populations are relatively smaller, parties are better able to sway a large section of the population and garner their support using a variety of means. In sum, establishing, and then maintaining, political dominance over a rural area is easier and thus, we do not see such patterns in urban constituencies.

And smaller populations mean that parties not only can maintain their dominance, but can also better monitor their voters too. In constituencies like Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7, however, even though their small populations and the social networks that comprise them make it easy to monitor voters, voters are so nearly unanimously in favor of a party that parties do not really have to invest much effort in gauging support. Essentially, it is not only easy to ascertain a party's level of support, but rather, *extraordinarily easy* to do so because with each election, voters consistently show that they support only one party and one party alone. Since not much changes from election to election, and each election reaffirms the dominant party's continued level of support from voters, party workers across all parties know whether they stand a chance or not in the upcoming elections. Therefore, in these constituencies there are two reasons why the level of information on voters is so high: the first is that populations are small and parties operate on an informal and interpersonal basis, and the second is that voters reveal their rather consistent preferences every election cycle. In fact, many of my subjects, from those who work in the political sphere and those who study it to individuals who work and reside all throughout Bangladesh, regularly made references to these constituencies by calling them, "Sheikh Hasina's constituency," or "Khaleda Zia's constituency." When such references came up, my subjects would note just how predictable elections were in these constituencies and also how constituencies would always be — as one of my subjects put it — "easy wins" for these two

ladies. Mohammad Hussain Ershad (also a former leader of Bangladesh), similarly enjoys landslide victories in his home constituency, Rangpur - 3, where there were only seven episodes of pre-electoral violence.

And because parties in these areas either enjoy a high level of complete dominance or little to no support whatsoever in nearly certain terms, there is very little political volatility — all players in these constituencies know exactly where they stand in the eyes of the voters. Thus, parties feel very little pressure to make attempts to gain support in an area where they know dominant parties will surely succeed and dominant parties will not feel much pressure to continuously establish their power by using violence.

However, this is not the only reason why these constituencies see so little violence. Neither Gopalganj - 3 nor Bogra - 7 are constituencies that serve as the district hub or headquarters. While Gopalganj - 3 houses the Tungipara and Kotalipara *upazilas*, Bogra - 7 is comprised of the Gabtoli and Shajahanpur *upazilas*, all of which are rural areas with very little presence of the state and its administration, especially since neither of these constituencies are home to the *sadar* areas of their respective districts. When there is no bureaucracy in the area, one must rely on informal networks and personal connections to those who are in positions of power to access state goods, resources, and services. But when the bureaucracy is present and does not cooperate with individuals, leaving individuals confused and frustrated, voters look to savior-type representatives who can make things right for the constituents. Since the bureaucracy has very little presence in both Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7, voters do not look for such saviors and parties do not attempt to project the image of being these saviors by using violence to show how much power they can wield.

As I have mentioned before, these constituencies are “home bases” for both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia; their respective parties, party histories, and their very identities, are deeply rooted in these areas. In many ways, one can think of these women and their respective parties as being symbols, mascots, or icons of these particular constituencies. As a result, both the Awami League and the BNP interact with voters in these constituencies differently. Because both the parties and their leaders are deeply tied to Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7 and voters consistently vote for these dominant parties, parties a) know they enjoy a high level of support and b) use this knowledge to campaign accordingly. Using violence to project an image of power is not needed in an area where one is already powerful. Rather, these parties use their party structure and local-level party workers to manage and maintain support using informal, personal relationships which have been cultivated over the years. As party workers have described, they personally take care of their constituents, know many by name, and are readily available to provide goods and services in these areas. Interactions are more direct, thus bypassing the need for voters to approach the bureaucracy on their own because the party directly serves voters and assists with any services or demands that voters may have. There is no uncooperative bureaucracy that needs to be tamed, nor any confusion on the parties’ end regarding who voters want in office. The level of certainty in these constituencies, is very high. And because voters rely on dominant parties who are ever ready to serve their voters, both the voters’ and the dominant party’s needs are met: voters get the services they need, and the dominant party gets the support they need.

Every so often, these dominant parties may resort to violence, like issuing a *hartal* or engaging in a scuffle with the opposition, simply to remind voters of who the “boss” in the area is. Some of my interviewees who work as party workers mentioned that such occurrences do happen in constituencies like Gopalganj - 3 and Bogra - 7, especially if the overall, nationwide support seems to be tipped in favor of the opposing party. For example, for the 2014 election, since the Awami League enjoyed a huge advantage due to the BNP’s boycott of the election, Gopalganj - 3 (the Awami League’s base) did not see any episodes of violence, while Bogra - 7 (the BNP’s base) did.

In addition, while I have discussed a number of rural constituencies that see very little pre-electoral violence, there are a few, perhaps anomalous, rural constituencies that do experience relatively high levels of pre-electoral violence, such as Bogra - 6 which was mentioned in the previous chapter. These constituencies illustrate the need for our understanding the conditions under which violence occurs which cannot be merely summed up by a rural-urban divide across countries. In the case of Bangladesh, these rural areas that do see pre-electoral violence are those where populations are larger and therefore, parties do not have as much information on voters as parties in less populated areas have, and where the bureaucracy is very present and relied upon. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Bogra - 6 is one such case. Not only does it house the downtown Bogra area with most of the district’s state buildings and offices where locals must go on their own to receive goods and services, it is also home to a relatively larger population within the district. Party workers in the constituency have expressed similar frustrations to those of the Khulna - 3 constituency: they cannot estimate the level of support their parties have because populations are far too high and individual voters are much more savvy in terms of whether or not they reveal their preferences to workers. The case of Bogra - 6, as well as my case studies found in both this chapter and Chapter 3 show how reliance on the bureaucracy and the level of voter information can impact the level of pre-electoral violence within a constituency.

Conclusion

Using both this chapter as well as the previous one, I have attempted to show the differences in conditions across the selected constituencies and how these differences lead to the variation in levels of pre-electoral violence. While constituencies like Dhaka - 7 and Dhaka - 8 — where individuals must interact with the bureaucracy independently and there is very little voter information — have had a higher frequency of violence, constituencies like Khulna - 3, Gopalganj - 3, and Bogra - 7 — where reliance on the bureaucracy is low and voter information is high — see much less violence. Particularly in places like Gopalganj - 3, parties have such a high level of voter information and because they essentially take the place of bureaucracy, there is very little need for parties to perpetrate acts of violence leading up to elections as a means of influencing voters. Voters are already influenced and dominant parties already have their support. One may ask, then, why those parties that are not dominant in these areas do not engage in pre-electoral violence in an effort to show their power and ability and change the equilibrium? The reason why weaker parties do not attempt to engage in acts of violence (as we see in Gopalganj - 3, for example) is that the dominant parties have such a complete monopoly over

both violence and power that a weaker party would run the risk of being completely wiped out politically should they decide to use violence as a means of improving their chances in the elections. Further, aggravating voters and the dominant party will only antagonize a constituency comprised of individuals who already support the dominant party.

Another interesting point to note is that Bogra - 6, which I included in Chapter 3 as an example of a rural constituency that had experienced a relatively high level of pre-electoral violence, was also one of the constituencies where Khaleda Zia ran. Since she and the BNP had boycotted the 2014 election, Khaleda Zia neither ran in Bogra - 6 nor in Bogra - 7. And while there were 14 episodes of violence in the latter, there were 45 episodes of pre-electoral violence in Bogra - 6. These are two constituencies with the same victorious, dominant party and candidate and are adjacent constituencies, yet there was a difference in the level of violence. Bogra - 6, unlike Bogra - 7, houses the main city center, or *sadar* area, and has a relatively larger population. Thus, while places where there are dominant parties with complete monopolies over violence and power do see little violence, when such conditions are taken away (by way of the BNP's boycott), these constituencies then become places where parties have little information on voters' preferences because their preferred party is no longer running in the election. This could explain why Bogra - 7 had 14 episodes of violence, much higher than Gopalganj - 3, where there were no episodes at all. But because the bureaucracy is far more present in Bogra - 6 than in Bogra - 7 and because there is a larger, more dense population in the former, Bogra - 6 saw a much greater level of pre-electoral violence than Bogra - 7.

However, despite the richness of these data that I have provided, relying on interview statements from voters, party workers, politicians, journalists, and other observers, one may not necessarily be swayed by a sample of case studies and commentary as proof of reality. In the following chapter, I conduct a cross-sectional study on all 300 constituencies in Bangladesh. Using data on the bureaucracy, demographics, pre-electoral violence, and election results, I test my hypothesis further.

Chapter 5: A Cross-sectional Examination of Bangladesh

Introduction

Thus far, I have discussed and analyzed the places where pre-electoral violence occurs and where it does not occur, separately. In many ways, one could argue that selecting a few particular constituencies to make my argument is rather convenient and perhaps not rigorous enough. And while studying these two subsets of cases allows us to get a better handle on the mechanics of why pre-electoral violence occurs, the question that remains is whether a cross-sectional look at all of Bangladesh supports my argument or not. Have I correctly identified the conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs in Bangladesh? Or, in other words, can we say that the greater the reliance of voters on the bureaucracy to obtain goods and services and the less information on voters parties have, there will be higher levels of pre-electoral violence? In the previous chapters, I have reviewed a number of scholarly works that attribute levels of violence to urbanity, economic conditions, certain demographics, institutional weaknesses, and the desire to suppress voter turnout. In this dissertation, however, I argue that the level of reliance on the bureaucracy and the level of information parties have on voters determine where pre-electoral violence occurs. More specifically, where individuals have to rely on a large, complex, and uncooperative bureaucracy and where parties have very little information on voter preferences, one will see higher levels of pre-electoral violence. Using an original dataset, I conduct a statistical, cross-sectional analysis of Bangladesh to prove this argument.

As I have shown previously, Bangladesh is home to great variation in terms of the level of pre-electoral violence, with cases like Gopalganj - 3 that saw no episodes of violence whatsoever, to others such as Dhaka - 8, that saw nearly 150 episodes (refer to Figure 2 in Chapter 3).

As one can see, there is tremendous variation within the country, with some constituencies that have over 100 episodes of violence, others with a few dozen, and still many others with little to no episodes at all. And while it was important to break down this variation by separating constituencies that see high levels of violence from those that see low levels to understand why parties use pre-electoral violence as a tool, it is equally important to conduct a cross-sectional analysis of the country so that we may a) address the *variation* across rather than neatly compartmentalizing certain types of areas and b) make statements regarding the prevailing factors in Bangladesh that lead to such violence by addressing this variation.

In the next section, I briefly review the literature on pre-electoral violence and summarize the various alternative hypotheses that other scholars have offered in their works and then provide my own hypothesis as to why pre-electoral violence occurs. After the literature review, I further explain my hypothesis by articulating my argument, detailing the causal mechanism that links my independent variables to the dependent variable, namely the occurrence of pre-electoral violence. Following the literature, I describe the data I use in this chapter and the methodology I employ to test my hypothesis, with an explanation of the regression model, independent and dependent variables, as well as diagnostic tests that apply to my model. I then provide a summary and in-depth analysis of my results. Finally, I conclude with thoughts on how to

further this research, other ways in which one may test such a hypothesis, and comments on areas of improvement for future analysis.

