

# Political Culture in Major Political Parties and Democracy Building: Bangladesh Perspective.”

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**Abstract:** The experience of limited democratic rights under the British Government made the people conscious about their democratic rights. This consciousness prompted the people of British-India to launch movement against the colonial government for establishing self-rule in India. The Independence of Bangladesh in December 1971 the process of political culture and democratization was started for implementing the objectives of the war of independence. The role of political parties in promoting and consolidating democracy has been highlighted by academics as well as practitioners of democracy-building projects. It has been pointed out that parties play an important role of promoting democratic processes as well as democratic outcomes. Those who emphasise democratic processes posit that parties work as incubators that nurture citizen's political competence. When political parties develop inclusive organizational structures and processes, citizens are provided with an opportunity to influence policy decisions, developing policy alternatives and thus expand their civic skills. This promotes participatory democracy. The researchers set some suggestions on the basis of the research findings. Researchers hope that these suggestions will be helpful to political culture in major political parties and democracy building.

**Keywords:** Political Party, Democracy, Culture, Political Culture.

## INTRODUCTION

The building of democracy depends to a great extent on the strength and capabilities of political institutions involved in an interlocking relationships and interactions to perform their respective roles in the processes of the political system. In this respect the quality of political leadership, political parties, associations and various interests, civil society and the like demand special consideration.

Political parties have a positive image for their contributions in our nationalist struggles and in our movements for realizing democracy. (Jahan, 2015:6) After the creation of Pakistan the people of Bangladesh started movement for cultural and political autonomy. In 1949, 1950 and 1952 the language and Autonomy movements dominated the political scenario of Bangladesh. The students and enlightened sections of the society organized these movements. In the provincial election of 1950 the ruling Muslim League, was defeated by the United Front (UF), a coalition of opposition political parties of East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) was the principal point the UF in the election. As a result martial law as imposed in 1958 prior to the general elections schedule for 1959. During the martial law in Pakistan a series of movements were launched in East Bengal. These were the anti-constitution movement of 1966-63, the education movement of 1964, the six point movement of 1966 and finally the mass upsurge of 1969. The military dictator Ayub Khan was ousted by this mass upsurge. Gradually all sections of the people participated in these movements. After the fall of Ayub Regime, general election was held for the first time in Pakistan in 1970. In this election the Awami League (AL) under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib) got landslide victory in favor of six-point program and Bengali Nationalism. Following the independence of Bangladesh in December 1971 the process of democratization was started for implementing the objectives of the war of independence. From its independence to 1996, the process of democratization in Bangladesh can be broadly divided into four periods: First-elected government and its failure to institutionalize democracy (1972-1975); second transition from military authoritarianism to constitutional government and the limits of democratic institutionalization (1975-1982) Third-failure of the top-down democratization process and bottom-up democratic transition (1982-1990) and Fourth-democratic transition without consolidation (1990-1996). This periodization was done considering the general nature and tendency of democratization process of the period concerned. (Siddiqui,2013:3-4)

Ershad's top down democratization process failed to legitimize his government. He was not serious about institutionalizing the electoral process. Infact, he manipulated and destroyed the whole electoral process to remain in power. (Ahmed, 1998: 68-91) His principal support constituency was the armed forces, not the general people. As a result, like Zia, Ershad never wanted to make power base independent of the military. (Alam, 1990:32-41) Alliances of the political parties and different social-cultural-professional organizations came to realize that restoration of democratic political system in the country with Ershad as its President was impossible. This realization led the opposition political alliances and organizations to one-point demand for the resignation of Ershad and election under non-party caretaker government. Fall of Ershad government paved the way for democratic transition in Bangladesh. The NCG led by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed conducted the Fifth Parliamentary election on 27 February 1991. It was the only election which was free fair and impartial since the Independence of Bangladesh. (Hakim, 1993:53)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Here the study focuses on the political culture in major political parties and democracy building on the basic of Secondary Data. This paper follows the techniques of content analysis method. By reviewing relevant available books and literatures of this respective field, the researcher tries to present a discussion of democracy building in Bangladesh. Relevant books and literatures have been reviewed that available in our Central Library of the University of Rajshahi, Seminar Library of the Department of Political Science, History, Public Administration, research reports. Magazines, Newspapers and Websites like Google etc. This research will be helpful for the researchers to study the political culture in major political parties and democracy building.

