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PARTY POLITICS IN BANGLADESH



Party Politics in Bangladesh

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In this book, the conflicting politics, various issues of democratic consolidation, and political alliance in the context of Bangladesh have been discussed. The discussion here may be of great importance to academicians, politicians, policymakers, and others concerned with promoting responsible politics in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

Dedication

For My Mother

Thank you, ma, for teaching me a lot

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About the Book

Party Politics is a much-discussed topic in Bangladesh at present. The book has been written in front of various problematic issues of Bangladesh politics. This book is presented to the readers in terms of issues related to the problems and prospects of politics based on long-term research. Various levels of existing problems and possibilities of party politics in Bangladesh have been placed in this book. In particular, state-of-the-art analysis of the institutionalization of democracy, defection, conflicting politics, political alliance, and legal bases of elections of Bangladesh is presented to contextualize the multifaceted crises and possibilities of party politics. A course on party politics in Bangladesh is taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in political science departments in public and private universities in Bangladesh. As a specific academic textbook for this course, it is expected to be particularly useful for teachers and students. Politics-conscious citizens and politicians of Bangladesh will also be able to find the solutions to various problems of Bangladeshi politics and the probable solutions from this book.

About the Author

Dr. Md. Sultan Mahmud is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh. Political development and Politics of Bangladesh is his main research field. Professor Mahmud has written important research articles on various aspects of the history and tradition of Bengali and the liberation war of Bangladesh. He achieved BSS (Hons) and MSS from the University of Rajshahi, obtaining First Class First in both degrees. He completed his PhD on Bangladesh's Political Development. Professor Mahmud is the chairman of the Bangladesh Institute of Professional Studies, a research institute. He has served as the Executive Editor of the journal *Development Compilation* from the beginning. Already, 18 issues of the journal have been published under his editorship. He regularly writes columns on various contemporary issues in important national dailies of the country. He has authored more than one thousand articles in international, national, local, and various online news portals and continues writing regularly. The number of articles published in internationally recognized journals is forty-five. He has authored twenty books on Bangladesh politics, the liberation war, the political development of Bangladesh, and international relations. He expanded his fame by participating in numerous important international conferences in different countries of the world funded by the Government of Bangladesh. He is also known as a social worker and political thinker in Bangladesh.

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Preface

Bangladesh's politics is very diverse. The political system exists in the tension of trust and distrust between political parties. Since the post-independence period, the journey of Bangladesh's politics started along the path of realizing the dream of parliamentary democracy. However, this journey has repeatedly stumbled. Although almost four decades have passed since the revival of the parliamentary system in Bangladesh, the question remains whether the democratic system has been institutionalized. According to Article 11 of the Constitution, "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed." The journey started with the dream of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh with the spirit of the constitution. However, due to various situations arising in the country and the weak democratic environment, an unwanted environment has been created in politics. Parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh has faced one crisis after another in the late 1990s. At the root of this failure in establishing parliamentary democracy on a solid foundation was the inability to sustain the nationally important parliamentary institutions efficiently; the central institution of parliamentary democracy, the National Parliament, failed to fulfill its constitutionally specific role. Questions about the Speaker's role as an important guardian in Jatiya Sangsad, boycott of the parliament by the opposition parties, bickering between the government and the opposition parties over the parliamentary elections, and the role of the Election Commission specifically hindered the tradition of parliamentary culture which is identified as a significant obstacle to the institutionalization of democracy in Bangladesh. For good reason, questions arise about the quality of politics in Bangladesh. In particular, the struggle for state power between the opposition parties walking the path of power politics is becoming more visible. Even the question of whether the structural aspect of democracy is being properly followed is also circling our minds. At present, the overall politics of Bangladesh is reflected in the party politics. The time has come to analyze the extent to which grouping, rivalries, and disputes are prevalent within the parties in Bangladesh. If the nature and type of party politics existing in Bangladesh cannot be investigated, it will not be possible to change the quality of politics in any way. The academic study of party politics is essential to restore or maintain constitutionally existing democratic structures. A text on party politics can be found particularly useful in understanding and identifying the areas of failure of the existing parliamentary system in the country and addressing them.

Although Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have been rivals for a long time, the level of rivalry is not the same as before. As the Awami League has been in power for a long time, the position of other opposition political parties has weakened considerably. As the opposition political forces are not in the field, the internal rivalry of the Awami League has

become visible in many cases. Due to rivalry and power standing side by side in politics, the level of conflict, conflict, and conflict within one's party has also increased considerably as strong opponents are gradually weakened. Writing a book on such an in-depth study of party politics in Bangladesh can be quite a challenge. However, this book thoroughly analyzes party politics, considering various challenges. From the theoretical aspects of politics and political parties to the reality of the political system of Bangladesh, a clear picture of the reality of the political system in Bangladesh has been recorded in different chapters in the book 'Party Politics in Bangladesh'.

Party politics has been a critical study at the university level for over a decade. In particular, a course titled 'Party Politics in Bangladesh' is taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in political science departments in universities of Bangladesh. There is no specific textbook for this course. I have taught this course in the classroom for over fourteen years in the Department of Political Science at Rajshahi University. Nevertheless, students' studies need more specific textbooks. As a result, I felt the urge to write a research-based book on party politics suitable for students at every moment. In order to teach the students about party politics properly and to create their field of study, I had thought long ago to write a book titled 'Party Politics in Bangladesh.' Also, many of my respected teachers and colleagues have provided encouragement and inspiration to write this book. Moreover, as my field of research is politics and the political development of Bangladesh, I felt academically motivated enough to write this book. Although several other books have been published before, I have a different liking and feeling for publishing this book. The book is written entirely from a research perspective. I take pride in writing a research-based academic text, specifically on the subject 'Party Politics in Bangladesh.' To improve the quality of politics in Bangladesh, this book on party politics will be useful to readers of all levels, including common and conscious citizens, analysts, researchers, policymakers, politicians, teachers, and students. This book will be useful for those who are interested in exploring the reality of the history of state and politics. As this book will be published in the first edition, there may be some things that I need to be aware of. If there are any existing errors or inconsistencies in the information, I sincerely hope they will be corrected in the next edition. Also, I apologize to the readers for all the mistakes. I am grateful to those who encouraged and inspired me and gave me all their support for the publication of the book 'Party Politics in Bangladesh'.

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Chapter 01

Relationships of Politics, Political Parties, and Public Affairs

Politics, political parties, and public affairs are closely inter-related. At present most of the countries in the world have party systems. Political parties are essential for a country's political system to function effectively. The presence of party system is considered necessary, especially in a modern democratic system. In addition to democratic systems, political parties can also be observed in authoritarian government systems. A political party's main aim and objective is to gain power and run the government legally. In other words, they are playing politics. Politics and public affairs are carried out through political parties. Political parties educate people about politics and play an important role in the success of proper allocation. In Bangladesh, several political parties run for election to gain state power. Generally the presence of sound party system is a healthy situation for a country. Parties give people the choice to make more progressive and practical decisions. Furthermore, it motivates other political parties to do better than their competitors to win elections and lead the country. This is the basic context of party system.¹

Many political parties have emerged to meet the need to establish parties within the democratic governance system recognized by the Constitution of Bangladesh. In this country, all political affairs are carried out exclusively through political parties. Since Bangladesh is a democratic country, people here are free to express their opinions. Currently, Bangladesh has a lot of political parties.²

In this connection, the chapter will discuss politics, the origin of political parties, and the relationship of politics, political parties, and public affairs.

Politics

We often use 'political' or 'centered on politics' to characterize a situation that revolves around a power battle between individuals or groups. The notion implies that politics entails strategic maneuvering and asserting conflicting interests. This concept of competition based on interests or power is particularly relevant to politics, specifically within party politics. Politics can be described as a procedure in which opposing groups make competitive assertions to gather backing and execute their agendas. Nevertheless, examining the intricacies of this rivalry and how it progresses is crucial. Answering these questions will allow us to develop a more detailed and proactive policy stance. What is the nature of politics? A classic answer is that politics decides who gets what, when, and how.³

According to this perspective, politics primarily revolves around resolving conflicts over the allocation of resources. This description may have accurately captured the nature of politics during the post-World War-II period when

progressive taxation and social welfare programs were expanded by a centralized state and a party system divided along traditional left-right ideological lines. However, the idea that politics is primarily concerned with the distribution of resources has been questioned in recent decades. The growing importance of debates centered on values and lifestyles, often called ‘post-ideological’ contestation, indicates that politics is equally if not more, focused on identity and culture than material wealth.⁴ Current political discussions revolve around topics that do not fit neatly into traditional left or right categories, such as the environment, gender and sexual rights, immigration, and security. Political contestation is as much about cultural identity and recognition as it is about allocating material resources.⁵

The “idealist turn” in political research challenges traditional political views. Scholars have demonstrated that politics includes distributive struggles and contestations over how political issues are presented or narrated. Although these two aspects are often linked, different ways of presenting the problem can significantly impact delivery. The critical point is that politics is a battle of ideas. Participants seek to control the narrative by appealing to deeply held values and beliefs rather than relying on objective personal interests. This recognition of the importance of archives is relevant to discussions of “fake news” and the possibility that rival political groups may frame political issues differently.

The second question concerns the political process:

How do these competing demands translate into policy? In multiparty democracies, the obvious answer is to win elections, which allow parties to carry out their programs.

However, this simple explanation needs to be more precise. When it comes to elections, there is often a competitive race in which political parties try to outdo each other by proposing more attractive policies. Voters sometimes think that these policies can be implemented as easily as if they were choosing a product. However, manifesto promises are frequently abandoned or compromised due to limited resources, feasibility, or political opposition. As a result, people become disappointed and lose faith in democratic politics. Political science faces the task of mapping and comprehending the transformations occurring in politics. It is crucial to recognize that political competition involves not only the distribution of resources but also cultural identity and acknowledgment.⁶

Furthermore, it is essential to understand the political disillusionment caused by the disparity between idealized visions and complex realities. By analyzing these models, we can establish institutions capable of revitalizing democratic discourse and restoring trust in politics. While this is challenging in the current political climate, the effort is well worth it and deserves our total commitment.⁷

Defining policy is a significant challenge because there still needs to be a widely accepted definition. Instead, a set of goals is considered valid and

acceptable. Politics is, therefore, a complex concept open to many legitimate interpretations. This makes politics a complex and ambiguous term, so much that even experts need help reaching a consensus on its precise meaning. Politics needs clarity, unlike the natural sciences, which have a standardized technical vocabulary and precise terminology.⁸

The meaning of politics can vary according to time and place. Previously, in the 19th century, business and trade issues were not considered part of politics as they are today. Politics can be defined in many different ways, such as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, group decision-making, the allocation of limited resources, and the use of deception and manipulation.⁹

There is no standard definition of politics. The policy has been defined in many different ways. The different perspectives on politics considered here are:

Politics is the art of governing, politics is the study of public affairs, politics is the study of conflict resolution, and politics is the study of rights force.¹⁰

David Easton states, “Politics is the authoritative allocation of worth and values for a society.”¹¹

Otto Von Bismarck opined, “The capacity of always chosen at each instant, in constantly changing situations, the least harmful, the most useful.”¹²

Joyce Mitchell said, “Politics is collective decision making or the making of public policies for an entire society.”¹³

Bernard Crick said, “A distinctive form of rule where people act together through institutionalized procedure to resolve differences.”¹⁴

Adrian Leftwich said, “Comprises all the activities of cooperation negotiation and conflict within and between societies.”¹⁵

Harold Laswell said, “Who gets what, when, and how.”¹⁶

Finally, politics means collective efforts for public welfare. Those involved in politics should have an authoritative sense and aspiration about it.

Political Party

In Bangladesh, several political parties run for election to gain power politics. The presence of multi-party system is a healthy situation for the country. Parties give people the choice to make more progressive and practical decisions. Furthermore, it motivates other political parties to do better than their competitors to win elections and lead the country. This is the basic context of political parties. But we have to know, what is political party?

A political party is a group of people. These people come together to contest elections to hold power in the government. It is a way to mobilize voters to support standard interests, concerns, and goals. The primary role of the political party is to fix the political agenda and policies. So, each party tries to persuade people by claiming their policies are better than those of other parties. From a broader perspective, a political party is a means via which the people can speak

to the government and have a say in the governance of any country. So, every political party must have three key components: Leaders, Active Members, and Followers.

One of the notable developments of modern democratic government is the rise of political parties, without which democracy cannot work. Gilchrist said, “A political party is an organized group of people with roughly similar political aims and opinions.”¹⁷

It is a group of people who share the same ideas about how the country should be governed.

Political parties have been compared to the tide of the ocean. Parties considered the link between the government and the people. The political party is called the unifying rope; without a party system, the state has no elasticity and no genuine self-determination. Bryce rightly said, “The necessity of political party is undeniable, and that existence is essential in every sovereign state.”¹⁸

Gettle defined a political party as “A group of citizens more or less organized who act as a political unit and use of their voting power aim to control the government and carry out their general policy.”¹⁹

MacIver said, “A political party is an association organized in support of some principles or policy which by constitutional means it endeavors to make the determinant of the government.”²⁰

Edmund Burke said, “A body of man united to promote by their joint endeavors the public interests upon some principles on which they are all agreed.”²¹

Leacock said- “By a political party, we mean a more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit.”²²

From these definitions, we conclude that in a political party, there are some features-

- (a) The people should be organized;
- (b) They should be similar in principles;
- (c) The aim should be to attain political power; and
- (d) Peaceful means for achieving political power.

Origin of Political Party

The origins of political parties have a variety of sources. The influence of religion on politics is widespread. To safeguard their followers' interests is the goal. Organizations like the Muslim League, Akhil Dal, the Hindu Mahasabha, etc., were created on this foundation.

Economic factors serve as the second originator of political parties. As an illustration, there are several social classes, including capitalist, laborer, business, and service. While the Communist and Socialist parties defend the interests of labor and workers, Conservative parties defend the interests of

capitalists.

The third element that affects the formation of political parties is race. For instance, there is a union for “All India Schedule Castes” in India. In addition, the Nazi Party was established in Germany as a result.

Relationships of Politics, Political Parties, and Public Affairs

Politics creates policies that affect our lives, which political parties implement. Politics controls the government, and political parties run the government. Without collective consciousness, politics cannot be done. The profound relationship between politics and public affairs is described below.

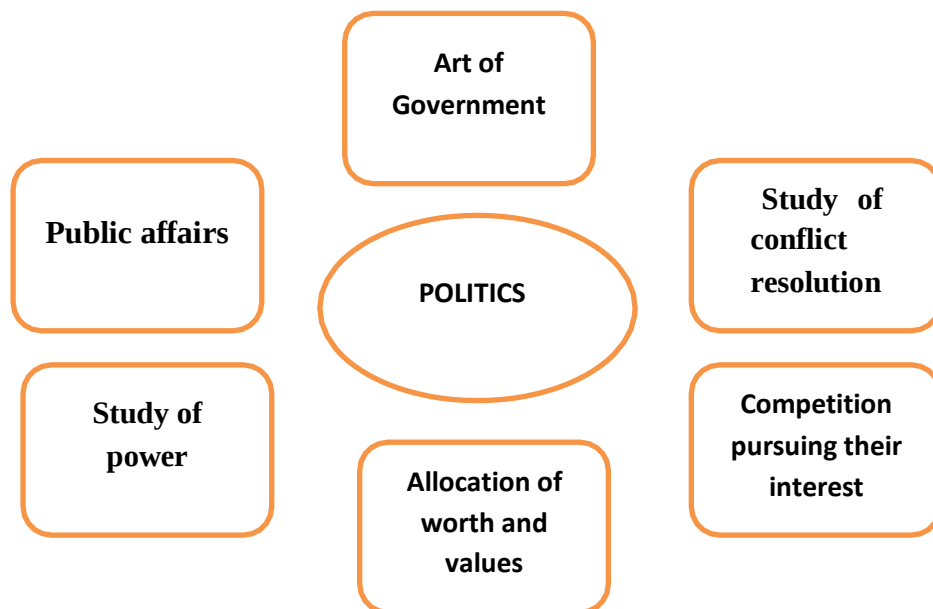


Figure- 01: Politics as Public Affairs

The Rights of People

Politics is the foundation of human rights, morality, and ethics. Without politics, people would not have clear standards or understanding of what they are entitled to as citizens of a country or society, leading to severe human rights violations. When legal documents and political practices regulate human rights, people may become worried about their rights within the political and social geography.²³

Daily Life Activities

Politics permeates every aspect of earthly life. While governments and political entities hold the power to enact laws and customs that govern our daily lives. People must understand that politics is the central figure in determining political processes, and society. Knowing this can help people choose the appropriate action when problems arise.

Choice of People

Voting plays an essential part in politics, as citizens hold the power to change the organizational structure of governments and the direction society moves towards. To understand what benefits and disadvantages each political party brings to their crusade, citizens have to do individual exploration and come informed of introductory political processes before casting their ballot.²⁴

Voice of People

Politics provides a direct platform for people to state their societal enterprises and precedence. While some citizens may be happy with the political order of a society, some may feel marginalized and disadvantaged in the community and may begin to protest for lesser and radical change. This capability to state opinions freely is a pivotal aspect of politics and highlights the power of politics in marshaling people to produce meaningful change.²⁵

Governing a Society

Political institutions hold the loftiest position of licit power when governing a society. As governments are responsible for laying the roots for all political, profitable, and social conditioning, they can manage culture in a way that suits an organization's political and social environment. Constitutions of a country are frequently supposed to be the founding documents of a country's political geography, as similar legal documents govern the conditioning of governmental institutions and keep their power in check.²⁶

Interest of the Community

Although politics is predicated on tradition and orthodox study, politics is an ever-changing reality that adapts to different political, artistic, and profitable surroundings. As politics acts as a societal key to unlocking new ideas and change for a society, it is pivotal for policymakers and governments to acclimatize to the political geography for meaningful and effective change that serves the stylish interests of the community.²⁷

Distribution of Power

Politics is frequently cited as an encompassing medium that controls the people and impacts the issues of events. The distribution and the extent of political power are commonly determined by governments and political institutions and equip certain groups of people to control a community's programs, societies, and customs. Governments have a complex system of rules that constrain this power to ensure that political power is not abused and used for the sole interest of one actor.²⁸

A Sense of Identity

As politics covers every aspect of human life, humans are likely to reverberate

with specific political issues more than others. Fostering a sense of identity with a particular political issue creates a lesser sense of communal responsibility and engagement, which in turn helps to state underrepresented groups within society. This sense of identity also makes communities where people can express their opinions and take their ideas of what governments should do to accommodate their citizens.²⁹

Decision Making

Politics tells mortal stations and actions as people are constantly interacting with politics on a daily base. The way a government distributes finances or deals with proposed laws affects the day-to-day lives of people, which eventually influences the stations and conduct of people. Accordingly, politics holds the power to change public sentiment and stations toward political marvels, which must be considered during political decision-making.³⁰

Finally, in light of the mentioned points, politics, political parties, and public affairs are closely connected. All the political activities and the entire public affair that is related to politics are implemented by political parties.

Conclusion

A political system cannot exist without the presence of a political party. This is evident in the functions performed by political parties through politics. If there are no political parties, each candidate in the election will be independent. Individual candidates need to be effective in promising citizens any significant political change. In such a situation, no one will be responsible for running the country. In the long run, only representative democracy can survive. Political parties are bodies that bring together different views on different issues and present them to the government. Political parties perform an important task in government by using the mechanism of politics. They bring people together to take control of the government, develop policies that favor their interests or the groups that support them, and organize and persuade voters to elect their candidates into positions. Although deeply involved in government activities at all levels, political parties do not constitute the government themselves, and the constitution does not mention them.

The essential objective of politics and political parties is to present candidates for public office and to have as many of them elected as possible who are able to complete all of public affairs successfully. Once elected, these officials strive to achieve their party's goals through legislation and programmatic initiatives. Political parties want to involve as many people as possible, so that public welfare is organized properly. Most members are passive and only vote for their party's candidates during election. Some become more active and work as party officials or volunteers to persuade people to vote. The most ambitious members may decide to run for office themselves.

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Chapter 02

Factionalism and Conflicts among Political Parties and Crises of Democratic Consolidation in Bangladesh

Bangladesh was formerly a part of the Indian subcontinent. After two hundred years (200) of control, they could dislodge the British via agitation and fight, but for the following 24 years, West Pakistan once more exploited them.¹ East Pakistan also struggled to eliminate this exploitation, ending in a bloody war. Although many contributed to the independence of Bangladesh, the central role was played by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party, Awami League. Before 1955, its name was Awami Muslim League. This party was the main party of the United Front in the provincial elections 1954. Its electoral symbol was the boat. The opposite party was the Muslim League. Its electoral symbol was the hurricane. The United Front was victorious against the Muslim League. Later, in the 1970 national elections, the Awami League won with the boat symbol. So, generally, the Awami League is in state power after independence. Bangladesh's politics are very diverse. The political system exists because of the tension between political parties and between trust and distrust. Since the post-independence period, Bangladesh's political journey has begun on the path to realizing the dream of parliamentary democracy.² However, this trip stumbles many times. Although nearly four decades have passed since the revival of the parliamentary system in Bangladesh, the question remains whether the democratic system has been institutionalized. According to Article 11 of the Constitution: "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured".³ The journey began with the dream of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh in the spirit of the constitution. However, due to the different situation in the country and the weak democratic environment, an undesirable political environment was created.⁴ In this chapter, I have analyzed the factional conflict within the political parties of Bangladesh and its implications.

Factionalism

Factionalism refers to arguments or disputes between two or more subgroups within a larger group. It is a condition in which a group, organization, government, etc., is divided into two or more subgroups with different and often opposing views or interests. Factions are often considered part of the political pathology. When the modern political party was born, when it formed industry representatives and competed for elections, factions and parties were discriminated against. Political parties exist within the party's leadership, an organizational necessity.⁵

Furthermore, for party leaders, factionalism is a staggering problem. It has occurred because of critical factors such as leadership, patronage, finance, ideology, personal conflict, personal interest, etc. All these things help to create an intra-party conflict. Sometimes, most common voters encourage leaders to form a new political party. Factionalism leads to political instability. The faction arises for the power of division details of application rather than on principles.⁶

Reasons behind Factionalism

i) Conflict of Self-interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests. Financial or otherwise, and serving one interest could involve working against another. Typically, this relates to the situation in which the personal interest of an individual or organization might adversely affect a duty owed to make decisions for the benefit of a third party.⁷

ii) Ideological Conflict

Ideological and factional conflict arose among the political parties in Bangladesh, and at one point, the Party broke up. Almost all the political parties in Bangladesh are in this problem today plagued ideological conflict exists in all the right-wing, middle-wing, and left-wing parties here.⁸

iii) Weak Leadership

Weak leadership is one of the most vital reasons for Factionalism in Bangladesh. We know that Factionalism also arises due to leadership among different political parties. Weak leadership is mainly responsible for this. When the leaders show incompetence in solving the overall problems in the group, fail to solve the disagreement, or fail to treat everyone equally.⁹ Then, different processes are created, and a part comes out of the leading organization and forms a new group under the leadership of another leader.¹⁰

iv) Nepotism

Nepotism is an advantage, privilege, or position granted to relatives and friends in an occupation or field. These friends may include but are not limited to business, politics, religion, etc. We know that nepotism is a big problem in Bangladesh politics. For the example, we can see that the leader's son became a leader despite his lack of qualifications.¹¹

v) Personal Gain

Person gain means a benefit or advantage related to a particular person rather than business, politics, group, or organization. Personal gain means a benefit to a person's or immediate family members' personal or financial interests.¹²

vi) Corruption in the Party System

Corruption is rampant in Bangladesh in almost every sphere of life. Corruption has been a continuing problem. According to all major-ranking institutions, Bangladesh routinely finds itself among the most corrupt countries in the world party corruption can especially be seen as a problem in newly democratized and developing countries where political and economic institutions still need to be fixed. The redistribution of public assets, which is a necessary part of democratic transition, is often disturbed by corruption.¹³

vii) Greed for Leadership

Greedy leadership creates internal party factionalism. If most leaders are coveted for positions and consider themselves the most qualified to receive various responsibilities, then factions arise within. The team on the question, most of the parties in our country are leader-based and engaged in faction fights to make their preferred panel win.¹⁴

Effects of Factionalism

Factionalism and Conflicts are gradually increasing in all areas, from national politics to their organizations in Bangladesh. The consequences of factionalism are very detrimental to our country. Some of the effects of factionalism are given below:

- i) Factionalism increases suspicion and mistrust in the same Party and creates blame for each other

The leaders and workers of the Party are blaming each other. The last 11th election could not bring the opportunity to get out of the ruined state it was in organizationally while carrying out the program to resist the election on January 5, 2014. BNP's dream of achieving the government's demands by putting pressure on the government through agitation and struggles has yet to be discovered.¹⁵

- ii) Factionalism turns into violence

Inter-political conflicts turn into violence; there will be political disagreements, disputes, and conflicts. Conflict is inevitable even where the nature of politics is regarded, and there is consensus on fundamental issues. However, it runs into violence.¹⁶

- iii) Factionalism instigates some political, and they make political fields unstable

Factionalism can affect the stability and institutionalization of parties and party systems and impact the efficiency and legitimacy of political parties and political systems. Factionalism has only received scant attention in the comparative literature on political parties.¹⁷

iv) Political Involvement in Social Clash

Disputes and conflicts between the parties in the politics of Bangladesh are becoming more common daily. The war crimes trial and the 10th National Assembly elections took shape in this terrible violence, and from 2013 to January 2014, more than five hundred people lost their lives. After that, in 2015, there also were many casualties due to violence, including petrol bombs and hacks. Local government elections have also seen many lives lost, injured, and property damaged in the past ten years, almost all due to infighting within the ruling party.¹⁸

v) A politician who is in power but always feels hesitation

Poverty among the people of Bangladesh also contributes to the factional conflict among the political parties in Bangladesh. The poor people of this country rush towards it when they get any financial opportunity to leave their party and join other parties for financial benefits. As a result, conflicts with the Party became inevitable.

vi) It significantly hampers local development

Factionalism hampers local development. It creates conflicts with their parties, and they are always busy winning their self-interest, so they cannot walk any local development, and for these reasons, local development needs to be improved.

Finally, intra-party and inter-party, suppressed and visible disputes, conflicts, hatred, and violence within the ruling party continuously turn our society into a violent township. Our weak and dysfunctional institutions cannot systematically resolve their conflicts, which have created an unstable situation for the future, and such an unstable situation is being taken advantage of by a self-interested group that wants to turn Bangladesh into a religiously radical state.