Literature Review

While many studies in the political science literature on violence have, in fact, examined the variation in the levels of violence within countries, the works themselves have been used to speak about broader, cross-national trends in violence or specifically to explain why some nations are more prone to violence than others. Many studies specifically look at the effects of pre- and post-electoral violence, while neither explaining the conditions under which such violence occurs in the first place, nor underscoring the variation in levels of violence. Both Michael Bratton and John Hickman have identified how pre-electoral violence suppresses voter turnout. Bratton's study on the 2007 elections in Nigeria sheds light on how both vote buying and pre-electoral violence depresses turnout.⁶³ Similarly, in his study of the 2005 elections in Sri Lanka, John Hickman also argues that pre-electoral violence was effective in minimizing turnout in certain areas. In places where opponents were able to mobilize violence, candidates saw declines in their percentage of vote shares.⁶⁴ While these studies are undoubtedly important in demonstrating the negative impact violence can have on elections, it is just as important to grapple with the causes of this violence and the conditions under which such violence occurs. Identifying the causes of the problem will ultimately lead to solving these challenges.

Some studies have, in fact, focused on the causes of violence, and that too, in the South Asian region. Scholars such as Ashutosh Varshney and Steven Wilkinson have conducted studies of India, examining Hindu-Muslim violence, and offering a number of arguments that attempt to explain the phenomenon. While Varshney (2002) argues that the level of social capital among Hindus and Muslims determine where violence does and does not erupt, Wilkinson (2004) makes an electoral argument, citing how minorities like Muslims tend to be protected by the state in places where they comprise a significant plurality, thus being of great importance to those running in the elections. Paul Brass, on the other hand, identifies political actors as playing a critical role in actually starting violence, or "institutionalized riot systems."⁶⁵ And while these scholars study the variation within India as well as the causes of violence, they do not explain why political actors choose to use violence as a tool for their own interests when other strategies are also at their disposal. Further, these studies focus on a particular and different type of violence — Hindu-Muslim violence that has erupted between these communities, ravaging certain parts of India more than others. Moreover, these works have contributed to a much broader discussion on why India as a whole sees Hindu-Muslim violence, often relegating

⁶³ Bratton (2008) and Hickman (2009).

⁶⁴ Hickman (2009), pgs. 433-434.

⁶⁵ Brass (1997) and Brass (2006).

findings such as higher levels of violence in Aligarh (and variation within Aligarh) relative to other areas in India, such as Calicut, to the background.⁶⁶

Other studies that have attempted to explain the variation in levels of violence have focused on economic factors, especially those that plague urban localities. I have reviewed these arguments on "relative deprivation," unemployed young men, and "youth bulges" in previous chapters (Huntington 1968, Becker 1968, Nagel 1974, Hardy 1979, Weede 1981, Muller 1985, Brainard and Chollet 2007, Urdal 2008).⁶⁷

Also noted in previous chapters, however, is that not all urban areas see greater levels of violence, and that the urban-rural divide in terms of pre-electoral violence is not a particularly clean distinction. There are various rural constituencies in Bangladesh, such as Bogra - 6, that saw a relatively high level of violence. And there were many urban constituencies that saw very few episodes of violence. In fact, when looking at Dhaka alone, there is tremendous variation, despite constituencies in the city all belonging to the same urban metropolis. Thus, arguments that explain an urban-rural divide to explain the variation in violence only go so far: we must probe further because there are some rural areas that are very violent and some urban areas that are not. Where, exactly, does violence then occur?

Another common argument scholars posit is the relationship between level of electoral competition and the occurrence of violence. Where there is great competition between parties, several scholars argue, there will also be greater violence because the stakes are so high (Manor 1992, Ferme 1998, Akhter 2001, Villareal 2002, Wilkinson 2004, Chaturvedi 2005, Hickman 2009, Collier and Vicente 2010, Boone 2011, Aidt, et. al. 2011). Based on this argument, one would expect to see constituencies where there are close races plagued with pre-electoral violence, while those places where parties and candidates win rather easily experience fewer episodes of violence. In this dissertation, I too, echo this notion, recognizing the explanatory power competition levels can have. However, not all landslide elections are violence-free in Bangladesh and not all highly competitive constituencies in Bangladesh are wrought with frequent episodes of pre-electoral violence. Thus, I identify two factors which I believe explain the variation across Bangladesh more completely: the level of dependence on the bureaucracy and the level of information parties have on voters. I explain this argument in the following section.

Argument

While ideological leanings of parties may be *one of many factors* when deciding on who they will give their vote to, Bangladeshis generally vote based on two qualities of greater importance to them: family loyalty to particular parties and whether or not they believe they can procure basic and immediate goods and services through these representatives. Many of the

⁶⁶ Varshney (2002).

⁶⁷ While some of these scholars have discussed the "relative deprivation" argument and studied the relationship between average income more broadly with violence (such as Weede 1981), not all of these scholars have supported this argument. For instance, the findings in Nagel (1974) suggest a lack of relationship between income inequality and the occurrence of armed attacks.

subjects with whom I spoke made it very clear that their partisanship and/or favor for certain candidates had nothing to do with their policy-based promises to the voters. In fact, most candidates in Bangladesh do not run for elections on programmatic platforms, or promising a policy agenda to their voters. Instead, most campaigns are run using the same anti-BNP and anti-Awami League rhetoric that has been used for decades, with neither a mention of any policy program nor any statement of how they will achieve any particular developmental, social, or economic objectives. Partisanship — specifically that of families or households — is what primarily sways the voter. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, most Bangladeshis vote based on how their families vote, and how generations of their families have voted before them. As my subjects discussed during interviews, individuals in Bangladesh either belong to “BNP families” or “Awami League” families.⁶⁸ Further, not only do voters care little for the ideological differences between the various parties or the policies parties may stand for, parties themselves rarely express ideological leanings and distinguish themselves from one another through mainly antagonistic positions. In fact, most of my subjects, including esteemed academics and politicians themselves, were unable to articulate any sort of current ideological or policy-based differences between the Awami League and BNP in particular.

When I spoke with voters across Bangladesh, both inside and outside of Dhaka, most, if not all, discussed how they sought representatives who made sure that individuals would be able to go about their daily lives without any major hiccups. For example, several pointed out how they wanted representatives who would not support the issuing of *hartals*, which stop children from getting to and from school, businesses from being opened, and other daily activities from taking place. Others brought up how they wanted parliamentarians who would help maintain infrastructure (repairing of roads, but at the same time, less construction) and perhaps even improve infrastructure by building new roads in places where infrastructure is very poor. A majority of these subjects mentioned how they voted for parliamentarians who supported their constituents whenever voters needed them. When I pressed further, the examples individuals gave me included helping voters acquire business licenses, support when filing police complaints or dealing with the police in general, getting the proper deeds and paperwork for properties, and taking care of the general maintenance of their neighborhoods. In sum, voters in Bangladesh want representatives who can provide public goods and services efficiently and in a way such that the voter faces little difficulty.

My argument begins with the way in which Bangladeshis and the state interact, or, more specifically, the mediation through which voters interface with the state for a variety of reasons. In places where the bureaucracy has very little presence, mediators often come in the form of local village leaders who may or may not have any political connections. They serve as quasi-representatives of individuals who may need some type of license or certification, etc, and they then essentially take care of the public’s needs on their own for monetary or some other form of benefit, such as gaining influence in an area. These leaders often rely on their own connections with powerful individuals and people in the government to take care of their clients’ needs, as I have described in Chapter 4. They are more often found in rural settings, such as villages, where

⁶⁸ While there are certainly some voters who support other parties like the Jatiya Party or the Jamaat-e-Islami, an overwhelming majority of individuals support either the Awami League or BNP, as evidenced by election results since Bangladesh’s independence.

village leaders or respected elders serve as agents for other residents in the area. It could be that this individual is one of the few who are literate, or may be someone with money, connections, and the know-how to obtain goods and services. This individual could also be someone who has to go to the nearby town or city for regular business, and thus, they have the connections and know exactly how to take care of their neighbors' needs. Villagers in Khulna - 3 described how their local leader was an individual who lived in their village since he was born and he knew many people across the river, where the various agencies and bureaucratic offices are located. Since many of these villagers have made very few trips to the town, let alone the downtown area of Khulna city, they often relied on this particular leader for services such as obtaining land deeds and permission to build housing. Like these villagers of Khulna - 3, individuals in such areas face the state apparatus only minimally and are able to obtain their goods and services with very little difficulty since they themselves do not directly deal with the state.

In other areas, such as urban hubs like Dhaka and Chittagong, however, where populations are far greater and more dense and where individual's social networks may not be that well-established, local mediators will not suffice. Here, bureaucratic offices and agencies serve the public and very few individuals have the appropriate connections, money, or ability to have others act on their behalf. Instead, individuals must go to the appropriate office to interact with the state and procure whatever services or goods in which they are interested. To clarify, it is not simply a matter of the fact that rural areas do not have these agencies and offices and urban areas do that individuals in the latter type of constituencies must rely on themselves. In many rural areas, indeed, there are few to no such offices. However, in urban areas, it is a combination of this issue *as well* as the fact that populations are too dense and large in urban areas for mediators to fulfill the needs of the public.⁶⁹

As a consequence, the experience when interfacing with the state in such constituencies is in great contrast to those who rely on local mediators. In places where individuals must approach the bureaucracy, once an individual submits the required paperwork, application, and other other materials for any given service or good, that individual may spend days, even months, attempting to chase the appropriate bureaucrat at a number of different offices simply to submit and/or receive certification of her materials. Then, she may be given a set of instructions with steps that she must complete before she receives her service — this may also take several weeks to complete. Somewhere in between this lengthy process, bureaucrats often expect (sometimes demand) bribes to either complete or expedite the service. This can often involve an elaborate song and dance where the individual must recognize the indirect language a bureaucrat is using to request a bribe, and then offer the bribe, but not by directly verbalizing the offer. Afterwards, an arrangement to pay the bribe will be planned between the two. Says one of my subjects:

“I was going through the process of adopting my daughter. I am rather green when it comes to dealing with the bureaucracy, so many of my relatives reminded me that I needed to bribe the official I was dealing with in order to get all the

⁶⁹ Again, while I say that generally, these are the circumstances of how one interacts with the state in rural and urban areas, it should be clear that these are broad generalizations, not formalized rules. There are some rural areas where local leaders do not exist, but where people must go to the bureaucracy on their own.

official documents to make the adoption legal. So, when the time came, I went up to the official and said, ‘Here you go, here’s some money - please take care of all my documents. You will complete this process for me, right?’ He looked at me completely stunned, and I immediately thought that perhaps I was dealing with the one and only non-corrupt official in Bangladesh. Suddenly, my aunt who accompanied me grabbed my arm and walked me out of the man’s office. She told me that I couldn’t offer a bribe directly, but that I should offer the money as a ‘gift’ and say, ‘Here, have some money for some tea.’ I walked into the man’s office again and said just that. Sure enough, the man accepted my bribe and acted as if the Tk. 5000 for tea was an acceptable gift. I was bewildered, but at least I was able to adopt my daughter.”

But bribing officials is not the only hurdle individuals have to face. Some are asked to travel throughout the city to different offices and are sometimes told to go to the incorrect office simply because the bureaucrat handling the case does not know where an individual actually needs to submit paperwork. This often leads to confusion, frustration, and will sometimes deter people from pursuing licenses, permission, or other types of services. At other times, the process for obtaining such services is very lengthy. Beyond these difficulties, sometimes the one official in charge of taking care of a particular task is unavailable due to absenteeism, long-term vacations, or simply because they are busy. When I spoke to my subjects about these obstacles, those who belonged to the working or middle class, with low to average salaries, and very few connections to powerful individuals, said that these frustrations often led them to avoid interacting with the state all together. Of those who belonged to the upper classes or were part of the political elite, nearly all said that this was not a huge problem that they faced because they were able to ask politicians to grease the bureaucratic wheels which then enabled them to obtain their needed services.

The experience with the bureaucracy in Bangladesh, then, is not only exasperating, but also confusing. And when the general public cannot obtain various goods and services — things they expect the state to deliver — because of such difficulty, they perceive the bureaucracy as this unwieldy, complex, and uncooperative entity that stands in their way from leading their daily lives. Because the bureaucracy and the bureaucrats who work within it are not elected officials and are often permanent political actors in Bangladesh, Bangladeshi voters seek representatives who can strong arm this uncooperative bureaucracy so that the bureaucracy does their job and allows the public to receive their goods and services. And the reason why voters seek this sort of assistance from representatives is because representatives hold a certain power over bureaucrats. While bureaucrats are often permanent fixtures in the state, parliamentarians are higher above in terms of the political hierarchy. Furthermore, parliamentarians can transfer or use other similar measures to punish bureaucrats should they feel the need to. By transferring bureaucrats to undesirable, remote locations, parliamentarians can effectively appease their voters and send a message to the uncooperative bureaucrats with one single move. Thus, because voters often find the bureaucracy to be uncooperative and because parliamentarians have influence over the bureaucracy, voters seek parliamentarians who can demonstrate a level of power and force. This

power and force is often demonstrated through the use of pre-electoral violence. This is my first independent variable.

And because the public looks to politicians as being their saviors who can strong arm the bureaucracy, parties need to project a powerful and forceful image to please voters and win elections. But why choose violence as a means to support this image in the eyes of the public when other strategies are available? To begin, when compared to strategies that use positive incentives, such as clientelistic practices, vote buying, or programmatic campaigning, there is no other campaign strategy that links itself as closely to the image of a powerful, able, and forceful representative than violence. This is because violence is literally the use of the force, and thus, when voters see parties associate themselves with violence, voters naturally associate parties and their candidates with the ability to literally grab bureaucrats by their collars to get their jobs done. Clientelism, vote buying, and other such practices are all predicated on the consent of clients, or voters, while violence strips all individuals besides the perpetrators of choice. Thus, violent parties and candidates are more easily able to establish an image of power and ability.

Further, winning elections is a matter of winning the largest plurality in Bangladesh. Therefore, parties strive to use strategies that will gain them the most voters within the campaigning time frame and the within the limits of the resources they have available. In other words, winning elections is a numbers game and the party that can influence the most voters within a short period of time wins the election. Thus, parties seek strategies that are easy to use, do not require excess resources, and can impact the most individuals efficiently. Here again, clientelism, vote buying, and other strategies that use positive incentives to sway voters fail to achieve these objectives of parties and their candidates. With clientelism and vote buying, parties require funds which many do not have available. To influence the largest plurality, parties need to spend money on each voter that comprises this plurality — needless to say, this can lead to large totals for political parties, especially if they must do this for a majority of the 300 constituencies in Bangladesh. Inciting acts of violence, on the other hand, requires no such funds. The only resource required is manpower, which political parties — especially large, established ones like the Awami League and the BNP — have at their fingertips.

When a party buys a bag of groceries for one voter, they potentially influence that one voter. The voter may then vote, or not vote, for the party that has just gifted them the groceries. On the other hand, when a party issues a *hartal*, they impact the daily lives of those at that particular street corner, planting an image of violence and power within the minds of those present. When others must find different routes to schools, offices, and businesses, they become aware of the power the issuing party has in terms of stopping daily activities. When others see the images of the *hartal* on the news, that same image gets transferred to many more. As one can see, only one incident of violence affects many voters.

Now, skeptics may argue that this signaling does not necessarily lead to votes for a political party or their candidate. There are, nonetheless, several certainties with pre-electoral violence that are not associated with other strategies. The first is that the image of a violent and able party is conveyed to those impacted and those who eventually are made aware of such an occurrence. Secondly, when parties use pre-electoral violence to intimidate voters or physically prevent them from voting, voters are most certainly suppressed from their ability to participate in the election. Further, violent parties distinguish themselves from other parties: when voters seek

representatives to assist them with regards to the bureaucracy, they look to violent parties, not those that cannot or will not use force. In other words, voters look to those who are willing to use their powerful position to make the bureaucracy cooperate. Violence demonstrates the party's willingness to do this, unlike other campaign strategies.

And this logic is of particular importance when political parties have little to no idea of whether constituents favor them for the upcoming election. When parties have very little information on voter preferences, or when there is great uncertainty in terms of which party or candidate has carried the favor of voters in a constituency, parties must rely on strategies that are efficient in impacting the most voters in an effort to win over a constituency. In constituencies where parties have an established presence and are more sure of the degree to which they can win votes, parties do not need to resort to strategies that sway a large number of voters because they already have the voters' support. But when parties do not know how voters perceive them, they need to rely on methods of gaining support while at the same time doing so within the given time frame and resource limitations. Otherwise, how do they win such constituencies? Simply trying to persuade voters through programmatic campaigns, or giving jobs to individuals, or distributing *saris* and *lungis* will only go so far. Thus, when parties are uncertain of their fate on election day, they are much more likely resort to violence in an effort to establish a monopoly of violence, show their might to the public, and win the public's support in the process. All other strategies are relatively inefficient compared to pre-electoral violence. Thus, my second independent variable is the level of information parties have on voters. The more they have, the less reliant they are on strategies like violence, and conversely, the less information they have, the more likely they are to use pre-electoral violence because they need efficient strategies to win. This, along with my first independent variable of the public's reliance on the bureaucracy, are the two variables I test in the rest of the chapter.

Data and Methodology

In this chapter, I rely on data from an original dataset, which includes variables on pre-electoral violence indicators, election results, demographics, as well as socio-economic indicators. Some of the variables I include come from figures from the most recent national census, which occurred in 2011. These variables include population density, the percentage of religious minorities, as well as unemployment in a constituency. Election-based variables, such as vote margin, turnout, vote shares, and other related variables come from the Election Commission reports on the 2014 election, as well as data from their website. Pre-electoral violence variables, such as the number of episodes of violence, deaths, injuries, and arrests come from articles that came from six Bangladeshi daily newspapers, which covered the various geographic regions of Bangladesh. These newspapers include the two largest national newspapers, *The Daily Star* (an English daily) and *Prothom Alo* (a Bengali daily), as well as regional papers, such as the *Daily Purbanchal*, *Daily Purbakone*, *Daily Sylhet*, and *Sonali Sangbad*, all Bengali newspapers. I collected these articles by readings these papers everyday from September 1, 2013 to election day, January 5, 2014. Any articles that had any mention of

episodes of violence were included in my initial collection of articles.⁷⁰ From there, I conducted more in-depth readings on each article, extracting information on the location where violence occurred, political parties involved, deaths, injuries, and arrests. These data were used to build my various pre-electoral violence variables. Using both the large national dailies and the regional papers allowed me to cover all of Bangladesh comprehensively; in fact, much of my work using the articles also involved making note of articles that featured the same episode of violence and making sure to record the event only once, even if featured in multiple papers.

I employ a negative binomial regression model to understand the covariation between my two independent variables of reliance on the bureaucracy and level of voter information, and my dependent variable, the number of episodes of pre-electoral violence across all 300 constituencies in Bangladesh. Since the dependent variable I am interested in is a count variable, one whose mean (10.68) is far lower than its variance (299.09), thus indicating an over-dispersed variable, a negative binomial model is most appropriate (refer to Figure 1 for a visual representation of the distribution of this variable). For my outcome variable, I simply counted each episode of violence (avoiding to count repeat coverage of any particular episode) and added each count to the constituency where each episode of violence occurred, since the unit of my analysis is the electoral constituency.

To measure the reliance on the bureaucracy, I included the following variables in my model: a dummy variable indicating whether a constituency included a *sadar*, or downtown, area where most bureaucratic offices are housed, the number of police stations since many individuals go to police stations to file reports or get security clearances for visas and other opportunities, and a dummy variable indicating whether city corporations were the main body of governance in the constituency. These three variables reflect not only the presence of the bureaucracy in a given constituency, but also indicate the government bodies or offices where one must go when interacting with the state. Variables that reflect the level of information parties have on voters include the level of urbanity of a constituency (0 = rural, 1 = semi-rural, 2 = urban, and 3 = very urban). This variable was constructed taking into account population density, whether it housed the district headquarters, and type of economic activity. Under this category are also population density and a dummy variable indicating whether an incumbent ran for election in the constituency (where 0 = no incumbents and 1 = incumbents or there was no contested election).⁷¹ There were four other variables that I also included to control for various other competing theories on pre-electoral violence. The first is the vote margin between the winner and runner-up (in constituencies where there were uncontested elections, the vote margin was 100%), included

⁷⁰ I have included a sample of articles from these six newspapers which were used in this dissertation in Appendix A.

⁷¹ Since the primary purpose of including the *Incumbent* variable is to test whether or not parties know the level of support they enjoy in a constituency based on their incumbent's past level of support, I also gave a "1" value to those 153 constituencies where there were uncontested elections. In those cases, the candidate ran knowing the amount of support they had (by default, everyone's, essentially), similar to places where incumbents ran and unlike places where all unknown politicians ran.

to show whether competition levels impact levels of violence.⁷² The next control variable is the percentage of religious minorities (or non-Muslims) in the constituency, which shows whether ethnic-religious dynamics influence violence or not. I have included this variable since scholars have previously made arguments about ethnic fractionalization and violence or violence that has erupted between ethnic or religious groups in South Asia (Varshney 2002, Wilkinson 2004). And the final two are socio-economic indicators, specifically, literacy rate and unemployment within a constituency. Table 1 presents the results of my model, specifying any sensitivity checks, and provide an explanation as well as analysis of my results in relation to the thesis of this dissertation.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Effects on Pre-electoral Violence Prior to the 2014 National Elections

	Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Reliance on Bureaucracy Variables	Sadar	0.3279 **	0.1669
	Police Stations	0.1005 *	0.0566
Level of Voter Information Variables	Incumbents	0.0173	0.1537
	Urbanity	0.2743 **	0.1235
	Population Density	-3.311E-06	5.212E-06
	Vote Margin	-0.0013	0.0022
	Literacy	0.0441 ****	0.0082
	Unemployment	0.7492	1.4620
	Religious Minorities	-0.0082	0.0080
	Intercept	-0.6982	0.4495
<i>No. of Observations = 295</i>			
<i>Note: * Significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%, **** significant at 0.1%.</i>			

⁷² The 2014 elections were rather unusual, in that 153 constituencies had uncontested elections due to the BNP coalition's boycott of the elections. I, nonetheless, calculate the vote margins for constituencies where there were uncontested elections as such, otherwise these observations would have been dropped, which would greatly reduce the number of cases as well as the effectiveness of my model. Further, the constituencies comprise over half of the constituencies in Bangladesh, which would give us an incomplete picture of what is going on.

I conducted various diagnostic checks, including tests for multi-collinearity and heteroskedasticity. Using a negative binomial model helped minimize the risk of heteroskedasticity since it accounts for over-dispersed data. Notice that Table 1 above does not include my dummy variable on city corporations in a constituency. When I checked for multi-collinearity, I found that my variables *Urbanity* and *City Corporations* were highly correlated. After running separate models excluding each, it seemed that *City Corporations* was absorbing much of *Urbanity's* explanatory power, which is why I ultimately chose to exclude the former. Lastly, I opted to report the model including any and all outliers. The outliers in my sample are important. They include constituencies like Dhaka - 8, where 147 episodes of violence occurred. To omit such an observation would be to remove one of the most important cases I aim to understand. For this reason, the model I have presented above contains nearly all 300 constituencies, with only five removed from the analysis due to missing values.⁷³

Based on the model above, the variables that reflected the reliance on bureaucracy had a greater effect on the episodes of pre-electoral violence. As I had predicted, both *Sadar* and *Police Stations* have positive coefficients, both of which were significant. This indicates that the likelihood of episodes of pre-electoral violence goes up when the constituency includes a *sadar* area as well as police stations. *Sadar* areas are essentially the satellites of the state across all the districts of Bangladesh. It may be that perpetrators of pre-electoral violence often target areas like *sadars* to demonstrate to voters that they can halt activity even where the state is located, or to make a particular statement to government officials nearby. Police stations having a significant impact could be due to either the fact that many police officers were involved in either stopping or escalating occurrences of pre-electoral violence or that parties used violence to specifically thumb their noses at law enforcement or both.

Interestingly, while population density and whether an incumbent ran in the constituency had no significant impact on episodes of violence, urbanity did have a significant and positive coefficient. And while the model above may seem to suggest that level of voter information does little to motivate a party's use of violence, it is imperative to note that the model is based on the 2014 elections, which were unique in that 153 constituencies had uncontested elections. Had all 300 constituencies conducted contested elections with the BNP coalition candidates, one may have seen a different result for the *Incumbents* variable in particular.

Likewise, the same could be said for the *Vote Margin* variable, which was not significant either. The uncontested elections in over half the constituencies undoubtedly had an effect; thus, a future study on a perhaps more "regular" election in Bangladesh's future would be quite helpful in estimating the effect vote margins have on pre-electoral violence, if any. While the percentage of religious minorities or non-Muslims in a constituency and the unemployment rate had no significant effect on violence, literacy rates were the most significant of all variables in my model. But contrary to what one may hypothesize, higher literacy leads to an *increase* in the likelihood of pre-electoral violence, thus suggesting that greater modernization does not necessarily mean that individuals take to more institutional approaches to solving political

⁷³ These missing values were due to either a lack of data or inability to compute the data. For example, the variables collected from the 2011 Census — *Religious Minority*, *Literacy*, and *Unemployment* — were based on the geographica unit of *upazilas*, but a few constituencies in Gazipur cut through a number of *upazilas* and thus, I was unable to compute these values for those observations.

disputes. It may also be an indicator of where violence is occurring — as I mentioned in Chapter 2, many university students who are actively involved with political parties incite acts of violence, many of which happen on their campuses. Further, since urban centers tend to have higher literacy rates than rural areas, this variable may be capturing this trend as well.

Conclusion

The results of my model suggest that the extent to which individuals depend on the bureaucracy certainly has an impact on the level of violence. The more voters look towards representatives who can use their might to get an uncooperative bureaucracy to work with individuals, the more willing parties will be to project an image of power through the use of pre-electoral violence. As a precursor to the elections, violence directly connects parties to an image of control, power, and ability, suggesting to voters that these parties will work on the behalf of voters and take care of their needs. Further, pre-electoral violence quickly and efficiently influences many voters, unlike strategies like clientelism and vote buying, which occurs on a one-to-one basis with voters, making little headway in gaining the largest plurality's favor. This is important because when parties face great uncertainty in a constituency and they do not know whether they have curried enough support from voters, they seek strategies that will gain them the most favor as quickly as possible. While one episode of violence projects an image of power to many, one bag of groceries, *saris*, or *lungis* only influences one voter or one household. While the model above does not show great support for the relationship between level of voter information and episodes of violence, this could be due to the unusual nature of the 2014 elections, where 153 constituencies had uncontested elections, which affected the data for variables such as *Incumbents*.

The next logical step is to conduct a similar analysis on a more regular or normal election in Bangladesh, either a past election or to wait for a future one. While this undoubtedly will lead to problems and challenges associated with collecting the appropriate data (especially collecting newspaper data for past elections), this would surely give us a better sense of what the relationship between level of voter information, reliance on bureaucracy, and the level of pre-electoral violence is. Further, because Bangladesh is not unique in terms of the occurrence of pre-electoral violence, it would behoove us to study the contexts of other countries that also experience violent elections to study whether similar mechanisms are at play on the ground there. If so, conducting similar analyses on those countries may help us gain a better understanding on the covariation I have discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6: A Review of the Results and Thoughts for the Future

Introduction

In this dissertation, I argue that the degree to which voters must interact with an uncooperative bureaucracy and the level of voter information parties have determine where pre-electoral violence does and does not occur in Bangladesh. After the various analyses displayed in this dissertation, what are the points one may take away from my findings? Can one make definitive claims regarding pre-electoral violence in Bangladesh or have we learned of the ways in which we can solve problems such as violent elections? The field of political science today largely relies on carefully crafted statistical analyses and experimental designs to determine causal relationships. However, not all questions can be answered through such methodologies, especially those that involve understanding occurrences such as violence, which cannot be influenced or manipulated without weighing ethical concerns one cannot ignore. In this particular case, I have struggled to come to terms with the fact that one may not be able to use neat methodologies that will lead us to clean causal conclusions on violence. Despite these difficulties, I have pursued this question and treat this dissertation as a first step towards *understanding* pre-electoral violence, where it occurs, and why it may occur in certain areas rather than others. To do this, I have phrased my research question as understanding the cross-sectional variation in the hopes of discovering patterns of where violence occurs, so that one may eventually develop research designs to determine the causes of this violence. In this chapter, I review my argument and discuss my findings, highlighting what I have learned from this extensive study and articulate my thoughts on how this research could expand into future studies that shed further light on the answer to the overarching research question on what causes pre-electoral violence.

A Review of the Argument

I began this dissertation by stating, and then grappling with, the following question: under what conditions does pre-electoral violence occur in Bangladesh? What initially interested me in this question was the idea that violence occurred not only in democracies, but also during a time in which a non-violent alternative to resolving political disputes — elections — took place. While many of my colleagues and scholars before me have noted that this is not particularly unusual, it is problematic if my work must situate itself within the greater discourse and field. What theories do political scientists have that explain violent democracies? More specifically, is there research which we can latch onto to better understand why state and political actors use violence in an attempt to win elections? Others have studied the consequences of pre-electoral violence (Bratton 2008; Hickman 2009; Aidt, Goldman, and Tiwari 2011) as well as potential reasons why politicians and state actors may use violence to their advantage (Wilkinson 2004, Chaturvedi 2005). But very few works have taken a close look at understanding why pre-electoral violence occurs and specifically why political actors prefer to use such strategies leading up to elections.

I hypothesize, and have found through my research, that in constituencies where Bangladeshis must rely on large bureaucratic bodies to interface with the state and where political parties have very little information on voter preferences, there will be relatively higher levels of pre-electoral violence. As I have discussed in previous chapters, constituencies across Bangladesh vary in terms of the way in which individuals seek and obtain a range of goods and services from the state. In some constituencies, where there are virtually no such state offices or individuals located within the area, the public must rely on intermediaries who serve as informal leaders, who, relying on their vast network and general know-how, help individuals get what they want from the state. For these individuals, the burden of dealing with the state largely falls on the shoulders of these leaders and the general public faces very problems in obtaining goods and services. In other constituencies where local leaders do not operate (due to a number of reasons I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4) — usually more urban areas — the public must rely on themselves and approach bureaucrats at agency offices that take care of specific tasks. These experiences are often in stark contrast to those who reside in constituencies where local leaders play a large role in serving the community. Here, individuals often face bureaucrat absenteeism, paying unspecified bribes (sometimes multiple times), having to go to a number of different offices in all parts of town, and poor treatment by bureaucratic officers. After all is said and done, sometimes individuals leave these offices unsuccessful in their attempts to get the licenses, deeds, formal paperwork, and the permissions that they sought in the first place.

It is imperative to note that in the South Asian context (and perhaps elsewhere too), the most important thing that voters seek from the state is not policy programs or promises for a better economic future, but rather immediate goods and services. In a developing country such as Bangladesh, this is of utmost importance to the millions of individuals who live in poverty or even those in the middle class who rely on permissions and licenses to maintain a livelihood. Thus, for these many individuals, the bureaucracy is essentially the state, especially the part of the state that concerns them the most. When this part of the state is uncooperative, confusing, inaccessible, and generally frustrates the public, individuals seek representatives who can correct these problems. For these voters, representatives who can serve as their "muscle," who can grab uncooperative bureaucrats by the collar and force them to serve the public, become instantly appealing. Many of my subjects have repeatedly told me just how important this quality is when they consider the power, viability, and appeal of a candidate up for election. For this reason, when voters are in constituencies where they must rely on the bureaucracy for goods and services on their own, they often seek violent or violence-wielding representatives.

And why do voters associate pre-electoral violence with the ability to get the bureaucracy to cooperate? To voters, when a party or candidate uses violence, it signals to voters the power and ability that they have in no uncertain terms. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, the imagery of pre-electoral violence, such as a *hartal*, or students vandalizing campus buildings, directly links parties with the capability of impeding daily life activities and the functioning of institutions. These acts of violence have real and immediate consequences, stopping people from going to school and their workplaces, keeping individuals from running their businesses, to even injuring and intimidating the public. And any one incident of pre-electoral violence can impact dozens to even hundreds of individuals. Further, the information and footage of one episode of violence can be disseminated to thousands more. Thus, the image of a party that will use

violence not only quickly links them to the idea of a party that has control — both over the general public and the state — but is also an image that quickly spreads to many voters. Violence is, essentially, a signaling mechanism used to display power to voters.

From the perspective of the party, pre-electoral violence is a more appealing strategy than most others, especially when they run in constituencies where there is a high level of uncertainty and parties are unsure of whether voters favor them or not. This is the second independent variable that I identify in the dissertation — the level of information parties have on voter preferences. When parties are more certain of the favor they have among voters, for example, in places where parties win or lose in landslide elections, or where there is a well-known favorite among all parties and candidates, there is less pressure for parties who already have strong supporters to establish a presence in the constituency — they already have the voters' favor. For those parties that are not favored to win in such constituencies, parties either know any attempts at making drastic attempts to curry favor or make statements (like inciting an act of violence) may be futile and/or backfire. This is especially so in cases like Gopalganj - 3, where anyone who runs against the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina will most certainly lose the election by a great deal. Thus, for these candidates, any strategy is futile, and inciting violence will only anger the ardent and overwhelmingly numerous supporters of Hasina.

But in constituencies where the election is up for grabs, or, in other words, where there is a high level of uncertainty with regards to who may win the election and all or some parties have similar chances of winning, parties must rely on campaign strategies that will lure voters and demonstrate strength and ability. And not only must they appeal to voters, they must compete with other parties who stand a similar chance to gain the most supporters within the short campaigning time frame. Thus, they must depend on strategies that influences the most voters and the one that does so the most effectively and efficiently. It may seem counter-intuitive to some that parties in contexts like Bangladesh would perpetrate acts of violence against the public and opponents in an attempt to win favor, especially when there are other strategies like clientelism or vote buying that may do the same without injuring others and leading to political backlash. However, in a context like Bangladesh, where parties are rarely punished by the state for using violence (indeed, issuing *hartals*, the most common form of pre-electoral violence, is actually an institutionalized way of political participation), or if they are punished, they can escape the system through various loopholes, backlash is of little concern to parties. Further, strategies that use positive incentives, such as clientelism, require money which parties may not have, and also require parties to spend these funds on a large number of individuals who must be persuaded on an individual level. Overall, clientelism and vote buying, or other such strategies, not only drains parties of their limited funds, but also is inefficient in that parties must cater to individual voters.

Pre-electoral violence, on the other hand, is far more efficient in projecting an image of power and ability to a large number of voters who seek those very qualities in their representatives. Inciting such acts of violence most easily, and rather cheaply, allows parties to establish their presence in the constituency and gain a reputation among voters as being the party that has the ability to help the people. Now while skeptics may argue that this projection of an image of power and ability does not necessarily translate into a high percentage of votes with certainty, the same can be said of strategies other than violence. Candidates and parties have

often engaged in using strategies that provide voters with various gifts and benefits, but voters will often take these goods and vote whichever way they had already intended to, regardless of whether or not they received their gifts from the benefitting party. Pre-electoral violence, on the other hand, while not ensuring votes for a party, has been a more persuasive means of parties currying favor among a large plurality of voters, which generally leads to winning votes.

It is these two mechanisms — one that operates at the voter-level, and the other at the party-level — that lead to pre-electoral violence. And while these findings are based on one country in particular, my results may shed light on a number of other cases that also see violent elections. Remember, Bangladesh is not unique in that it has to deal with pre-electoral violence in certain areas. Other countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and India have also experienced similar phenomena. These findings may help equip us with a better understanding of why such violence precedes elections in countries across the world.

My Findings

And do my results confirm or support my argument? Much of the qualitative data I present in Chapters 3 and 4 certainly do. In Chapter 3, I examine constituencies where the public must rely on directly interfacing with the bureaucracy and where parties have little knowledge of voter preferences. Through the interviews and case study work in various constituencies, it seems that many voters find violent parties appealing because they come across as being capable parties that take care of their constituents. For example, in Lalbagh (Dhaka - 7), one respondent brought up how roads were always nicely paved and general maintenance and service was always up to date because of the likes of politicians like Haji Selim, Pinto, and Khoka, politicians all known for the frequent use of violence and intimidation. Several residents of the area described how it was precisely because they used violence that voters knew that these representatives would be able to assist them when attempting to obtain goods and services, either for their local neighborhood areas or for individuals on a personal-basis. Thus, these individuals seemed to echo the notion that the use of violence signals to voters an image of ability and power. The resident who described the perfect condition of the roads in Lalbagh also described how the bureaucracy and various state agencies very rarely operated in an efficient and responsive way, thus these violent and tough politicians were quickly able to win the hearts of their supporters. In contrast, residents of Kalabagan (Dhaka-10) also discussed very similar problems, but how their "clean imaged" representative Taposh was unable to grab bureaucrats by the collar and take care of roads or provide residents of the Dhanmondi and Kalabagan area with the services they needed. So, in areas where individuals have to approach the inefficient, inaccessible, and unresponsive bureaucracy on their own, they seek representatives who can use force.

And parties rely on pre-electoral violence when they have little knowledge on how the constituents will vote for them and when there is little time to determine such information on a large number of voters. This is especially the case for urban constituencies, where populations are high and dense, and parties find themselves with little information on whether they stand a chance or not in the constituency. Many party workers I spoke with shared with me their frustrations and challenges of working in such constituencies. Some mentioned how many

voters were renters who had just moved into the city from outside districts and who had no connection or history associated with the area. Some frequently mentioned in our conversations who top leaders would often call them to incite acts of violence adjacent to densely populated neighborhoods so that children would not be able to attend schools, adults could not go to work, and roads would be blocked for the day — all to send a message to all residents that the party was powerful.

In Chapter 4, I examine constituencies where parties are better able to gauge the level of support they have from voters and where voters rely on local leaders to obtain goods and services instead of going directly to bureaucracy agencies. In these constituencies, because individuals' interaction with the state occurs through the mediation of local leaders, voters face little difficulty in dealing with the state, and as such, they do not require leaders who must demonstrate their use of force. Many respondents, both villagers and those who serve as local leaders described how the process was often very easy for the general public since they did not have to travel to the nearest *sadar* area to apply directly at various bureaucratic agencies or deal with uncooperative state employees. For the leaders themselves, they often found the process very easy as well since they have the connections and knowledge regarding the process of obtaining goods and services. Further, because populations generally are less dense in these areas, and since many of the services that urban voters tend to require (business licenses or acquiring land deeds) are not commonly requested by voters in these constituencies, leaders are not particularly burdened by having to represent and take care of the administrative tasks of many residents.

On the parties' end, these constituencies present far fewer challenges in terms of ascertaining whether voters will vote for the party or not. Most, if not all residents, in these areas have lived in the constituency for years, thus party workers have a general idea of how households vote each election. Further, as a few party workers described in Khulna - 3, since parties have a good sense of how people will vote in the election, parties generally tend to use strategies to cater to those who may not support them by directing specific strategies at those voters. For example, one party worker explained that he and his colleagues tend to post many more fliers and large posters near the residences of those who may not support them. This party workers also said that they have even tried to persuade voters with "gifts," such as *saris* for women, in an attempt to muster more support. When asked if party workers give voters who do not support them money to vote for them, party workers have shied away from answering directly, but one mentioned that his party orders him to, "make non-supporters happy in any way that we can." Pre-electoral violence in these constituencies, however, plays a very little, if non-existent role. Most party workers described how violence does little for parties as they are better able to garner new support by serving non-supporters rather than frightening them into submission.

And the quantitative data in Chapter 5 also lend support to my argument. Using a negative binomial model to estimate the effect on episodes of pre-electoral violence, I find that variables that reflect reliance on bureaucracy, such as whether a constituency consists of a *sadar* area or not and the number of police stations, positively impact pre-electoral violence. Urbanity also had a positive effect on pre-electoral violence, suggesting that when parties must contend with a large population on which they have little information, the occurrence of pre-electoral

violence increases. As I have mentioned in Chapter 5, while the results show some support, they also demonstrate the need for further research. Since my model is based on the 2014 elections, where nearly 50% of the country held uncontested elections due to the BNP coalition's boycott, the data in the model are somewhat unrepresentative of elections in Bangladesh in their "true" form. It is because of the uncontested elections that I fear my results in the model modestly support my argument. Perhaps if normal, contested elections are held during the next cycle (which should be held in 2019), then one may do another analysis to see whether there is support for my argument.

Prospect for Future Studies

In this dissertation, I have uncovered the extent to which reliance on the bureaucracy and level of voter information covary with levels of pre-electoral violence. And while I have discovered interesting results through both my quantitative and qualitative analyses, there is ample potential for further studies on this topic to increase our understanding of this political phenomenon. As I have said earlier, pre-electoral violence is an occurrence that plagues not only the elections of Bangladesh, but also the elections in many other democracies and have done so previously in still many others (such as the United States at one point in history). It would behoove political scientists, and certainly myself, to test my argument in these other contexts — both past and present — to see whether similar mechanisms are in operation, causing pre-electoral violence to occur.

And though my study does not include a research design that can pinpoint causality, there may be an innovative way of studying pre-electoral violence that has not yet occurred to me or other scholars. There are many challenges to creating such a design, yes. One would have to consider major ethical concerns if attempting to use some sort of experimental design in which a type of manipulation or treatment causes more or less pre-electoral violence in some cases rather than others. In addition, one is hard pressed to find an appropriate natural experiment setting that would allow such a study to identify causality as well. If delimitations were truly random and not political at all, then perhaps one could study newly delimited areas that go from constituencies that are bureaucracy-heavy and with low information on voters to constituencies where local leaders operate and where there is plenty of information on voters. However, such re-drawings of constituencies are hardly ever by chance. They are often due to parties wanting to eke out certain advantages at subsequent elections or for other perhaps more innocent reasons such as balancing population density across all constituencies (this was the official line of reasoning for Bangladesh's most recent delimitation prior to the 2014 election).

Lastly, I feel it is absolutely imperative to conduct another study on Bangladesh when there are data available on an election that is contested in each and every constituency and under more or less "normal" conditions. Bangladeshi elections are rarely peaceful and the circumstances surrounding the elections are often contested by both parties. Issues such as whether there should be an election commission presiding over the elections or not, how constituencies are to be delimited, to even the timing of when elections are announced. Yet despite the potential for irregularities, there have been several, fully contested elections that have been held under election commission rule and without emergency rule. Because such elections

comprise the majority of elections in Bangladesh, one may call such elections "normal." Further, when parties have previously boycotted the elections, leading to a large number of constituencies holding uncontested elections, the government has usually held another election after making certain concessions to those parties which boycotted them in the first place. The 2014 election is the first time a boycotted election's results have been upheld. For these reasons, I believe the results in Chapter 5, while supportive of my argument, rely on data that show us an incomplete picture of elections in Bangladesh. Especially so considering that approximately half of Bangladesh's constituencies had uncontested elections, which mean nearly half the observations had an unusual set of data.

Contributions of the Dissertation

This dissertation attempts to understand the conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs in the hopes that one day scholars may determine actual causes of this violence. My work contributes to a literature that touches on the topic of violence in democracies, and more specifically, the problem of violent elections that plagues countries not just in South Asia, but all across the developing world. It is one of the first works that attempts to understand the motivations behind why political actors choose to use violence as a strategy to win when others are available. This dissertation also emphasizes the importance of understanding election-related violence as not accidental or spontaneous occurrences, but as events that are *orchestrated by political actors for their advantage*. Why political actors may choose to use such a tool and see violence as a potential advantage is a question I have tried to answer in this dissertation. Moreover, in Chapter 2, I describe the many ways in which political actors use violence as a precursor to elections in Bangladesh, providing a typography that has not yet been thoroughly studied in political science.

Further, going beyond just theory, this dissertation covers a political phenomenon that is relevant and important. There are practical implications of my work and understanding the circumstances that surround pre-electoral violence. In countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, people experience elections that are mired in violence. Their elections are often rigged, unfair, and unfree, where people must make political choices under duress. Just like Bangladeshis, Indians, Nigerians, and individuals elsewhere must experience a number of stoppages to daily life due to riots, strikes, and other violent demonstrations. Some are intimidated and prevented from making their way to polling stations. Others fear repercussions if they do not vote for a particular party or candidate. Still many others are the very victims of specific acts of violence — those who may have been targets, or were injured by being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Regardless, this dissertation allows us to study the causes and conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs. My findings can aid in identifying the institutional weaknesses that lead to violence or policies that can prevent parties from perpetrating such acts. This work can potentially lead to real life changes that may change the face of elections in a number of countries across various regions.

Final Thoughts

Ultimately, the question that remains is whether I have made strides towards understanding the research question with which I began. Have I identified the conditions under which pre-electoral violence occurs in Bangladesh? I believe I have. The qualitative data in Chapters 3 and 4 clearly show the mechanisms at work from both the voters' and political parties' perspectives on why pre-electoral violence is appealing. In these chapters, my subjects have carefully articulated what pre-electoral violence signals to voters and why it is, as a consequence, useful for political parties and their candidates. When further probed, my subjects also explained the conditions that make them believe such violence is useful and/or appealing. Voters discussed their never-ending frustrations with the bureaucracy and how they sought parties and candidates who could "get the job done" or "take care of their constituents." Party workers as well as high-ranking officials have explained that parties rely on pre-electoral violence to signal to voters that they are the most powerful and capable, thus establishing their viability as contenders in the election. And these narratives were consistent across constituencies that had similar environments: where individuals must interact with the bureaucracy on their own and where parties know very little about their constituents' preferences.

The narratives in other constituencies — where individuals rely on local leaders who mediated transactions between voters and the state and where parties knew their voters' preferences very well — were consistent but different from what I mentioned above. Here, voters did not express any sort of frustration with the state and therefore never articulated a desire to vote for candidates who monopolized violence or showed their power through the use of force. Party workers, like those in Khulna - 3, did not express any sort of confusion regarding their voters or an urgency to use pre-electoral violence to establish their presence. Most discussed how voters already knew their parties and candidates well and a majority of the party workers in these constituencies explained how they used strategies that employed positive incentives (vote buying, clientelism, distributing gifts) to curry the favor of specific pockets of voters who they knew were not current supporters of their party. In these constituencies, both voters and party workers described a less violent political landscape.

And lastly, in Chapter 5, I rely on a quantitative picture to answer my research question, which also provides support for my argument. With the negative binomial model, I show that the extent to which individuals must rely on the bureaucracy on their own and whether parties have knowledge of the voters' preferences covary with the level of pre-electoral violence in a constituency. While there is more support for the bureaucracy independent variable in the model, I believe that if one were to retest using this same model on a different, perhaps less irregular election, one would find greater support for both of my independent variables. Regardless, the model in Chapter 5 gives us a complete picture of the variation across all 300 constituencies.

In sum, understanding the causes of violence of any kind may be tricky, but I believe that I have posited a number of patterns that may inform us of the circumstances surrounding pre-electoral violence. To further probe and perhaps, one day, determine the causes of pre-electoral violence, we may need to step outside of the bounds of conventional political science research designs and employ more creative designs that may actually test for causality. With this

work, I have intended to begin the discussion of understanding pre-electoral violence, and I believe that with this dissertation, the conversation has indeed begun.

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Appendix A: Sample of Newspaper Articles Used in the Study

All articles' authors have not been named by the newspapers, many used terms such as "Staff Reporter" or "Location X Correspondent" to denote the authors.

Source: The Daily Star

Date: September 2, 2013

10 hurt as BCL, JCD clash in MC College

At least 10 persons were injured in a clash between activists of pro-BNP organisation Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League on Sylhet MC College campus yesterday. Campus sources said Sylhet Government College and MC College units of BCL and JCD clashed with rods and sticks over parking motorcycles on the campus of Sylhet Government College. The two colleges are next to each other. The BCL men also vandalised a motorcycle of a JCD activist during the half-hour long clash. At one stage the BCL men forced the JCD men out of the campus. On information, police and Rapid Action Battalion contingents rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control. Akhtar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shahporan Police Station, said they rushed to the MC College campus after hearing of the clash. "We soon brought the situation under control and nobody was seriously hurt," he said. The OC said there has been a longstanding rivalry between the two organisations over reigning supremacy in MC College, Sylhet Government College and the Tilagar area.

Source: Sonali Sangbad

Date: September 9, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Shibir-Police Clash in the City, 10 Injured

The clash took place at around 11:00 am. During the clash, 10 were injured, including newsreporters. Witnesses describe that yesterday, around 11:00 am, Shibir members gathered in the Shalbagan area of the city to demand the release of their fellow party workers by participating in a missile. The missile began at the power house more and was proceeding to the Shalbagan petrol pump when the police attempted to stop them from moving any further. At this point, the Shibir members threw brickbats at the police officers. During the ensuing fight, police used rubber bullets, tear shells, and sound grenades to stop the Shibir members. Of the 10 injured, all were either members of the media or police officers. The OC from the city's Boalia Model Thana, Ziaur Rahman informed us that the police were able to immediately contain the violence soon afterwards. Police are currently investigating the incident in the Shalbagan and surrounding areas, though they have been unable to arrest anyone yet.

Source: Prothom Alo

Date: September 15, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Intra-party fighting between three groups of the BNP, 10 Injured

Three groups of the BNP clashed in Gazipur's Kaliakoir upazila near Shafipur Bazaar yesterday when they went to greet Begum Khaleda Zia as she was traveling northbound. At least 10 people were injured. Witnesses from the area as well as BNP members described how Khaleda Zia was making her way through Gazipur's Kaliakoir upazila yesterday afternoon on her way to Rajshahi. In an attempt to greet her while on her way and to establish themselves as the most deserving candidates for the area, several politicians and their workers brought banners and festoons and set up early in the afternoon on both sides of the road. At this point, BNP politician Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui's workers started a missile on the main road. In response, the BNP's Kaliakoir pourasava member, Mujibur Rahman's workers also start their own missile in the same area. During these missiles, Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui and Mujibur Rahman's workers begin fighting. At this time, the BNP's Kaliakoir leader, Kazi Sayeedul Alam's workers start yet another missile, after which Siddiqui's workers begin to attack this group as well. During this melee, at least 10 people were injured. Police used their batons to disperse the crowd. Due to the fight, the Dhaka-Tangail highway was closed for some time. Despite this, the Shafipur Bazaar area is now back to normal. During the fight, however, many of the stores were closed in the bazaar. Once the fight was over and the police dispersed the crowd, many BNP workers returned to give their greetings to Khaleda Zia. At around 8:30 pm, Khaleda Zia made her way through the Kaliakoir area. Mujibur Rahman says that none of his workers were involved in the fight, but he also does not know who was involved in the fight. On the other hand, Sayeedul Alam informed the reporter that Tanveer Siddiqui is an expelled politician of the BNP. Thus, when Siddiqui's workers were using his posters and starting a missile, his workers attacked Siddiqui's group. Efforts were made to contact Tanveer Siddiqui by calling his phone, but he did not respond. Kaliakoir Thana's OC Omar Faruque reported that police have been deployed to the area to maintain the peace there.

Source: The Daily Sylhet

Date: September 23, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Shibir Missile at Bandar Bazaar, Vehicle Vandalized, 16 Shibir Members Arrested

In Sylhet's Bandar Bazaar, Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing, Shibir, started a missile. On Monday morning at around 10:00 am, they began their missile from Bandar Bazaar's Metro Hotel. Witnesses describe how once they got to the Karim Ullah Market, the police attempted to stop them from proceeding any further. At this point, Shibir members vandalized a bicycle and an SI police office was injured. Besides this, five vehicles, including a city corporation vehicle, was vandalized by Shibir members. By 10:30 am, the police were able to stop the vandalism, and the Shibir members fled the scene. In other news, police raided the Sunamganj zila area on Sunday night and Monday morning, during which they arrested 16 Shibir members, including politician Jamil Ahmed Raj.

Source: The Daily Purbanchal

Date: October 7, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Jamaat-Police Clash in Dhaka

Police and Jamaat workers clashed in the Mohammadpur, Mirpur, and Pallabi areas of Dhaka. However, no one was injured in these incidents and the police have been unable to arrest anyone. We have been informed that the Jamaat-Shibir workers had planned to begin missiles yesterday on Sunday morning at 10 am, starting from the Mohammadpur Town Hall area as well as a few other places. During the missile, they chanted slogans calling for the release of many of their fellow members and workers. When the police showed up to the scene, the Jamaat-Shibir members threw brickbats at the police officers, who then used their batons in retaliation. After a struggle between the two groups, the Jamaat-Shibir members dispersed from the area. At the same time, another Jamaat-Shibir group began a missile at the Mirpur-10 intersection in the city. They too threw brickbats at police officers, who then responded by fighting back and dispersing the Jamaat-Shibir men. In the Pallabi area, Shibir men also started a missile, during which they exploded cocktail bombs. This caused bystanders to flee in panic. When the police responded by attempting to stop the Jamaat-Shibir men, they also fled the scene.

Source: The Daily Purbakone

Date: October 13, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Jubo Dal Vandalizes and Attacks at a BNP Meeting in Bandarban: 1 Injured

Last Friday, at the zila BNP meeting in Bandarban, Jubo Dal members attacked and vandalized the event. After the incident, a riot ensued in front of the BNP office and surrounding bazaar area, where the police were immediately sent. Both the BNP and Jubo Dal initiated various missiles all throughout the city. The Jubo Dal men used their shoes and batons to attack BNP men. Later on in the evening, Jubo Dal member, Mohammad Selim was seriously injured in the attacks. The Awami League informed us that they had met with the local BNP at their workshop on Thursday evening to join hands. Later on, on Friday afternoon, the Jubo Dal brought sticks and started vandalizing the stage as well as chairs at the event. It was because of this act that the BNP initiated missiles in response to the Jubo Dal's behavior. In response to those missiles, the Jubo Dal also initiated their own, after which the police were deployed. BNP politician Mujibur Rashid informed us that during their meeting, Jubo Dal member Mashiur Rahman Liton and Nijam Chowdhury's groups begin vandalizing the stage and other items. Rashid says that they attacked the meeting for no reason. Jubo Dal leader Mashiur Rahman Mithun said that in preparation for this meeting, the Jubo Dal were working, and in the process, another Jubo Dal leader, Bakkar was forced to resign, which the zila leader, Saching Jeri didn't accept because Bakkar was instrumental in preparing this meeting. On top of that, none of the Jubo Dal leaders

or members were invited to the meeting. For these reasons, we attacked the meeting. Another source from the BNP said that the real reason behind this attack was due to intra-party fighting between the BNP leader Abdul Mabud and the Jubo Dal over territorial power in the area.

Source: The Daily Star

Date: October 27, 2013

Blasts at Strategic Places in the City

Unidentified miscreants blasted crude bombs in front of the houses of Supreme Court Justice SK Sinha and Law Minister Shafique Ahmed in the city yesterday ahead of the 60-hour hartal enforced by BNP-led 18-party alliance from today. The law minister suspected that Jamaat-Shibir men blasted the bombs to stop the ongoing war crimes trial. A key component of the 18-party alliance, Jamaat-e-Islami has been demanding the government stop the trial. Five of its top leaders have already been convicted of committing genocide and crimes against humanity during the Liberation War. Some other leaders were facing similar charges. Justice Sinha, one of the members the Supreme Court's Appellate Division bench, has been dealing with the appeals of war crimes convicts. He is the senior most judge of the Appellate Division next to the chief justice. The law ministry deals with the formation of war crimes tribunals, enactment and amendment of war crimes laws and appointment of prosecutors. In an apparent bid to create panic, miscreants also blasted bombs in some strategically important places in the capital, including in front of the residences of another minister and the chief election commissioner, offices of cops and several media houses. Criminals hurled a handmade bomb at the residence of Justice Sinha on Central Lane of Kakrail area around 10:30am. However, none was injured in the explosion, said Shibli Noman, assistant commissioner (Ramna) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Supreme Court Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam, who visited the spot immediately after the blast, told The Daily Star that Justice Sinha was at home when the bomb went off hitting the boundary wall of his residence. The judge recently received several death threats over the phone, he added. Justice Sinha was one of the members of the five-member SC bench which handed death sentence to Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah for committing crimes against humanity in 1971. He is also dealing with the appeal filed by convicted war criminal Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee. In both the cases, defence petitioned the SC to keep Justice Sinha out of the bench, but the SC rejected the petitions. Two bombs were blasted at the space between the building and the boundary wall of the Indira Road residence of Law Minister Shafique Ahmed around 7:10pm. The minister said he was at home when the bombs went off near his residence. Quoting the on-duty police at his residence, he said the miscreants came by two black cars and left the spot immediately after blasting the bombs. Informed by on-duty cops, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police inspected the spot. A case was filed with the police station in this connection last night. In Comilla, a cocktail blasted near the residence of the law minister at the town's Ashoktala around 10:30pm, said Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, additional superintendent of Comilla police.

Source: Prothom Alo

Date: October 29, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Jubo League Politician Stabbed to Death in Chittagong

Yesterday, on Monday night, a Jubo League member Humayun Kabir Murad was stabbed to death by unknown assailants in Chittagong. The city's OC Mohammad Shahidullah informed us that last night, at 11:45 pm, Murad was traveling by motorcycle. When he got to the Pahartali railroad crossing, assailants stopped him and started to stab him. Upon hearing about the incident, police quickly went to the spot and took Murad to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Murad was Tiger Pass area's Shahnewaz's son. Shahidullah also said that locals from the area claim that hartal participants were responsible for Murad's death. Police are now investigating this possible lead.

Source: The Daily Sylhet

Date: November 5, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Clash Between Shibir and Chhatra League in Zakiganj, 10 Injured

On the anniversary of Jail Killing Day, Shibir and Chhatra League workers clashed in Sylhet's Zakiganj area on Sunday afternoon. Ten people from both sides were injured during the clash. Due to this incident, the surrounding area was overcast with tension. Many of the city's police officers were deployed to the area. Upazila Chhatra League politician Aminul Islam Chowdhury Shimul said that members of the Chhatra League initiated a missile from Zakiganj Government College's campus in the morning in honor of Jail Killing Day when Al Amin, Raihan Ahmed, Bodor Uddin, and Sajib Ahmed from Chhatra Shibir tried to stop them. Later on in the afternoon, Chhatra League held a function in honor of the same anniversary. South upazila Chhatra Shibir leader Hasanul Banna's group of Shibir members then attempted to attack the event. During this clash, ten individuals, including Banna, Munir Ahmed Khan, and Ali Amjad and the Chhatra League's Anwar Hossain and Junaid Ahmed, were injured. Among the critically injured, Banna and Munir were taken to Sylhet Osmani Hospital. After this incident, the Chhatra League held another missile in the city. South Upazila Shibir leader Hasanul Banna informed us that there was no such attack at the Chhatra League function in the morning. He also added that these charges were laid upon Shibir unfairly.

Source: The Daily Purbanchal

Date: November 11, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Fire at Awami League Office, Vehicle Vandalized in Bagerhat

Unknown assailants set fire to the Awami League ward office, while in Fakirhat, several trucks and a motorcycle were vandalized. Bagerhat sadar's Awami League whip chairman Sheikh Akhtaruzzaman Bacchu said that fire was set to the 8 no. ward Awami League office early Sunday morning. Locals who were on their way to the mosque for the morning prayer noticed the fire and immediately called residents nearby to help put out the fire, which they did. He added that it was workers from the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami who were responsible for the arson. While Bagerhat sadar's chief of police, Ershadul Kabir Chowdhury acknowledged that such an incident did take place, he added that no files have been charged yet. Meanwhile, in Fakirhat, unknown assailants threw bricks at three trucks and a motorcycle, damaging them.

Source: Prothom Alo

Date: November 25, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Shibir Holds a Missile near Bijoynagar

On Sunday afternoon, Jamaat-Shibir workers held a missile near the capital's Bijoynagar area. Witnesses and police informed us that yesterday afternoon at 4:00 pm, at least 50 Jamaat and Shibir workers initiated a missile. During the missile, they vandalized several vehicles. When the police attempted to stop them, the party workers fought back. This clash lasted for approximately half an hour. Finally, the police were able to bring calm to the area using tear shells. Ramna Thana's Mashiur Rahman confirmed this incident.

Source: Sonali Sangbad

Date: November 28, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Police are the Target of Shibir's Wrath Again

The police have been targeted yet again by Shibir. The incident happened during the 18-party coalition's half-day hartal on Wednesday morning, in front of Rajshahi College. Those injured are the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police's constables Hamid (25), Touhid (23), and Azam Ali (23). The injured were taken to Ramek Hospital. Before this incident, last year on November 6, Shibir men took Boalia Thana's police constable Musharraf's rifle and attacked him. Since this incident, the Shibir have continued to target the police with various attacks. During yesterday's clash, Hamid, Touhid, and Azam Ali were injured when Shibir exploded several cocktail bombs. Before this, Shibir blasted several cocktail bombs in the city's Shalbagan and Butter More areas, injuring SI Jahangir, PSI Mokbul Hossain. Since that particular incident, there were no such attacks on the police. However, yesterday's attack on the police marks the Shibir's renewed attempts on the police.

Source: The Daily Star

Date: December 1, 2013

4 killed on first day

Commuters suffer most; vehicles attacked on highways

Announced all of a sudden the night before, the opposition's three-day blockade left at least four people killed and put tens of thousands of travellers across the country in peril on its first day yesterday. Many people were bewildered after reaching inter-district bus terminals early in the morning having no idea of the fresh blockade, called hours after another ended on Friday morning. Passengers of long-route buses suffered most as vehicles that hit the roads soon after the previous blockade got stuck at different points all over the country. The trucks and lorries laden with perishable goods, particularly vegetables, lay stationary for hours on end. In Rajshahi, Jamaat-Shibir and BNP activists torched a pharmaceutical company's microbus and four rice-carrying trucks throwing petrol bombs at Katakhal Dewanpara on the eve of the blockade. Bangladesh Truck & Covered Van Owners Association fears the entire road transport system will collapse if the current political impasse continues. In a statement yesterday, it demanded the government compensate the affected owners; otherwise, they won't be able to return to business. The BNP-led 18-party alliance called the blockade of roads, rail and waterways for the second time in seven days to press for the cancellation of polls schedule and protest "false cases" against its leaders and "torture and repression" of its activists. Like in the earlier blockade, violence flared up across the country as opposition men clashed with law enforcers and exploded crude bombs, report our district correspondents. Two pedestrians in Dhaka and Chittagong, a Shibir activist in Jhenidah and a Jubo Dal man in Pabna were killed, pushing the death toll in the opposition's back-to-back blockades to 23. In the capital's Malibagh, pro-blockade activists hurled a petrol bomb at a bus area around 7:30pm. Losing control, the bus crushed Habibur Rahman, 35, to death and injured a rickshaw-puller. Two passengers also suffered burn injuries in the bomb attack. Another pedestrian was hurt in a blast at Bangshal around 2:00pm. In Chittagong, a 45-year-old man was killed as a pickup, chased by blockaders, ran him over at Nayakhal on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway in Satkania upazila around 8:00pm, UNB reported. The deceased, Nimai Nath, hailed from Patiya upazila of the district. Our Jhenidah correspondent reports: Shibir activist Israfil Hossain suffered bullet injuries during a clash with police in Kotchandpur bus stand area, locals say. He was rushed to a local health complex where doctors declared him dead. Five others, including policemen, were also wounded in the incident. Jamaat secretary Tajul Islam of Kotchandpur upazila claims police fired live rounds without any provocation. But ASP Jahid Hassan says police shot rubber bullets at Jamaat-Shibir-BNP activists who were throwing petrol bombs and brick chips at them. Jamaat called a daylong hartal in two upazilas of the district today in protest at the killing. In Pabna, Mahbul Islam, 26, was killed and five others were injured when hit by a truck in Ishwardi upazila around 6:00pm. He was identified by locals as an activist of Jubo Dal, a pro-BNP student body, police said. Biman Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station, said blockaders hurled brick chips at the Kushtia-bound truck at Mirkumari point on Rajshahi-Kushtia highway. As the vehicle sped up, the driver lost control of it, resulting in the accident. The activists set fire to the truck. Road communications between Dhaka and other districts

remained suspended yesterday as the opposition men put up barricades on highways and smashed vehicles. Ferry and launch services were badly disrupted on various routes. The blockaders put up barricades on Lalmonirhat-Dhaka and three other routes near Mahendranagar station in Lalmonirhat for eight hours till 2:00pm yesterday. Chittagong's rail link with Dhaka and Sylhet was snapped for around two and a half hours as several hundred blockaders took position on Dhaka-Chittagong route at Ispahani Gate area yesterday morning. The rail services on the route resumed around 11:10am as police managed to disperse the activists. Jalal Ahmed, 50, a locomaster of Chandpur-bound Meghna Express, was injured when blockaders threw stone around 6:15pm while the train was approaching Sitakunda Railway Station. Incidents of clashes, vandalism and explosion were also reported from Rajshahi, Moulvibazar, Chittagong, Jamalpur, Chandpur and Jessore.

Source: Prothom Alo

Date: December 6, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Awami League-BNP Clash, 8 Injured

At least seven people from both the Awami League and BNP were injured during a clash between the two parties Thursday morning in Khagrachari's Matiranga upazila. Among the injured, four were taken to Khagrachari Zila Sadar Hospital for further treatment. *Prothom Alo* was informed that yesterday morning at 9:30 am, Awami League members were assaulting Monir Hossain (40), a Pour Shramik party member in the Gazinagar area in Bottoli of Matiranga. After this incident, rumors of Hossain's death spread across the area. After workers of the BNP heard this news, they retaliated against the Awami League. During this clash, Saiful Islam, Javed Hossain, Abu Taleb, Mostafa Kamal Khokon, Daud Miya, Moselim, and Mohammad Hanif of the Awami League were injured. They were initially taken to Matiranga Upazila Health Complex. From there, Javed Hossain, Saiful Islam, Mostafa Kamal, and Daud Miya were taken to Khagrachari Zila Hospital for further treatment. Matiranga Thana's OC Main Uddin Khan informed us that, based on what he knows, this whole incident occurred due to a misunderstanding between the two parties. Khagrachari Zila BNP leader and Matiranga Poursava mayor, Abu Yusuf, informed us that the Awami League was responsible for physically assaulting Monir Hossain of the Pour Shramik League. It was only after the rumor of Hossain's death that the BNP decided to fight with the workers of the Awami League. Workers from both parties were injured.

Source: The Daily Sylhet

Date: December 18, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Chhatra League Leader Injured After Attack on Sylhet Polytechnic's Campus

Chhatra League leader, Shoukat Chandra Rimi was gravely injured when he was stabbed by unknown assailants on the Sylhet Polytechnical Institute campus. After the attack, Rimi was taken to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital. The attack occurred on Tuesday at around 1:00 pm. Witnesses informed us that Rimi was sitting at a shop by himself in front of the campus on Tuesday around 1:00 pm. At that point, 8-10 individuals arrived on motorcycles and started to stab him numerous times, after which he was taken to the hospital. Chhatra League has named Shibir as the responsible party for this attack. Meanwhile, Shibir has stated that the Chhatra League has made it a habit of blaming them for any attack on anyone. They have further stated that because of this habit of the Chhatra League, those who are really responsible get away with crimes.

Source: The Daily Purbanchal

Date: December 23, 2013

(Translated from Bangla)

Bombing at Zila Chhatra League Leader's House in Jessore

There was a bombing at Jessore Zila Chhatra League leader, Ariful Islam Riyad's house. On Saturday night, unknown assailants targeted Riyad's house and threw a bomb towards it. The bomb hit one of the outer walls of the house, upon which a loud noise could be heard. No one was injured in the incident. The police have inspected the scene of this incident.

Source: Sonali Sangbad

Date: January 2, 2014

(Translated from Bangla)

Covered Van Set on Fire in Gazipur

A covered van was set on fire by unknown assailants even before the BNP-Jamaat continuous *aborodh* began. Shreepur's ASI Moqlesur Rahman informed us that on Tuesday night at around 3:00, the assailants set fire to the van, which was left near the Rajnigandha Railway Station, and then fled. Upon receiving reports of the incident, the police went to the scene and put the fire out. The fire completely damaged the front of the vehicle, but no one was injured. ASI Moqlesur also said that the police have arrested eleven individuals who are suspected of creating terror and panic in connection to the *aborodh*. The BNP and their 18-party coalition have issued a continuous *aborodh* starting from the first day of the new year in an attempt to stall the January 5 national elections.

Source: The Daily Star

Date: January 2, 2014

Blockade Goes On: Hartal in 4 Dists Till Polls Day

Vehicular movement on the capital's thoroughfares was almost normal yesterday, the second day of the non-stop blockade sponsored by the BNP-led 18-party combine, though long-distance buses did not leave from the city or come to it. Stray incidents, however, marked the indefinite blockade elsewhere over the demand for the cancellation of the January 5 polls. The blockaders went on the rampage at least in three districts, injuring no fewer than 40 persons. The 18-party called a 48-hour hartal starting tomorrow morning in Chittagong, Sylhet, Jhenidah and Bogra, protesting the confinement of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and the cancellation of the January 5 polls. Two crude bombs were blasted near the BNP chief's Gulshan residence last evening. Unknown miscreants torched three buses yesterday evening in the capital's Abdullahpur, Dilkusha and Sankharibazar. They also exploded crude bombs in different parts of the city. No casualties were reported. Though launches set off for their respective destinations from Sadarghat launch terminal, the number of passengers was thin compared to Wednesday, Abul Aziz, in-charge of Sadarghat terminal outpost, said last night. Passengers at the Kamalapur Railway Station were present as usual. But the train schedule was disrupted as trains ran slower than the normal speed due to the blockade, railway sources said. In Chittagong, the blockade passed off almost peacefully as no untoward incident was reported in the 14 upazilas yesterday, reports our bureau office in the district. However, Jamaat-Shibir men allegedly torched a passenger bus in the city's BRTC area around 6:30pm, said Mohiuddin Selim, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Police Station, adding that none was hurt. Fire service sources said fire fighters of Nandankanan Fire Station extinguished the fire around 7:30pm. The damage caused by the fire was estimated at Tk 2 lakh. Zakir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bara Awlia Highway Police Station, said vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway was very thin. Police escorted 20 covered vans to and from Chittagong. Meanwhile, the opposition has called a 48-hour hartal in the district tomorrow. In Bogra, at least 10 people, including two police personnel, were injured in a triangular clash involving Awami League and BNP activists and law-enforcers at Sonatola upazila. The clash erupted at Balurhaat Bazar when the opposition and the ruling party brought out separate processions for and against the blockade. Police intervened to disperse them. The local BNP also called a 48-hour hartal in the district tomorrow. The BNP also called a 48-hour hartal in Sylhet and Jhenidah tomorrow. Meanwhile, the second day of the blockade was marked by vandalism and burning of tyres on road and rail tracks in Natore. The blockaders created impediments on the Natore-Rajshahi road by burning tyres. They also vandalised a potato-laden truck in Digpatia area, leaving potato trader Mofazzal Hossain injured. The blockaders also set fire to an auto-rickshaw in Station Bazar area. The joint forces in several raids detained at least seven leaders and activists of the BNP, and Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat, from different areas, reports our district correspondent. In Moulvibazar, at least 20 people were injured in a clash between police and the 18-party supporters at Bhuai of Juri upazila yesterday evening. The injured were admitted to different local hospitals. Md Mahbubur Rahman, OC of Juri Police Station, said police fired teargas canisters to bring the situation under control. Police detained five people while picketing in the area. Joint forces were deployed to avoid any untoward incident. In Dinajpur, at least 20 people were injured in a clash between 18-party men and joint forces in Birganj upazila yesterday evening. On the way to Thakurgaon and Panchagarh for electoral duties, three vans of industrial police came under attack by pickets at Kabirajhat on Dinajpur-Panchagarh highway that triggered a clash between the two sides.

Demanding the cancellation of the January 5 polls, the BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance has enforced a nationwide blockade of roads, rail and waterways for 22 days in phases since November 26.

Appendix B: *Hartals* or *Aborodhs* that Occurred from September 1, 2013 to January 5, 2014

<u>Date</u>	<u>Party Who Issued Strike</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Location</u>
3-Sep	AL	Day long	Mymensingh - Dhobaura Upazila
3-Sep	BNP	Half day	Sylhet - Biswanath Upazila
8-Sep	BNP	Half day	Patuakhali - Dumki Upazila
16-Sep	Communist Party	Half day	Sylhet - Sadar Upazila
18-Sep	Jamaat	48 hour	Countrywide
19-Sep			Continuation
22-Sep	Jamaat	Half day	Meherpur
22-Sep	BNP	Half day	Dinajpur - Parbatipur Upazila
23-Sep	JCD	Half day	Barisal - Hizla Upazila
25-Sep	BNP	Half day	Jessore - Chowgaccha Upazila
26-Sep	Shibir	Half day	Chittagong, Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari
26-Sep	Jamaat	Half day	Kushtia - Kumarkhali Upazila
26-Sep	18 Dal	Half day	Rajshahi - Charghat Upazila
27-Sep	AL	Half day	Jessore - Chowgaccha Upazila
29-Sep	Shibir	Day long	Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna, and Chapainawabganj
2-Oct	BNP	Day long	Chittagong, Rangamati, and Bandarban
2-Oct	BNP	Half day	Satkhira
5-Oct	BNP	Day long	Natore - Baraigram Upazila
13-Oct	Shibir	Half day	Chuadanga, Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenaidah
19-Oct	BNP	Day long	Chandpur - Kachua Upazila
20-Oct	Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal	Day long	Feni - Sonagazi Upazila
22-Oct	BNP	Half day	Sirajganj
23-Oct	BNP	Day long	Tangail
26-Oct	BNP	Day long	Chandpur - Faridganj Upazila
26-Oct	BNP	Half day	Barguna - Pathorghata Upazila
27-Oct	BNP	60-hours	Countrywide
28-Oct	BNP		Continuation
29-Oct	BNP		Continuation

30-Oct	BNP	Day long	Jhenaidha, Chandpur, Magura - Mohammadpur Upazila, Tangail - Madhupur Upazila
30-Oct	BNP	Half day	Nilphamari - Jaldhaka Upazila
31-Oct	BNP	Day long	Cox's Bazaar
3-Nov	BNP	Half day	Pirojpur - Nazirpur Upazila
4-Nov	BNP	60-hours	Countrywide
5-Nov	BNP		Continuation
6-Nov	BNP		Continuation
5-Nov	BNP	Day long	Bogra
9-Nov	BNP	Half day	Khagrachari
9-Nov	BNP	Day long	Noakhali - Companyganj and Kabirhat Upazilas, Comilla - Homna and Titas Upazilas, Bhola, Dhaka - Pallabi, Feni - Dagonbhuiyan Upazila, Pabna
10-Nov	BNP	84-hours	Countrywide
11-Nov	BNP		Continuation
12-Nov	BNP		Continuation
13-Nov	BNP		Continuation
16-Nov	BNP	Day long	Pabna
16-Nov	Swechchasebak Dal	Half day	Satkhira
17-Nov	Swechchasebak Dal	Day long	Lakshmipur - Ramgati and Kamalnagar Upazilas
17-Nov	BNP	Day long	Chittagong
23-Nov	BNP	Day long	Pabna
24-Nov	Jamaat	Day long	Chittagong, Noakhali
26-Nov	BNP	Half day	Chittagong
26-Nov	BNP	72-hours	Countrywide aborodh
27-Nov	BNP		Continuation
28-Nov	BNP		Continuation
27-Nov	BNP	Day long	Bogra
27-Nov	BNP	Day long	Sylhet - Biswanath Upazila
27-Nov	BNP	Half day	Rajshahi - Rajshahi City Corporation
28-Nov	BNP	Day long	Sirajganj

28-Nov	Jamaat	Half day	Satkhira
28-Nov	Jamaat	Day long	Jessore
29-Nov	BNP	Day long	Pirojpur - Zianagar Upazila
30-Nov	BNP	131-hours	Countrywide aborodh
1-Dec	BNP		Continuation
2-Dec	BNP		Continuation
3-Dec	BNP		Continuation
4-Dec	BNP		Continuation
5-Dec	BNP		Continuation
			Rajshahi, Sylhet - Companyganj, Jointiapur, Dakshin Surma, and Gowainghat Upazilas; Sirajganj - Ullahpara Upazila; Comilla - Laksam and Monoharganj Upazilas; Chittagong; Cox's Bazaar; Dinajpur
1-Dec	BNP	Day long	
1-Dec	BNP	36-hours	Bogra
			Jhenaidha - Kotchandpur and Maheshpur Upazilas
1-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	
1-Dec	AL	Day long	Jessore - Noapara Upazila
			Naogaon, Gaibandha, Noakhali - Begumganj Upazila, Gazipur - Kaliakaur Upazila, Mymensingh - Bhaluka Upazila, Chittagong - Potia Upazila
2-Dec	BNP	Day long	
2-Dec	BNP	72-hours	Natore
			Naogaon, Satkhira, Jessore - Manirampur Upazila
3-Dec	BNP	Day long	
3-Dec	BNP	Half day	Chittagong
			Sirajganj, Chandpur, Chapai Nawabganj, Sylhet - Biswanath Upazila, Chittagong - Mirsarai, Sitakundu, Sandwip, Haithazari, Fatikchhari, Raozan, and Rangunia Upazilas
4-Dec	BNP	Day long	
4-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Satkhira
5-Dec	BNP	Day long	Feni, Cox's Bazaar
			Sylhet - Dakshin Surma, Chittagong - Haithazari Upazila
5-Dec	BNP	Half day	
7-Dec	BNP	Half day	Chapai Nawabganj

7-Dec	BNP	Day long	Cox's Bazaar, Khulna - Fultola Upazila, Narsingdi
7-Dec	BNP	72-hours	Countrywide aborodh
8-Dec	BNP		Continuation
9-Dec	BNP		Continuation
10-Dec	BNP		Continuation
11-Dec	BNP		Continuation
12-Dec	BNP		Continuation
13-Dec	BNP		Continuation
8-Dec	BNP	Day long	Dhaka, Moulvibazaar, Sylhet, Bogra, Chittagong, Patuakhali, Khagrachari, Munshiganj
			Rajshahi, Joypurhat, Bogra, Naogaon, Natore, Chapai Nawabganj, Pabna, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Narail, Sylhet, Sunamganj (Chhatak and Dewrabazaar Upazilas also had separate calls), Moulvibazaar, Habiganj, Kushtia
9-Dec	BNP	Day long	Habiganj, Kushtia
9-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Countrywide
10-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Countrywide
10-Dec	BNP	Half day	Bagerhat - Fakirhat Upazila
11-Dec	BNP	Day long	Sylhet
11-Dec	BNP	Day long	Jessore, Satkhira
11-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Countrywide
12-Dec	BNP	Day long	Jessore
12-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Countrywide
12-Dec	Jamaat	Half day	Naogaon - Raninagar Upazila
12-Dec	BNP	Half day	Jhenaidah - Kaliganj Upazila
14-Dec	BNP	Day long	Lakshmipur
15-Dec	Hefazat	Day long	Chittagong
15-Dec	Jamaat	Half day	Countrywide
			Sylhet, Habiganj, Moulvibazaar, Sunamganj, Rajshahi (Rajshahi City had a separate, half day call)
15-Dec	Jatiya	Day long	

17-Dec	Jatiya	Half day	Sunamganj
17-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Satkhira
17-Dec	BNP	72-hours	Countrywide aborodh
18-Dec	BNP		Continuation
19-Dec	BNP		Continuation
20-Dec	BNP		Continuation
18-Dec	BNP	Half day	Jessore, Jhikorgacha
19-Dec	Jatiya	Half day	Chittagong
21-Dec	Jatiya	Half day	Khulna
21-Dec	BNP	Half day	Tangail
21-Dec	BNP	83-hours	Countrywide aborodh
22-Dec	BNP		Continuation
23-Dec	BNP		Continuation
24-Dec	BNP		Continuation
23-Dec	BNP	Day long	Chittagong
24-Dec	Jamaat	Day long	Cox's Bazaar Sadar Upazila
25-Dec	BNP	Half day	Noakhali
26-Dec	Jamaat	Half day	Sunamganj
28-Dec	BNP	Day long	Kushtia - Bheramara Upazila
30-Dec	BNP	Half day	Natore - Singra Upazila
31-Dec	BNP	Day long	Rangpur
1-Jan	BNP	Continuous	Countrywide aborodh
1-Jan	Jamaat	Day long	Meherpur
1-Jan	BNP	36-hours	Bogra
2-Jan	BNP	Half day	Chandpur
4-Jan	BNP	48-hours	Countrywide
4-Jan	BNP	48-hours	Chittagong, Sylhet, Bogra, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Comilla, and Bagerhat
4-Jan	BNP	Day long	Jhenaidah, Natore