This may not be a popular outcome for all supporters of military democracy. After all by November 2007, they would have been living one year in a democracy-free country, or rather, Tareq-free. They would have got used to living without elected ministers. Why would they want the usual suspects back?

Those not keen to see the Sheikh in power might therefore prefer another option.

Professor Yunus seems to embody that feeling of something new and fresh, albeit at the tender age of 66 (which is young by Chinese standards). He is looking on from the sidelines, occasionally letting off a broadside against corrupt politicians, and propagating his version of a micro-credited economy thriving via a privately owned port. He is getting bolder (or more brazen) by the day. Apparently, he considers being president as being beneath him. It is rumoured that he will not be satisfied with anything less than prime ministerial power.

Here we come to a dilemma. Lawyers know that justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. Thus, a transition to the "right" democratic regime has to be engineered. If the democratic project is to be revived, there has to a credible vote and electoral theatre.

An interim government can only play for a certain amount of extra time. We are already beyond the stipulated time. There has to be a result in the end. It cannot continue ad-infinitum. The default option is for a ratcheted up national crisis (much worse than the one in January), to be followed by an open military regime, with day to day administration run by technocratic ministers. The difference from the situation today would be that it would be sanctified as a more or less permanent feature, rather than today's temporary (here today, gone tomorrow) façade.

If this is the default scenario, what is the preferred scenario?

We have established that the return of the two ladies is not it. The penny has not yet dropped amongst the older Awami League professional politicians. They still believe that the red carpet is being prepared for them.



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What if a new political party were to appear from nowhere? Imagine if some NGO leaders decided to throw their hats into the ring. With the BNP in terminal decline, would some senior leaders join this new party? Could one envisage some "modern" Awami League leaders signing up too?

A new political party

What if a new political party were to appear from nowhere? Imagine if some NGO leaders decided to throw their hats into the ring. With the BNP in terminal decline, would some senior leaders join this new party? Could one envisage some "modern" Awami League leaders signing up too? That would allow room for some of the Old Left has-beens to offer a progressive gloss.

The ramshackle LDP could be easily renamed (again), or one or two could abandon that ship too. All in the national interest (remember the "rumours of a Third Force and national government" that used to circulate in 2004?).

Islamist politicians would not be welcome. They would be on a sticky wicket, though I would not count them out.

This new party would do well in the media circuit in Dhaka but suffer in the real world of rural Bangladesh. Would the army offer a protective shield against BNP-AL goons? Thousands of their cadres are already being held in custody, and we could expect many more to be threatened.

Do you think the embassies and aid agencies would salivate at the prospect? I am sure discussions are at an advanced stage.

Fanciful? Of course, but then how many of you believed that an ex-World Bank employee backed by the military would be ruling today?

Have we forgotten that the BNP and Jatiyo Party were created by military strongmen, utilizing state resources to attract politicians for hire? A new party would thus only be following the tradition of militarized politics. I wonder what it would be called. Notun . . . ?

For some fearful Awami Leaguers, I must add that nothing is inevitable, but they had better come up with something resembling a strategy. Next time, we can ponder on the fate of the Awami League, a left over from the days of the British Empire and Pakistan.

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