### Objectives of the Study

- I. To study the political culture and democratization process of Political Party.
- II. To find out the overall condition of Democracy of Bangladesh.
- III. To know the steps on democratic development.

## CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

### Political Party

There are many bases for the formation of political parties. Many people form a political party on the basis of religion. Their aim is to protect the interests of their followers. For instance, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Mahasabha, etc. were formed on this basis. In European countries Catholic parties have been formed on this very basis. The second basis for the formation of the parties is economic. For example, there are many classes in the society, i.g. of capitalists, labourers, businessmen and services. The third basis for the formation of a political party is racial. For example, in India, there are all India Scheduled castes Federation. In Germany, Nazi Party was also formed on this basis and its programme was to drive out the Jews from the country. Fourthly, certain parties are formed on political basis-like, Indian National Congress in India. Fifthly; Sometimes the basis for the formation of political parties is psychological on national differences. Many people consider the old traditions of the society as ideal and they went to review them. (Agarwal, 2016:390)

Sometimes a political party may be formed to help the causes of social reform the All India Depressed Classes League and the Scheduled Castes federation aimed at the betterment of the lot of the Harijans or the untouchables. There is a tendency towards combativeness in human nature. Fighting and quarreling from a part of the original nature of man. In civilized times men “gang up” or choose sides, i.e., Create Parties, in an attempt to give organized expression to this competitive instinct. Another cause of the growth of political parties is the personality of a dynamic political leader. He inspires unthinking obedience in his followers who form a political party to support his struggle for power Political parties are also based on human nature. Some people

are instinctively conservative and there are others who are instinctively progressive. Those who are conservative stand for the maintenance of status quo and those who are progressive want change sometimes radical changes. (Mohajan, 1988:574-575)

Political parties have a special importance in democracy. Parties are inevitable. No free country has been without them. (Agarwal, 2015:390) All forms of governments in all societies have turned to the political parties and have maintained them as an essential institution of the political system. Political parties are the main intermediate and intermediary structures between society and government. They are central to both in the sense that they connect bridges to create a two-way communication process between them. Being the 'primary lubricants' and moving forces of the governmental process they are central also to modern political system. (Ashraf and Sharma, 1995:88) Parties can create political legitimacy, conciliate and manage conflict among competing groups, facilitate national integration and promote political stability. (Jahan, 2015:2)

Parties were regarded with some suspicion because of their long association with factions. Edmund Burke, Benjamin Constant and others conceived of party as on ideological group. According to this school, the members of a party entertain a set of common basic convictions about public interest, and are ready to act in concert in pursuit of these ideals. According to Burke's definition 'a party is a body of men for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. (Duverger, 1954:24-25)

Political parties are indispensable for the working of a democratic government. They supply the motive-power which keeps the wheels of administration moving. Without political parties, says MacIver, "there can be no unified statement of principle, no orderly evolution of policy, no regular resort to the constitutional device of parliamentary elections, nor of course any of the recognized institutions by means of which a party seeks to gain or to maintain power. (MacIver, R.M.,:396) Those who deplore the existence and influence of political parties perhaps do not understand the working of the machinery of democracy. As Lowell says, "The conception of government by the whole people in any large nation is, of course, a chimera; for wherever the suffrage is wide parties are certain to exist and the control must really be in the hands of the party that comprises a majority or a rough approximation to a majority of the people."

Political parties serve as the motive force in crystallizing public opinion and as the unifying agency which makes democracy workable. They are the indispensable links between the people and the representative machinery of government. They are the vehicles through which individuals and groups work to secure political power and if successful to exercise that power. Every political party is based upon two fundamental aspects of human nature. The first is that men differ in their opinions, but at the same time, they are gregarious by nature. If they are to live in society they must adjust their differences with others and

agree on fundamentals of certain opinions. Secondly they combine with persons holding similar views in order to put forward those views in an organized manner, and to support the principles or policy which they jointly favour and support.

By a political party, we mean an organized group of citizens who hold common views on public questions and acting as a political unit seek to obtain control of the government with a view to further the programme and the policy which they Profess. MacIver defines a policy party "as an association organized in support of some principles or policy which by constitutional means it endeavors to make the determinant of government." According to Leacock, "by a political party we mean more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit. They share on profess to share the same opinions on public questions and by exercising their voting power towards a common end seek to obtain control of the Government." (Leacock, 1906:313) R.G. Gettell defines, "A political party consists of a group of citizens more or less organized who act as political unit and who by the use of their voting power aim to control the Government and carry out their general policies. (Gettell, 2002:199)

At last we can say there is no free country without political parties. No one has shown how representative government could be worked without them. They bring order out of the chaos of a multitude of voters. From the above definitions we come to the conclusion that four things are essential for the formation of political party. First, the people should be organized. Secondly, there should be similarity of principles. Thirdly, the aim of a political party should be to attain political power. Fourthly, a political party should use peaceful means for attaining political power.

### Democracy

Many social and political theorists consider hunting and gathering societies extremely democratic. These societies preceding Athens represent the historical roots of all present day societies. Since these societies were dispersed across the world they challenge the claim of Athens and the west as the progenitor of democratic ideas. Dictators sometimes justify their hold on power by describing democracy as a creation of the west which is inappropriate for their regions of the world. (Bollen, and Pamela, 1997:35) It is commonly known that the English word 'democracy' has originated from two Greek words demos and krates. To identify the origin of the idea of democracy scholars normally start from the direct democracy of the ancient city-state of Athens. Athenian democracy was initiated in 507 BC which lasted until 322 BC. The peak period for Athenian democracy was 460 to 330 BC. (Midlarsky, 1997:17) The most weak point of the Athenian democracy was that it was only for the adult male citizens and women, metics (foreigners), children and slaves had no access to it. Women, metics, children and slaves were powerless segments of the Athenian society. (Wotton, 1994:72)

Democracy means a form of government, a form of the state and also a way of life. As a form of government, it means that the legal power in the community

is vested in the people as a whole and the rule belongs to the majority in the electorate in communities which act by voting. Democracy also signifies a way of life. It allows every individual to speak, criticise and disagree with others. It is based on the principle of tolerance. Individuals can have their separate ideas and ideologies and democracy does not believe in crushing them. Democracy believes in the method of persuasion and peace both in internal and international spheres. A democratic government does not use illegitimate coercion in the name of social welfare. Democracy upholds the dignity of human personality and various kinds of rights are given to every individual. Liberty and equality are the foundations of democracy.

Definitions of democracy have been attempted by various persons from time to time. The Greek philosopher Cleon defined in 422 b.c. democracy thus that shall be democratic which shall be of the people by the people, for the people. American President Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people. According to Juarez, Democracy is the government of the cattle, by the cattle and for the cattle. Lord Bryce defined, "Democracy is the these words the words democracy has been used ever since the time of Herodotus to denote that form of government in which the ruling power of a state is legally vested, not in any particular class or classes, but in the members of the community as whole. This means in communities which act by voting, that rule belongs to the majority as no other method has been found for determining peaceably and legally what is to be deemed the will of a community which is not unanimous."

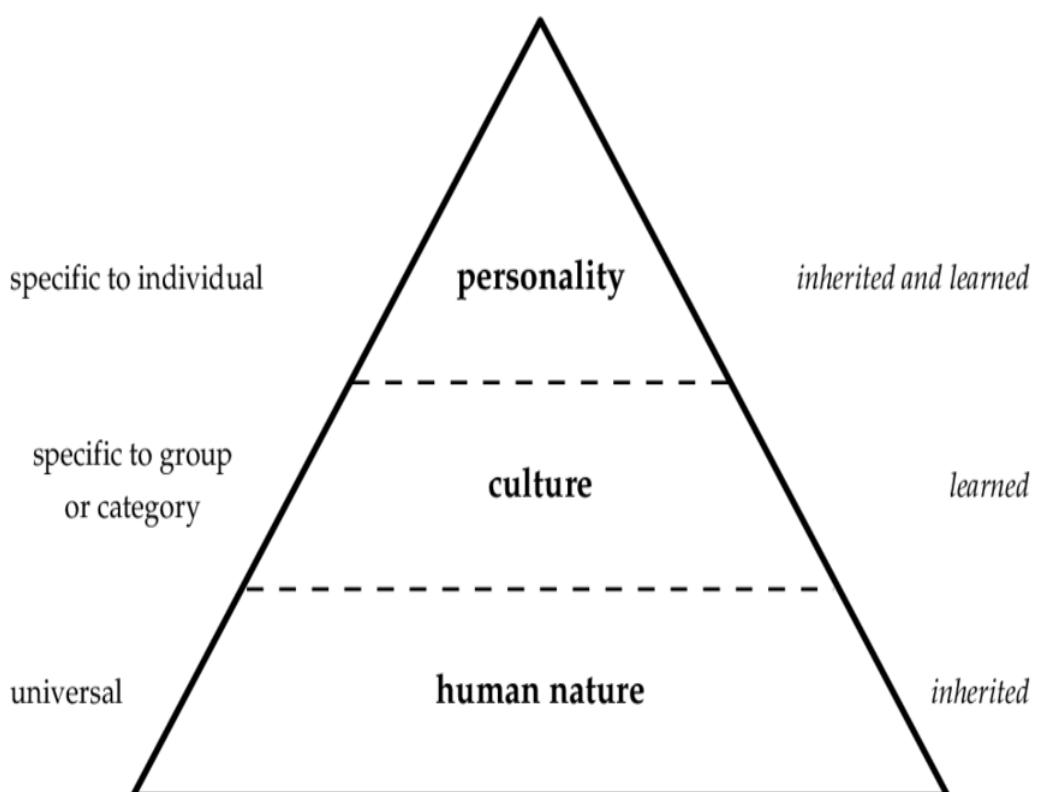
J.S. Mill defines, "democracy as that form of government in which the whole people or some numerous portion of them, exercise the governing power through deputies periodically elected by themselves." According to Barker, "Democracy is a mode of spirit, an attitude of mind of those who profess it and those who profess it alone can practice it." S.M. Lipset says, "Democracy may be defined as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence a major decision by choosing among contenders for political office." According to Prof. Dicey, "Democracy is a form of government in which the governing body is a comparatively large fraction of the entire nation."

According to President D. Roosevelt, "Democracy was not a mere matter of universal suffrage and unhampered expression of the popular will. It must be a positive and constructive force in the daily lives of the people and provide not merely for political but economic needs also. If men were forced to choose between liberty and bread. They would choose bread." At last we can say that is in the hands of the people and the people are the source of the state power and the people taking part in the government directly or through their representatives.

### Culture

The word is full of confrontations between people, groups and nations who think, feel and act differently. At the same time these people groups and nation. Just like our twelve angry men are exposed to common problems which demand cooperation for their solution. Every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been acting which were learned throughout their lifetime.

Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment which is where it was learned. It is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other, although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture and between culture and personality is a matter of discussion among social scientists. There are three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming. Culture is the most important one of the three levels. (Hofstede, 1999:3-5)



Source: Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations, Profile Book*, London, 2003, p.3

### Political Culture

The individuals who make up a society in which a political system is set may be categorised according to race, wealth economic ideology and even religion, but really there is more to the setting than what is often termed the social structure. In the social system there exists also the culture of the society. The individual members of the society will have certain values, beliefs and emotional attitudes which make up the culture the community of which political attitudes are a part. Such social behaviour has its basis in the culture of a society and similarly political behaviour has its basis in the political culture. (Kapur, 2019:60)

The concept of political culture tries to integrate psychology and sociology to make it possible to apply it to dynamic political analysis, psychological methods and sociological techniques for computing attitudes in mass societies. A study of political culture enables us to understand the political ideals and standards of behaviour people have set for themselves in a polity. It constitutes an important link between the behaviour of individuals and political events wars election campaigns, laws, acts of government officials etc. Affect the behaviours of individuals and groups and their behaviour is also influenced by their own reaction to events which are interpreted according to attitudes, beliefs and values. Political culture does not include formal or informal political institutions, governments, political parties, pressure groups lobbies etc. (Mahajan, 2008:189)

A political culture is a pattern of individual values, beliefs and emotional attitudes. Individual notions of what is right or wrong, good and bad in political affairs, together make up the value pattern-the pattern of norms, of what it is considered ought to be closely linked with such values will be the beliefs about what it really is, that is, of what exists in the world of politics. The values and beliefs of an individual are such that his emotions are aroused in the realm of politics; such political emotions sustain values and beliefs and are evoked by symbols. If a political culture was merely the individual writ large, then one might speak of a completely homogeneous culture. However, it is more; it is a unique pattern of values and beliefs and emotional attitudes of a collection of individuals. In the modern world, while in some countries the degree of cultural differences is relatively small, differences will, no doubt, be found such heterogeneity of a political culture rests in differences between, the political culture of groups and in differences between individuals. (Kapur, Ibid.)

Political culture is composed of attitudes and orientations which people in a given society develop towards objects within their political system. These orientations may have three distinct dimensions which are cognitive, affective and evaluative. According to Almond and Powell, "Political culture consists on attitude, beliefs, values and skills which are current in an entire population, as well as those special propensities and patterns which may be found within separate parts of that population." (Agarwal, 2016:422) The concept of political culture owes its origin to Gabriel A. Almond's observation that every political system is conceded in a particular pattern of orientation to political actions. The notion of political culture assumes that the attitudes, sentiments and cognitions

that inform and govern political behaviour in any society are not just random congeries but represent coherent pattern which fit together and are mutually reinforcing. (Mohajan, *Ibid.*)

According to Eric Rowe, “A political culture is a pattern of individual values, beliefs and emotional attitudes.” Ray Macridis says, “Political Culture means commonly shared goals and commonly accepted rules.” Talcott Parson writes, “Political culture is concerned with orientation towards political culture objectives.” According to Lucian Pye and Sydney Verba, “Political culture is a recent term which seeks to make explicit and systematic much of the understanding associated with long standing concepts as political ideology, national ethos and spirit national political psychology and fundamental values of a people.” Rose and Dogan define the concept of political culture as a convenient shorthand way of referring to the values, beliefs and commotion that give meaning to political life.

Political culture is only a part of the general culture. It includes only the set of political beliefs held by an individual and those beliefs are only a part of the totality of his beliefs. Political culture is not static. Its characteristics may change as a result of the import of alien ideas industrialization, the impact of new leaders, population changes and many other factors. The continuity of the culture, even in the face of such occurrences, is a sign of the effectiveness of the process by which political culture is passed from generation to generation the process of political socialization.

## **ELEMENTS FOR A FUTURE STRATEGY ON DEMOCRACY BUILDING**

### **Coalition of Governments**

A coalition of Governments, effects at democracy building are currently highly fragmented and often follow priorities of national constituencies and fashions rather than the needs on the ground. Coalitions of various actors would not only allow flexibility and a longer-term commitment to planning but would also raise legitimacy, especially when developed and developing countries jointly agree on priorities and programs.

Thus a future strategy must develop forums and policy instruments to facilitate the formation of coalitions on the international and regional level, instead of today's turf battles. The community of Democracies and its patterns could act as a catalyst by providing a space for meetings and a debate that promotes cooperation.

### **Participation and Information for all Citizens**

Many policy instruments in democracy building today still favour specialists rather than average citizens. Systematic and user-friendly information on the net can facilitate access to democracy resources and options rather than prescribe solutions. An expanding network of democracy resources, with a well-developed core, is also more flexible to use than limited project funding. However,

information on the Net must be supported by thematic networks of activities and practitioners to ensure enduring relevance and remaining on the cutting edge. The website of the International Institute for democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) [www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int) is one example of such a network. The establishment of lasting conceptual frameworks on democracy building also guarantees that resources are spent on providing citizens with new tools, rather than supporting a cast of consultants whose efforts often have little long-term impact.

#### An Emphasis on Regional Collaboration

A conceptual framework should also look supporting regional organizations as was already started at the community of democracies conference. With what practical tools can member states support cooperation and joint action at the regional level? Peer reviews, peer assistance and peer pressure have proven to be efficient at regional levels. States and regional organizations should open and compare their tool boxes and institutionalize their exchange of information.

#### Political Culture in Political Parties and Democracy Building in Bangladesh

The political culture of Bangladesh is an area which has hardly been explored. The culture bedrock of Bangladesh has been formed by several religious traditions. There is very little information about the prehistory of Bengal. The earliest religion appears to have been the worship of the dead and the groves which still survives among the Santal tribe of the country. The political ideologies in Bangladesh have mainly assumed populist forms. Populism refers to any utopia espoused by some oppressed groups to transform a given condition of society through collective action on the assumption that the indigenous society is a natural and homogenous community. It tends to give rise to charismatic leadership and mass political parties. Bengali nationalism was also interwoven with populism. It stressed the Bengali linguistic-ethnic group as a natural communism oppressed by the Punjabis and sought to mobilize the masses with the utopia of Sonar Bangla or Golden Bengal. The mass mobilization was undertaken by the Awami League under charismatic leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The historical development of political culture suggests an important aspect which celebrated linguistic identity. Secularism and liberalism lost much of its favour with the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Bangladesh is a twice-born nation. It achieved independence in 1947 from British domination as part of Pakistan over a period of two decades. It finally emerged as sovereign nation in 1971 through protracted mass agitation and a war of liberation which claimed millions of lives, but with great dream for the future. It started with the Westminster model of democracy. The idea of a competitive party system is inexorable linked with modern democracy. Democracy cannot survive without a responsible and responsive party system. (Khan and Haque, 1996:1-2.

During the martial law in Pakistan a series of movements were launched in East Bengal. These were the anti-constitution movement of 1962-63, the education movement of 1964, the six-point movement of 1966 and finally the

mass upsurge of 1969 which is led by the party of Awami League. (Maniruzzaman, Talukder, 1980:156) Immediately after the Independence of Bangladesh the state power was assumed by the AL that spearheaded the liberation war in 1971. To legitimize its assumption of power in sovereign Bangladesh the AL organized the first parliamentary elections in 1973. In this election AL obtained a landslide victory by gaining 292 seats in a house of three hundred. There was no doubt about the victory of AL in the 1973 elections; the electoral process was not above controversy. Opposition parties brought allegations of terrorizing and rigging in the elections against the ruling AL government. (Sobhan, 1993:24; Ahmed, 1983:141-146; Shafique, 1993:69; Maniruzzaman, 157.)

The introduction of one-party system the opposition political parties had been trying to launch movement against the government for failing to run the state. But the opposition political parties were not organized enough to mobilize people against the government. In the backdrop of this situation, introduction of one-party system antagonized and further threatened almost all sections of the people. (Jahan, Rounaq:135) Absence of organized opposition political movement with a viable alternative to incumbent government and the introduction of authoritarian system created a political vacuum in the country. In the situation, president Mujib, along with most of his family members, was brutally assassinated by a group of disgruntled junior army officers in 1975. Assassination of Mujib brought the end of AL rule in August 1975. (Siddique, 2013:6)

After the assassination of Mujib, his cabinet colleague, Khandaker Mustaque Ahmed assumed the presidency and proclaimed martial law throughout the country within a few months through coups and counter coups. General Ziaur Rahman became the *de facto* head of the state. (Khan, 1984:160) During the period of Zia parliament could not be developed as the supreme body. Multi-party system under the presidential rule of Zia was characterized as martial democracy by the opposition. (Siddiqui, 2013:8) The opposition political parties took initiative to launch movement against Zia. (Khan, 294-206) The opposition political parties could not put forward and organized alternative to the ruling party. Lack of consensus on the national issues, differences interests and goals of the opposition parties prevented them from launching a united movement against Zia. (Islam, 132) Even the main opposition party, AL could not mobilize people against the government. (Ahmed, 1995:149.) Moreover people were not sure that bringing any change in politics. (Alam, 1990:32-41) During Ershad period political parties, professional groups and different social organizations played active role. Political parties formed alliances against the government and the student organizations also got united against the policies of Ershad government. For the restoration of democracy, the AL-backed 15-party alliance and BNP backed 7-party alliances started movement with five point demands against the Ershad government.

From 1975 to 1990 the state power and the politics of the country were completely dominated by the military. The coups, counter coups killings,

execution of army personnel and planned attempts of the military coterie to establish army domination in all spheres of society were common phenomena of those days. The subsequent political developments reinstated civilian authority over the state and society. A strong public opinion was built for the fact that the army would remain in the barracks and power and politics would be an absolute domain of the politicians. Many authentic publications also interpreted that the military rules did not bring the country nearer to achieve sustained economic growth. Comparative analysis of the macro-economic indicators showed that civilian governments performed better than the military regimes. The military never indicated any involvement or interest in political matters. It proves that Bangladesh has successfully sealed off the main source of threat to democracy.

Comparative Analysis of Macro-Economic Indicators of Bangladesh (1975-2005), civil-military rule vs. political democracy.

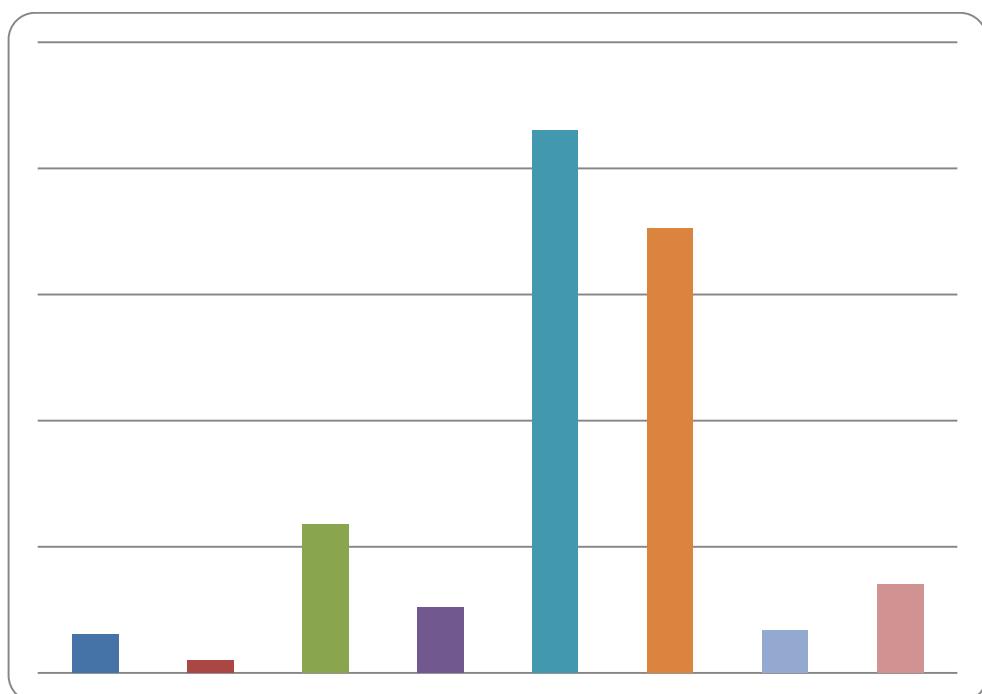
Indicators	Civil-Military Rule (1975-1990)	Political Democracy (1991-2005)
Per capita GDP Income growth rate %	3.9%	5.9%
GDP growth rate %	3.2%	5.1%
Export growth rate %	6.0%	10.5%
Average Inflation rate %	9.9%	4.9%
Trade balance as % GDP	-10.9%	-5.4
Budget deficit	-6.8%	6.6%
Current account as % GDP	-4.1%	-0.7%
Investment as % GDP	12.5%	21.3%
Private	6.4%	6.6%
Public	6.1	14.7%
Savings	11.0%	37.5%
Private	2.1%	16.5%

Source: World Bank Tables 1975-01 for this book the above table has been taken from Abul Momen CTG should focus on election, The Daily Star, Dhaka, 8 May 2007.

In 1991 the formation of the government by the BNP, all the opposition political parties, groups and student organizations put tremendous pressure on the ruling party to reintroduce a parliamentary form of government. (Ahmed, 1997:70-91) At last parliamentary form of government was established. This was the new era for democracy building in Bangladesh (Mashreque, and Rashid, 1995:67-79)

The politics of agitation has its deep root in the political history of Bangladesh. Hartal or strikes is another political culture as method of movement in the parties in Bangladesh. Political parties thinks hartal or strikes is really necessary for the development of democracy. Hartal or strikes that violently enforce closure of urban areas-have unfortunately become the way all opposition forces in Bangladesh demonstrate their political clout and disrupt governance in the hope of forcing change. Statistics of Hartals are given below with a view from 1962 to May, 2013.

Hartal Chart



Source: Chart taken from March 2005 UNDP report, "Beyond Hartals: Towards Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh"

In the above Chart we can see various hartal numbers.

In 1962-1971: 15 days of hartal in East Pakistan. After liberation,

In 1972-1975: 5 days of hartal, we can see in this time.

In 1981-1987: 59 days of hartal, we can see in this time.

In 1991-1996: 26 days of hartal, we can see in this time.

In 1996-2001: 215 days of hartal, we can see in this time.

In 2001-2006: 176 days of hartal, we can see in this time.

In 2009-2012: 17 days hartal, we can see in this time and

In March, 2013-May, 2013: 35 days hartal, we can see in this time.

Source: The Daily Star, March, 2013.

Hartal also have longer term effects, discouraging foreign and local investment. Attempts have been made to estimate what the country's growth might have been if it is written for the stoppages. Economists complain there appear to be no proper record kept of hartal days to help them calculate their impact. It's also not clear if the cost of a hartal is a full day of productivity or less in practice, since some economic activity does always continue. Conversely the long-term impact on the country's development could be much greater than one day's loss of trade. Yearly cost of hartal is shown in the below chart:

Yearly Cost of Hartals, Millions Taka					
Year	GDP1	GDP/Day	Hartal Day2	GDP loss of Hartals	GDP Loss %
1990/91	1,325,226	4,477	1	4477	0.3
1991/92	1,392,01	4,703	5	23,514	1.6
1992/93	1,455,680	4,918	7	34,425	0.2
1993/94	1,515,339	5,119	13	66,543	4.4
1994/95	1,589,762	5,371	27	145,012	9.1
1995/96	1,663,241	5,619	28	157,334	9.5
1996/97	1,762,847	5,956	7	41,689	2.4
1997/98	1,844,436	6,231	8	49,850	9.5
1998/99	1,934,370	6,535	28	182,981	5.1
1999/2000	1,934,291	6,535	15	98,022	4.5
Average	1,641,700	5,546	14	80,385	4.5

1. Constant market prices

2. National

Source: Dr. Syed Mokbul Hussain, Democracy in Bangladesh 1991-2006, Neem Printers, Dhaka, 2007, p.237.

Hartal means complete stoppage of all activities public, private, commercial and transport and conveyance movement. (Rahman, 2008:39) To one observer strike on hartal is a form of institutionalized lawlessness. (Kibria, 1992:) Hartal is a political weapon without which the opposition is not taken seriously in Bangladesh. (Rashiduzzaman, 2001:122) The opposition parties call and observe harts to compel the government to realize their demands. Bangladesh holds hartal records unmatched in the world. (Rahman,:40) It's a normal culture in political parties in Bangladesh. During the period from 1991 to 2001 opposition parties resorted to agitation politics. They called and observed hartals, gheraos, marches and other agitational programs to exert pressure on the governments. The opposition parties concentrated more on streets than on institutional paths to realize their demands. From 1991 to 1996 AL observed 416 hartals throughout the country. BNP enforced 244 hartals during the period from 1996 to 1999. While in power both BNP and AL opposed hartals but their roles reversed when they were in opposition. The main tactic the opposition parties usually apply in Bangladesh is to build political movement to alienate the inclined to think that the more anti-government movement the more will be alienation of the ruling party. They believe in overthrowing movement would ensure 'defeat' of the party in power in the elections. (Firoj, 2012:290-291)

Unparliamentarily behaviour and comments contributed to derail the normal functioning of the House. These were responsible to bring major shifts in the priorities of the house and its members. The parliaments had to concentrate more on leading the contending parties to the right track than discussing, taking decisions and enacting laws on the issues related to the welfare of the common people and the advancement of the country. It has been found that he MPs and leaders have not only hurled bad words on their counterparts they have also defamed the late national leaders. In one occasion an AL MP in the House called the founder of BNP and former President of the country Ziaur Rahman a traitor. (Inquilab:1997)

The political climate of Bangladesh leading to one crisis to another. