

Political Deception in Bangladesh

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Preface

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Chapter 1: Understanding Political Deception – Conceptual Foundations

Political deception refers to the deliberate manipulation of information, narratives, symbols, and institutions to mislead citizens for the purpose of acquiring, retaining, or legitimizing power. In the Bangladeshi context, political deception is not merely an episodic practice but a structural phenomenon embedded in party politics, electoral processes, state institutions, and public discourse. This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation of deception, drawing on political ethics, behavioral psychology, and democratic theory, and situates Bangladesh within broader global practices of deceptive governance.

Chapter 2: Historical Roots of Political Deception in Bangladesh

Political deception in Bangladesh has historical continuity, beginning in the colonial period, intensifying during the Pakistan era (1947–1971), and evolving after independence. This chapter examines how broken promises, manipulated narratives of nationalism, and selective memory shaped political legitimacy. It argues that deception became normalized as a political survival strategy during periods of instability, coups, and authoritarian rule.

Chapter 3: Liberation Narrative and the Politics of Selective Memory

The Liberation War of 1971 is central to Bangladesh's political identity, yet it has also been instrumentalized for political deception. Competing parties selectively interpret history to legitimize themselves and delegitimize opponents. This chapter explores how selective memory, historical erasure, and symbolic appropriation of 1971 have been used to deceive citizens, suppress pluralism, and monopolize patriotism.

Chapter 4: Electoral Deception and Democratic Illusions

Elections are the most visible arena of political deception in Bangladesh. This chapter analyzes voter manipulation, controlled participation, electoral engineering, and the use of state machinery to create an illusion of democratic legitimacy. It argues that procedural democracy without substantive fairness becomes a tool of deception, eroding public trust while maintaining a façade of constitutional governance.

Chapter 5: Media, Propaganda, and Manufactured Consent

Media plays a dual role in political deception—both as a watchdog and as an instrument of power. This chapter examines how state influence, corporate interests, self-censorship, and partisan alignment distort public discourse. It highlights the transformation of media from an accountability mechanism into a narrative-manufacturing system that normalizes misinformation and silences dissent.

Chapter 6: Developmentalism as Political Deception

Economic growth, infrastructure projects, and development rhetoric are frequently used as tools of political deception. This chapter critiques the use of selective statistics, exaggerated achievements, and symbolic megaprojects to distract citizens from inequality, governance failures, and institutional decay. Developmental success, when detached from justice and inclusion, becomes a deceptive political narrative.

Chapter 7: Institutional Deception and the Erosion of Rule of Law

Institutions such as the judiciary, bureaucracy, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies are often presented as neutral and independent while functioning under political influence. This chapter explores how institutional deception—appearing lawful while acting politically—undermines constitutionalism, accountability, and citizen confidence in the state.

Chapter 8: Political Deception through Legal and Constitutional Instruments

Legal reforms, constitutional amendments, and emergency regulations are sometimes framed as necessary for stability but used to consolidate power. This chapter examines how legal language and procedural legitimacy are employed deceptively to restrict opposition, curtail civil liberties, and weaken democratic checks and balances under the guise of legality.

Chapter 9: Religion, Identity, and Moral Deception

Religion and identity politics are powerful tools of political mobilization in Bangladesh. This chapter analyzes how religious sentiments, moral symbolism, and identity narratives are manipulated to deceive citizens, polarize society, and justify political actions that contradict ethical and constitutional principles. Moral language

becomes deceptive when divorced from moral practice.

Chapter 10: Opposition Politics and the Cycle of Counter-Deception

Political deception is not confined to ruling parties alone. Opposition movements may also engage in exaggeration, misinformation, and strategic silence. This chapter explores how cycles of deception and counter-deception weaken democratic culture, reduce politics to tactical survival, and deprive citizens of genuine alternatives.

Chapter 11: Youth, Digital Spaces, and Algorithmic Deception

With the rise of social media, political deception has entered digital spaces through misinformation, algorithmic amplification, and emotional manipulation. This chapter examines how youth are simultaneously empowered and exploited in online political engagement, where truth competes with virality and perception often overrides reality.

Chapter 12: Psychological Impact of Political Deception on Society

Prolonged exposure to political deception produces social fatigue, cynicism, and moral disengagement. This chapter analyzes how deception affects citizens' political psychology—leading to apathy, fear, normalization of injustice, and loss of collective trust. A deceived society gradually loses its capacity for ethical resistance.

Chapter 13: Towards Truth, Transparency, and Ethical Politics

The concluding chapter proposes pathways for overcoming political deception in Bangladesh. It emphasizes institutional reform, independent media, civic education, ethical leadership, and moral accountability. Sustainable democracy, the chapter argues, is impossible without a collective commitment to truth, transparency, and principled political conduct.

Conclusion

Glossary

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Democracy does not always collapse through force. Sometimes, it fades quietly—through rituals without choice, laws without justice, and narratives without truth.

Political Deception in Bangladesh is a penetrating analysis of how power is legitimized through illusion rather than accountability. Moving beyond partisan explanations, the book reveals how elections, development, law, media, religion, and digital platforms are systematically used to manufacture consent and normalize untruth.

Combining political theory with Bangladesh's lived realities, this book exposes the moral and psychological costs of deception—and asks a difficult but necessary question: Can democracy survive without truth?

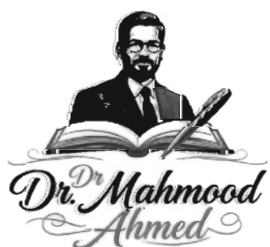
A vital read for scholars, policymakers, journalists, and citizens who refuse to accept deception as normal.



Dr. Mahmood Ahmed is an Assistant Professor at Eastern University Bangladesh (EUB) and a seasoned academic, researcher, and policy analyst with extensive experience in finance, governance, and political economy. He previously served as Director-General of the Islami Bank Training & Research Academy (IBTRA) and has held academic and professional roles at leading institutions in Bangladesh and abroad.

Dr. Ahmed has authored and edited numerous books and research works on Islamic finance, social justice, governance, political ethics, and the impact of digital transformation on society. His interdisciplinary scholarship bridges economics, politics, ethics, and public policy, with a particular focus on institutional accountability and moral leadership.

Known for his critical yet balanced approach, Dr. Ahmed writes for both academic and general audiences, aiming to connect rigorous analysis with real-world relevance. His work consistently challenges normalized injustice and advocates truth, transparency, and ethical responsibility in public life.



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