Permanent reasons for Conflicts and Factionalism in Bangladesh Politics

Factionalism and instability remain inevitable in Bangladesh's political landscape. The main reason is that no one has the mentality of giving up. Taking people hostage in the name of public service has become the primary goal of current policy. It is impossible to escape factionalism without changing this state of mind. In the interest of protecting and developing the country, the mentality of giving in to all politicians can be observed in very few cases. Democratic politics aims to ensure public welfare. However, in reality, public welfare remains elusive. Sociologists, political scientists, and historians try to determine the causes of political unrest, conflict, and factionalism in different countries. These are brief described.

i) Different Political Ideologies

Different political parties have different political ideologies. The ideological

differences between the political parties in Bangladesh are deep and varied. Some are secular, and some are Islamist. However, some are extreme Islamist, and others are left-wing/ communist. Ideological diversity could have contributed to political parties' development and organizational strength. However, ideological divisions between political parties on a number of important issues, institutions, and state policies have created fierce opposition and conflicts. There was no consensus among political parties about the Liberation War of 1971. Jamaat did not consider the liberation war as a freedom war. For them, it is a civil war between India and Pakistan. They cooperated with the professional forces to protect Pakistan.¹⁹

ii) Personal ambition and lust for power

Ambition, restlessness, greed, power-hungry, and even unseemly or unstable behavior of individuals or groups can create permanent political conflicts. In the latter part of the 20th century, democracy failed in many less-developed countries because of the 'value constraints' of political leaders and populations. The personal relationship between political leaders in Bangladesh could be better. Their 'power-centered' and 'competition to power at any cost' is giving rise to political conflicts. The top leaders of the two main parties in Bangladesh even no talk to each other.²⁰ Their personal ego and personality clash is one of the reasons for the deteriorating relationship between the two parties. The top leaders will refrain from discussing the country's political, national, regional, or international issues.

iii) Behavior and geographic differences

The behavior of a population at this time acts as the governing force of their politics. Many scholars think that the main reason for conflict in Bangladesh is the nature of the country and river flow. An essential feature of Bangladesh's nature and society is that it is divided into factions. Beverly mentioned that the villages of Bengal are scattered in various ways. Social life here is highly individualistic. Access to resources is unequal in rural Bangladesh. Faction and conflict arise from this inequality.²¹

iv) Competition for resources

As a developing country, Bangladesh always had a scarcity of resources. The scarcity of resources intensifies the competition for resources. Political power helps establish control over resources. In theory, political activist, and leaders use political power to serve the people. But, political power in Bangladesh is a means of establishing control over the resources. Since political power ensures access to and control over acquiring resources, no party wants to lose power. This mentality is a life-and-death struggle for power among political party leaders and workers.²²

v) Disagreements over strategies or tactics

Bangladesh has a multi-party political system, and these parties have different strategies and tactics. Moreover, these differences lead to disagreements between the political parties. Different opinions on how to achieve a common goal can lead to the formation of factions.²³

vi) Religious political parties

The most popular form of government in the world today is democracy. However, every state has some religion-based political party who has the primary purpose of introducing religious discipline within the state by going into a state power in one way or another. They use the religious emotions and feelings of the people to carry out all kinds of political activities with the plan to get the state's power. Besides, they gather workers by promoting happiness and peace in the worldly life and life after death. The movement of these political parties becomes more violent. They think that through this violence, they can use religious emotions and sentiments to create political conflict to sit in the state's power.²⁴

vii) Political and Leadership Conflict

There are differences of opinion among political parties about the leadership of the War of Independence. For most parties, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the father of the nation; he is the original and undisputed leader of the independence movement. But, according to BNP and Jamaat, Ziaur Rahman is the prominent leader of the liberation war.²⁵ According to them, Ziaur Rahman declared independence and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman surrendered to the Pakistani military on March 25, 1971 "to resolve the crisis through dialogue."²⁶ The Jamaat was a staunch critic of Bangabandhu before the war of independence. Jamaat branded Bangabandhu as a 'separatist' when Awami League declared 6 points program in 1966.²⁷ Jamaat and other right-wing parties and groups had a negative attitude towards Bangabandhu's leadership, and his image as the father of the nation is a major cause of political division in the country.²⁸

viii) Disagreement over state principles

On various issues, through long-term struggle and independence war, there was disunity on state principles. This is reflected in the Constitution by inserting the four principles of Nationalism, Democracy, Secularism, and Socialism. But, the Fifth and Eighth Amendments to the Constitution changed the principle of statehood and the basic structure of the Constitution. The changes made in the Constitution by the Fifth Amendment are: (1) adding 'Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim' to the preamble at the beginning of the Constitution, (2) removing one of the state principles 'secularism' and replacing it with the words 'complete trust in Almighty Allah'. Islam has been added as a state religion through the

Eighth Amendment of the constitution. Although the Fifth and Eighth Amendments to the constitution were later essentially repealed, these changes created new debates about fundamental principles of the state and the relationship of religion to the state. Consensus on state principles needs to be made among the political parties of Bangladesh.²⁹

ix) Yellow Journalism

The state's general public gets the news and information on political activities through the mass media. In Bangladesh, grassroots activists get information about the programs of any political party, the formation of policy-making committees, etc., through the mass media. As a result, any movement spreads from one end of the country to the other quickly. Even then, political tensions within the state become extreme as many media exaggerate and propagate some trivial political events. In the context of Bangladesh, almost every journalist supports some political party in one way or another. That is why; journalists do such things to strengthen their place in the party. As a result, political movements around trivial causes turn violent. And it slowly turned into a political conflict which is one of the causes of political conflict and violence.³⁰

x) Ideological and trust conflict of the Liberation War

What will be the ideological basis of the liberation war and the implementation of the spirit of the liberation war of the Bangladesh? The country's politics are deeply divided on the question. Bangladesh became a synergistic society in 1971, where people of different religions, views, and paths lived historically. The society here is affluent in liberal, democratic, and humanitarian spirit; the goal of independence is to establish a state that will develop Bangladesh in the direction of non-communalism, liberality, democracy, humanity, and syncretism. However, after the political change in 1975, there was a fundamental change in the spirit and ideology of the Bangladesh. The country was taken back to communal and authoritarian lines from the spirit of the independence war. The side accused and punished for war crimes and perverts of liberation war are counter-attacking to resist this ideological and spiritual awakening of Bangladesh. Attempts are being made to block Bangladesh's revival in the spirit of liberation war through this attack. Therefore, the conflict known and generally explained as 'power politics' has this ideological and religious conflict at its core in the spirit of the liberation war.³¹

xi) Absence of Civil Society

Civil society is one of the most essential elements of political ideology and socialization of every state. So, if a state does not have a genuine civil society or cannot play a fundamental role, then that state can never reach the right political goals. Due to the absence of proper activities of civil society, there is no proper political practice within the state, so there is always conflict between political

parties on various issues which eventually turned into political conflict and violence. These are some of the common causes of factionalism, but many other factors can contribute to the formation of factions. Therefore, to keep the state free from political conflicts and violence, the state must keep an eye on these factors so that they do not occur.³²

Crises of Democratic Consolidation among Political Parties in Bangladesh

i) Awami League Regime (1971-75)

After a successful liberation war on December 16, 1971, independent Bangladesh was born. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to the country on January 10, 1972, after being released from captivity in Pakistan. The next day, as President, a parliamentary system of government was introduced in place of the President-ruled system, and he became the country's Prime Minister. The Awami League government had to face enormous challenges while managing the new country of Bangladesh. National Awami Party (NAP-Mozaffar) and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB-Mani Singh) assured the Awami League government to deal with these problems. However, left-wing political parties quickly formed factions due to internal conflicts. All these factions left started opposing the Awami League. In this situation, the known ultra-leftist parties in the country, such as the National Socialist Party (JASAD), the Communist Party of Bengal (BCP), the Proletarian Party of Bengal, the Communist and Leninist parties, refer to the independence struggle of Bangladesh as an unfinished revolution for the country. It declares a continuous struggle to subdue the power of the ruling bourgeoisie through struggle.³³

On the other hand, religious parties like the Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, Nezam-e-Islami, etc., considered Pakistan as the motherland of the muslim people in the Indian subcontinent and actively supported the Pakistani rulers during the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971. After independence, Islamic right-wing parties were banned on the basis of constitutional ground. Provisions are made in the Constitution to prevent any religious organization with political objectives. General Zia came to power after the political change 1975 through a counter-military coup.³⁴

ii) Regime of Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981)

After Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed on August 15, 1975, the politics of Bangladesh began to change rapidly. General Ziaur Rahman came to power on November 7, 1975, through a military coup, counter-coup, etc. In this coup of November 7, Army and Revolutionary Soldiers Organization played a key role. On 8 and 9 November 1975, the Revolutionary Army Corps revolted in various cantonments and killed many officers during the class struggle. Ziaur Rahman tactfully formed the Nationalist Front. This front later formed a single

political party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).³⁵ Jasad leaders demanded the immediate withdrawal of martial law and power to an elected democratic government. After the second parliamentary elections in 1979, Zia talked about the necessity of opposition parties for parliamentary democracy. However, he made no arrangements to establish effective control of opposition parties in Parliament. In this regard, it is mentioned that the parliament session should be convened for up to seven months after the 1979 budget session. In addition to the anti-government movement during Zia's regime, there was a trend of internal strife and party fragmentation among the opposition parties.³⁶

iii) Regime of Ershad (1982-1990)

On March 24, 1982, after taking the power Lt. General Ershad decided to form a simultaneous movement to overthrow the military and establish a democratic government. Ershad completed the upazila elections on 16 and 20 May after gathering public support through the plebiscite on March 21, 1985. Although the 15 and 7-party alliance took a stand against the upazila elections, many candidates of several parties participating in the Alliance contested the elections. Especially since the candidates of Awami League, BNP, BAKSAL, Jasad, NAP (Mozaffar), and the Workers Party contested the election, the burden of boycotting the election by the two alliances became a farce. However, the most complicated situation arose around the third parliamentary election (1986). When the 15-party Alliance and Jamaat-e-Islami participated in the elections, and the relationship between the two alliances deteriorated in the anti-government movement. In 1987, a bill called the Zilla Parishad Bill was passed in Parliament, providing for the representation of the armed forces in the Zilla Parishad. In protest of this bill, the 8-party alliance members led by the Awami League left the Parliament and came down to the streets. As a result, the anti-Ershad movement gained new momentum and brought the main opposition alliances and parties back into a united movement. On December 6, 1987, when the government dissolved the Parliament and announced new elections, the agitating alliances decided to boycott the elections. Despite this, the government held elections. After the 1988 elections, the intensity of the anti-government movement decreased. Meanwhile, political alliances followed the go-it-alone policy. In 1990, when Ershad announced his candidacy for the presidential election, the opposition political parties were upset, and again, there was a trend of unity among them. At that time, continuous hartals, strikes, demonstrations, etc., were held across the country on the initiative of the student alliance and three alliances. A compromise was established between the opposing political parties, and Ershad fell in their massive movement.³⁷

iv) BNP Regime (1991-1996)

In the 1991 Fifth parliament election, the 8-party Alliance of Awami League had disagreements and splits between the alliances on the question of candidate

nomination, and the 7-party Alliance led by BNP participated in the election. Differences arose between the two coalitions over the system of government, and later, consensus was established, and a parliamentary system of government was introduced. After the formation of the BNP government in 1991, the relationship between the political parties inside and outside the Parliament deteriorated considerably. Most bills introduced in the fifth parliament were passed without adequate discussion and debate. However, the Constitution's 11th and 12th Amendment Bills had the governments and opposition parties' full support. In other bills, the ruling party rejected most opposition proposals without a vote. As a result, the tendency of opposition party members to boycott Parliament increased. In the first 13 sessions of the Fifth Parliament, the opposition parties walked out 76 times.³⁸

On the other hand, the relations between Awami League and other parties deteriorated with BNP outside the parliament. Corruption and vote rigging by the ruling party in various by-elections worsened the relationship. During the mass movement in 1996, the BNP held a one-sided election on February 15, 1996, despite the promise of a three-term caretaker government in the framework of three alliances.³⁹

v) Awami League Regime (1996-2001)

In December 1995, Khaleda Zia dissolved the Parliament. She announced the date of the next parliamentary election under her government, preventing other political parties, including the Awami League, from participating. A fierce conflict arose between the two parties when the BNP formed the government through the February 15, 1996 elections. Finally, in the only session of the Parliament formed in 1996, the government was forced to establish a non-partisan caretaker government based on the constitutional amendment. Parliament dissolved again, and the government resigned. Chief Justice Habibur Rahman took charge as the chief advisor of the caretaker government and was able to hold the parliamentary elections smoothly within 90 days. Awami League formed the government based on a majority in the elections. Awami League has to face challenges in achieving political development. From the beginning of the seventh Parliament, BNP repeatedly boycotted the parliament sessions and started agitations. Since the formation of the government, the conflict and mistrust between the government and the opposition parties have been increasing. Political institutions still need to play a significant role in their function.⁴⁰

vi) BNP-led four-party alliance regime (2001-2006)

On October 1, 2001, the BNP, under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, won the parliamentary elections under the caretaker government and formed the government. The non-partisan caretaker government in Bangladesh was born mainly in the face of solid agitation by the opposition parties, given the demand

for free and fair general elections. After the 2001 elections, the BNP-Jamaat (four-parties) alliance carried out brutal atrocities nationwide. After the BNP-Jamaat came to power in October this year, the country's main opposition party, the Awami League, started to persecute the minority community in a well-planned manner. The BNP has faced widespread criticism due to its Alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami, the anti-independence party of Bangladesh, since the coalition government. In 2001, war criminal Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid was appointed as the social welfare minister of this country. On May 22, 2003, war criminal Matiur Rahman Nizami was also appointed as the Industry Minister by the coalition government. However, for most of 2003 and 2004, the coalition government was preoccupied with suppressing the overthrow of the main opposition party and its allies. The anti-government movement gained momentum, especially after heinous incidents like the grenade attack on the Awami League rally on August 21, 2004, shook the world's conscience. The level of disappearances and murders was alarming. The famous leaders of the Awami League were on this murder list. BNP-Jamaat started farce in the name of the trial of political murder. And the militants created a tangible panic through bomb attacks one after another during the BNP-Jamaat government. On August 17, 2005, 63 districts were bombed simultaneously across the country. Awami League MP Suranjit Sengupta was bombed in a public meeting in Sunamganj. In this way, the government party continues to persecute the opposition party, and the opposition party continues to try to overthrow the government vigorously.⁴¹

vii) Fakhruddin's Caretaker Government (2006-2007)

After the end of the BNP government's term in October 2006, there was widespread disagreement over the formation of a caretaker government, and violence broke out in various parts of the country, including the capital Dhaka. January 22, 2007, was fixed the date as the ninth parliament Election. However, doubts persisted over holding free elections, and political violence and conflict spread across the country amid the failure of reform dialogue between the two opposing political parties. In the circumstances that arose, the President declared a state of emergency on January 11, 2007, and the election was postponed. The President stepped down as Chief Adviser, and a caretaker government was again formed under the leadership of Fakhruddin Ahmed. This government announced the roadmap for the election by December 2008 and carried out various reforms, including electoral reforms. Fakhruddin Ahmed's caretaker government served until the grand coalition under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina assumed power on December 29, 2008.⁴²

viii) Awami League (Grand) Alliances (2009-14)

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina formed her second term government on January 6, 2009, with 23 (twenty three) full ministers and 8 (eight) state

ministers, a week after the eighth national parliament election held on December 29, 2008, under the military-backed caretaker government. Thirty-eight registered parties participated in the 2008 elections. However, the main competition is between Awami League and BNP. In 2008, during the military-backed caretaker government, the Secretary General of the Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, along with several others, challenged the party's registration in the Election Commission in the High Court, alleging that the Constitution of Jamaat-e-Islami, a religious sectarian organization, violated the Constitution of Bangladesh, and created discrimination between men and women in the Constitution, spread communalism among the people, etc. Because of filing the writ petition after a lengthy hearing, on August 1, 2013, a three-member bench of His Highness High Court announced the cancellation of Jamaat-e-Islami's registration in the Election Commission. BNP-Jamaat alliance was the main opposition party to the government at that time. However, within a few days, they started boycotting the Parliament on various pretexts. As a result of Awami League's political strategy at this time, BNP became increasingly weak in internal and global reality. Despite decades of political tradition, they constantly lose the fight to sustain their existence. The BNP-Jamaat alliance needed to make the research and analytical decisions needed to frame the anti-government movement. BNP became organizationally weak. Since then, the Awami League's progress and the BNP's backwardness can be seen. Due to this, the people could not be involved in various controversial issues against the government. Hefazat-e-Islam's May 5 rally was a bone of contention for the BNP alliance.⁴³

ix) Regime of Awami League (2014-2024)

The 10th parliamentary election on January 5, 2014, pitted the ruling party, Awami League, and its allies against the BNP-Jamaat-led Alliance. As per the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution (July 3, 2011), the provision of a non-partisan caretaker government has been abolished. The election is supposed to be held with the ruling government as per the constitutional norms. As BNP candidates won 5 city elections in the country before this election, it was assumed that the BNP- Jamaat alliance under the Awami League government would finally agree. However, this hope still needs to be fulfilled. They remain adamant in their earlier election demands under a non-partisan caretaker government. No efforts by the Secretary General of the United Nations, himself and earlier by his Special Envoy Oscar Fernandez Taranco, have been able to thaw the ice. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina moved away from her usual position to bring the main opposition party, BNP, to the elections and took various initiatives. She even offered BNP to join the election government's cabinet and give five crucial ministries, including Home Affairs.

However, the BNP-Jamaat did not agree to any option other than the Prime Minister's resignation. However, Sheikh Hasina's government chose the

election route. Elections were held on January 5, 2014. BNP- Jamaat not only boycotted this election but also announced to resist it. Apart from the Awami League, the Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Party (Manju), Bangladesh Workers Party, Jasad (INU), Bangladesh Tariqat Federation, Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF) and some independent candidates participated in it. In 2018, the Dhaka District Judge Court found Begum Khaleda Zia guilty and sentenced her to 5 years of rigorous imprisonment. BNP's politics took another step back.

On the other hand, as Tarique Rahman stayed in London, the indecision in BNP politics reached extreme levels. Now, the situation of the BNP has become such that it is time to think about whether the BNP will be able to move out of this situation and whether the BNP will be like its predecessor, Nap (Bhasani) or the Muslim League. The 11th parliamentary elections were held on December 30, 2018, with the participation of all registered political parties. BNP and the 20-party Alliance were defeated in the election. Awami League's primary political opponent, BNP, and the party-led Jatiya Oikya Front rejected the election results. Annulment of election and demand for re-election and also announced to build a movement. However, no movement program was observed on their part later. Despite rejecting the election results, out of the eight members of Parliament elected by BNP and Gano Forum from this Alliance, all but one (Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir) took oath and joined the Parliament. There has also been an internal crisis in the BNP-led 20-party Alliance and Jatiya Oikya Front. The 'partner parties' from the 20 parties are leaving. Besides, the Jatiya Oikya Front is also in the face of disintegration. Bangladesh Jatiya Party-BJP, led by Andalib Rahman Partha, has left the 20-party Alliance led by BNP. Due to differences between the BNP Oikya Front, the BJP formally withdrew from the 20-party Alliance on May 6, 2019. Before the 11th parliamentary elections, Bangladesh NAP and NDP left the 20 parties. There is also a difference of opinion between the BNP and the National United Front. Again, the top leader of Oikyafront Kamal Hossain's party-Ganoforum also disagrees with the leaders.⁴⁴ So, it can be said that the relationship between the political parties has had ups and downs at different stages of the establishment of democracy in Bangladesh. Sometimes, relations have deteriorated due to election-centered violence, political clashes, provocative political activities, etc., and sometimes, the lack of mutual tolerance, trust, and confidence in democracy has been constantly visible in restoring democracy which has hindered the development of relations between political parties and the establishment of real democracy. Therefore, to develop relations between political parties and establish real democracy, it has become necessary to establish pure democratic ideals, a fair, accessible, and impartial system, political dialogue, mutual tolerance and understanding, mutual trust and faith, effective national parliament, etc. However, I believe that the political parties will create a suitable environment for the people to taste real democracy by developing their mutual relations.⁴⁵ Bangladesh's democratic crisis reached a peak during Sheikh Hasina's fourth

straight term in 2024, driven by disputed reintroduction of the 30% quota system for descendants of independence fighters, authoritarian rule, and irregularities in the election process. Driven by disgruntled young people who were experiencing inequality and unemployment, the quota protests turned into a national anti-Hasina movement. Hasina's 15-year tenure came to an end in August 2024 when she was forced to retire due to curfews, violent confrontations, and a loss of army backing. The public's strong discontent with corruption, favoritism, and the politicization of national history was reflected in her downfall. Dr. Muhammad Yunus's temporary administration represented a shaky promise for democratic rebirth.⁴⁶

x) Regime of Dr. Muhammad Yunus (2024-Present)

Dr. Muhammad Yunus's tenure in Bangladeshi politics has revealed multiple crises of democratic consolidation that stem from institutional, structural, and leadership shortcomings. The crisis of democratic consolidation in Bangladesh under the interim leadership of Muhammad Yunus is starkly illustrated. The piece presents a scenario where a technically appointed government, lacking broad political legitimacy, presides over a country in deep political and economic turmoil. Widespread public discontent has arisen from what is described as severe economic decline rising inflation, job losses in key sectors like garments, deteriorating education standards, and declining foreign investment eroding any remaining credibility of the regime. Politically, the exclusion of major parties, including Awami League, from meaningful engagement in governance and elections undermines the pluralism essential for democracy. The regime's heavy-handed rhetoric, internal discord among its officials, and censorship of dissenting voices further signal the breakdown of democratic norms. In essence, rather than progressing toward stable democratic consolidation, Bangladesh finds itself in a state of "transition without progress," where institutional legitimacy is collapsing and the very foundations of accountability and political inclusion are under severe stress.⁴⁷

The legitimacy crisis was exacerbated by frequent administrative changes, conflicts with civil officials, and tense ties with both major political parties. Furthermore, the brittleness of democratic institutions was brought to light by concerns about accountability, inclusion, and the unequal use of executive power. Rather than strengthening democracy, the Yunus era was characterized by a period of transitional instability, as the reality of entrenched partisanship, elite struggle, and institutional inadequacy clashed with aspirations for participatory politics and clean government.

Conclusion

Democracy in Bangladesh is at a crossroads. The country has achieved some successes in economic development, and its social development record is quite commendable. It is poised to grow economically faster if it can overcome

confrontational policies and strengthen its economic democracy. Political parties have largely failed in this regard. There are many alarming signs of the erosion of democracy in the country. Parliament could be more effective. The civil service has become increasingly partisan, inefficient, and corrupt. Successive governments still need to separate the judiciary from the executive. Despite their promises, state-controlled media have yet to be granted autonomy. Instead, we know that the government plans to enact strict controls on the media, especially cable channels, critics of the proposed bill point out. The gap between the two main political parties involved in the caretaker government and the Election Commission is increasing daily.

Bangladesh's political system has undergone significant transformations since independence, shifting from military to popular rule. Although the country has made significant progress, challenges remain to strengthen its popular system further. This chapter explores political polarization, election-related violence, the dominance of major political parties, poverty, inequality, religious and ethnic divisions, and physical failure regulations pose challenges to ubiquitous connections. However, there are still encouraging prospects for the future, including a vibrant civil society, active citizen engagement, an immature population, technological advances, commitment to the SDGs, and transnational support.

To promote grassroots relations in Bangladesh, it is essential to encourage dialogue, improve electoral reforms, promote inclusion, address socio-economic differences, diversify the arts, strengthen institutions, fight corruption, protect freedom of expression, and promote social cohesion. These measures and the country's commitment to sustainable development and indigenous cooperation can contribute to strengthening famous institutions, effective governance, and socio-economic progress. In short, Bangladesh's political system is dynamic and evolving. By addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities, Bangladesh can continue to move toward strengthening popular governance and creating a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable political system that represent the diverse needs and interests of people.

Notes and Reference

¹ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh: Promise and Performance* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2000), p. 13.

² Bangladesh's political culture goes beyond "healthy competition" and is steadily getting more combative. Instead of using a democratic political process, parties would rather settle their issues on the street. The fact that the party in power was found to be more violent than the opposition suggests that economic resource control may eventually determine political violence. In order to defeat the opposition and secure control over resources, political factions of competing parties band together during election campaigns. Politics violence is encouraged by a lack of democratic procedures inside parties, a lack of ideological alignment, weakened institutional controls, and other factors.

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- ⁴ Ali Riaz, *How Did We Arrive Here?* (Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, 2015), pp. 12-13.
- ⁵ A. Dalakoura, "Differentiating Leader and Leadership Development: A Collective Framework for Leadership Development". *Journal of Management Development*, 2010. 29 (5), 432–441.
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- ⁸ J. D. Sandole Dennis, 'Conflict Resolution: A Unique U. S. Role for the 21st Century', *Electronic Journal of the U.S. Information Agency*, Vol. 1 No. 19, December 1996.
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- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Nurul Islam, *Corruption, Its Control and Drivers of Change: The Case of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Prothoma, 2014), p. 18.
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- ¹⁵ Amin-Al-Zaman, "Party Factionalism in Bangladesh: A Case Study of the Awami League (1991-1997)", *Unpublished PhD Thesis*, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, 2004.
- ¹⁶ Nizam Ahmed, "From Monopoly to Competetion : Party Politics in the Bangladesh Parliament (1973-2001)," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 76. No. 1. pp. 55-80.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Manzoor Khan Afridi, & Tabi Ullah Uzma Gul, "Electoral Politics of Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan (1987-2009)", *Global Social Sciences Review (GSSR)*, Vol. I, No. I (Spring 2016) Page: 58 – 76.
- ¹⁹ Stefano Bartolini and Mair Peter, 'Challenges to Contemporary Political Parties', in Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 327-43.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ Ali Riaz, *Inconvenient Truth about Bangladesh Politics* (Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, 2012), pp. 34-35.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Ali Riaz, *Lived Islam and Islamism in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, 2017), pp. 34-35.
- ²⁵ A. Dalakoura, "Differentiating Leader and Leadership Development: A Collective Framework for Leadership Development", *Journal of Management Development*, 2010. 29 (5), 432–441.
- ²⁶ Abul Fazl Haq, *Bangladesh: Rajnoitik Sangskriti* (Dhaka: Ananya, 2018), pp. 398-99.
- ²⁷ Kamal Hossain, *Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice* (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 2013), pp. 56-57.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Sultan Mahmud, *Bangladesh Sangbidhan: Prekkhit ebong Prangikota* (Dhaka: Aleya Book Depot, 2020), p. 23.
- ³⁰ Enayetur Rahim, "Bangladesh : A Historical Ledger", in A. M. Chowdhury & Fakrul Alam (edi.), *Bangladesh : on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2002), p. 33-35.
- ³¹ Abul Fazl Haq, *Op.cit.*
- ³² David Lewis, *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society* (Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, 2018), pp. 45-46.
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- ³⁴ *Ibid.*

- ³⁵ In the type of political polarization that occurred in Bangladesh after 1975, the dominance of military authority was well entrenched in the construction of coalitions under the pretext of democracy, and the demilitarization process resulted in the growth of opposition alliances. The striking characteristics of alliance politics at this time are dissolution, disagreement, and new polarization among political groups focused on joining the alliance and proclaiming the breakdown of the partnership. Bangladesh has experienced a fresh political division after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family were killed in 1975. In the transition of power, Ziaur Rahman formed JAGODAL, staying behind the scenes. Later, he formed the Nationalist Front, consisting of the JAGODAL, Muslim League (Shah Aziz), NAP Bhasani, United People's Party, Bangladesh Labor Party, and Bangladesh Tafsil Jati Federation. Ziaur Rahman was introduced as the chairman of the alliance (Rahman, 1990). On the other hand, the Democratic Unity Alliance was formed, consisting of the Awami League, CPB, Jatiya Janata Party, NAP (Muzaffar), Gano Azadi League, and the People's Party
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Chapter 03

Election and Democracy in Bangladesh: Strategies, Weakness, and Constitutional Bases

Election is the centerpiece of democracy. Generally, the process by which the people nominate and elect candidates of their choice is called an election. In a democratic society, it is the only occasion on which most people become directly involved in politics. Sometimes elections are dramatic, sometimes mundane, sometimes they herald turning points in history, and sometimes they pass without significant change.¹ It is difficult to imagine democracy without elections. In democratic governance, people form political opinions through participation in the standardized electoral process. In this system, every government depends on the people's consent. But, in a non-democratic system, people are denied the opportunity to express their opinions because they need to participate in the political system spontaneously. The electoral process serves as an essential mechanism for evaluating all aspects of the political system, thereby creating a smooth transition of power.² Electoral politics of a nation allows an exciting window to assess the configuration of alignment of political forces and issues, but only when a free and fair election takes place and a smooth transition of power is guaranteed.³

One of the features of the 1972 constitution is the introduction of a parliamentary system of government to ensure democracy and human rights and improve the quality of life of the people in Bangladesh. Elections are a prerequisite for guaranteeing democracy and human rights. Various articles and sub-articles of the constitution, such as articles 66 and 119 of the form, have been mentioned about various elections-related matters.⁴

Political Parties and Election

Political parties and elections play a vital role in analyzing politics in developing countries, particularly in the study of democratization and, specifically, the consolidation of democratic political regimes. A political party is a political group officially recognized as part of the electoral process and can support candidates for elections regularly.⁵ This way, political parties (party system) and elections consolidate a society's democracy. Election is the method of selecting public representatives. In Bangladesh, most of the representatives including local level elections are nominated from political parties. All eligible citizens from the local to the National level elect their representatives by voting who are largely involved with any political party.

Political parties form government by securing majority in democratic system. Election acts as a bridge between the government, the people, and the political parties. In a democratic system, the Election is a process of obtaining power. People elect their representatives through voting, and those representatives manage the political system.⁶ That is why there are vast systematic connections

between elections and political parties. David Robertson said that the electoral system is the method of decision-making or allotting seats to candidates who have won.⁷ C.J. Friedrich said, “Election is a process for representation of Peoples voice in state decision making through representatives. The election is the most widely accepted basis for the legitimate term.”⁸ According to J.J. Kirkpatric, “Elections are the central institution of Democracy”.⁹ Allan R Ball commented that Elections are how the people choose and exercise some degree of control over their representative.¹⁰ The result of the Election reveals the hope of the people. Political parties articulate all of the hope of the general people.

So, the process by which people can directly and indirectly participate in governance by selecting representatives is called Election, and the issues are very interrelated with political parties.

Role of Election

Elections make a fundamental contribution to democratic governance. Because direct democracy, a form of government in which political decisions are made directly by the entire body of qualified citizens, is impractical in most modern societies, democratic government must be conducted through representatives.¹¹ Elections enable voters to select leaders and to hold them accountable for their performance in office. Accountability can be undermined when elected leaders do not care whether they are reelected or when, for historical or other reasons, one party or coalition is so dominant that voters have no choice among alternative candidates, parties, or policies. Nevertheless, the possibility of controlling leaders by requiring them to submit to regular and periodic elections helps to solve the problem of succession in leadership and thus contributes to the continuation of democracy.¹²

Moreover, where the electoral process is competitive and forces candidates or parties to expose their records and future intentions to widespread scrutiny, elections serve as forums for discussing public issues and facilitating the expression of public opinion. Elections thus provide political education for citizens and ensure the responsiveness of democratic governments to the will of the people. They also legitimize the acts of those who wield power, a function that is performed to some extent, even by noncompetitive elections.¹³

Elections also reinforce the stability and legitimacy of the political community. Like national holidays commemorating everyday experiences, elections link citizens to each other, thereby confirming the polity’s viability.¹⁴ As a result, elections help to facilitate social and political integration.

Finally, elections serve a self-actualizing purpose by confirming the worth and dignity of individual citizens as human beings. Whatever other needs voters may have, participation in an election serves to reinforce their self-esteem and self-respect. Voting allows people to have their say and, through expressing partisanship, satisfy their need to feel a sense of belonging. Even nonvoting

satisfies the need of some people to express their alienation from the political community. For precisely these reasons, the long battle for the right to vote and the demand for equality in electoral participation can manifest a profound human craving for personal fulfillment.¹⁵

Whether held under authoritarian or democratic regimes, elections have a ritualistic aspect. Elections and the campaigns preceding them are dramatic events that are accompanied by rallies, banners, posters, buttons, headlines, and television coverage, all of which call attention to the importance of participation in the event. Candidates, political parties, and interest groups representing diverse objectives invoke the symbols of nationalism or patriotism, reform or revolution, past glory or future promise. Whatever the peculiar national, regional, or local variations, elections are events that, by arousing emotions and channeling them toward collective symbols, break the monotony of daily life and focus attention on the common fate.¹⁶

Naturally, the electoral laws and the nature of participation in elections have been relevant here.

Election Campaign in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a democratic country where elections have special significance. The people's participation at the national and rural levels is essential for democratic development. In a democratic system, citizens directly vote for legislation and select representatives to manage the country who will be responsible to the people for their work.¹⁷ That is why democracy has given so much importance to the election system. The sources of communication among the political parties, the government, and the people are the process of conformity, which reflects accountability, commitment, and public interest of the respective parties and ruling groups. The peaceful transfer of power, the state leadership's reversal, and people's participation in governance are possible only through democratic elections.¹⁸ Through elections, citizens decide for a party how long and how to manage the country. The government is formed in a democracy with the electoral verdict, and the government is undoubtedly responsible for the citizens through the parliament.¹⁹ When the elections are held, the political parties appear in front of the voters with several public welfare programs to get their support in the polls. Active and spontaneous participation of the people is an integral part of the democratic government system.²⁰ People's representatives are elected directly by participating in specific time intervals which party will form the government, and what will the government's policies and programs. The general public also decides through the application of a franchise.

If the government fails to meet their wishes, people can change the government through re-election or next electoral procedures. For this reason, political parties and candidates campaign in different ways to achieve public support, such as

people's participation in elections. In this way, their involvement in the Election was widely seen. According to the constitution of Bangladesh, the universal franchise has been fixed for 18 years. Of course, this does not mean that all the adults in the country will get the right to vote. It requires some accessory qualifications for this. According to the decision of the Criminal Court, the accused person is deprived of this right for particular reasons. It must have psychological and moral competence to apply for a franchise.

Foreigners residing in the country should be given the right to vote.²¹ All the remaining male and female voters can get the right to vote and vote in the country's conventional elections. There is a code of conduct on the type of campaign and behavior of candidates in the Election. The Election Commission's Code of Conduct Rules, 1996, formulated the powers of the 91-B section of the Representation of the People Order, 1972.²² It is said that political parties in this rule will get the opportunity to participate in the campaign. It has also been told that no one can stop the movement and in no way affect the voter. The opportunity for more people to participate in elections will increase their political awareness. Voting is the best way for people's political participation. Because, through voting, people can directly support or reject any political decision. As a medium of promotion, the candidates use advertisements in posters, public meetings, procession, Facebook, or T.V. magazines. They carry out month-long campaign activities and spend much money behind them.²³ They want to control voting rights.

Before the elections, political parties and candidates adopt different approaches to the people's support, such as miking, posters, delivery of leaflets, publication of election manifestations, etc. The campaign is an innovative strategy to showcase the party's programs and ideals to the people. Campaigning can influence people.²⁴ The election campaign is particularly a plan to win elections. It primarily increases the popularity of the party and its policies, goals, and leadership to the people.²⁵ The principles of campaigning in the Election are the selection of campaign material, avoiding embarrassing content, avoiding specific commitments, and the misunderstanding of opposition parties.²⁶ Political parties highlight the differences between the political parties, economic and other issues, and make the difference between the parties' opinions. Though criticizing the policies and programs against the political party, its primary goal is to focus on the essential thinking of the group.²⁷ Its aims and objectives are evident in the campaigning for public opinion. The political party inspires people to follow its policies and programs by using all the effective means of public campaigning. Political parties are busy organizing public gatherings, booklet collection and distribution, nominating attractive candidates in the Election, etc., to work towards attracting citizens. In fact, during this campaign, political parties influence the potential of the citizens in all possible ways and only express their desire to serve them.²⁸ Each party nominates its candidates in

the electoral areas and conducts election campaigns to win the elections.²⁹ For the sake of its candidate, the political party does not calm down criticizing the opposing parties. Still, it offers a lot of attractive promises in cases where the candidate needs more financial support to meet his election expenditure. The political party carries on this expenditure of the candidate.³⁰ It is seen that the workers of these party candidates have different harmful activities with other positive activities at different times. The actions of these party candidates have an essential role in the Election. Various sources of political, social, and financial changes, including public opinion, party activities, state policies, visions, and behavior of different groups, through electoral behavior are released.

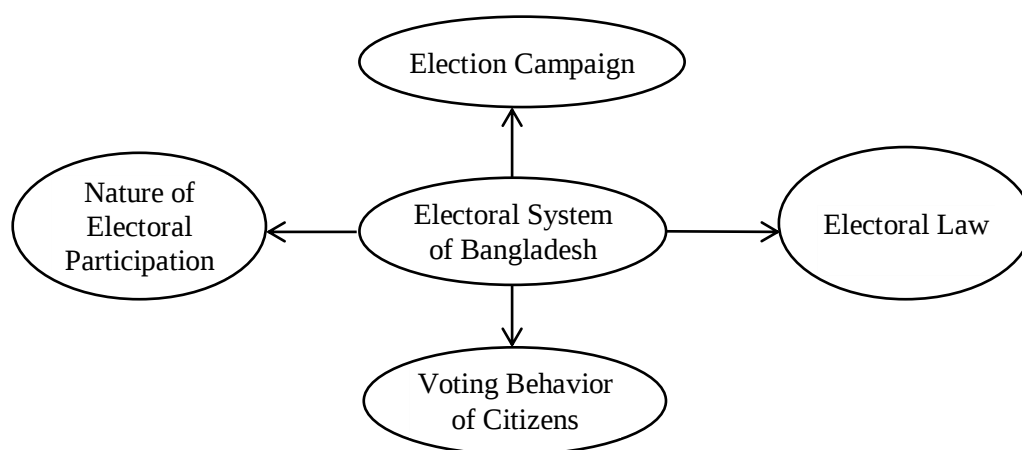


Figure-02: Electoral System of Bangladesh

Importance of Election in Bangladesh

Election is a formal decision-making process through which people choose a representative work. Elections have been essential in modern representative democracies since the seventeenth Century. Legislature positions may be filled through Election, sometimes representatives in regional and local governments, in addition to the executive and judiciary. This selection process is again applied in many private and commercial organizations. Starting from clubs or societies, various voluntary organizations and Corporations also use this process.

Elections are universally used as a means of selecting representatives in modern democracies. The electoral system is so essential in a democracy that the successful functioning of a democratic system is not possible without an election. Part 2 of the constitution of Bangladesh, article no: 11, states that effective participation of the people shall be ensured through elected representatives at all levels of administration.³¹

Therefore, as a reminder of democratic values and traditions, the People's Republic of Bangladesh has developed a free and fair election system based on voting rights at all levels.

The main feature of democracy is that elected representatives are accountable to the people and face the voters again at scheduled times to seek their verdict on whether or not they remain in power. This is why most democratic constitutions call for periodic elections.³²

In democratic governance, the people are the source of sovereign power. The people exercise their sovereign power through elections. Citizens form competent and efficient governments instead of inept and incompetent ones by exercising the right to vote in elections. In the current representative democratic state, the people indirectly participate in governance, and public representation becomes effective only through Election.

The Election is a part of the political process in the democracy that several people study when they are young or perceive from various mass media for a long time. For example, if there is no election, there is no democracy. The definition of 'Democracy is the Election' creates the meaning indifferent for all political systems and indicates that the election is an unavoidable process since if there is no election; the political regime will be a dictatorship.³³

According to Thai politician Dr. Chanchai Chitlaorporn, "The politics is to be the political agents from the election only; it cannot be the citizen's representative and have the picture of the state representatives."³⁴

Electoral Acts of Bangladesh as Per the Rules of RPO

The Election Law aims to ensure fair conduct of elections, explain the behavior of candidates and those participating in the election process on behalf of the candidates, and ensure the provision of punishment for violators of the relevant regulations. The constitution of Bangladesh in 1972 provided for the formation of the Election Commission. The President appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners per Article 118 of the Constitution. The Election Commission is independent in its duties under the constitution and law. According to Article 119 of the Constitution,³⁵ the Election Commission is entrusted with preparing, supervising, directing, controlling, and conducting the electoral roll for the parliamentary elections. The People's Representation Order 1972, Election Conduct Rules 1972, and Conduct Rules 1996 were made to determine the election commission's procedures and conduct its activities.³⁶ Electoral legislation is made up of these orders and regulations.

i) RPO (Representation of People Order)

Subject to the provisions mentioned in Section 3 of the Representation of the People order, the Election Commission will determine its procedure. According to Clause 5 of the order, the Election Commission can direct any person or authority to perform such duties and provide assistance as may be required. Suppose any officer involved in the Election, a member of the law and order

force, does anything to obstruct the fair and impartial Election or to influence the election result. In that case, the Election Commission may at any time exempt him or them from the election duties and, if necessary, refer the concerned superior officer to take disciplinary action. Apart from this, keeping a close watch on the various political parties participating in the elections and whether the party can be brought under the registration these issues are recorded in the law.³⁷

ii) Election Conduct Rules

In consultation with the Election Commission, the government framed the Election Rules, 1972 under the powers conferred by Section 94 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972. Rule 5 provides for an appeal to the candidate against the cancellation of the nomination paper. Rule 6 states the procedure for publishing the list of nominated candidates. Rule 7 describes the method for publication of the final list of candidates with the allotment of symbols after the deadline for withdrawal of candidature has not passed. Rule 8 lays down the procedure for declaring unopposed candidates, and Rule 9 lists symbols. Rules 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15 describe the preparation of ballot paper, the issue of postal ballot and its vote record, the procedure for illiterate vote record, and the return and re-issuance of postal ballot. Rule 15-A deals with ballot box records, rules 16 and 17 with ballot paper marking, and rules 18 with inserting it into the box. Rule 20 describes the process of challenging votes by candidates, and Rule 21 illustrates the process of canceling abandoned ballots. Rules 22, 23, 24, and 25 describe the procedure for counting votes, preparation of details by the Presiding Officer, and consolidation of results. Rule 26 illustrates the method for public inspection of polling papers.³⁸

iii) Electoral Behavior (Code of Conduct)

Election Commission Code of Conduct, 1996, was enacted under Section 91-B of the Representation of the People Order, 1972. Clause 3 of these rules, while imposing restrictions on subscriptions, donations, etc., states that the overall development plan of the concerned political party can be presented to the public. However, from the announcement of the election schedule to the day of polling, no candidate or on his behalf shall make any contribution or donation openly or secretly to any institution or any other institution of the concerned constituency or undertake any development project in the concerned constituency. I can't promise. Rule 5 states that political parties and candidates shall have equal rights to campaign regardless; Meetings, processions, and other movements of any adversary shall not be staged or obstructed. After the announcement of the election schedule, no candidate or political party or anyone on its behalf shall be allowed to use government propaganda machines, government officials or employees, or government vehicles for election purposes and shall refrain from using state facilities. Election campaign posters

should be on native paper in black and white color, and the size shall not exceed 22" x 18" in any case. Everyone should refrain from all kinds of wall writing in an election campaign.³⁹

Rule 6 of the Code of Conduct states that money, arms, muscle, or local power cannot influence elections. According to rule 7, only election employees, candidates, election agents, and voters will have access to the polling station. Only the polling agents will perform their duties by sitting in their designated places. According to rule 8, any violation of these rules will be considered pre-election irregularity, and the person or political party aggrieved by the irregularity can submit an application to the Electoral Inquiry Committee or the Election Commission for redressed. Suppose the application submitted to the Election Commission objectively considers the Commission. In that case, the Commission will send it to the concerned or any Electoral Inquiry Committee for investigation. In both cases, the Electoral Inquiry Committee shall conduct an inquiry following the provisions of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 (Presidential Order No. 155 of 1972) and submit recommendations to the Commission.⁴⁰

iv) RPO-Political Party Acts 90 (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I)

The electoral system is the primary condition of a thriving democracy. Another essential condition of democratic governance is the presence of political parties. Political activities are conducted through these political parties. However, if a political party is formed everywhere, it needs approval. When a political party is formed through specific rules and regulations, it gets registration. The Election Commission has attached certain particular conditions to the RPO regarding the registration of political parties.

The PRO guidelines for party registration were first formulated in 2008, before the ninth parliamentary elections. The guidelines were revised and approved by the Ninth Parliament in 2009.

Article 90 of the RPO states that, a political party seeking registration with the EC must fulfill the following conditions:

90A. For this order, any political party may be registered with the Commission subject to the conditions laid down in Article 90B.

90B. (1) If any political party desires to be registered, it shall-(a) fulfill one of the following conditions, namely- (i) secure at least one seat with its electoral symbol in any parliamentary election held since the independence of Bangladesh; or guaranteed five percent of total votes cast in the constituencies in which its candidates took part in any of the aforesaid parliamentary elections; or established a functional central office, by whatever name it may be called, with a central committee [, functional] district offices in at least one-third of administrative districts, offices [in] at least one hundred Upazilas or Metropolitan Thana having a minimum number of two hundred voters as its

members in each of them; and

(b) In addition to complying with the terms and conditions referred to in [sub-clause(a)], the political party desiring to be registered with the Commission shall have the following specific provisions in its constitution, namely- to elect the members of the committees at all levels, including members of the central committee; to fix the goal of reserving at least 33% of all committee positions for women, including the central committee, and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020; to prohibit the formation of any organization or body as its affiliated or associated body [consisting of] the teachers or students of any educational institution or the employees or laborers of any financial, commercial or industrial institution or establishment or the members of any other profession :

Provided that nothing shall prevent them from organizing independently in their respective fields or forming an association, society, trade union, etc., and exercising all democratic and political rights, and individual, subject to the provisions of the existing laws, to be a member of any political party to finalize the nomination of a candidate by the central parliamentary board of the party in consideration of panels prepared by members of the Ward, Union, Thana, Upazila, or District committee, as the case may be, of the concerned constituency.

If an independent member of parliament joins any unregistered political party, the fact of his joining shall not qualify that party for registration with the Commission.

90C. (1) A political party shall not be qualified for registration under this Chapter if- the objectives laid down in its constitution are contrary to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh or if any discrimination regarding religion, race, caste, language, or sex is apparent in its constitution; or by name, flag, symbol, or any other activity that threatens to destroy communal harmony or lead the country to cessation; or its form reflects the objectives of maintaining and nourishing a party-less or one-party system; or there is no provision in its structure for the establishment or operation of any office, branch, or committee outside the territory of Bangladesh.

No political party shall be registered under a name under which another political party has already been registered:

If more than one party applies for registration with the same name and no party has already been registered under such title, the Commission may, after giving the parties a reasonable opportunity of being heard, write any of the parties with such name.

The commission shall not register any political party banned by the government.

90D. Any political party complying with the conditions laid down in Article 90A, Article 90B and not disqualified under Article 90C may apply for

registration in the prescribed manner under the signature of its Chairman and General Secretary or any other person holding the equivalent rank :

Provided that the Commission may allow any political party to apply for registration which has a provisional constitution containing provisions as specified under sub-clauses (b)(i), (b)(ii), (b)(iii), and (b)(iv) of clauses (1) of Article 90B as well as complying with the provisions under Article 90C along with a resolution of the highest policy-making body of the party, by whatever name it may be called, to the effect that the party shall submit a ratified constitution [within twelve months] from the date of the first sitting of ninth parliament.⁴¹

90E. (1) The Commission shall issue a registration certificate in the prescribed form after deciding to register a political party and publish it in the Official Gazette.

If the application for registration of a political party is canceled, the Commission shall, within seven working days, inform the concerned party of it in writing.

The decision on registration by the Commission shall be final.

90F. (1) Subject to the provision of clause (2), a registered political party shall be entitled to receive donations or grants from any person, company, group of companies, or non-government organization except the sources mentioned in clause (1) of Article 44CC :

Provided that such amount of donation or grants shall not exceed the following limits in a calendar year- in the case of a person, taka [ten] lakh or property or service equivalent to it ; in the case of a company or organization, taka [fifty] lakh or property or service equivalent to it ; one of the prescribed symbols for all the candidates set up by it in any election under this order or rules according to the preference indicated by it and the symbols so allotted shall be kept reserved for it, unless it indicates its preference for any other prescribed symbol available ; one set of election rolls in compact disk (CD) or digital versatile disk (DVD) or any other electronic format at free of cost ; broadcasting and telecasting facilities in the state-owned media during the general Election to Parliament according to the principles and guidelines prescribed by the Commission; and be consulted with by the Commission in respect of any matter relating to Election, particularly problems of and measures for holding Election fairly, peacefully and in accordance with this order and rules.⁴²

No registered political party shall receive any gift, donation, grant, or money from any other country or non-government organization assisted by foreign aid or from any person who is not a Bangladeshi by birth or any organization established or maintained by such person.

90G. A registered political party shall inform the Commission in the prescribed manner about the compliance of the provisions in [clause (1)(b) of Article 90B].

90H. (1) The registration of a political party may be canceled for the following reasons, namely- if the party is declared dissolved according to the constitution of the party by the highest decision-making body, by whichever name it is called, or an application is made to the Commission along with the minute for dissolution of the party under the signature of the chairman and general secretary of the party or any other person holding equivalent rank; if the political party is declared banned by the government; if the political party fails to provide any information under this order and rules to the Commission [for three consecutive years; if the political party violates the provision of [clause (1)(b) of Article 90B]; if the political party does not participate in the parliamentary elections for two consecutive terms[; or if the political party fails to submit a ratified constitution within the stipulated period as mentioned in the proviso of Article 90D.]

The Commission shall, before cancellation of registration under [sub-clauses (c), (d), (e), and (f)], allow the concerned political party to be heard in the prescribed manner.

No political party shall be registered in the name of a political party which has been declared dissolved.

The names of the dissolved and canceled political parties shall be published in the Official Gazette.

90I. If a registered political party is aggrieved by an order of cancellation of registration by the Commission, it may prefer an appeal to the High Court Division.]⁴³

Political Parties of Bangladesh under RPO Rules

All four major parties of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jatiya Party, and Jamat-e-Islami, were registered under Article 90 as they secured more than one seat under their electoral symbol in Bangladesh. The A., BNP, and JP submitted their revised constitutions in compliance with the conditions in Article 90 of the RPO within the time set for applying for registration. Jamat-e-Islami, however, could not submit their revised constitution to the satisfaction of the election commission, though the party attempted several revisions of the party constitution. In 2009, a case was filed with the High Court seeking cancellation of the J.I. registration with the E.C. on the ground that the J.I. constitution did not conform to the Bangladesh constitution. On August 1, 2013, the High Court ruled in favor of canceling the J.I. registration. J.I.'s appeal to the Supreme Court against the High Court ruling is still pending.⁴⁴

i) Bangladesh Awami League

Bangladesh Awami League is an ancient political party of Bangladesh. It is a registered political party as per the rules of RPO- 90(B), (1), (b), (ii) and 90(C), (1), (a), (b). The party ideology and program of Bangladesh Awami League are not against the constitution of Bangladesh. It is not even related to any anti-public activities. Bangladesh Awami League represents everyone irrespective of caste and religion. It does not guarantee unique benefits to any particular religion.⁴⁵

Again, 33 percent of women's participation in this party has also been confirmed. Not just in the center. The involvement of women members is ensured in every committee as per RPO rules. Therefore, constitutionally and as per the rules of RPO, it is a valid and registered political party in Bangladesh.

ii) Bangladesh Nationalist Party

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is a popular political party in Bangladesh. It is a registered political party as per the rules of RPO- 90(B), (1), (b), (ii) and 90(C), (1), (a), (b). The party ideology and program of BNP is not against the constitution of Bangladesh. However, it promotes religion-based politics in Bangladesh. It is not related to any anti-public activities. BNP talks about the representation of all, irrespective of caste and religion. Again, 33 percent participation of women in this party has also been confirmed. The involvement of women members has been ensured as per RPO norms in every committee at the center and region. Therefore, constitutionally and as per the rules of RPO, it is a valid and registered political party in Bangladesh.

iii) Jatiya Party

Jatiya Party, a political party, was established by the hand of Ershad. It is a registered political party as per the rules of RPO- 90(B), (1), (b), (ii) and 90(C), (1), (a), (b). The party ideology and program of the Jatiya Party is not against the constitution of Bangladesh. However, it also promotes religion-based politics in Bangladesh, like the BNP. It is not related to any anti-public activities.

Jatiya Party also talks about representing all, irrespective of caste and religion. Again, 33 percent participation of women in this group has also been confirmed, but some lack remains in the rural committee. The involvement of women members has been ensured as per RPO norms in every committee at the center and region. Therefore, constitutionally and as per the rules of RPO, it is a valid and registered political party in Bangladesh.⁴⁶

iv) Jamat-e-Islam

Jamaat-e-Islami, a religion-based political party strongly opposed the creation of Bangladesh. The party ideology of Jamaat-e-Islam conflicts with the constitution of Bangladesh. Jamaat-e-Islam's party constitution mentions state

governance based on the Quran and Sunnah.⁴⁷ That is, they refer to party management centered on a particular religion. As the Constitution of Bangladesh says, Bangladesh is a secular state, and the party is not constitutionally allotted. Religion-based politics and some of the party's programs are also disallowed as per the rules of the RPO.⁴⁸

According to the rules of RPO, 33 percent of women members should be ensured in the central and regional committees. Still, in this case, the Jamaat failed to provide it because Jamaat does not believe in women's leadership. In this regard, they have prioritized gender inequality. Hence, this group is not registerable as per RPO rules. Although the party has repeatedly amended its constitution and submitted to E.C. but has not received permission as it is unable to fulfill the conditions as per rules of RPO- 90(B), (1), (b), (ii) and 90(C), (1), (a), (b).⁴⁹

Nature & Trends of Bangladesh Election

Elections have always been a feature of the democratic process. Democratic institutions thrive on the exercise of choice at regular intervals by the electorate. Elections safeguard democratic freedom and, among other things, make for the rotation of rulers and create leadership potential. Local elections have established a bridge between the electorate and candidature. As a result, the importance of local elections is equal to national elections. This section reveals that some determinants shape the voting behavior of people. They became encouraged to vote and sometimes ceased voting for some remarkable causes.

i) Violation of Code of Conduct

A common trend in Bangladesh elections is that most candidates violate the rules and regulations. According to the code of conduct set out by the E.C., campaigning 48 hours before the polling time, pasting posters on walls, graffiti, tearing down an opponent's signs and others are strictly prohibited. But most of the candidates violate the election code of conduct imposed by the E.C. Moreover, the candidates are seen to continue election campaigns or distribution of campaign materials during the prohibited time. On the other hand, posters on walls, graffiti, tearing down an opponent's posters, and improper use of motor vehicles, blocking roads for meetings, holding big marches, and positioning of elaborate gates are common scenarios in a local election.⁵⁰

ii) Violence and Intimidation

Violence and intimidation occur before, during, and after local-level elections. Violence occurs among supporters of rival candidates and between the supporters of winning and defeated candidates. Sometimes, religious minorities feel insecure and are even attacked during elections.⁵¹

iii) Spinelessness of Election Commission

Many people, including candidates, die and get physically injured due to election clashes and violence. But the E.C. claims the elections to be peaceful, accessible, and fair. An environment conducive to holding a free, fair, and neutral election is not materialized due to the weak stand of the E.C. and law enforcing agencies and the direct influence of the ruling political party. The influence of political parties and the spinelessness of the E.C. are the main reasons for violence, irregularities, and ballot box stuffing in Upazila elections.

iv) Influence of Ruling Party

The ruling party's supporters manipulate elections by preventing rival voters, capturing vote centers, and snatching ballot boxes. Sometimes, election officials and even law enforcement agencies are found to be lax while handling law and order situations. In many cases, ordinary people complain about the working of law enforcement agencies in favor of the pro-government candidates.

v) Use of Money and Muscle

The local election procedures in Bangladesh are clear on election expenses, election campaign mode, undue influence on the voters, challenges and appeals against illegal means, and others. In most cases, the main candidates in the local level elections get party affiliation. Muscle and black money are critical in securing the nomination and elections. For this, decent and civic-minded individuals find it difficult even to contest in the Election.

vi) Breaking Electoral Expenses

According to law, candidates will have to maintain the electoral expenditures through their respective bank accounts, and statements of the funds will have to be attached during the submission of returns. In addition, the ceiling of the poll expenditure is fixed based on the number of voters in their jurisdiction. The knowledge of the common people on the submission of electoral expenses and statements of account could be better. But most candidates cross electoral expenditure and spend vast amounts of money. They also hide the actual amount of money they spend on elections.⁵²

vii) Dirty Polling Station

While talking about the environment of polling stations, some centers look different from voting centers. Logistics and infrastructure facilities like electricity and lights-fan, sanitation, and door for booths need to be improved and satisfactory.⁵³

Conclusion

In his famous Gettysburg Address of 1863, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”⁵⁴ A democratic government is made of representatives of the people, chosen freely by the people at large, to serve all people of the nation. Such a government, created with people's consent and serving people's interests, it is hoped, "shall never perish from the earth."

We fought our Liberation War to earn the right to self-determination. To that end, democracy was enshrined as a fundamental principle of our state policy. Article 11 of our Constitution mandates the republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed, and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured. Article 59 of the Constitution further mandates the rule of people's representatives at all administrative levels to make the democratic system all-encompassing.

A prerequisite of a democratic polity is free, fair, and credible elections, which serve as the mechanism to create a government with the people's consent. However, whether a government is truly democratic depends on what it does or does not do between two elections. For a proper democratic system, the elected government must allow citizens to enjoy fundamental political and civil rights, respect basic human rights, ensure the rule of law and social justice, practice transparency and accountability, and facilitate effective participation of the people in the affairs of the state. We have had 11 parliamentary elections in the history of Bangladesh. Four were held under a neutral caretaker government (1991, 1996, 2001, and 2008 elections) and were more or less credible elections where people could exercise their franchise. Those governments, though formed with the people's consent, did not practice the democratic ideals of respecting people's rights, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and social justice. Thus, Bangladesh became a nation of “one-day democracy,” deviating from the aspirations of our courageous freedom fighters. Because of such deviations, Bangladesh is now a country of stolen elections, closed democratic space, serious human rights violations, crony capitalism, looting and plundering, and unjust polity. Therefore, we must begin to face the stark reality and address the monumental challenges we face. However, there is no magic formula or quick fix to our problems.

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Chapter 04

Walkout and Boycott of Opposition Parties in Bangladesh

The legislature is a major organ of the government, known as the parliament in a parliamentary system; thus, it bears the significant responsibility of oversight activities of the executive.¹ The two most widely used parliamentary tactics that disrupt the normal functioning of parliament and bring forward the picture of adversarial politics in the country are walkouts and boycotts.² The constitutional provisions, rules of procedure, the role of individual MPs, and most importantly, the role of the opposition are crucial in ensuring parliament's oversight and other responsibilities, such as offering a credible alternative to the majority in power, defending civil and political rights of the citizens and demonstrating that minority has the constitutional rights to disagree and ability of the citizens to resolve conflicts peacefully in a parliamentary system.³

The opposition should discern that as representatives of its constituencies and paid to undertake the task for it has been elected, it is immoral not to carry out its duties. Furthermore, if it does, the opposition parties lose their credibility in the eyes of the electorate.⁴

Immoral or not, the Opposition-led alternately by AL and BNP is merrily practicing the boycott culture without any regard or attention to the electorate's sentiments and increasingly resorting to this extra-parliamentary means in order to, not precisely to make the executive behave, but to fulfill its agenda.⁵

It is pertinent to mention that, according to parliamentary procedures, whatever the issues are, national or international, should be settled on the floor of the House.

Unfortunately, by shifting away from its constitutional role, the Opposition in Bangladesh is giving more prominence to extra-parliamentary forms of opposition than the constitutional one.⁶

Walkout and Boycott

The words 'walkout' and 'boycott' are used to protest. Two valid and enforceable parliamentary means are workout and boycott. Members of Parliament use these two ways to express their protest or dissent. In common sense, the walkout means 'coming out,' but in parliamentary parlance, the walkout is the coming out of the House of Parliament. A walkout is when members of parliament leave the chamber for a short period. Walkout is a form of protest. Nevertheless, an unexpected way of protesting may be against any decision/call of the Speaker, any act/decision of the Government, or the speech or conduct of any Member of Parliament.⁷ There is usually debate about whether opposition members can walk out against the Speaker's decision or call or whether such protests are desirable. Many feel that to preserve the dignity and solemnity of the Speaker's post; there should be no protest against the

Speaker's decision. The Speaker can take action against the protestors if the exercise is aimed at protesting.⁸

The word boycott originated from the name of British land agent Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott. Generally, a boycott is a refusal to buy or use a country's or company's goods.' In diplomatic terms, 'boycott' is why one nation or ethnic group deliberately abstains from conducting diplomatic activities with another nation or ethnic group. Dictionary of Political Science explains boycotts as a political and economic struggle strategy. It says, 'Boycott: A means of Political and economic Struggle consisting of the total or partial curtailment of relations with a state, e.g., the imposition of an embargo on the export and import of goods, discrimination using duties and tariffs.'⁹

The American Government and Politics Dictionary defines a *boycott* as a strategy to change or influence government policy. In the language, Parliamentary 'Boycott' means boycotting Parliament and is also a way of expressing protest.¹⁰ Usually, opposition party members use this strategy to protest against any decision/ruling of the speaker, any act or decision of the government, or members of the government party.¹¹

In Bangladesh, parliamentary boycotts are used to exert pressure on the government. Political parties in Bangladesh use more group boycotts. Here, the spontaneous boycott turns into a planned boycott. According to Bangladesh's current constitution, parliamentarians can be absent from parliament for 90 consecutive working days. By misusing this opportunity, the opposition has created a pattern of continuous boycotts which seriously undermine parliamentary democracy.¹²

Democratic culture and traditions are built around Parliament. Laws are made through lively discussion and argumentation. There is no better medium in a democratic state than speaking in Parliament to ensure accountability and highlight the government's shortcomings. Healthy politics centered on Parliament. A functioning and dynamic parliament is one of the critical determinants of democracy. Various problems of the people and the possible ways to solve them come up in the discussion, arguments, and counter-arguments of the members of Parliament. In this way, in the country of parliamentary democracy, people's hopes and aspirations are reflected in the Parliament. However, for the effective practice of all this, firstly, the participation of all parties and members in the session of Parliament is necessary. It is at this place that Bangladesh's Parliament and parliamentary politics have stopped. In the history of Bangladesh, the reluctance of the elected representatives to go to the Parliament has been noticed for a long time. People's representatives are interested in something other than spending time in Parliament. In this case, the tradition of Bangladeshi politics is to boycott the Parliament when the opposition party is in the government and to talk about the absence of the opposition party in the Parliament when the same party is in the

government. The anti-parliamentary opposition parties are more interested and able to participate in the parliamentary debates and give programs on the streets. It has already been said that when a political party gets a chance to go to the government party, it starts politics by boycotting the opposition party. Instead of constructive discussion in and outside the Parliament, there is severe condemnation and abuse. The opposition party is called to come and talk in the Parliament. Each party's election manifesto promises to make Parliament effective and central to all activities.¹³

Nevertheless, it still needs to be implemented. The general people elect members of Parliament to speak for the people of their area. However, after being elected, boycotting the Parliament started from the opposition party. Even if they do not participate in the parliament session, the MPs receive salary and other monthly benefits. Even if they regularly attend the standing committee meetings, many parliamentarians still need to attend the session room. Despite increasing the salaries and other benefits of the members of Parliament, the attendance rate in the Parliament session could be much higher. That is why there is now a demand to stop the boycott of Parliament by making a law.¹⁴

It is a privilege of the opposition party members to walk out from the Parliament and boycott the meeting of the Parliament. However, additional walkouts and boycotts have called into question the effectiveness of Parliament. The main difference between a walkout and a boycott is the time frame. The walkout is for a short period. On the other hand, the boycott lasted for a relatively long time. At times, walkouts turned into boycotts. Occasional walkouts and boycotts are legitimate and beneficial for expressing protest and dissent. However, a spate of walkouts and boycotts led to deadlock in Parliament.¹⁵

In light of the experience of the Parliament of Bangladesh, boycotts can be divided into short-time and long-time boycotts. A short-term boycott can be for two days to 30 days. A long-term boycott, on the other hand, can last for years. Prolonged boycott resulted in stagnation in the proceedings of Parliament.¹⁶

In Bangladesh, especially since 1991, boycott and walkout has become a permanent issue. Parliamentary boycotts and walkouts by opposition parties are major negative features of parliamentary proceedings. Here, while discussing essential issues or passing significant bills by a government party or Speaker, little attention is paid to whether the opposition party is in the parliament. There is no severe discussion here on the walkout or exclusion of the opposition or any ruling by the Speaker on pending discussion in the absence of the opposition or delaying the passage of bills.

Culture of Parliamentary Walkouts and Boycotts in Bangladesh

Since Bangladesh returned to a parliamentary system in 1991, its parliament (Jatiya Sangsad) has remained dysfunctional and thereby seriously threatened

Bangladesh's democratic system and good governance. During the lives of the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, and Nine Parliaments, the Opposition, which is an indispensable component of the system, led by the Awami League (AL) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), have missed 34%, 43%, 60% and 83.38% of the working days of parliamentary sessions by boycotting it (CPD- CMI Work Paper-2 and TIB's Parliament Evaluation Report).¹⁷

Table- 01: Walkouts and Boycotts of Oppositions from Parliament in Bangladesh (1973-2023)

Parliament	Date of Sitting & Dissolution	Actual Term	Total working days	Number of Walkouts & Boycotts	Percentage
1 st	April 7, 1973- November 6, 1975	2 years 6 months	134	01	.74
2 nd	2 April 1979- 24 March 1982	2 years 11 months	206	67	32.52
3 rd	July 10, 1986 - December 6, 1987	1 year 5 months	75	29	38.66
4 th	April 15, 1988- December 6, 1990	2 years 7 months	168	03	1.78
5 th	April 05, 1991- November 24, 1995	4 years 8 months	395	135	34.18
6 th	March 19, 1996- March 30, 1996	12 days	04	...	...
7 th	July 14, 1996-July 13, 2001	5 Years	383	163	42.56
8 th	October 28, 2001- October 27, 2006	5 Years	373	223	59.78
9 th	January 25, 2009- January 24, 2014	5 Years	418	342	81.81
10 th	January 29, 2014- January 28, 2019	5 Years	410	04	.97
11 th	January 30, 2019- January 29, 2024	5 Years	272	05	1.83
12 th	January 30, 2024-06 August 2024	6 Months 6 Days	----	----	----
Total			2829	972	34.33

Source: Compiled by Author from Daily Newspapers

The opposition should discern that as representatives of its constituencies and paid to undertake the task for it has been elected, it is immoral not to carry out its duties. Moreover, if it does, the opposition parties lose their credibility in the eyes of the electorate.

Immoral or not, the Opposition, led alternately by AL and BNP, is merrily practicing the boycott culture without any regard or attention to the electorate's sentiments and increasingly resorting to this extra-parliamentary means in order to, not precisely to make the executive behave, but to fulfill its agenda. It is pertinent to mention that, according to parliamentary procedures, whatever the issues are, national or international, should be settled on the floor of the House.

Unfortunately, by shifting away from its constitutional role, the Opposition in Bangladesh is giving more prominence to extra-parliamentary forms of opposition than the constitutional one.

Such Opposition activities in Bangladesh are accelerating the downward trends in the country's democratization process. Why are we in these predicaments? Briefly, the opposition's irresponsible role emanates from several factors:-

The rigid and intransigent attitude of the ruling party in the context of Article 70 of the constitution and its unwillingness to recognize opposition's rights; lack of responsibilities on the part of the opposition; the relationship between the two major parties at the heart of which is power; lack of democratic political culture; unwillingness of the losing political party not to accept the election results; and the role of a partisan Speaker.

Whatever the reasons, a parliament, in the absence of its opposition, can neither deliver the fruits of democracy nor consolidate the system. No democratic politics is possible without transparency and accountability. In order to achieve such politics, there must be a limited government, i.e., various formal and informal mechanisms to restrain the arbitrary powers of the government.

As such, a recognized, legal, and constructive opposition has been invented in a parliamentary system to uphold the basic principles of a democratic system. The bottom line is that there can be no democracy without the opposition's critical and constructive role.¹⁸

Reasons for Parliament Boycotts and Walkouts

Parliament boycotts are frequent in Bangladesh for trivial reasons. Several common factors can be identified by analyzing the immediate causes of the workout in different parliaments. These have been discussed/ analyzed below:

i) Speaker's Decision / Ruling

Most of the walkouts in all Parliaments have taken place to protest against decisions/rulings/refusal of the Speaker or Speaker. Opposition members have always complained that they did not receive equal or impartial treatment from the Speaker. They staged a walkout, terming the Speaker's or the President's decision as inconsistent with the rules of procedure and motivated by party interests. Many walkouts are done for 'political' reasons or against the backdrop of events outside Parliament.¹⁹ Crime-related conversations on Facebook, Twitter, Skype, or any other medium on the Internet and related still and video images are admissible in court. Keeping this provision, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013 was passed in the National Parliament on 11 June 2013. Members of the opposition BNP alliance staged a walkout to protest the bill's passage. They said that the bill is being passed to suppress the opposition, not to suppress terrorism. However, after a minute, they returned to the Parliament.²⁰

On May 5, 2016, the power to remove judges was vested in Parliament. The

verdict given by the High Court declared the Sixteenth Amendment of the Constitution invalid after the angry response to the judges' salary bill in Parliament. The opposition Jatiya Party (JP) staged a walkout in protest during the lunch. Nevertheless, these are historical, political, and social, besides the immediate and apparent visible causes.²¹

ii) Historical Colonial Tradition

Bengal Legislative Council was established in 1862 according to the Indian Council Act 1861. Since then, the purpose, tenure, membership, and procedure of the Legislative Council of Bengal have gradually evolved. It is rightly said that the experience of colonial rule allowed Bangladesh to acquire this type of parliamentary behavior and become familiar with it. But not all of these experiences were pleasant. Many experiences of the colonial era harmed the parliamentary development of independent Bangladesh. The Indian Council Acts of 1909 and 1919 were relatively progressive. However, the legislative councils established by these laws have had to move through complicated and tumultuous times. The first Legislative Assembly elections held in 1920 were boycotted by the two main parties of the country, the Indian National Council and the Muslim League.²² Under the leadership of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, the Swaraj Party they have participated in the second assembly elections held in 1923. However, the Swarajya Party's strategy to participate in the elections was 'to wreck the democratic reform from within than to make it a success. 'The Swaraj Party won a single majority in the elections and was called upon to form the Cabinet. However, the party refrained from forming the cabinet as part of their obstruction policy'.²³

This principle is also reflected in the behavior of Swaraj Party members inside the Legislative Council. It is said that Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Dashi introduced the policy of working out against the ruling of the President of the Legislative Council. Then, he and his party members would walk out from the council almost every day.²⁴

The journey of the new state of Pakistan began with the establishment of a parliamentary system. However, the Pakistani elite, the Constituent Assembly, did not miss any opportunity to put unfair pressure on the provincial assemblies. Various Legislative Assemblies suffer from external pressure and non-cooperation on the one hand and internal inter-party conflicts, floor crossings, excessive walkouts, and unparliamentarily behavior and incidents. The Deputy Speaker was also seen on the walkout during the Pakistani era. The Speaker has also been forced to rule whether a walkout by the Deputy Speaker is desirable.

Disgraceful incidents occur in the legislatures of many countries. However, on 23 September 1958, a terrible incident occurred in the East Pakistan Legislative Council, resulting in Deputy Speaker Shahid Ali losing his life.²⁵ This incident

has been remembered as an extreme example of contempt and disrespect for parliamentary etiquette.

iii) Protest as Part of the Anti-Government Movement

The policies adopted by the nationalist and libertarian political parties during the colonial period are primarily followed by the present-day opposition parties in Parliament. For the opposition, parliament is a place to strengthen the anti-government movement. In almost all parliaments, the opposition party applies the principle of opposition to power. The crisis of the legitimacy of the military rulers encouraged the opposition parties to adopt a policy of ousting the government. Awami League and its allies participated in the second parliament even though they considered General Zia's then-government illegitimate.²⁶ Awami League's primary political strategy at that time was to consolidate the party's position after the tragic events of 1975 and to highlight the anti-people role of the government as far as possible by taking advantage of the parliamentary structure. A large section of the opposition led by the BNP abstained from participating in the third parliamentary elections. However, an 8-party alliance led by the Awami League participated in the election 'to oust General Ershad through the people's ballot. When the parliament was formed after the election, the 8-party announced a policy of intensifying the movement to topple the government from within and outside the parliament. All major political parties and alliances boycotted the fourth parliamentary elections. After the election was over, the policy of the later opposition parties was not to support the Parliament but to hasten its downfall. The Fifth Parliament was formed through a relatively fair election. Awami League wanted more than the announced results of this election. They took part in the fifth Parliament, but the party's strategy was not to let the government rest in peace. This policy of the opposition party is reflected in the anti-government movement inside the parliament and on the streets. It took much work for the opposition BNP to accept the results of the seventh parliamentary elections, which were conducted impartially and peacefully.²⁷ BNP took part in the seventh parliament but adopted a tit-for-tat policy towards the government. As part of this policy, frequent workouts and boycotts of parliament continued. Awami League continued the same strategy in the 8th Parliament and BNP in the 9th Parliament. Opposition parties in Bangladesh do not consider Parliament the leading political institution. They need active and responsible behavior for its full development.²⁸ The opposition party feels it is the government's responsibility to run the parliament properly, and they have to hasten its downfall from within and without. This attitude encourages the opposition parties to stage walkouts and boycotts. Although he boycotted the parliament on various issues, he joined the session to protect his membership as soon as his absence approached 90 days. As such, the opposition parties join the parliament to protect their membership.²⁹

Khaleda Zia was in the parliament on the first day of the ninth parliament on January 25, 2009. Opposition four-party alliance led by Khaleda staged a day walkout protesting the President's speech.³⁰

Before joining on the last day, Khaleda Zia spoke for 3 hours and 25 minutes on all four days of her previous six days of presence; what is noteworthy is that in each of the fifth to the subsequent four parliaments (except the sixth), the presence of the opposition party decreases. In contrast, the participation rate of the government party and the number of government MPs increase. In this case, the leader of the opposition party is the leader. A widely used saying of the opposition in Bangladesh is that we are not allowed to speak in Parliament. In this case, it should be remembered that the number of members of the government party is high and heated exchange of words and throwing of pens, files, and chairs happens in every parliament of the world.³¹

iv) The Numerical Strength of the Opposition Parties

In 1973, during the journey of the Bangladesh Parliament, the number of opposition party members was minimal. Only seven opposition members were in the 315-member Parliament (including 15 women members of reserved seats). The ruling BNP had 220 members in the second parliament (including 30 members from reserved women's seats). On the other hand, only 39 members of the main opposition Awami League were elected. In the third parliament, the ruling party, the Jatiya Party, won 213 seats (including 30 women members of reserved seats), and the main opposition Awami League won 76 seats. The fourth parliament also shows a significant disparity in numbers between government and opposition parties. In this Parliament, the ruling party, the Jatiya Party, won 281 seats (including 30 members of reserved seats for women), and the Combined Opposition won only 19 seats.³²

This scenario changed in the fifth and seventh parliaments. A distinctive feature of the Fifth Parliament over other parliaments is the presence of a solid and organized opposition party. The opposition won 160 of the total 330 seats in the fifth parliament. The opposition party had a strong position in the seventh Parliament as well. Members of the opposition party were elected in 157 of the total 330 seats in this parliament. In the fifth and seventh parliaments, the opposition gained a competitive position. The numerical difference between the government and opposition parties was 91.23, 54.85, 41.51, 79.40, and 90 percent in the first, second, third, fourth, and sixth parliaments, respectively.³³

In contrast, this difference was only 4.85 percent in the fifth and seventh parliaments. The numerical disparity between the government and opposition parties has reached the lowest level. As a result, the pressure of the government party on the opposition party is reduced. Numeracy encourages the two sides to fight against each other. The increase in the number of opposition parties in the fifth and seventh parliaments encouraged them to consolidate their positions in

the parliament to raise their voices and express their demands, explanations, and views and, from time to time, to walk out and boycott the parliament. The disparity in numbers between the government and opposition parties increased significantly in the eighth and ninth parliaments. The government party won more seats than the opposition party. The extreme growth in numbers disheartened and demoralized the opposition. In 1958, the Deputy Speaker (Shaheed Ali) had to die after being injured in such a situation in this territory as well. In this situation, however insignificant the number of opposition parties is, it is natural that the National Parliament will become lifeless due to their continued boycott. The people of this country always expect to see a vibrant parliament with the participation of the ruling party and the opposition party. In the 5th (91-96) parliament, the government passed two bills, and the opposition unprecedented in the country. In that parliament, Khaleda Zia is the leader of the parliament, and Sheikh Hasina is the leader of the opposition in the parliament. Opposition parties boycotted parliament to protest vote rigging and indecent taunts by a minister. In the first session of the 7th (1996-2001) parliament, the first heated debate started when the opposition leader pointed fingers at the ruling party MPs as ‘shut up.’³⁴

v) Opposition Parties Aim to Influence Voters and Public Opinion

MPs fight within the House. Although their role is within the room, the main target is the ordinary people and public opinion of the country outside. Many of the conflicts within parliament are aimed at voters outside. Awami League in the fifth parliament and BNP in the seventh Parliament staged most walkouts and boycotts as part of their anti-government movement strategy. In the fifth parliament, the opposition started a prolonged boycott to protest an insulting speech by the then-information minister. Later, the opposition raised the demand for a deterministic caretaker government. For the implementation of this, various programs such as protests, hartals, long marches, sieges, etc. have been taken. At one point, the opposition party decided to resign from the parliament.³⁵ As the agitation intensified the opposition’s chances of returning to parliament diminished. It is then argued that since the government is collapsing, it is pointless to return to Parliament. As a result, no opposition parties returned to parliament before the dissolution of parliament. Almost the same thing happened in the Seventh Parliament. On July 5, 1999, the opposition went on a walkout in protest against a decision by the president. This walkout later turned into a long-term boycott. The opposition BNP, the Jatiya Party (Ershad), and the Jamaat started boycotting the parliament on August 28, 1999, to protest against the transit to India. Then, the BNP developed close ties with the other opposition parties, especially the Jatiya Party (Ershad) and the Jamaat.³⁶

The government was separated from the people. The opposition parties implemented programs like strikes, blockades, sieges, etc. As part of this

movement, the opposition did not join the parliament. After the disastrous results in the national elections of December 2018, the BNP was divided. A large section of the party does not favor keeping BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia in jail and going to parliament. They favor releasing Khaleda Zia through a behind-the-scenes 'political compromise' in return for 'legitimizing' the government by joining parliament. Influential Western diplomats have repeatedly held formal and informal meetings with top party leaders in parliament. Some BNP leaders have suggested that collecting responsibility in the movement will be challenging. Parliament can be joined as part of the movement. This will benefit the team. Six MPs of the BNP went to the parliament and made many important speeches and, if necessary, boycotted the session to attract the world's attention. The issues of election irregularities can be brought up to the locals and foreigners through domestic meetings and in the Parliament.³⁷

vi) Anti-depressed MPs

The opportunity for a member of the opposition to play an influential role in the legislative process of Parliament is minimal. The rules of procedure provide little time and opportunity for them to contribute to discussions of pressing issues, rising questions, deciding important policies, etc. The scope of work of opposition MPs as members of various parliamentary committees is also limited. Members of opposition parties cannot contribute significantly to the development of constituencies. The opposition MPs are not only in the minority in the parliament but also marginal within their party. There is constant pressure from the top echelon of the party and party leaders who have failed to win the parliamentary elections to resign or take to the streets.

On the one hand, they are unable to make an effective contribution to the Parliament; on the other hand, they are cornered within the party. This situation depresses them. Their situation is. Much like British MP Ken Weetch said, 1 catch the slates as they fall off the roof—frustration, failure, and pressure forces opposition MPs to resort to negative tactics like workouts and boycotts.³⁸

The Rationale of Walkouts and their Effect on Establishing Good Governance

Boycotts and walkouts can occur even in effective and successful parliaments. However, these are exceptional cases in those parliaments. Members boycotted Parliament and walked out to express their protest and dissent. Nevertheless, boycotts and walkouts are not exceptions in Bangladesh. These are familiar, regular, and everyday occurrences. Additionally, walkouts and boycotts have been ignored in several post-Nineties parliaments.³⁹ Democracy cannot be institutionalized without a functioning national parliament and opposition parties. As we know, the 11th Parliament has the highest number of political party representatives. The everyday activities of the Parliament are also going

on. There is no tendency of the opposition party to boycott the parliament. Nevertheless, parliament is not coming alive. The most alarming thing is that the interest of the familiar people in the activities of the National Parliament in Bangladesh has now decreased. The role of Parliament is becoming increasingly secondary in state policy-making. The existence of the sovereign parliament is about to disappear. This is by no means suitable for democracy.

According to political scientists, it is necessary to reap the benefits of a parliamentary democratic system, a strong opposition party, through which the balance of power will be ensured.⁴⁰ This possibility is possible in the 11th parliament formed in this country after the incredible victory of the Awami League. It is at a weak stage. The discussion on this issue started immediately after the election. After the formation of the 11th Parliament, this discussion got more branches. Almost everyone concerned said the ball is now in the government party's court, they must take practical steps to make the parliament effective. According to the information from the Parliament Secretariat, the then main opposition party, BNP, set a record for boycotting the Parliament during the ninth Parliament. Out of 418 working days, they were absent for 342 days. Before this, the then-opposition Awami League members were absent for a maximum of 223 days in the eighth Parliament. That parliament ended in 373 working days. Before this, the total working days of the Seventh National Assembly were 382 days in five years. At that time, the then-opposition BNP boycotted for 163 days. After the return to parliamentary democracy, the total working days of the first parliament, i.e., the fifth parliament, were 400 days in five years. At that time, the opposition Awami League boycotted parliament for 135 days.⁴¹

However, we see that the culture of exclusion has gone, but the parliament has yet to be effective. As a result, there needs to be better governance. The Executive Department and the Judiciary Department are also being talked about. Naturally, the question may come from this situation: what is the way out? Initially, we want the responsible behavior of the government party concessions if necessary. Once this is confirmed, there is no room for further discussion. However, this responsible behavior, this concession mentality, will not come suddenly. That is why the entire political system needs to be reformed. This is a big task, and political parties and leadership are interested in something other than this task. There is also an intense discussion of whether they bring MPs outside the party circle. Experts are giving different opinions and suggestions on this. The demand to change the much-discussed Article 70 of the Constitution is also long-standing. The main feature of the parliamentary system is the complete and active presence and lively debates of the government and opposition parties. In contrast, the sole dominance and control of the BNP in the fifth and eighth parliaments and the Awami League in the seventh, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth parliaments make the parliamentary system a laughing

matter.⁴² The absence of opposition parties and monotonous Parliament without debates make the whole system unattractive and undignified. Public interest in parliament under the influence of the ruling party largely dissipates. While excessive boycotts and walkouts add harmful elements to the evolution of the country's parliamentary and democratic system, the lack of presence of opposition parties and a culture of walkouts, if absent, creates the possibility of a fading parliamentary tradition or even good governance.⁴³ There is scope for obstruction in the establishment.⁴⁴

Dhiraj Kumar Nath has identified eight major parameters of good governance which has been depleted in the following picture.⁴⁵

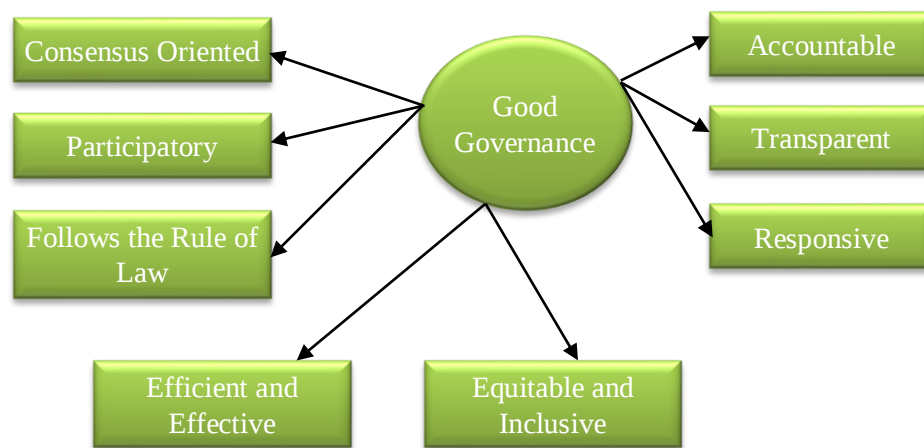


Figure- 03: Major Parameters of Good Governance

Conclusion

The effectiveness of parliament depends on the spontaneous participation of the parliament. An appraisal of the above discussion regarding the 10th parliament depicts that quorum crisis, the constant exercise of walkouts and boycotts, discretionary control over the Members by the Executive Head, MP's inefficiency in conducting parliamentary activities, procrastination in forming the standing committees, and their irregular meetings held the parliament ineffective. Although the opposition party is vital in ensuring an effective parliament, the opposition's walkout and boycott tendency crippled this institution. In the history of Bangladesh politics, both the ruling and the opposition parties barely show any tolerance to each other to run the failed to establish responsible government. Instead, the executive head exercises control over the House. Influential parliamentary committees reflect the functions and standards of parliament and ensure the government's accountability and responsibility. After the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990, Bangladesh experienced the functioning of seven parliaments. The problems discussed above were found in almost all the parliaments; the difference was in

its extent. However, if this practice continues, the parliament will fail to achieve the desired form of government.

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- ²⁴ Rounaq Jahan and Inge Amundsen, "The Parliament of Bangladesh: Representation and Accountability" *Op.cit.*
- ²⁵ The Mutiny in 1957 compelled the British colonial power to rethink their administrative arrangement in India. They felt it necessary to allow the native people in a legislative process. Sir Bartle Frere, a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council commented: 'The addition of the native element has, I think, become necessary owing to our diminished opportunities of learning through indirect channels what natives think of our measures and how the native community will be affected by them. It is a great evil of the present system that the Government can rarely learn how its measures will be received or how they are likely to affect even its European subjects till criticism takes the form of

settled and often bitter opposition' (Quoted in M. Rashiduzzaman, *Pakistan: A Study of Government and Politics*, Ideal Library, Dhaka 1967, pp. 1-2). The Indian Council Act of 1861 enabled the Indian members for the time to be associated with the legislative bodies.

²⁶ Nizam Ahmed, 'Parliament-Executive Relations in Bangladesh', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 3(4): 70-91 at 90, Mohammad Mohabbat Khan & Syed Anwar Husain (1996) Process of democratization in Bangladesh, *Contemporary South Asia*, 5:3, 319-334 at p 331, DOI: 10.1080/09584939608719799 (1997)

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³⁷ Chowdhury and Hasanuzzaman, "Constructive Alternatives to Hartals", *Beyond Hartals Towards a Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, UNDP, 2005, pp. 69-70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury, "Civil Society and Political Party Process in Bangladesh", in Mizan R. Khan & Mohammad Humayun Kabir, *Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh* (Dhaka : Academic Press and Publishers Limited, 2002), p. 63.

⁴⁰ The parliament must become independent and effective to make the system of checks and balances work and ensure the transparency and accountability of the executive branch. The parliament members must focus on law-making and not be involved in local development, which is a violation of the Constitution, as per the High Court verdict of Anwar Hossain Manju vs Bangladesh. A Code of Conduct must also be framed for MPs to prevent conflict of interest along with a Privilege Act, as mandated by Article 78 of the Constitution. [Source: Badiul Alam Majumdar, "What is required for Bangladesh's democracy to flourish?", *The Daily Star*, 19 February 2022.

⁴¹ Jalal Firoj, 'Walkouts and Boycotts from the Fifth and the Seventh Parliaments of Bangladesh: Trends, Causes and Impacts', *The Journal of Social Studies*, Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka, No. 135, July-September 2012.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ 'Good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlighten policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of the government accountable for its action; and a strong civil society participating in the public affairs; and all behaving under rule of law.' 'Good governance involves the self-organizing and inter organizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state'. 'Good governance means the effective management of a country's social and economic resource in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable equitable'. 'Good governance is the exercise of economic, political, administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It encompasses mechanisms, process and institutions through which citizens' groups articulate their interests exercise their legal rights, meet their legal obligations'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Dhiraj Kumar Nath, *Guidelines for Good Governance* (Dhaka: CIRDAP, 2018), p. 34.

Chapter 05

Challenges and Prospects of Democratic and Political Institutionalization in Bangladesh

Institutionalization can be ensured by various institutions, including in any political system, and by the correct arrangement and functioning of these institutions to exercise political power.¹ Building a political system can only be done when institutions are developed and function properly. Emphasizing the importance of institutionalization, political scientist SP Huntington believed that forming political institutions and developing political systems are synonymous. In this regard, it can be observed that in developing countries, including Bangladesh, there is no practice of institutionalizing democracy and representative democratic institutions.² Since the founding of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream of establishing democracy after independence has repeatedly encountered many obstacles. The two essential elements of democracy are ensuring equal opportunities for everyone to gain power in society so that people can enjoy universal freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. Equally, to create opportunities, it is necessary to create opportunities for regular elections and universal suffrage, with no room for repression. Democracy is the only form of government in which political opponents and minorities can express their views and influence policy-making.³

Institutionalization occurs when an activity or organization becomes prestigious, widely known, or even widely accepted. They argue that by applying this concept to the bottom line of the party system and identifying its various dimensions, more institutionalized systems will be more stable.⁴

A political party must be well institutionalized to reach many people. Institutionalized systems have appropriate structures, rules, regulations, and hierarchies. In Bangladesh, there are more than 100 political parties. However, all parties are going through a moment without signs of full institutionalization. In this chapter, I will find the theories, challenges, and prospects of democratic and political institutionalization in Bangladesh.

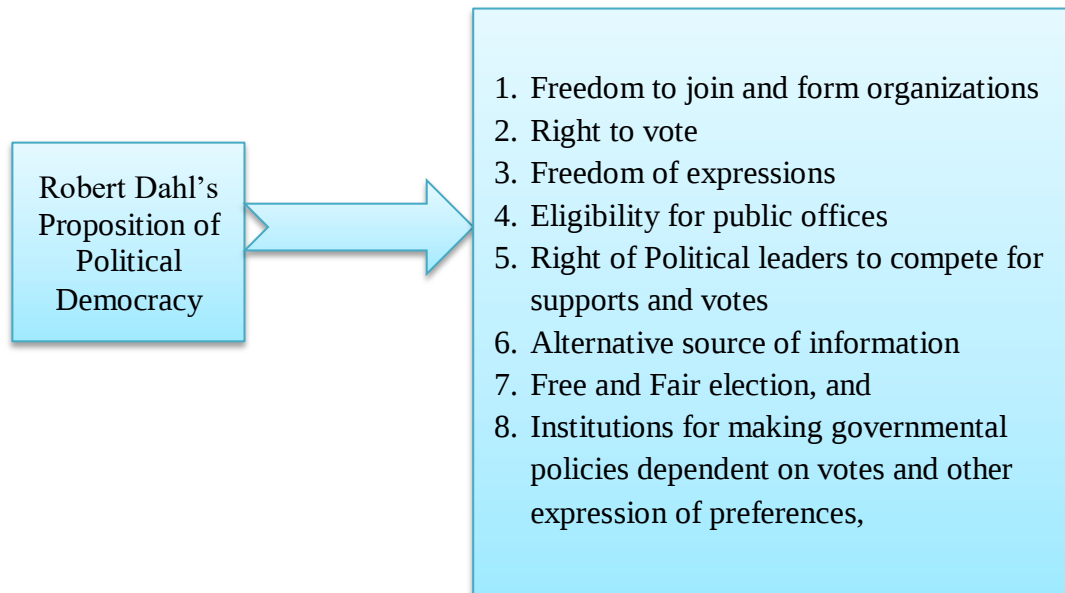
Democratic Institutionalization

According to Freedom House, most of the countries have been committed to changing governments through electoral democracy for more than half a century. Different thinkers have expressed different views on the institutionalization of democracy.⁵

Larry Diamond and M.F. Plattner⁶ mention 5 conditions for liberal democracy, namely: Basic Liberties; Rule of law; Independence and impartiality of the judiciary; Accountability of other political institutions; and Freedom of press.

Robert Dahl⁷ mentions some conditions, namely:

Freedom to organize and join organizations;
 Right to vote;
 Freedom of expression;
 Right to competition; and
 Free and fair elections



Source: Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Crisis* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.

Figure- 04: Proposition of Political Democracy

Therefore, the following conditions for democratic institutionalization of Bangladesh can be mentioned based on discussion. The conditions are-

Free and fair elections
 Rule of law
 Basic civil liberties
 Accountability

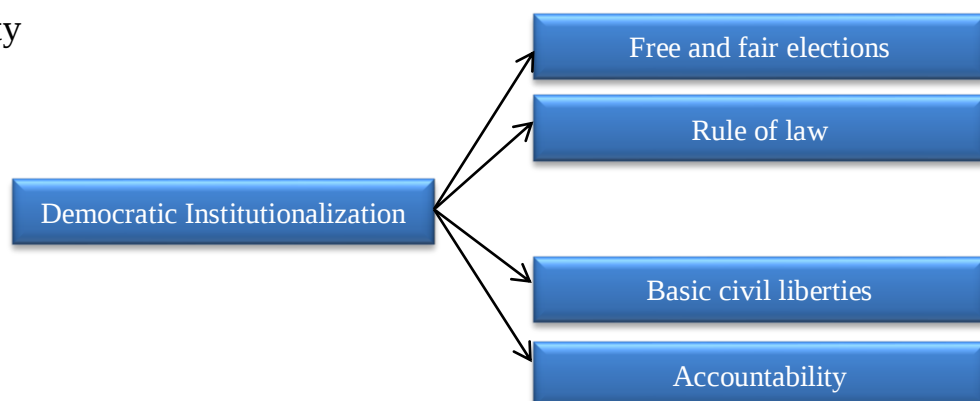


Figure- 05: Proposition of Democratic Institutionalization

A German researcher named Merkel has set up such a theoretical framework for measuring democracy. He created his ideal type and named it 'embedded liberal democracy'.⁸ Five key elements are prioritized there, which are: Holding elections at regular intervals and making elections fair ensure the participation of all citizens to create an open political environment, preserve the right to freedom of speech, express opinions, and join organizations.

Treating all equally, establishing legal defense against arrest, deportation, and interference with the privacy of others to ensure civil rights; To frame the lawful activities of the state; The establishment of a structure of government with established officials.

Many political scientists have suggested simplifying the democratic process and argued for using three criteria. One of them is to promote the qualities of candidates running for election. The second is to ensure the people's political freedom, and the third is to establish the rule of law.⁹ They believe that if these three aspects can be fully implemented, a suitable democracy can be established.

Challenges and Realities of Democratic Institutionalization in Bangladesh

The institutionalization of democracy can be judged based on the following indicators concerning the theoretical analysis of the institutionalization of democracy.

i) Challenges of conducting a free, fair, and impartial election

Free and impartial elections are considered one of the prerequisites for institutionalizing democracy. If the representatives are not appropriately elected and reflect the people's will, the State's administrative measures cannot be effective. If the election itself is problematic, the authority of elected officials will be called into question and even demonstrate weakness in important government decisions. If elections are free and fair, if people can freely exercise their right to vote without unlawful influence, and if the Election Commission has independent control over election administration without being subject to the government, if it can govern, then the entire parliament, including officials, can emerge as an institution that reflects the sovereignty of the people. Bangladesh was never a fully independent regime after gaining independence. During the 1973, 1979, 1986, and 1988 general elections, the government managed and controlled all electoral processes on behalf of the Election Commission.¹⁰

After the end of 15 years of military rule, the context of change in the democratic system was created in Bangladesh. The experience of widespread vote rigging in elections held during the military regime came to be considered a demand of the pro-democracy movement for a nonpartisan caretaker government.

February 27, 1991, for the first time after the Independence of Bangladesh, a free, fair, and impartial election was held under the EC. The government elected by the people's right to vote was restored, and the judiciary of the democratic process started again in the country. In September 1991, the 12th Amendment to the constitution was adopted in a historic step with the absolute support of all in the National parliament, and the parliamentary system was re-introduced in the country.

In the elections held in this country since 1991, 1996, 2001, 2008, 2014, and 2018, the government was formed mainly under the leadership of Awami League, and BNP, and the leadership of the system of two parties is established in practice. Since then, BNP and AL have taken opposing positions. However, unfortunately, they have not been able to promote the necessary and appropriate role in institutionalizing the party system in our country. It is worth mentioning that after the 1991 election, the then-ruling party, BNP, and the main opposition party, AL, failed to fulfill their belief in restoring parliamentary democracy.

Eleven parliamentary elections were held in Bangladesh after independence. The first was under the direction of the AL, and the second, third, and fourth were under the military governments of General Zia and Ershad, respectively. The sixth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth legislative elections occurred under democratically elected governments. The fifth, seventh, and eighth parliamentary elections occurred under the neutral caretaker government. The nine-parliament election took place under a different model of an interim government backed by the military. However, although the elections were held under a caretaker government, they were not controversial.¹¹

ii) Challenges in establishing the Rule of Law

A constitution containing provisions on parliamentary democracy, a multi-party system, and fundamental liberties was drafted in 1972, shortly following the country's declaration of independence. However, after three years it was placed under military control and remained so for the following fifteen years. The restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, which followed the end of military dictatorship, intended to reinstate the rule of law. If the government sustains partisanship at all levels of civil administration and lower courts, corruption will spread widely. The state's rule of law has received very bad ratings in polls conducted by several foreign organizations.¹²

iii) Jurisdiction

Independence of Judiciary was expected when democracy was established in 1991. But, a parliamentary system of government was reintroduced. The bill to separate the judiciary failed to pass in the legislature. Therefore, various issues related to the appointment of judges cannot escape the influence of the executive branch. Two chief justices led interim governments in 1991, 1996, and 2001. This organizational separation is necessary to ensure the

independence of the judiciary.

Political leaders have complete influence over judicial activists in lower courts in Bangladesh. Judges and magistrates direct their activists under government control, mainly through recruitment rotation, promotions, etc.

AL and BNP are committed to building an independent and objective judiciary, especially during election campaigns. Finally, the judiciary was separated from the executive on 1 November 2007, at the initiative of the Fakhurddin's interim government. However, the independence of the judiciary still has many tasks to complete. The judicial system is always influenced by the government, which hinders the institutionalization of democracy.¹³

iv) Civil and Police Administration

In a democratic system, political leadership is provided by the government, and it is the responsibility of the government and bureaucracy to carry out this responsibility.¹⁴ Both will carry out their duties within their respective limits, just as officials faithfully carry out the government's policies. Politicians will not influence day-to-day administrative work. Appointing and promoting civil servants based on merit is necessary, but ruling party politicians have recently taken control of appointments and promotions. The Public Service Commission has been widely criticized for its involvement. Members of the ruling party are appointed as chairmen of the Service Commission. Recently, the opposition party has raised various complaints regarding the impartiality of the president and members of the PSC.¹⁵

Although the previous caretaker government of Fakhruddin Ahmed had undertaken this reform process, help was still needed to implement it. It is important to note that the government wants to see people of its choice join the administration.

In almost all areas of police administration, corruption has increased to a greater extent. There is discrimination in recruitment and promotion, which goes against the basic conditions of democracy. It is suggested that the fifth case will only progress if the police accept bribes. The government uses the police as its face.

v) Violence and Political Vendetta

Observing the level of violence in the last six elected governments can be seen as one of the obstacles to the institutionalization of democracy. There was much violence before and after the election. For example, in May 2004, opposition party Ahsonullah Master was shot dead by a gan-man during a public meeting. On 21 August 2004, 23 people, including AL leader IV Rahman, were killed, and Sheikh Hasina was also injured in this attack. The murder of these senior leaders was not adequately prosecuted.¹⁶ After the BNP returned to power in 1991, they declared war on Eashed's former Minister. Most of them were jailed for various corruption charges.¹⁷

After AL returned to power in 1996, she filed a lawsuit against Begum Zia's family members and former ministers but also against thousands of leaders and activists across the country, using various provisions of the Sole Powers Law and the Penal Code. Freedom of speech and movement is not guaranteed, which impedes democracy.

vi) Establishment of Civil Society

One of the conditions for consolidating and institutionalizing democracy is establishing an independent and functional society within the political system, as it forms the institutional foundation of democracy. Political organizations become democratic evaluation agencies, eliminating the arbitrary use of power and authority and creating legitimacy to control consciousness, interests, awareness, trust, citizens' confidence, and activities in political-ideological issues. Civil society must remain neutral by freeing itself from the entanglement of partisan interests. But some civil society always tries to speak up for truth and justice. While expressing independent views, civil society often faces the government's wrath.¹⁸

Political Participation and Accountabilities

Political participation refers to any action aimed at influencing government policy governance and the election of political leaders.¹⁹ These rights are constitutionally recognized in Bangladesh. However, in practice, the exercise of that right could be improved in many ways.

i) Absence of Democracy in party structure

Political parties in Bangladesh face several problems in implementing internal democracy. Internal democracy seems to be absent in political groups. The charters of major political parties specifically stipulate the institutions of the democratic system, internal party management, job descriptions of affiliated levels, and the selection process for party leaders and workers. However, in many cases, these rules and regulations must be followed. The top-down planning process and democratic selection of leaders in organizations remains illusory. Annual party councils and major party congresses should be convened regularly. When convening the party council, the election of leaders and party structure also seemed irregular. In this way, the party leadership elects itself.²⁰ In the absence of freedom of election, the levels, structures, and permanent members of the two parties, Awami-League and BNP, can only find one other solution than handing over all power and authority to the leaders. In this reality, important executive positions and appointments are assigned to the party leader. Directives from higher structures consider the priorities of other party cells, such as the working committee. In this way, authoritarian behaviors of party leaders appear in the main parties. The privatization of power takes place based on existing kinship relationships and impositions. In addition to intra-party

authoritarianism, Article 70 of the Bangladesh Constitution subjects parliamentarians, including elected party representatives, to the party's leadership, thereby losing their right to freedom of speech within the party or parliament. For this reason, reality has made changes in authoritarian behavior and democratization of party structures ineffective.²¹

ii) Political Opportunism

The culture of political opportunism has a long history in Bangladesh. In actuality, it now becomes a component of our governmental structure. In fact, political opportunism is “a trend of thought, or a political tendency, seeking to make political capital out of situations with the main aim being that of gaining more influence, prestige, or support, instead of truly winning people over to a principled position or improving their political understanding.”²² A new political environment in the nation arose following the War of Liberation. Most of Bangladesh's political parties rely on opportunism due to a lack of due alliance and practice in their course of action. If there is a slight loss of interest by this, they start harboring animosity towards their party. Finally, they cut ties with the party and infiltrated some other party, especially the government party. They are busy getting various privileges from the government party. As a result, political parties are only a means of personal self-interest. In recent decades, political parties have not seen only meaningful activity in establishing values in society and providing public guidance for determining goals. Because of their muscle power, they can gain access to various benefits and patronage for themselves and distribute it to their supporters by creating a path of infiltration into the country's main parties and spreading political influence. Moreover, the dependence on muscle power for political reasons gives rise to various adversities, and the political influence of harmful elements outside the party structure creates ambition.²³

iii) Nomination Process and Nomination Trade

Unfortunately, it can be observed in Bangladesh that the nomination process of vital political parties still needs to be completed according to the demands of the grassroots level or the procedure followed in the party's constitution. In this way, the candidature of dedicated workers and qualified party organizers should be addressed in the nomination process for these parties. On the eve of the National Assembly elections, a tendency to change political identity and even change parties can be observed among opportunistic politicians and factions to gain candidature. Several industrialists, business people, and debtors became among the nominations of the significant process. Political parties make it easy for these individuals to get nominations with the support of party authority. In the context of the party leadership taking over the nomination process in political organizations, the candidacy of truly representative candidates are proportionally reduced, and the election right to select dedicated candidates is

underlined.²⁴

iv) Unfair Party Funding and Financial Management

People are always in the dark about the funding sources and financial arrangements of political parties in Bangladesh. Indeed, these parties' income, expenditure, and account statements are disclosed only with the parties' financial systems clearly defined and transparent. Independent parties collect money from any source and their funds. Thus, there have been allegations of unethical fundraising to meet the party's day-to-day expenses and finance election campaigns, and due to political conflicts between parties and conflicting policies, spending limits imposed on election campaigns are often violated. It is worth noting that on the eve of the National Assembly elections, the party nomination process turned into an investment in which new candidates were nominated on an issue basis.²⁵

v) Lack of Implementation of Election Promises

Fulfillment of promises made to voters during the election campaign. Political parties maintain power by forming coalitions. The election manifesto is a guideline for implementing their policies and programs in all these parties. However, in this country's context, the successful implementation of policy commitments is rarely recognized. In many cases, there is a significant gap between the electoral promises of political parties and their capabilities. The recent election manifesto contains exciting promises. However, after coming to power, the ruling political party proved lax in respecting and implementing these promises.²⁶

vi) Patron–subordinate Relationship

Clientelism is very active in Bangladesh's political party system and institution-building process. The feudal trait of extreme social and economic equality is frequently seen in many areas of social and political organization. The rural, urban, and urban settings suggest a patronizing scene element of unequal class relations.²⁷ Parties seek support from local patrons and recruit their supporters to carry out political activities and campaigns. This element of failure in the party organization process leads to party defections and weakens its moral foundation. This feature promotes infighting, nepotism, and corruption in forming real parties and electoral politics, creating obstacles to institutional consolidation or institutionalization of political parties.²⁸

vii) Politics of Hartal

The emergence of the two-party system after 1991, the ongoing conflict, and the conflictual relationship between the two main parties in politics have hurt the party system and the political process in the country. Although democratic parliamentary structures have been adopted in 20 countries, their ineffectiveness

has led to authoritarian attitudes, political protest, and protest behavior. As a result, hartal culture has taken root, and hartal is continuously used as a political weapon in the name of constitutional rights.²⁹

viii) Violent Politics, Judiciary Politicization, and Caretaker Government Issues

In the context of distrust in the electoral system following the election of the fifth parliament and especially the subsequent elections, a neutral, non-partisan interim government was put in place in the form of a constitution. All political parties, including the Awami League, demanded a caretaker government. They did not participate in the February 15, 1996 elections and continued to demand the formation of an interim government. The BNP won the sixth National Assembly election on February 15, 1996, and formed the government. However, in the end, he was forced to accept the opposition party's request for a caretaker government. He introduced the caretaker government by proposing the Thirteenth Amendment on June 12, 1996; Awami League formed the government as stated in the constitution. In 2001, elections were held under an interim government, and the BNP came to power.³⁰ This provisional government was widely viewed with suspicion. The 2006 interim government and the military-backed 2007 interim government were also controversial.³¹

Politicians and business people have suffered psychologically, socially, politically, and financially from harassment by the military-backed interim government in 2007. They do not want to see another unconstitutional government in the name of the provisional government. According to them, if there is a constitutional government, they can report injustice and illegal harassment and file complaints with politicians and administrative officials. However, an unconstitutional government can only do this if it is accountable to the people. Under an unconstitutional government, they have no legal recourse. It was also observed that there was factionalism in the apex judiciary due to the requirement that the chief adviser of the caretaker government should be the last retired chief justice. In a historic ruling on May 10, 2011, the court struck down the First Amendment. Constitution and declared the interim government unconstitutional. The Supreme Court ruled against including judges in the interim government. In this context, the Fifteenth Amendment abolished the new parliamentary system.

Institutionalize democracy within each political party. It is necessary to have democratic culture internally so managers and workers can have a democratic spirit. In recent times, the political landscape and electoral contests have increasingly turned to violence, intimidation, the influence of black money, the use of force, and, in some cases, the use of inorganic weapons against political opponents. As a result, the country's politics have become hostage to terrorism. It was alleged that, in many cases, competing ideologies of politicians were tolerated. Therefore, controversy over ideas of any morality turns into armed conflict. Such trends create severe problems and obstacles to healthy partisan

politics.³²

ix) Permanent Interest and Responsiveness

Most political parties in our country represent special interest groups. They always serve eternal interests. They protect their interests by expressing partisan ideology and attacking others. As a result, national interests are damaged and trampled upon. They often have to endure conflicts. Even responsiveness has become another critical issue for political parties in Bangladesh. Most political parties here have failed to show dedication and loyalty to the party's ideology and have become reactionary, imperialist, aggressive, influential, and factional. As a result, this process is interrupted. All kinds of progressive and liberal ideas and activities are gaining momentum.³³

x) Idealism

Every political party has specific ideas, goals, and objectives that it wishes to realize. These ideas, goals, and objectives make the party known to the people and rely on their support. Unfortunately, most of the political parties in Bangladesh are not idealistic and cannot frame their policies and programs appropriately and adequately to liberate the people.³⁴

Prospects of Institutionalizing Political Parties in Bangladesh

i) Necessary remedies and structural reforms

The problems mentioned above in the party system of Bangladesh create a need for more public trust and cause problems in public participation as well as creating contributions, awareness, and expressing demands in political parties. For this reason, the issue of practicing democracy in political party structures, which plays an essential role in the political and governmental process, is gradually neglected among intellectuals and consciousness, and ideas all follow an integrated and informed approach in this area. Operating the country's parliament and parliamentary system effectively and practically is impossible if political parties cannot be transformed into genuinely democratic institutions in action and ideology.³⁵

ii) Political Party Registration Process and Party Reform

A number of measures have been taken since the World War. This is the time to regain voters' trust in the political party system of the developed democratic world, in the nomination process, in election campaigns, and in transparency in financial activities. These include party registration, fair election laws, and state financial allocation to parties.³⁶

According to Article 21 of the Basic Law, the internal structure of German political parties confirms democratic procedures and practices. Canada has a formal process for forming and registering political parties. Through registration

regulations, parties follow a democratic process among workers, whereby each party delegate exercises his or her right to vote at the “National Leadership Congress.” In the UK, the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (which came into force in January 2001) introduced a new system of compulsory registration of political parties. Party system registration policies have been adopted in many countries across the developing world, including the subcontinent. There is a particular need for legislation for political parties in Bangladesh and proper registration of parties with the Election Commission.³⁷

iii) State Grants and Transparency

Protect the organizational strength of political parties, ensure transparency of financial procedures, minimize political opportunism, differentiate election campaigns of rival candidates, helping to eliminate and democracy streamline the party nomination process. It has been recommended to provide equal opportunities and allocation of funds to all election candidates subject to certain conditions of honest and fair funds for primary party election and fundraising campaign treatment in Bangladesh.³⁸ Regarding state grants for political parties, it is mentioned that part of the national budget can be earmarked to finance political parties, and the parties concerned have to submit to their audit or the parliament's public accounts committee. Legitimate sources of income and state grants can reduce personal influence within the party, and disclosure of the assets and income of party officials is a prerequisite for this. In this case, only those political parties that have won the required level votes in national elections can be eligible for state grants. Low tax benefits and media benefits are essential for these political parties. Direct donations and appropriations for electoral work are also necessary.³⁹

iv) Correspondence and related benefits are also considered

Indirect donations such as free postal facilities, use of auditoriums, and broadcasting for party candidates, as in Britain, are also worth considering. Political parties need to be supported for their party work and convention.⁴⁰

v) Political Education and Training

The political parties in this country do not have adequate structures to properly educate their leaders and workers about democratic politics. In this case, there must be a long-term and effective integration system for the party's training and research cells to participate in socializing relevant politicians. The needs and aspirations of the constituency's citizens are met, and representation is meaningful. It should be noted that electoral representatives must have a good understanding of the technical aspects of parliamentary procedure. This knowledge can be applied to the responsibilities imposed by the people, including participation in plenary sessions and the parliamentary committee system. In the political party charter, there needs to be an institutional

mechanism to properly plan and research important political, economic, and social issues of the country and share responsibilities related to establishing party members' good management through educational units. Ultimately, creating a just and pleasing environment in the country's political landscape depends on fair elections to address the systemic problems in Bangladesh. Just as the government party must actively create this environment, the opposition parties must step up and play a leadership role.⁴¹

The Process of Political Institutionalization in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a small country. It is an emerging democracy. This country's politics is institutionalized based on manufactured political cleavage that depends on founding. There are many ways to process political institutionalization in Bangladesh.

i) Regulate its citizen

The citizen is the most potent element in a country. If a citizen is conscious of their property and appeals for this, political parties must fulfill public demand and regulate political parties on the right track. Hence, regulating citizens is an essential feature of political institutionalization.

ii) Response flexibility to its citizen demand

With the change of time, new demands emerge in the citizens' minds, like democracy. If the government is not flexible for citizen demand or good governance, political-institutional is essential to solving this problem. The government must emphasize citizen demand, which is processed flexibly. For this reason, political institutionalization is very important.

iii) Distribute resources efficiently

The resources of a state are insufficient, and the proper use of these resources is a crucial issue of political institutionalization. The resources are properly used by other side people awareness and social empowerment is other features of political institutionalization.

iv) Adopt changing circumstances

Many changes are expected to promote better government and improve people's well-being; there are many changes in daily life, and political institutionalization favors all changes and adaptations to improved circumstances. An institutionalized political system addresses public opinion and promotes better government.

v) Ensure constant pattern of internal organization

In a state, many internal political organizations play an important role in running the actual government through institutionalization. Political parties are

recognized, and people know the main goals of a political party. This is why political institutionalization is essential for every country. Through institutionalization, the political party is freed from its principles.⁴²

vi) Ensure mass participation and mobilization

People participate in politics, and they become their rights and exercise their fundamental rights. The political party system ensures this activity. A recognized political party will help attract mass participation and growth in political life. This process of political mobilization is warranted. Political institutionalization is favored in this process.⁴³

vii) Exist orderly competition for power

In the democratic system, elections were held there, and political parties participated in these elections. By winning elections, political parties shape the exercise of power. Through political institutionalization, the exercise of power is an orderly change, and opposition parties play a cabinet role in the National Assembly. By institutionalizing politics, political parties exist within an orderly power structure. They work for the public good and try to improve political participation.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Almost all types of party systems exist in Bangladesh as a constitutional democracy. These are religious, secular, left-wing, and right-wing parties. Theoretically, such diversity is possible because the country has a democratic aesthetic. However, although the beauty of democracy is good in theory, the reality is different. Practically, democratic conditions do not prevail among political parties in Bangladesh. An undemocratic atmosphere prevailed inside and outside the party. There is a shadow of dynasticism in the major parties. Most elements of the full institutionalization of political parties need to be addressed.

For this reason, there was a chaotic atmosphere inside and outside the party. Each party has completed registration under the Representation of People's Order (RPO) but must comply with the orders of the Electoral Commission after registration. Despite the diversity in Bangladesh's political party system, the main goal of most parties is more than just the public interest to gain power. Due to a lack of power, each political party prefers irregularities over rules. Although the country enjoyed a competitive political environment after independence, it is no longer the same.

Free and fair elections are considered a legitimate and appropriate way to continue the political development of a nation, the orderly transformation of its system of government, and its overall democratic development. In order to strengthen the democratic system of Bangladesh by considering this opinion, the

election was chosen as an appropriate way in the 1972 constitution. A history review shows that eleventh national parliament election have been held here. Among these elections, the first election is followed by limited irregularities. Subsequently, the 2nd, third, and fourth parliamentary elections were held directly and indirectly under the military regime's control, so the elections could not be free, fair, and impartial. Electoral irregularities and corruption have been institutionalized instead of free and fair. As a result, democracy has been corrupted.

The fifth, seventh, and eighth National elections were free and fair as they were held under caretaker governments. As a result, the message of hope for democracy is seen to be transmitted. However, a democratically elected government held the sixth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth parliamentary elections, which sparked controversy. In fact, except for the elections held under the caretaker government, the incumbent government conducted the rest to consolidate its power and restore electoral irregularities and corruption. From the date of eleventh parliamentary election, it has been proved that in these elections, there was use of force, fake votes, terrorism and violence in polling stations, use of black money, kidnappings of polling and presiding officers, not allowing minorities to vote, other irregularities including patronage and media cues were noticeable. Although the journey of parliamentary democracy started in Bangladesh after independence for various reasons, this system did not survive after 1975. Though parliamentary democracy was re-established by consensus in 1991, the prerequisite for its institutionalization could not be fulfilled. The factors considered as one of the conditions for the institutionalization of democracy are not functioning correctly in the political structure of Bangladesh.

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Chapter 06

Violence and Party Conflicts in Bangladesh

Political violence is an alarming and growing phenomenon in many parts of the world. The severity of violence in Bangladeshi politics is widely debated domestically and internationally. Once again, politics is dominated by a winner-takes-all mentality. In Bangladesh's system, where the winning party enjoys a monopoly of power throughout its electoral mandate, the ruling party and its inner circle have become unparalleled centers of political power.¹ As the opposition's ability to act within the formal system is limited, political violence has become an indispensable part of changing political power. Bangladesh's politics are contentious, and the opposition has few opportunities to express itself within the formal political system. Political violence stems from a deep political culture of intolerance, antagonism, revenge, and arrogance. While differences of opinion between parties are common in democracies, in Bangladesh, they often lead to the use of an extreme form of violence, resulting in death, injury, and significant damage. Dynastic politics and the lack of democratic practice in the internal organization of political parties have created a very contradictory political situation in our country today. As a result, political conflict and violence remain stuck in a "vicious cycle."² In this chapter, violence and party conflicts in Bangladesh has been analyzed in various trend and nature.

Meaning of Violence and Conflict

Generally, conflicts mean a clash between individuals arising from a difference in thoughts, processes, attitudes, understandings, interest requirements, and even perceptions. A conflict results in a heated argument, physical abuse, and loss of peace and harmony. Violence is often understood as the use or threat of force resulting in injury, harm, deprivation, or even death.³ It may be physical, verbal, or psychological. In politics, this plays out in a range of ways; in some cases, parties will agree on goals but disagree on how to achieve them, and in other cases, parties will not agree on the facts of the disputes, obscuring any potential for problem-solving. There is a close relationship between conflict, competition, and cooperation.

According to Thomas Shelling, "Conflict, competition, and cooperation are inherently interdependent; conflict occurs when competing groups, goals, objectives, needs or values clash, and aggression, although not necessarily violence, is a result."⁴

According to Ronald Axtman, "Factionalism and political conflicts were accepted as an inherent aspect of a political community."⁵

James Madison says, "A faction by definition is injurious to the public good."⁶

Raymond W. Mack and C. Richard seems about political violence, "Political

conflict may occur as a behavior where actors behave in a confrontational way to promote their interests and stop other actors from obtaining their objectives.”⁷

According to these definitions, conflict can be defined as a threat or perceived threat to an individual’s interests, values, or needs. Politics also can be a source of conflict where it is inevitable that the public rarely sits incomplete. Politics produces winners and losers. This situation can be turned into political violence and conflict.

Trends of Political Violence and Party Conflicts in Bangladesh

The political history of the Indian sub-continent shows that the origin of violence in politics dates back to the British colonial era. The dramatic transformation of East Bengal to East Pakistan and finally to Bangladesh, under British and Pakistani rule, respectively, was a narration of violent struggles. The legacy of political violence was further perpetuated after independence. The period from 1971 to 1975 was turbulent, as elites with significant political power but few economic assets came to power in the newly independent country. Political violence becomes a means of capital accumulation. In the 1990s, Bangladesh began to practice a multiparty parliamentary political system.⁸ However, political violence in Bangladesh remains a tool to gain political supremacy. There are so many facets of political violence; it is difficult to put them together in a neat package to assess the trends of political violence in Bangladesh. Here, political violence will be considered in terms of four factors: (1) Killing, (2) disappearances, (3) torture, and (4) extra-judicial killings.

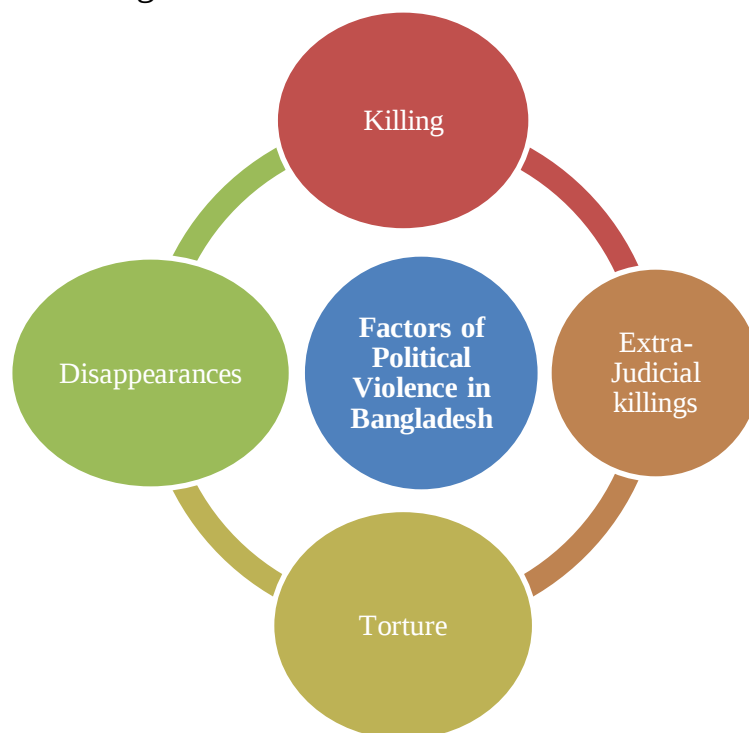


Figure- 06: Factors of Political Violence in Bangladesh

i) Political Killing

Violence, often resulting in killing, is becoming pervasive in Bangladeshi politics. Supporters of different political parties, and sometimes the supporters of different factions of one party, often clash with each other and police during rallies and demonstrations. The trend of political killing has started since our independence war. Pakistani military forces killed 30 lakh people of Bangladesh.⁹

They carried out merciless massacres across the country under a blueprint. They killed freedom fighters, political activists, students, teachers, farmers, laborers, and women. Hundreds of intellectuals were killed on December 14, 1971 to paralyze the Bengali Nation. 991 teachers, 13 journalists, 49 doctors, 42 lawyers, 16 writers, activists, and engineers were brutally killed.¹⁰ Even after independence, political killings did not stop in Bangladesh. Hundreds of political murders took place between 1972 and 1975.¹¹ Motul and Kadir, active members of the Chatra Union, were killed by the police on January 1, 1973. It is considered the first national murder in Bangladesh. On August 15, 1975, Bangobandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation of Bangladesh, and 42 members of his family were brutally Murdered.¹² It is a fierce chapter of our history. Another brutal massacre was organized on November 3, 1975, in Dhaka Central Jail. A group of Army killed national leaders, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M. Monsur Ali, and A.H.M Kamruzzaman. During Ziaur Rahman's rule (1975 to 1981), the military went through tremendous turmoil, successive coup attempts, unprecedented massacres, and horrific atrocities, an almost untold dark chapter of his region.¹³ One thousand one hundred forty-three soldiers and airmen were killed in the failed September to October 1977 coup. They were hanged in secret trials.¹⁴ There was a farce in the name of justice. 561 Air Force people were killed. Zia was killed in a military field coupe at Circuit House on May 30, 1981. During the Ershad regime (1982 to 1990), many people were killed in political violence and clashes. About 500 people were killed during the regime from 1990 to 1999.¹⁵

Dhaka grenade attack occurred at an anti-terrorism rally organized by Awami League on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004. The attack left 24 dead and more than 500 injured. The attack was carried out at 5:22 p.m. after Sheikh Hasina, the leader of the opposition, had finished addressing a crowd of 20,000 people from the back of a truck. The attacks targeted Awami League president Sheikh Hasina. She was injured in the attack. The involvement of the BNP-Jamaat-led government is still debated to this date.¹⁶

ii) Elections and Political Violence

Seven parliamentary elections have been held since the end of the military dictatorship in December 1990. However, no other election had so many deaths as the 10th parliamentary election. In 1996, the main opposition, Awami

League, and other political parties were excluded from the BNP election. 41 people lost their lives around the election that year. Around 38 people were killed in the 2001 election. There was no violence in the 2008 election.¹⁷ This election was held under the army-backed government. The BNP-led alliance held a 26-day blockade program in 6 phases from the day after the election schedule was announced on November 25, 2013, to the day before the election. At that time, 123 people lost their lives across the country. On January 5, 2014, 18 people were killed in political violence at different places on the Election Day. At last, 141 people had to die in that election. Twenty-two people died in 2018 in the 11th parliamentary election.¹⁸

iii) Political Violence disappearances and Extra-Judicial Killing

Although there were extra-judicial killings in Bangladesh earlier, the culture of extra-judicial killings became institutionalized after the BNP-Jamaat coalition government came to power in the October 2001 election. 44 people in 2001, 83 in 2002, 81 in 2003, 210 in 2004, 377 in 2005, and 362 in 2006 were victims of extra-judicial killings by law enforcement.¹⁹ In most cases, the victims of such extra-judicial killings are political opponents, especially Awami League leaders and supporters. This system was in Operation even during the military-backed caretaker government in 2007. 180 people in 2007 and 175 people in 2008 lost their lives at the hands of police forces. Awami League came to power in 2009. Unfortunately, this culture has not stopped. Two hundred twenty-nine people were victims of such murders in that year.²⁰ In the following years, there were reports of the disappearance of people at various levels, along with the gunfights. A human rights organization law and arbitration center report compiled data from various National dailies, saying 133 people were killed in gun fights, shootings, and police custody in 2010. On the other hand, in 2010, 44 people were abducted by law enforcement agencies. In 2011, the number of people killed in gun fights and police custody was 100. In the same year, 59 people were allegedly abducted by security people. In 2012, the number of deaths in the crossfire and law enforcement custody was 91. At that time, the number of missing persons was 56, of which four bodies were later found. In 2013, 208 people were killed by law enforcement agencies. One hundred thirty-seven people were killed in firing during clashes between Crossfire and police - RAB custody.²¹

In the same year, 58 people were abducted by law enforcement Agencies. According to the Center for Law and Arbitration, 44 people were victims of extra-judicial killing and assassinations in 41 days at the beginning of 2014. German newspaper Deutsche Velle says that 18 people died and 40 were missing in 2019, 17 in 2018 and 15 in 2017, 466 in 2018, and 162 in 2017 were killed. The statistics show that more than 317 people were killed in crossfire and disappearances yearly when the BNP was in power. According to the same statistics, this number peaked at 187 during the current Awami League government.²²

iv) Caretaker Government and Political Violence

After the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, the controversy over the caretaker government ended, and national elections were held three times under this system. However, the 14th Amendment of the Constitution was passed to make a person of choice the head of the caretaker government; the caretaker government led by Fakhruddin planned to stay in power for a long time. The caretaker government tried to control politics in the name of reforming political parties, and the military tried to control politics and political parties through the use of Intelligence Agencies; the supreme court's ruling (May 2011) declaring the caretaker system unconstitutional, etc., led to a new debate about the use of Intelligence and polarization of the caretaker government system 1996, politics was divided into two extremes and entered the caretaker government system. The situation moves gradually toward a political conflict. In 2013, 507 people were killed and about 22000 injured in political violence. On January 5, 2014, extreme political violence erupted. In 2015, clashes between the government and the opposition again took place, and Massive casualties occurred. One-even and minus-two formulas were also the result of political conflict.²³

v) Movement and Strike

Strikes, general strikes, blockades, or complete deadlocks are common features of Bangladesh politics. The opposition parties see the strike as the only way to pressure the ruling party. However, the Bangladeshi middle class and international Donor organizations consider strikes a distractive campaign. Every year, in the name of hartal, massive nationwide damages occur. As shown in the table below:

Table- 02: Hartal in Bangladesh (1947-2025)

Duration	Number of National Hartal	Number of Local and Regionals Hartal	Total Hartal
1947-1971	48	42	90
1972-1975 (August)	5	17	22
1975 (September)-1982 (March)	6	53	59
1982 (April)- 1990 (December)	72	256	328
1990 (December)- 1996 (March)	81	335	416
1996 (March)- 2001 (July)	59	275	334
2001 (September)- 2006 (October)	91	230	321
2006 (October)- 2009 (December)	0	1	1
2009 (December)- 2025 (October)	11	14	25
Total	373	1223	1596

Source: Compiled by Author from Daily Newspapers

Table- 03: Consequences of Political Conflicts and Violence (2001-2025)

Year	Death	Injured
2001	656	25770
2002	420	8741
2003	436	6281
2004	526	6235
2005	310	8997
2006	374	21265
2007	79	2685
2008	50	3185
2009	251	15559
2010	220	13999
2011	135	11532
2012	169	17161
2013	504	24176
2014	190	9129
2015	197	8312
2016	215	9053
2017	77	4635
2018	120	7051
2019	39	2689
2020	17	632
2021	157	10,883
2022	70	6914
2023	95	7690
2024	170	12220
2025 (Up-to October)	130	9570
Total	5607	254364

Source: Compiled by author from the Daily Newspapers and the Reports of Human Rights

Causes of Political Conflicts in Bangladesh

According to Alan. R. Ball, there are four leading causes of political conflict.²⁴ Those are:

a) Ideological difference

Ideological difference is another important cause of political conflict and

violence. When the ruling party and the opposition parties become different in ideological issues, this leads to unstable politics.²⁵

b) Economic disparity

The economy is the most essential element of a stable democracy. Economic and social disparity has become our country's leading cause of political violence and conflict. Every year, political conflict occurs as a result of economic disparity.²⁶

c) Religion and racial torture

According to Alan Ball, religion and racial torture also play an essential role as an element of political conflict in a nation. We can mention the example of the language movement and our independence movement.

d) Conflict of personality

Alan Ball also mentioned conflict of personality as one of the most important causes of political violence and conflict.

There are also other causes of political violence and conflict in Bangladesh.

i) Anti-Colonialism Movement

The conflicting trend of Bangladesh's current politics originates from the region's anti-colonial movements. The people of Bangladesh not only protested against colonialism but also struggled against the internal colonialism of Pakistan. Letter destabilizing the government, false promises, strikes, organized leadership, mass uprisings, and other conflicting cultures came to Bangladesh politics. Uncompromising politics was formed.²⁷

ii) Political, ideological issue

One of the most fundamental issues is the nation's identity. Awami League and the leftist party strongly believe in Bengali nationalism, which refers to the ethnic identity of the people. However, BNP and other like-minded rightist parties such as JP believe that the national identity must be based on geography first. This is because the Bangladeshi population, despite being Bengali ethnically, is geographically distinct and separate from the Bengali population living in West Bengal in India. Political parties cannot agree on any issue; hence, political violence continues. In our country, some parties are secular (AL, Jasad, NAP), some parties are pro-liberal Islam (BNP, Jatiya Party), some parties are Islamist (Jamaat- Islami), and some are left-wing (CPB, workers party).

iii) Disagree over state principles

After a long struggle and independence war, Bangladesh received National consensus on various issues. This is reflected in the Constitution by the four principles of nationalism, democracy, secularism, and socialism. However, our

country's political parties could not agree on the state principles. The secular Leftist and Communist parties always want to make the country a secular state where people of all religions will live peacefully. On the other hand, parties like the BNP, Jatiya Party, and Jamaat Islam emphasize Islamic identity. This conflict issue is revealed through the Fifth and Eighth Amendments of the Constitution. The changes brought by the Fifth Amendment are: At the beginning of the Constitution, Bismillah Hir Rahmanir Rahim, was added to the preamble. One of the most important state principles, secularism, was excluded. The 8th Amendment of the constitution made Islam the state religion.²⁸

iv) Military and civil relations

Not only during the Pakistani period but also after independence, Bangladesh was under military rule for a long time. Bangladesh witnessed widespread political violence and conflict during this military rule. Ayub Khan imposed the first military rule in Bengal in 1958. Ayub Khan abdicated military rule in the face of the mass movement in 1969. After independence, the second phase of military rule began in 1975 under the rule of the general Ziaur Rahman. It lasted till 1981. In 1982, the rule of military ruler Hussein Muhammad Ershad began again; it lasted till 1990. During this long military rule, widespread political violence occurred in the country. Many people lost their lives, and political instability was created.²⁹

v) Foreign policy

Ideological differences exist between the political parties of Bangladesh in foreign policy. Bangladeshi politicians are divided on how Bangladesh's relationship with India will Shape Up. BNP, Jamaat, and other Islamist parties favor the anti-India foreign policy. They feel that pluralistic India cannot be a friend of unitary Bangladesh. However, in recent times, those parties have shown a flexible attitude towards India. It is more politically strategic than thought and ideological. Extreme Islamist parties are against women's involvement in political life while Awami League, BNP, Jatiya party, and left-wing communist parties are supporters of women's involvement in the country's political, social, economic, and cultural development.³⁰

vi) Student politics and student movements

The political history of Bangladesh is the history of the student movement. The student political movement from 1947 to 1990 is particularly noteworthy. Students played a significant role in the anti-British movements, the language movement of 1948 to 52, the anti-Ayub movement, the independence movement, and the anti-Ershad democratic movement. Despite such historical contributions of students, student politics is now a controversial issue. This decline process of student politics started in the Pakistani period. The process of

alienating talented students from politics, using armed cadres in student policies, and making student organizations devoted to political parties began. The current student organizations in Bangladesh are divided into four categories. These are Awami League Bangladesh Chatra League, BNP Nationalist Chatra Dal, Jamaat Islami, Chatra Shibir, and various progressive Student Organisations (such as Chatra Front and Chatra Union). Political violence continued among these student union activists.³¹

vii) Use of yellow journalism and mass media

Mass media is the fourth organ of a country. The general people of the state get news and information about political activities through mass media. People get information about political party programs, policy-making committees, decision-making, etc in mass media. However, some newspapers and news media exaggerate the most common political events. As every journalist is personally supporter of some political parties published much misleading news. It is one of the reasons for political conflict and violence.³²

viii) Weakness of political institutions

Political conflict and violence can arise from the weakness of political institutions. Parliament plays a vital role in de-escalating conflict and violence. The Parliament of Bangladesh has made progress in many fields quickly, but the parliament has failed to solve political violence. Many people think that the parliament of Bangladesh could be more effective. The weak position of political institutions is one of the reasons for political violence.

ix) Lack of public support

Lack of public support is another essential reason for political violence. When a political party's popular support declines, it starts agitating against the government on various issues to gain public support and power. As a result of this type of agitation, political violence and conflict occur.

x) Lack of political Socialization

Political socialization is an important political element. If there is no proper and fair political socialization among the citizens and leaders of the state, disorder arises in politics. Political leaders cannot take proper action on essential topics like political programs, decision-making, party functions, elections, etc. It also occurs in political violence.³³

xi) Absence of active civil society

Civil society is one of the most essential elements of political ideology and socialization of every state. The absence of an active civil society in the political context of Bangladesh is one of the reasons for political violence. Due to the absence of civil society, political parties behave arbitrarily. This leads to

political violence.³⁴

xii) The crisis of national unity

General Ziaur Rahman amended Article 6 of the Constitution to change the citizens' national identity. In the original Constitution, the national identity was Bengali. He replaced Bengali with Bangladeshi. He gave two arguments for this change. First, Bangladeshi Bengalis can be distinguished from Indian Bengalis if they identify as Bangladeshi. Second, the Bangladeshi identity can also include small ethnic groups. This change led to disagreements between political parties which gave rise to political violence.³⁵

xiii) Suppression of the government party

In a democratic state, one party is constitutionally empowered to form the government, while others are opposition parties. On the one hand, the opposition parties try to form the government through various democratic activities and elections. The ruling party blocked the non-violent movement of the opposition parties through various repressions, which led to political violence.

xiv) Dynastic politics

Unfortunately, Bangladesh has had a poor tradition of growing leadership through democratic practice in the parties. Instead, the chiefs have been elevated to their position under the aegis of an institutionalized dynastic culture that effectively extended this undemocratic structure of powers to the party level and subsequent ruler at the state level.³⁶

xv) Politicization of bureaucracy

After independence, all political parties in power tried to create loyal bureaucracy through recruitment, promotion and punishment, as they can be used in election engineering. In case of Bangladesh law enforcement bodies are highly accused for using against the opposition.

xvi) Student, youth and other wings

Many political parties have a number of ancillary organizations, focusing on specific groups like students, youth, women, workers, or farmers. These organizations, both from Awami League and BNP are organized with a hierarchy of committees, under a president and a general secretary starting from the central level committee to union and word committees or to university, college, and student hall committees. Both organizations are divided into factions rallying under different leaders. Violence is endemic among the student political wings of the major national political parties, and between rival factions within the parties.³⁷

xvii) Lack of Political Trust

When the current prime minister of the country accuses the former prime minister of attempting to kill her, the political system lacks trust. When the leadership of the different political parties cannot sit together to work out a win-win situation out of the most simple issues, let alone the most difficult situations, there is no trust in the political system.

Resolution of Conflict

According to Allan. R. Ball, the following methods can be used as methods of conflict resolution:³⁸

a) Election

Elections work as a pillar in a democratic state. Fair and impartial elections are the lifeblood of democracy. Through fair elections, the government and opposition parties can take political power. If the elections are fair, the fear of political violence and conflict is reduced to a great extent.³⁹

b) Debate in the legislature

The legislature is an essential political organ of a state. Decisions are taken on all matters of the state in the legislature. Suppose the debate is ensured in the legislature. In that case, the leaders of the opposition parties and the general public can get the opportunity to give their opinions in making political decisions as well as give their opinions in the formulation of various laws. It reduces political violence and conflict.⁴⁰

c) Continuous functions of political institutions

Solid and active political institutions can reduce political violence and conflict. Various political institutions do various types of political activities. Political conflict and violence can be reduced if these institutions work correctly and effectively.⁴¹

d) Temporary solution (Win-win solution)

It is also another meaningful and effective solution to political conflict and violence. In this type of solution, the ruling and opposition parties can express their opinions. Moreover, both political parties are happy with the decisions they make.

There are some other solutions to political conflicts.⁴² They are:

i. Toleration

The coexistence of political parties is one of the most essential features of a democratic state. Political parties must be tolerant of each other in all areas, including political decision-making, law-making, budgeting, and political discussions. Tolerance can eliminate political violence.

ii. Avoidance

As a political leader, it is essential to have the ability to refrain from tactfully. Actions, criticism, and statements that can cause political violence. It can play an essential role in preventing political violence and conflict.

iii. Negotiation

In conflict resolution, you can and should draw on the same principles of collaborative negotiation used in deal-making. For example, you should aim to explore the interests underlying the parties' positions, such as a desire to resolve a dispute without attracting negative publicity or to repair a damaged business relationship. By brainstorming options and looking for tradeoffs across issues, you may be able to negotiate a satisfactory outcome to your dispute without the aid of outside parties.

iv. Mediation

In mediation, disputants enlist a trained, neutral third party to help them reach a consensus. Rather than imposing a solution, a professional mediator encourages disputants to explore the interests underlying their positions. Working with parties together and separately, mediators seek to help them discover a sustainable, voluntary, and nonbinding resolution.

v. Arbitration

In arbitration, which can resemble a court trial, a neutral third party serves as a judge who decides to end the dispute. The arbitrator listens to the arguments and evidence presented by each side and then renders a binding and often confidential decision. Although disputants typically cannot appeal an arbitrator's decision, they can negotiate most aspects of the arbitration process, including whether lawyers will be present and which standards of evidence will be used.

vi. Adjudication

Adjudication is a unique, fast-track statutory dispute resolution process for resolving building and construction disputes under the Act. It is the most commonly used dispute resolution process for resolving such disputes. Adjudication is quick and cost-effective. Most disputes are resolved in less than six weeks from the process is initiation. Adjudication can be used regardless of whether the construction contract is written or oral.

Conclusion

The political turmoil in Bangladesh and violence are not new to us. Since the birth of Bangladesh as a sovereign state, we have been facing this bravely like the Natural Calamities. History proves that we know how to deal with foreigners but do not know how to deal with our own people. The political culture of Bangladesh goes beyond 'healthy competition' and is becoming more

confrontational day by day. Parties prefer to solve their differences in the street rather than in a democratic political way. The party in power is found to be engaged in more violence than the opposition, which ultimately indicates that control of economic resources could be the ultimate determinant of political violence. During elections, the political factions of parties unite to fight against the opposition, aiming to be in power, thus ensuring control of resources. The lack of intra-party democratic practices, ideological harmony, and weak institutional mechanisms promote political violence.

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Chapter 07

Defection and Anti-defection Law in Bangladesh: Constitutional Bases and Evolution of Article 70

The term defection “Floor crossing” is a prevalent issue in every democratic country. Political defection is otherwise called political ‘defection or side swapping,’ which means joining an opposition party. The term “Floor crossing” in constitutional and political terminology generally means to cross one member’s party to another party when voting in the House. That means floor crossing occurs when one Member of Parliament resigns from his or her political party to join another party or become an independent candidate. The term, Floor Crossing was first used when Members of the British House of Commons crossed the Floor to join members of another political party seated on the opposite side.¹ Although “political defection” is fundamentally related to certain fundamental rights such as personal freedom, freedom of speech, and association, it is a growing political disease. It has increased, especially in third-world countries. Many countries, especially third world countries, have applied anti-defection laws. Our constitution embodies the aspirations and emotions of millions of Bengalis. It is considered a beacon of the nation, but there are some abominable things, like the anti-defection law that upholds contrary norms contrary to the wishes of the Republic. These disgusting regulations turn the constitution into a tool of abuse and become an obstacle to the country’s development. The anti-defection law is one of the most controversial and abusive instruments of the constitution, in which all aspirations like the solemn expression of the will of the people, the long-cherished dream of democracy, parliamentary democracy, responsible government, and certain fundamental rights guaranteed by government. Constitution, etc., are lost. Similarly, the provision of anti-defection law incorporated in Article 70 of the Constitution of Bangladesh is not only contradictory to the provision of Articles 7(2), 11, 26, 39 (1), 39 (2A), 44, 55(3), 102 and the expression of the preamble of the constitution but also enslaves the MPs to the command of their respective political parties. So, it is high time we worked on it for the betterment of our nation.² In this chapter, I have closely evaluated the floor crossing law in Bangladesh, constitutional bases, and the evolution and effects of Article 70.

Defection or Floor Crossing

The term floor crossing can be used in two different ways. The definition used here is when one member of the Parliament or council ultimately leaves his or her political party to join another party or become an independent candidate. The term was first used to describe the process when members of the British House of Commons crossed the Floor to join the group of the people (members of another political party) seated on the opposite side of the Floor.³ In a broader sense, floor crossing refers to voting against one's party in the House or

Parliament during voting. The floor crossing also says that if one member is not present when voting or passing a bill or does not participate, the member will lose his membership or seat in Parliament. The term floor crossing can also be called political defection or side swapping.⁴

Historical Background of Defection

The history of Floor Crossing is close to the modern time parliamentary system. It has been developing with the modern parliamentary system. The current parliamentary system was first introduced in the U.K. through the House of Commons. The expression comes from the seating arrangements in the Chamber where the Government party sits together on the right, and the Opposition sits together to the left. A change of party allegiance can mean crossing the Floor of the House from one side of the Chamber to the other. The floor crossing was practically first used in the House of Commons.⁵

Floor Crossing is one of the most practiced customs in a democratic parliamentary system. It varies from country to country. Every country practices it differently. Many countries do not allow floor crossing, but many do. Certain countries allow Floor crossing in certain circumstances, such as during the Budget and election of the Prime Minister. Here is a list of some countries that practice floor crossing, yet everyone has their version.⁶

U.K.

The United Kingdom is the birthplace of the concept of Floor Crossing. Usually, in the House of Commons, the Government and the Opposition sit face to face on row benches. A famous example of floor crossing is Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister, who crossed the Floor from the Conservative Party to the Liberal Party in 1904, later crossing back to the Conservatives in 1920. Till now, many British MPs have crossed the Floor.

USA

Few cases of political defection have been observed in the United States. President Donald Trump has switched parties four times. He started his political career with the Democratic Party. Later, he became the leader of the Republican Party in 1987. Later he changed the party again. From 1999-2001, he was seen as the leader of a new party. From 2001-2009, he again became the leader of the Democratic Party. He was the leader of the Independent Party in 2011-12. That same year, He is again seen as the leader of the Republican Party. He won the presidential election as a candidate of that party. Senator Strom Thurmond worked for the Democratic Party for several years but eventually joined the Republican Party. Senator (Wayne Morse), a Republican, joined the Democratic Party in 1952, refusing to support Ise Hower.⁷

India

As a former colony of the British Empire, the Indian Parliamentary system follows the British Parliamentary system. In India, Floor Crossing is known as ‘Aya Ram, Gaya Ram.’ It literally means here he comes, and here he goes. The term originated in Haryana, where excessive Floor crossing, counter floor crossing, and counter-counter floor crossing occurred within a few weeks in 1967. This triggered several rounds of frequent political defections and resulted in the dissolution of the Haryana Assembly, and consequently, in 1968, an election was held.⁸

India adopted an anti-defection law in 1985 in the 52nd Amendment of the Constitution to prevent floor crossing. Many political critics have mentioned it as a bar to the Freedom of speech of the MP. If the member has taken prior permission or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified. If two-thirds of members merge with another party, they will not be disqualified as Members of Parliament. In 2003, anti-defection law was strengthened by adding provisions for disqualifying defectors and banning them from being appointed ministers for some time.⁹

Canada

Floor crossing is older than Canada itself. As a past member of the British colony, the Canadian parliamentary system follows the British parliamentary system. Floor crossing is a very commonly practiced custom in the Canadian Parliament. There are several examples of political defection for which the Canadian Government had to resign. Professor Royce Koop of the University of Manitoba puts it, —When an MP crosses the Floor, and it is a beautiful reminder that we cast our votes for candidates, not parties in Canada.

Pakistan

Article 63A of the Pakistan Constitution elaborates on the floor crossing of Members of Parliament. Article 63A says, Disqualification on the grounds of defection, etc.-

(1) If a member of a Parliamentary Party composed of a single political party in a House resigns from membership of his political party, joins another Parliamentary Party, or votes or abstains from voting in the House contrary to any direction issued by the Parliamentary Party to which he belongs, about election of the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister; or a vote of confidence, a vote of no confidence, or a Money Bill or a Constitution (Amendment) Bill; he may be declared in writing by the Party Head to have defected from the political party, and the Party Head may forward a copy of the declaration to the Presiding Officer and the Chief Election Commissioner. It shall similarly forward a copy thereof to the member concerned: Provided that before making the declaration, the Party Head shall provide such member with an opportunity to show cause as to why such declaration may not be made against him.¹⁰

Floor Crossing in Bangladesh: Pre-Independence Era

In the pre-independence era, Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, had a bitter experience with floor crossing. In 1954, the United Front, led by Sher-E-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy, had a landslide victory in the Pakistan General Election. However, the Government needed help to finish its tenure due to floor crossing. Due to political defection, the United Front was broken, and Maulana Bhashani created the Awami League and became the Opposition of the United Front. However, due to disagreements between Suhrawardy and Bhashani about foreign policy, the Awami League was divided, and Bhashani created the National Awami Party (NAP). Chaos continued when United Front leader Abu Hossain created a government but failed to prove a majority in the Parliament. After Abu Hossain's failure, the Awami League formed a government that could last up to three months. Because of the instability of the Government, five general elections were held during four years. It all ended on October 7, 1958, when General Ayub Khan took over the government.¹¹

Floor Crossing in Bangladesh: Post-Independence Era (1971-1975)

After Independence, a constituent assembly was formed to make a constitution for the newly formed country. The constituent assembly members were elected members from the 1970s East Pakistan provincial election and Pakistan general election. By then, floor crossing was familiar to them. Bangladesh's Constituent Assembly (Cessation of Membership) Order 1972 is called the architecture of Article 70 of the Constitution.

Article 70 from the 1972 Constitution had mainly two conditions against floor-crossing¹²:

If a member resigns from his party;

If he votes against his party during voting time

This provision was mainly instituted to bring stability to the government. Right after Independence, there was so much chaos everywhere; there was no law and no executive, so the government had no choice but to put bars on floor crossing to make the government stable and robust.

Anti-Defection Law in Bangladesh

In 1972, our constitution makers included Article 70 to prevent floor crossing in Bangladesh. Though primarily the rule was due to the unstable situation of the newly independent country, nowadays, it has become a law against human rights. The term 'floor crossing' refers to voting against one's party in Parliament during voting. It also says that if a member does not participate at the time of voting, the member will lose his seat in the Parliament. In politics, the term 'crossing the floor' can mean either to vote against party lines, especially where

this is considered unusual or controversial, or to describe a member who leaves their party entirely and joins the opposite side of the House, such as leaving an opposition party to support the government (or vice versa), or even leaving one opposition party to join another.

Article 70 is designed to prevent floor crossing in the Parliament. This was an anti-defection or anti-floor crossing law. This law basically blocs the development of the parliamentary government. The leading spirit of the parliamentary government is that the government is accountable or responsible to the legislature. Anti-Defection Law in Bangladesh the coalitions and disagreements from 1954 to 1958 and the selfish nature of the members made a strong base for Article 70 of 1972.¹³

History of Defection in Bangladesh

If we look at the political defection or floor crossing in East Pakistan, then we will know the reason behind Article 70 or the floor crossing law; before the liberation war, when Bangladesh was used to be a state of Pakistan, we can see that members were used to cross the Floor for their interest. The lack of wisdom, illiteracy, and politically unconscious people has crossed the Floor.¹⁴ They were selfish and never thought of the good of the Parliament; instead, they took advantage of floor crossing and made such a situation which stopped the actual flow of Parliament.

Causes for Defection in History: Bangladesh Perspective

One member's name was not included in the local relief committee, so he defected or crossed the Floor to take revenge. Money for flood-affected people was sent in the name of a school secretary and not in the name of a member of the locality, so a defection or floor crossing took place. Some members crossed floors or did not attend part meetings out of whim. One member felt he was not getting enough attention in the House, so he defected or crossed the Floor. A member needed to have influenced the authority for her husband's job and was absent from the Parliament. A member was caught due to black marketing, and he sought help from the Chief Minister. When he did not get the assistance, he crossed the Floor or defected.¹⁵ The main reasons for defection in Bangladeshi politics are as follows:

i) Lack of obedience to party leadership

A political party is formed based on several principles and ideals. As a result, mutual trust and understanding between political parties is essential. This lack of mutual trust leads to a lack of loyalty to the party leadership. Because of this, politicians accuse each other. The Pakistan Muslim League was fragmented in a maze of political grievances and counter-grievances. Government power would pass from one party to another; Members of the Legislative Council frequently

changed their party allegiance. In a political system where politicians are distrusted and suspected, the very apolitical character of the military makes it a powerful political force.¹⁶

ii) Ideological Conflict

Disagreement occurs when politicians of different ideologies combine in the same party. There needs to be more political and ideological loyalty and commitment within the party. Disputes arise on party management policies, tactics, election issues, party commitment to state management, government system, and Constitution. Later, defections occurred due to these disputes. During the council session of Awami League at Kagmari, Tangail, on February 6-10, 1957, a disagreement arose between Awami League president Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Awami League leader and Prime Minister of Pakistan Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy about Pakistan's foreign policy, especially the Santo and Sietta agreements to protect the interests of imperialists. In this question, the right-wing bourgeois leaders and activists of the party supported Suhrawardy, and the left wing, led by Maulana Bhasani demanded an independent and non-aligned foreign policy and maximum autonomy for East Pakistan. As a result, the Awami League was divided due to ideological reasons. Maulana Bhasani resigned as the President of the East Pakistan Awami League on March 18.¹⁷

iii) Military Rule

If military rule exists in a political system, there is a tendency to create new parties and change parties. New parties were created in the name of political reform. At this time, the leaders of the existing political parties joined the new party. Even military rulers organize elections by forming political parties to legitimize their rule. BNP and the Jatiya Party in Bangladesh were formed to legitimize the military rulers in politics. During the military regime, it can be seen that the leaders of the political parties are subjected to various repressions. In order to be saved from these repressions, the rulers formed a party or joined a new party and gained political shelter. During the military regime of Fakhruddin-Moinuddin, several new political parties took the initiative to emerge in Bangladesh. On June 22, 2007, the progressive Democratic Party (PDP) emerged under the leadership of Qureshi.¹⁸

iv) Lack of Organizational Activity

An essential feature of political parties in advanced democracies is broad-based organization. Moreover, because of this, political parties are 'emerged' rather than 'formed.' Just as political parties need public relations through mass organization at the village level, there should be some programs for future generations. From 1942 until the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim League gained many supporters. However, it has yet to develop an effective

organization; its primary objective was essentially the creation of Pakistan. It did not work among trade unions or farmers' associations or show any organizational activity at the village level. Because of this, after Independence (1947), the Muslim League quickly fragmented. Similarly, the Muslim League had no program to attract future civil society. Because of this, after Jinnah's death, Pakistan's youth was no longer attracted to the Muslim League.¹⁹

v) Election Procedures

In Bangladesh, many times, election violence, rigging, vote robbery, and use of cash inviting, politicians do not have to gain much momentum to win the election. Any leader can join any party for his interest and win the election. Politicians join any party whenever there is a chance to win through election rigging or irregularities. Especially in elections in Bangladesh, the party is considered more than the candidate. Therefore, even if politicians change parties quickly, they can win elections easily because the voters vote according to the party.²⁰

vi) Greed for Power

Political ambition and greed for government power have become one of the reasons for defection in developing countries, including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. If the ministry can be gained by taking advantage of the unstable and uncertain political situation, then there is an opportunity to increase its status, benefits, and prestige. So, in such a situation, it becomes difficult to ignore the threat of defection.

vii) Disengagement from Public Relations

Another characteristic of political parties is always prioritizing public opinion and public welfare. But it can be seen that most leaders became isolated after coming to power. As a result, people lose confidence in one political party and join another or form a new party.²¹

viii) Lack of Prestige of Politicians

A person who has a good influence in a political party but needs to manage the party activities properly and his value is reduced by the party leader. As a result, other leaders and workers should have paid more attention to him. That is, he becomes a leader without self-esteem. At that time, if the chief told him that he would be given a prominent position in other political parties, he left the party and went to another party.²²

ix) Lack of Loyalty and Political Asylum

One of the main reasons for defection in Bangladeshi politics is a lack of loyalty. There is no loyalty or honesty in the political party leaders of Bangladesh. If the political party leaders had love for the party and had loyalty

or honesty, then defection would not have been possible.²³ Another reason for defection in Bangladesh politics is gaining political asylum. When a leader is expelled from a party, another political party invites him to join that party.

x) Low Political Culture

Defection has now become a political issue in Bangladesh. Political leaders leave the party for any small reason. When denied the nomination, they lose patience and leave the party. There is no characteristic of an ideal political party among the hundreds of political parties in Bangladesh today. Neither party has organization at the village level; there are no fixed ideals or agendas, and it is quick to water down ideas. That is why new groups are being formed daily; defection is happening. As a result, political stability is not coming. However, the primary reason behind them is uneducated and politically unaware people. People need to be more educated, and the need for more organization at the village level of the major political parties makes people herd like a flock of sheep into different parties.²⁴

Evolution of Article 70 under the Constitution of Bangladesh from 1972 to Present

As the provision of floor crossing was enacted in the Constitution in 1972 to bring stability to the government, it was amended a few times. There were mainly two conditions against floor crossing in the 1972 Constitution; if a member resigns from his party, and If he votes against his party during voting.

In 1975, the 4th Amendment of the Constitution added two more conditions against floor crossing, which are; if a member is present at the session in the Parliament but does not take part in the voting; if a member does not attend the Parliament at all against the will or direction of his party.

12th Amendment in 1996 added two new features in the provision of Floor crossing,

No one can form a group within one political party; and if one elected member joins another political party.

Finally, in 2011, Article 70 was substituted with a new set of conditions in the 15th Amendment.

It says, a person elected as a Member of Parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he resigns from that party, or votes in Parliament against that party.

However, they shall not be disqualified for subsequent election as a member of Parliament.

Floor Crossing Law (Article-70) in Bangladesh: Advantages and Disadvantages

Our Constitution itself proclaims that in Article 11, The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured. Besides that, if we want to see Article 39 (1), Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed.

Floor crossing is a very well-recognized parliamentary custom in different countries. There are lots of advantages of floor crossing. Some of the advantages of floor crossing are discussed below. Members of Parliament have more Freedom and rights of choice in the House. Members of Parliament have a single entity; they are not accountable for any choice they make in the Parliament.

The Cabinet cannot make any unilateral decisions. The Cabinet has to make Parliament satisfied with the decisions they make. The members of Parliament have more power and accountability in the Parliament, which also empowers the ordinary people. The actual demand of the people is reflected in the Parliament. The members of Parliament can freely choose sides if their party's decision is not going in favor of the people they represent.

Any party's Prime minister or leader cannot make any autocratic decision. He/she needs approval from his fellow members of Parliament to make any decision. Good governance can be ensured more effectively because the government may lose confidence in the Parliament if good governance is not ensured.

The executive cannot pass any undemocratic law or bill in the Parliament. i. The cabinet members must answer all the questions and concerns before the Parliament. One of the recent examples of this is Boris Johnson, UK Prime Minister, who had to face a parliamentary standing committee for violating Covid protocol.

The Parliament is more accessible, powerful and impactful when the members of Parliament have such immunity and privilege.

Even though floor crossing is a healthy practice for democracy, there are also some disadvantages. Here, I have pointed out some opposing sides of floor crossing. The Government is unstable; it may collapse anytime if the Parliament loses confidence in it. So, the government gives more attention to holding confidence in the Parliament than the nation's progress. The executive cannot make any law in case of emergency; it always has to be passed under the procedure of the Parliament. As the members can vote freely, the Parliament may not pass it. Corrupted and self-interested members of Parliament can always take advantage of floor crossing. Minority governments cannot make

any decisions. The government has to induce other party members and its party to make any decision. The decision of the executive could be more effective. Their decision can be revoked at any time.

Effects of Floor Crossing on Different Countries

In this chapter, I have already discussed floor crossing in different countries. Here, I will discuss the effects of floor crossing on different countries.

Effects of floor crossing vary from country to country, depending on the country's political situation. Western countries like the U.K. and Canada allow floor crossing because the members of Parliament are less self-concerned. They are more concerned about the good governance and progress of the nation. Government collapse will not affect the progress and system of the country.²⁵

In 2019, U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May lost confidence in the House of Commons on the question of Brexit. She had to resign alongside her Cabinet. Her resignation did affect Brexit, but the system and progress of the U.K. did not stop or change. Floor Crossing in progressive countries like India and Pakistan has a massive effect on the system, economy, and others.²⁶

India does not allow political defection, but India had a bitter experience with floor crossing. When a government is changed in India, the ruling party constantly changes the system according to their self-interest. There are several other reasons why India does not allow floor crossing.²⁷

Pakistan allows Floor crossing in particular conditions. Pakistan allows floor crossing in case of electing a Prime Minister, vote for confidence, and vote for money Bill. Pakistan's political situation has always been chaotic. There were several examples when the government had to resign because of political defection. In the recent past, Imran Khan, former Pakistani Prime Minister, was doing exceptionally well considering the previous governments. However, his party was not the majority party in the Parliament. He was leading a minority government. During the vote for confidence in the Parliament, his alliance joined the opposition party and showed no confidence.²⁸

Floor crossing is only sometimes good for countries like India and Pakistan. It may significantly impact their system, political atmosphere, and economy.

Floor Crossing in Bangladesh

M.Ps in Bangladesh are not allowed to cross the Floor from party to party; they have to prove loyalty to the party from which they are elected. Many M.Ps, politicians, and political analysts have raised their voices against Article 70 of the constitution of Bangladesh. Major. Rafiqul Islam (ret.), an Awami League MP, referred to Article 70 of the Constitution, which eliminates the status of a legislator for voting against a party when discussing the 2017-18 budgets in the parliament. According to Article 70 of the Constitution, lawmakers from the ruling party are required to support the party. Refereeing Article 70, he said, the

finance minister believes that the M.Ps will approve anything he will put on the table and asked that the constitutional clause be changed as needed so that the M.Ps from the ruling party can vote against the budget.

All helpful provisions in the Constitution for maintaining the rule of law are frustrated by Article 70.

First, Article 70 needs to be revised to guarantee the right to be governed by a representative body accountable to the people. The Cabinet is always confident that a no-confidence motion will not overthrow it because no majority party member has the right to vote against the party, despite Article 55's declaration that —The Cabinet shall be collectively responsible to Parliament. This collective responsibility provision has, therefore, been rendered ineffective by Article 70 of the constitution.²⁹

Second, the rule of law, as opposed to the rule of man or party, refers to the legislation approved in a democratically elected parliament following sufficient discussion. As legislators are the people's representatives, they should govern the government on behalf of the people. However, due to Article 70 of the Constitution, ruling party members are the puppet of the government. The ruling party members must say yes to whatever the executive presents before the Parliament. There is no scope to deny for the sake of proving loyalty. There are quite a few examples where political leaders, MPs, were thrown out of the party because they were not ready to accept the party's decision; they intended to go against it.³⁰

The ruling party members cannot raise their voices against any government decision, even if it is not suitable for the people of their constituency. It is actually against the spirit of democracy.

Effects of Article 70 in Bangladesh

i) Contradiction among the M.Ps

Article 70 does not allow the M.Ps to vote against the party's undemocratic decisions or protest against it. However, Article 70 does not set any rule against expressing their opinions in party meetings. But, many M.Ps do not have a clear idea and do not speak freely, even in party meetings. As a result, the good results of democracy are yet to be achieved. So, the position of the MPs is contradictory.³¹

ii) Lack of responsibility and scope of dictatorship

Article 55 states that the Cabinet should be collectively responsible to the Parliament. However, Article 70 allows the government not to be responsible and accountable to the Parliament and provides the government enough room to practice dictatorship.³²

iii) Hinder the practice of the Rule of Law

The rule of law, as distinguished from the rule of man and party, means the rule of that law, which is passed in a democratically elected Parliament after adequate discussion and deliberation. When there is scope for adequate deliberation and discussion over a bill, it creates an environment to remove the undemocratic provision.³³

iv) Contradiction in the system or Constitution

The idea of parliamentary government is that the government should be responsible to the Parliament or legislature. On the other hand, under the presidential government, the government is not responsible to the legislature. However, as we can see, Article 70 blocks the system of being responsible to the legislature, so in Bangladesh, we are not practicing the parliamentary government system. So, we are in a position that contradicts the government's spirit.³⁴

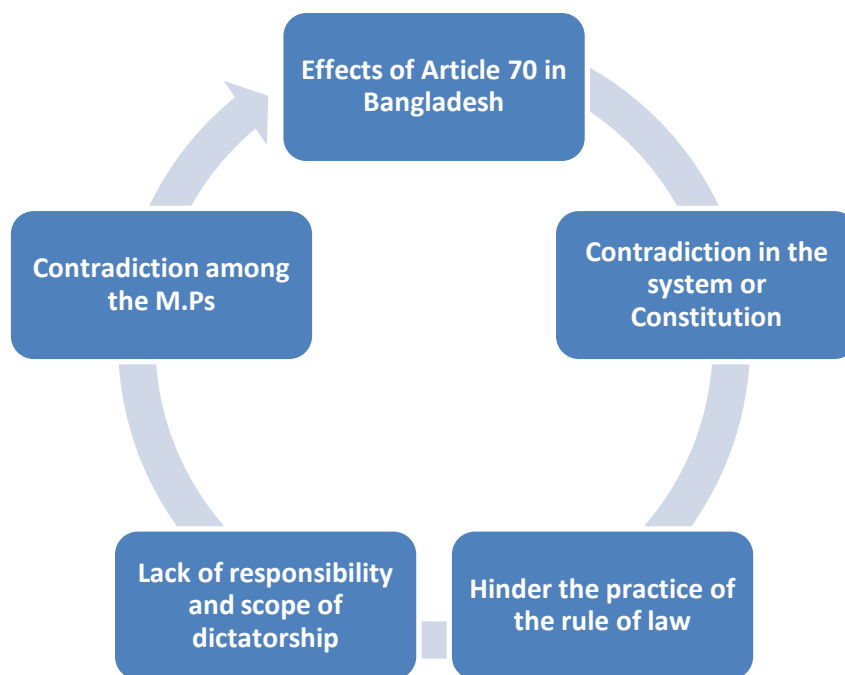


Figure- 07: Effects of Article 70 in Bangladesh

Conclusion

Article 39 of Bangladesh constitution rightly mentions no restriction in exercising the right to vote inside the Parliament. Again, Article 78(3) prescribes immunity to the Members of Parliament in exercising their right to vote that they will not be liable to proceedings in any court regarding the publication of vote by the authority of Parliament. However, Article 70 is contrary to the spirit of the democratic character of the Constitution. Now it is high time to think over it.

A Member of Parliament has every right to resign from his political party. This is his constitutional right, as guaranteed in Articles 31 and 32. Mere resignation from his political party should not be the grounds for vacationing his seat in Parliament. If it would happen, then Article 67(2) will be meaningless.

So, the explanation to Article 70 should be amended Inserted the provisions that Members of Parliament should be freed to vote by their conscience except on three fundamental and vital issues: when a vote of censure or no-confidence is brought against a particular government, the concerned M.P. shall invariably vote for the party on whose ticket he was elected; he shall not vote against the Finance Bill or the smooth passage of the Annual Budget so that the financial activities of the government should not be harassed; on sensitive defense matters, which may be debated on camera, if needed. Because this is not the concern only of a political party but also the concern of all people living in Bangladesh, in other cases, Members of Parliament should be allowed to speak and vote freely, maintaining the decorum of the House. As a result of these amendments, democracy and the stability of government can be maintained properly.

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Chapter 08

Political Alliance and Inter-Party Relationship in Bangladesh Politics

The formation of political alliances is one of the most debated issues today, especially in the context of national elections in Bangladesh.¹ The coalition election culture was introduced to Bangladesh during the fifth parliamentary election in 1991. When the Ershad military regime was overthrown in a popular uprising in December 1990, Bangladesh entered the “third stage” of democracy, and the term “third stage” became popular at that time². Famous political scientist Samuel Huntington divided the historical development of a democratic country into three stages. The road to democracy is not easy for Bangladesh, as it is for this new democratic country in its third phase. Bangladesh has failed to consolidate democracy. However, it also failed to institutionalize the fundamentals of democracy.³

In the Eleventh Parliamentary Election in 2018, it was seen that the alliance politics in the country was visibly divided into two sections, and all the political parties were divided between the two alliances, too. The tendency to form alliances is visible in domestic, global, and international politics. A coalition of two or more countries is called an alliance in international politics to maintain the balance of power or to promote their interests through close cooperation. Morgenthau says, “Alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating with a multi-state system.”⁴ Coalition politics has become very common recently, especially in emerging democracies in Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Coalition politics exists in many Asian countries now. The main difference between Asian politics and the political ideology of the Western world is in the formation of single-party and multi-party coalitions.⁵ As many Asian countries have multiple political parties, a natural tendency to form alliances during elections is noticeable. Neighboring country India has also practiced coalition politics for a long time. The politics of this Alliance is now vital in Bangladesh. In this chapter, I have deeply discussed coalition politics, political alliances of Bangladesh, role and nature of alliances, and Inter-Party Relationship in Bangladesh Politics.

Coalition Politics

Alliance governmental issues, by and large, allude to formal cooperation with explicit objectives between at least two ideological groups. Alliance governmental issues likewise allude to political union, front, or coalition. Political collusion is shaped by a few everyday interests, techniques, or philosophies to frame an administration in a popularity-based way in a parliamentary government arrangement. Along these lines, political coalitions can be steady or even transitory. The historical backdrop of shaping coalitions or fronts in legislative issues is the same old thing. Numerous nations have a past filled with framing partnerships in governmental issues. Presently, alliance

state-run administrations are in power in many created and immature nations worldwide. In Bangladesh's current political environment, coalition politics are becoming more prevalent. Political parties typically work together to fulfill specific needs and goals to build political coalitions without compromising their party structure, ideologies, or core values. Suppose more than one significant or minor political party joins forces through mutual consent and adopts a particular program for various reasons, having a particular ideology for meeting one or more demands related to the national interest, such as an anti-authoritarian movement, a movement for the establishment of democratic rule, an issue-based movement to mobilize public opinion on any pressing issue, or a tactic to defeat political rivals. In that case, it is referred to as a political alliance. According to Altman, a political alliance is defined when one or more parties come together to achieve a specific goal, especially when political parties unite for a certain purpose in pursuit of a common interest and become committed to protecting their own interests after achieving the goal⁶. A political alliance is an organization consisting of several parties to unite the maximum population of a state for the purpose of implementing a joint program in the national interest and for the welfare of the people or to deal with political opponents⁷. An alliance, therefore, is the unity of several political parties to achieve a common goal. An alliance can be formed among several political parties on the question of elections or any movement⁸. Alliances are usually formed with congenial parties and individuals, and the alliance usually survives till the objective is achieved⁹. At the same time, coalition politics is alliance-centric politics, or politics conducted in alliance. Coalition politics is considered a system conducted and recognized at a national and international level at present. There is no constitutional barrier to conducting coalition politics in our country.

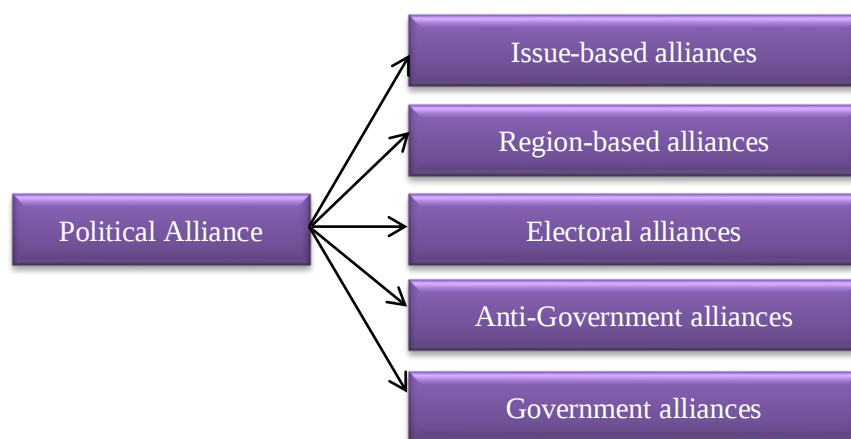
Above all, it will be termed a political alliance if a number of big or small political parties come together through mutual agreement and adopt a specific program for different reasons, having a specific ideology intending to meet one or more demands related to the national interest, such as the anti-authoritarian movement, the establishment of democratic rule, an issue-based movement to build public opinion on any urgent issue or strategy to resist political opponents.¹⁰

Classification of Political Alliances

Different political alliances can be observed depending on the political environment, ideology, program, etc. Three types of political alliances exist, including the opposition alliance, electoral alliance, and parliamentary alliance. Parliamentary coalitions, such as the opposition and governing coalitions, can be further subdivided into two subcategories. In the setting of elections, political parties are once again seen to create two different sorts of alliances, such as the Pre-Electoral Alliance and the Post-Electoral Alliance.¹¹ Reviewing the political context, ideology, programs, etc. of Bangladesh since independence, five types

of political alliances can be seen. i) Issue based alliances, ii) Region based alliances, iii) Electoral alliances, iv) Anti-government alliances, v) Government alliances¹². Today, the prevalence of coalition politics has increased. Different coalition politics are observed in different countries. Bangladesh has also seen various types of coalition politics since independence.¹³

These five types of political alliances are—Issue-based alliances, Regional alliances, Electoral alliances, Opposition alliances; and Governing alliances. The classification of political alliances is explained below:



Source: Sahabul Haque and Bayezid Alam, *Bangladesher Jot Rajneeti* (Dhaka: Obsor, 2014).

Figure- 08: Formation of Electoral Alliances of Political Parties in Bangladesh

i) Issue-based Alliance

Political Alliances are formed on different issues. Issue-based coalitions are formed around elections or any other issue. Various alliances or fronts have been formed around the issue in Bangladesh. For example, the National Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas-Mineral Resources and Power-Ports, composed of various left-wing organizations, is the best issue-based coalition. The Awami League has been continuously in power for a long time. It has continued to build an alternative political power gathering outside the Awami League-BNP and the 'democratic alliance' of eight left-wing political parties in the country. The attitude of the top leaders of the Left Alliance is that the 11th parliament election cannot be acceptable in any way. The people have rejected that election. They think that the present government has taken away the voting rights of the people through that election. That is why the central issue of their movement at the moment is to get the voting rights of the people and Radical reform of the electoral system. Along with the movement on this issue, they are reducing the price of gas and electricity, the price of agricultural products, fair wages of workers, guaranteeing work for farm laborers, arresting defaulting bank robbers, and removing chaos and disorder in the financial sector, improvement of law and order situation including murder-rape-torture, Wants to continue continuous programs on issues like floods and waterlogging.¹⁴

ii) Regional Alliance

Sometimes, regional alliances are formed. All these alliances are formed based on the demands and interests of a particular region. As a result, the scope of these alliances is limited to regional boundaries. Showing excessive loyalty to regional sentiments and using this loyalty as alliance capital. Ideological alignment is evident in such alliances. However, such alliances are often criticized for lacking stability and structure. Examples of such alliances are the Chittagong Hills Tracts, Violence against Women Movement and Rajshahi Adivasi Mukti Morcha, Rajshahi City Protection Committee, and Sammilita Adivasi Nari Jota. Also, various organizations were born in the Chittagong Hill Tracts during the British period to protect the identity and existence of small ethnic groups. Among the organizations formed during the period were Chakma Yuvas Samiti (1915), Chakma British Yuvas Sangh (1918), Parbatya Chittagong Jana Samiti (1920), Parbatya Chittagong Chatra Samiti (1939), Hill Students Association (1956), Tribal Students Association (1965), Tribal Welfare Association (1966), Rangamati Communist Party (1970) during Pakistan period.¹⁵

iii) Electoral Alliance

Alliances have become more important than parties in electoral politics. Analyzing the results of the national elections in Bangladesh, this picture becomes clear. The effect of the Alliance was more pronounced in the results. For this reason, the country's two main political parties prioritize alliances. In a multi-party political system, alliances are formed on the eve of elections to gain power only by crossing the electoral threshold. Political alliances formed to win the elections usually only last for a while in the post-election state. After the election victory, the tension of interests begins in most cases. Alliances break down. Alliances have become more important than parties in electoral politics. Analyzing the results of the national elections in Bangladesh, this picture becomes clear. The influence of alliances has been more significant, especially in the results of all the parliamentary elections held since 1991.¹⁶ Because of this, the two main political parties of the country have lost their alliances. Analysis of the 5th to 11th parliamentary elections results shows that coalition politics has determined the results. At this time, the two main political parties, the Jatiya Party, and Jamaat, have played a significant role in the coming to power of Awami League and BNP. At the same time, both parties have established themselves in the Parliament. Political researcher Mohiuddin Ahmad thinks that alliances are more critical in vote politics. The two main parties participated in the elections by forming alliances with small and big parties. In this case, small groups can also have an impact, so they are also valued.¹⁷ In many cases, supporting a minor party becomes necessary if a significant party cannot win a majority in the elections. For this reason, although two big political parties usually do not ally, the importance of smaller parties is much greater in this regard.

iv) Anti-Government Alliance

This type of Alliance is formed by combining several opposition political parties against the injustice and misrule of the government or to oust it from power. Such alliances were formed in the opposition movement to oust the military government. During the Ershad government, a party alliance led by the Awami League, a seven-party alliance led by BNP, and five parties left Alliance can be mentioned. The four-party Alliance formed in 1999 against Sheikh Hasina's government (1996-2001) turned into an electoral alliance on the eve of the 2001 eighth parliamentary elections. A four-party alliance was formed in 1999 to build a movement against the government. Ershad's Jatiya Party, Jamaat, and Islami Oikyajot joined this Alliance led by the BNP. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Jamaat Amir Ghulam Azam, and Islami Oikyajot Chairman Fazlul Haque Amini announced it through a press conference on January 6.¹⁸

However, Ershad could not stay in this Alliance. He had to leave the Alliance. At that time, his team again held. A section led by Naziur Rahman Manju remained part of the four-party Alliance. Just like that, the 14-party Alliance formed in the context of the continuous movement against the four-party coalition government (2001-2006) took the form of an electoral alliance called Mahajot (Grand Alliance) before the 2008 Ninth National Parliament elections. Jatiya Oikya Front is the latest addition to the coalition politics in Bangladesh formed before the 2018 11th parliamentary elections. The Role of this Alliance has been primarily seen as anti-government. However, in 2019, a break in this Alliance was noticed. In 2020, the existence of the Alliance named Jatiya Oikya Front is being questioned.¹⁹

v) Government Alliance

Coalitions are often formed in the administration of government. A coalition government is formed when no single party gets enough of a majority to come to power. In Bangladesh, such coalition governments have been formed at various times. In 1991, the BNP formed a coalition government with Jamaat, and in 1996, the Awami League formed a coalition government with the Jatiya Party. Later, the Jatiya Party withdrew from the coalition government. Also, if we analyze the history, we can mention the coalition cabinet of the Krishak Praja Party and Muslim League in 1937 of undivided Bengal. However, the history of such alliances could be more pleasant. Parties can withdraw support and bring down the government.²⁰

Historical Background of Formation of Political Alliance

The history of political coalition formation in Bangladesh is ancient. Coalition politics started mainly from British rule. 1916 'Lucknow Pact'. Moreover, the 'Bengal Pact' of 1923 can be mentioned. Moreover, the 'Non-Cooperation

Movement' of 1920 and the 'Combined Opposition Parties' in 1942, abbreviated as 'COP', Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque, Maulana Bhasani, Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, led by the United Front. This Alliance took part against the ruling Muslim League of Pakistan and won a landslide victory.²¹ The 'Pakistan Democratic Movement' of 1969, the 'Democratic Action Committee' of 1969, and the Coordination Committee for Bangladesh Liberation Movement in 1971 during the independence struggle carried the identity of political coalition. Each Alliance had its program and ideology and was formed to achieve specific goals and objectives. Despite the victory of the coalition politics in the election, the coalition failed after the formation of the government. In the history of politics, this Alliance was formed based on 21 points against the 'common enemy' even though there were conflicts and disputes between the members of this political Alliance. 6 Until the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, there were various alliances. There have been various polarizations in the anti-government movement in Pakistan. Alliances have also been formed in student society leadership, which has created pressure on political parties. In the 1970 elections, even though there was no coalition, the united people made the Awami League victorious over the question of Bangladesh's independence. The following year saw the emergence of independent Bangladesh under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the party's leader.²²

The Challenges of Electoral Alliances in the Context of Political Culture and the Growth of Democracy in Bangladesh

The ascent to the top of power has been the principal objective of the country's current culture of political alliance for the past thirty years. In actuality, creating these coalitions without values, objectives, and initiatives is a political exercise in futility. As a result, the general public is denied the chance to investigate the beliefs and actions of political parties. The practice of creating these coalitions makes national politics murky. In the guise of an election campaign, candidates with a lot of cash and clout strive for a lot of cash and clout²³. The major political parties clash, minor parties continue to exist, and the parties' primary means of resolving conflicts over wins and losses is through alliances. The Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) has a definite obligation to register political parties in elections. The EC introduced the registration system for political parties before the 9th parliamentary elections in 2008. 116 (one hundred and sixteen) applications were submitted in the first year. Only 40 (forty) parties among them were registered subject to fulfillment of conditions. At present, there are 193 parties in our country. 154 (one hundred fifty-four) parties are unregistered parties among them (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2020). At least 14 (fourteen) names of alliances have been found in the Eleventh Parliamentary Elections campaign, where there are 193 (one hundred ninety-three) parties, of which only 40 (forty) parties are registered²⁴. By demolishing

the rules and regulations of the EC, the political parties, which are only involved in the politics of self-interest, are forming alliances with most of the unregistered political parties for the fascination to usurping power. This is hindering the progress of political institutionalization and democracy.

When nominating party candidates for elections in a democratic system of government, it is essential to consider devoted members of the grassroots. However, the qualified candidates are denied nominations in the coalition politics cycle and the various calculations of multiple political parties. As a result, loyal or sincere activists are increasingly disengaging from politics. Politics and the advancement of democracy both find this frustrating.²⁵ Even the coalition government is seen to be formed with candidates selected from the anti-liberation forces and convicts. These unacceptable and isolated people are seen to be in power instead of those who will work for independence and patriotism is intact in their politics of the alliance²⁶. Leaders and activists are also getting divided and frustrated as many unfamiliar faces have been nominated for the last one and a half decades amid the politics of division in coalition politics.²⁷ This discourages grassroots and dedicated leaders and workers in politics.

A party can never work independently within an alliance. Parliamentary democracy requires independent programs and activities from every party, big or small, in the country. Due to the alliance, the expression of the independent views of that multi-party democracy is being severely hampered. The path of leadership creation is being obstructed as well as the activities of each party are being limited. The obligation to express a common opinion within the coalition impedes the free thought, expression of talents, and freedom of speech of the members of the legislature, and thus the effectiveness of the parliament decreases.²⁸

Nature and Role of Different Political Alliances in Bangladesh

The history of forming alliances with political parties of many opinions and paths on various issues is familiar. Not only in our subcontinent but for political interests in different countries. The formation of fronts or alliances can be found by turning the pages of history. Political parties form alliances on the issue of a particular movement, election, or government management. However, alliances are formed and are easily broken or eventually broken due to conflict of interest between the parties involved. After the liberation war in Bangladesh, political alliances have been formed on different perspectives or issues. They are discussed in:

i) The Seven-party Alliance and the All-Party United Front

The government was formed under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after the independence of the seven-party Alliance and the

All-Party United Front. Then, on December 29, 1972, Maulana Bhasani was formed as the President of the Anti-Government All-Party Struggle Committee. This was the first Alliance after independence. The 15-point Alliance comprised the National Awami Party (NAP- Bhasani), Bangladesh Jatiya League, Bangladesh Communist Union, and Bangladesh Socialist Party, Bangladesh Communist Party (Leninist), Sramik Krishak Samajwadi Dal, and Bangla Jatiya League.²⁹ Their demand was the resignation of the Bangabandhu government, the establishment of a democratic environment, and the formation of an all-party government. This Alliance did not last long. At that time, the Alliance was also weakened due to the establishment of Jasdar and the heat of the anti-government movement. Later, another alliance 'Sarbadliya Yuktu Front' was formed with Bhasani as its chairman on April 14, 1974. Before that, Jatiya Mukti Front 20 was formed on April 20, 1973, with 11 organizations under the leadership of Siraj Sikdar.³⁰

ii) Tripartite Unity

During the 1971 independence struggle, a close relationship developed between the Awami League, the National Awami Party (Mozaffar), and the Communist Party of Bangladesh. Independent Bangladesh NAP (Mozaffar) and the Communist Party criticized the Awami League government for corruption, nepotism, political oppression, and failure to maintain law and order. However, these parties were in agreement with the Awami League on basic principles. 2 After the Awami League's victory in the 1973 elections, NAP (Mozaffar) and the Communist Party proceeded to work in Alliance with the Awami League to achieve several fundamental goals. After the 1973 elections, a compromise was made between the ruling party, NAP (Mozaffar), and CPB amid political opposition. The Alliance pledged to work together under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to build the country based on four national principles—nationalism, democracy, secularism, and socialism.³¹

iii) Nationalist Front

Political polarization was renewed after the killing of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family³² in 1975. Ziaur Rahman, formed Jagdal (Jatiyatabadi Gonotantrik Dal) behind in the power. Later, Jagdal, Muslim League (Shah Aziz), Nap (Bhasani), United People's Party (UPP), Bangladesh Labor Party, and Bangladesh Scheduled Castes Federation formed the Nationalist Front. Zia became the chairman of the Alliance. On the other hand, the Awami League, CPB, Jatiya Janata Party, NAP (Mozaffar), Ganazadi League, and People's Party formed the democratic coalition. On June 3, 1978, Zia participated in the presidential election from the Nationalist Front. Moreover, MAG Osmani participated in the Democratic Alliance. Ziaur Rahman dissolved the Nationalist Front and formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) after being elected President.³³

iv) Five-Party and Ten-Party Alliances

After the presidential election of 1978, there was a new polarization between the ruling party and the opposition around the parliamentary elections. At the end of that year, a coalition of five leftist parties was formed under the leadership of Mohammad Towaha to launch an anti-government movement. At the end of 1980, a 10-party alliance was formed under the leadership of the Awami League. Although this Alliance was in the anti-government movement, it could have made little impact. After the assassination of Ziaur Rahman on May 30, 1981, the 10-party anti-government coalition formed during his tenure tried to nominate a single candidate for the presidential election.³⁴ In the end, it collapses. The coalition parties participate in the elections separately. Awami League candidate was Dr. Kamal Hossain. Awami League (Mizan), Basad, Mazdoor Party, and Jatiya Janata Party formed an alliance called the Nagrik Committee and nominated MAG Osmani as the presidential candidate. The Progressive Democratic camp consisting of NAP (Mozaffar), NAP (Harun), and CPB nominated Mozaffar Ahmad. Major MA Jalil was nominated by the tripartite Alliance consisting of Jasad, Sramik Krishak Samajwadi Dal, and the Workers Party. Mohammad Ullah Hafezzi Huzur was the candidate of the Ulama Front consisting of the Islamic Republican Party, Jamiat Ulamaye Islam, and Bangladesh Justice Party. Justice Sattar was elected by getting 65.8 percent votes in the election. Dr. Kamal Hossain got 26.35 percent.³⁵

v) Fifteen Parties and Seven Parties Alliances

On March 24, 1982, Hussain Muhammad Ershad appeared on the country's power politics stage. In 1983, various polarizations occurred in coalition politics against Ershad's dictatorship. The Awami League and like-minded parties formed a 15-party alliance, and a seven-party alliance was formed under the leadership of the BNP. The parties in the 15-party Alliance were Awami League, Awami League (Mizan), Awami League (Farid Ghazi), Jasad, Basad, Ganazadi League, Workers Party, NAP (Harun), NAP (Mozaffar), CPB, Communist Party (Toaha), Communist Party (Nogen), Jatiya Ekota Party, Sramik Krishak Samajwadi Dal and Jatiya Mazdoor Party. The number of parties in this Alliance has sometimes increased and decreased due to the formation of BAKSAL after the breakup of Awami League, the departure of Mizan Chowdhury, the breakup of Basad-Workers party, the merger of two parts of the Communist Party, the merger of two NAP and Ekota Party. The seven-party Alliance formed under the leadership of BNP included BNP, UPP, Democratic Party, Bangladesh Jatiya League, NAP (NURU), Krishak Sramik Party, and Revolutionary Communist League. This Alliance was also fractured. As a result, the number of parties in the Alliance has increased and decreased. From the beginning, the two alliances went into simultaneous movement.³⁶ The two alliances and Jamaat announced a national mass meeting in Dhaka on October 14, 1984, to realize the five-point demand. The two alliances demanded

the withdrawal of martial law and elections under a neutral government. May 7, 1986, was fixed as the date for the parliamentary elections. Fifteen factions split over participation in the elections. Eight parties under the leadership of the Awami League participated in the election. From the Alliance in protest. Seven teams left. Hasanul Haque Inu's Jasad, Menon's Workers' Party, and a few left parties formed a five-party alliance. The seven-party Alliance led by the BNP also boycotted the election. After that, the two main alliances, the Left Alliance and the Jamaat, held a blockade program on November 10, 1987, demanding the resignation of Ershad. On that day, six people were killed by law and order forces. The next day, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia were put under house arrest.³⁷

vi) The Combined Opposition

The date for the parliamentary elections was February 28, 1988, but in the face of agitation by the opposition alliances, a new date was set for March 3. Opposition parties, including three alliances, decided to boycott the elections. The government then strategically helped to form a 140-party Combined Opposition Party (COP) under the leadership of A S M Abdur Rab. This Alliance came to be known as the anti-domestic party. At the end of July 1990, the opposition alliances became active again. The student organizations became active after six people were killed in a police attack on October 10 during the siege of the secretariat. Sarvadlia Chhatra Oikya was formed out of 22 student organizations.³⁸ The main political parties and alliances were forced to sit together under the pressure of the student movement. On November 19, the three alliances announced the outline for the transfer of power to Ershad. Following this, military dictator Ershad was forced to resign on December 6, 1990.

vii) Post-1990' Political Alliances

BNP was in an alliance position in the anti-Ershad movement, but after the fall of Ershad, BNP was elected alone. After discussing with the politicians of that time, it is known that in the 1991 elections, BNP wanted to win elections in Alliance with five parties. BNP offers 42 seats. However, as the five parties claimed more seats, they were not elected. Jasder Hasanul Haque Inui sought more than 100 seats.

On the other hand, CPB won 5 seats by electing the Awami League. Two joined the BNP, and two later joined the Awami League. In the 1980s, alliances were formed with the military ruler Ershad as the primary opponent. However, one of the features of the coalition formation in the nineties was the tension between the Awami League and BNP over the dictator Ershad. At the end of the BNP period, a new alliance was formed under the leadership of the Awami League. Ershad's Jatiya Party also joined the coalition on the demand of the caretaker government. When the Awami League won the 1996 elections, Jasad (ROB) and Jatiya Party joined the government.³⁹

viii) Four-Party and Eleven-Party Alliances

Jatiya Party, led by Ershad, left the consensus government led by the Awami League at one point and later formed a 4-party alliance with BNP. Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikyaazot joined four parties with them. However, before the 2001 elections, Ershad left the Alliance, but another part of the Jatiya Party remained in the Alliance under the leadership of Naziur Rahman Manju. After the 2001 elections, a section of Islami Oikyaazot left the Alliance under the leadership of Maulana Azizul Haque. Awami League made a written agreement with this part in 2006. Awami League joined the eight parties formed against the 4-party Alliance, making it an 11-party alliance. Eleven (11) parties later became fourteen (14) and formed into the Grand Alliance. At the end of the 4-party coalition government, BNP tried to bring Ershad into the coalition. However, Ershad appeared on Paltan's Grand Alliance from an unknown place and declared solidarity with the Grand Alliance—alternative style B on that stage. Chowdhury, Colonel (retd) Ali Ahmad of LDP also joined.⁴⁰

ix) Tenth Parliament Election-centered Anti-Election Alliance

After the fall of the Ershad government in the anti-dictatorship movement, elections were held for the first time under a non-partisan caretaker government in the country in 1991. In 1996, in the face of solid agitation by opposition parties, the caretaker government system was given constitutional status, and the next three elections (June 1996, 2001, and 2008) were held under that system. It is safe to say that party 14932 None of the elections held in Bangladesh under the government have been successful. The ruling party has always influenced the election results in their favor (in the seven previous elections held under the party government (1973, 1979, 1986, 1988, February 1996, 2014, and 2018), there were cases of massive fraud and rigging). Since then, national elections under the caretaker government have been held in a free and credible process.⁴¹ However, people's expectations for effective democracy remain unfulfilled. The elections under the caretaker government were widely praised at home and abroad for being free and fair, but the losing party raised allegations of rigging.⁴² That is why the BNP 2014 On January 5, withdrew from the elections due to the demands of the caretaker government. Awami League was elected unopposed in 153 seats and formed the government. Jatiya Party (2014-18) played the role of the opposition party.

x) Twenty-Party Alliance and National Front

The latest addition to coalition politics in Bangladesh is the National Unity Front. The structure of Oikyafront is quite complex. Because, in this Alliance, different parties have united with different political ideologies.⁴³ The main party of the BNP is Oikyafront. The BNP's 20-party Alliance also includes Jamaat-e-Islami, which is unregistered and opposed the country's independence in 1971. The top leaders of this party have been sentenced for war crimes. Oikya Front is

a coalition of votes. In the country's politics, alliances have always been formed, thinking about vote politics. Parties of different views and ideals have come together in big alliances only because of the desire to come to power. There is instability in the BNP-led 20-party Alliance while calculating demand and power. The Alliance's unity is limited mainly to paper. The accurate picture is different. BJP, led by Andalib Rahman Parth, has left the 20-party Alliance led by the party due to BNP's political inconsistency and indecisiveness.⁴⁴ The disunity within the Alliance has spread even within the partner parties. BNP leaders need unity on several issues, including going to Parliament and participating in by-elections. This level has reached such a level that the leaders get involved in arguments in the standing committee meeting. BNP in crisis with political Alliance. The dream with which they formed a larger political alliance, Jatiya Oikyafront, must be fixed. On the contrary, many like-minded political parties have moved away from BNP due to this Alliance. Also, the long-time political allies of the 20-party Alliance are not cooperating with BNP as before. Instead of Some of the coalition partners have been critical of the BNP, causing damage to the party.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The political parties in Bangladesh are conducting agitations and elections in Alliance and forming the government after winning the elections. While making alliances, sometimes compromises have to be made with ideals. Ascension to power is vital in forming alliances in Bangladesh. For example, when there was a movement against the murderous brokers of the 1990s, the Awami League supported the movement with all its might. However, later on, the demand of the caretaker government they also held a press conference with these killers while protesting simultaneously. Alliances are made for power; they abandon the Alliance and join a new alliance without getting a share of power. Due to this, the political situation has reached a dire situation. The coalitions of the past could only ensure the political and economic emancipation of the ordinary people by coming to power. A particularly noteworthy fact is that coalition movements have strengthened when the democratic governance process has been disrupted. Whenever military rule has hit the political scene, politicians have joined coalition movements to maintain democratic rule. Due to the changed circumstances of 1/11, the threatened people, dreaming of a new liberation, grasped the Grand Alliance and put them in power with a vast support force. The main party of the Alliance is responsible for keeping the ruling coalition politically and organizationally active and active. However, just as the Awami League, the main party of the Grand Alliance, could not be active and enterprising as per the expectations of the people after the election, similarly, the Alliance could not be politically and organizationally. In addition, the dissatisfaction of smaller groups that are part of the Grand Alliance undermines the effectiveness of the Alliance in many ways. Towards the end of

the grand coalition government, the CPB and Basad joined forces to build a left alternative outside the coalition-grand coalition circle. A new polarization and alliance-building game is playing out in politics around the 10th and 11th parliamentary elections. There was an attempt by the main political currents. To break each other's Alliance and attacks the opponent. Ganajagaran Manch and Hefazet Islam were effective adjuncts in this process of tactical struggle before the election battle. The country's coalition politics became conflictual in the face of these two. Although Hefazot Islam claims to be non-political, the government and the opposition parties take the initiative to use this organization for their interests. On the other hand, none of the plans of the Awami League alliance to break the BNP and especially to bring Jamaat-e-Islami out of the Alliance have been successful. That is why the election is central. Some of the coalition partners have been critical of the BNP, causing damage to the party. Alliance could not be active and enterprising as per the people's expectations after the election. Similarly, the Alliance could not be politically and organizationally. In addition, the dissatisfaction of smaller groups that are part of the Grand Alliance undermines the effectiveness of the Alliance in many ways. Towards the end of the grand coalition government, the CPB and Basad joined forces to build a left alternative outside the coalition-grand coalition circle. A new polarization and alliance-building game is playing out in politics around the 10th and 11th parliamentary elections. There was an attempt by the main political currents. To break each other's Alliance and attack the opponent. Ganajagaran Manch and Hefazet Islam were effective adjuncts in this process of tactical struggle before the election battle. The country's coalition politics became conflictual in the face of these two. Although Hefazot Islam claims to be non-political, the government and the opposition parties take the initiative to use this organization for their interests. On the other hand, none of the plans of the Awami League alliance to break the BNP and especially to bring Jamaat-e-Islami out of the Alliance have been successful.

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- ³¹ Md Masud Sarker, A.G.M. Niaz Uddin and Md. Bayezid Alam, 'Parliamentary By-Election in Bangladesh: The Study of Bhola-3 Constituency', *Higher Education of Social Science*, vol. 4, No.1 (2013), p. 25; Rounaq Jahan, "The Parliament of Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward", CPD-CMI Brief 1 (2012).
- ³² The most disgraceful tragedy in the history of Bangladesh was the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation and the charismatic leader of the Liberation War. Under his leadership, the Bangalees fought for nine long months. Bangladesh became independent on 16 December 16, 1971. Within three years, Bangabandhu managed to fulfill most of the rehabilitation tasks in a war-torn Bangladesh. He established political stability and worked for economic reformation. He had a vision for the development of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu stated the world is divided into two halves the oppressed and the oppressors, and he was always with the oppressed. All his dreams were shattered on 15 August, 1975 when traitors murdered him along

with most of his family members. Only two daughters survived: Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana. Others killed in the attack were Bangabandhu's wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, his younger brother Sheikh Nasser, his sons Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Kamal and their wives Rosy Jamal and Sultana Kamal, his youngest son Sheikh Russel and his chief security officer Colonel Jamil Uddin Ahmed who had rushed to save Bangabandhu. Several servants were also murdered in lavatories. The assassination of Bangabandhu and his family on 15 August is one of the most heinous killings in the history of human civilisation. But it was not just murder. It was also a conspiracy to silence the progress of a newly independent nation forever. After the assassination of Bangabandhu, the four principles of the Liberation War - secularism, Bangalee nationalism, democracy and socialism - were removed from the constitution. We lament the brutal killing of a politician who had dedicated his whole life to serving his nation. The occupiers of state power trampled on the spirit of independence and took to building Bangladesh based on Pakistani ideology. Needless to say, those who were against Bangladesh's freedom and supported Pakistan were behind Bangabandhu's killing. After the assassination, the killer group targeted our constitution achieved through the Liberation War; they wanted to kill our national principles. Their main objective was to destroy our constitution and the values of Liberation War as well. Source: <https://www.tbsnews.net/supplement/bangabandhu-and-spirit-liberation-war-were-killed-1975-477650> accessed on 24 October 2023.

³³ Sultan Mahmud, *Bangladesher Daiya Rajniti* (2nd Edition) (Dhaka: Obosor, 2022), pp. 368-370.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Nazma Ater, “ The Political Parties and the Political Crisis in Bangladesh: A Study on the Formation of Electoral Alliances”, *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science Volume 10 ~ Issue 5 (2022) pp: 38-49 ISSN(Online):2321-9467*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Naureen Chowdhury Fink, “On the borderlines: Politics, Religion and Violence in Bangladesh”, Political Violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical Perspective, Abraham, Newman and Ewiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, p. 96.;

³⁸ Shamsul I Khan, and *etal*, *Political Culture, Political Parties and the Democratic Transition in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2008), pp. 34-36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ David Lewis, *Bangladesh Politics, Economy and Civil Society* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 45-47.

⁴¹ Habib Zafarullah & Muhammad Yeahia Akhter, “Non-Political Caretaker Administrations and Demoratic Elections: An Assesment, Government and Opposition”, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2000), pp 359

⁴² Mashiur Rahman, *Democracy in Crisis* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2008), p. 67.

⁴³ Sahabul Haque and Bayezid Alam, *Op.cit.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Kazi S.M. Shasrul Alam Quddusi, “Elecions in Bangladesh: who after Chretakers?”, *Social Action*, Vol. 63 (July–Sept, 2013,) p. 274.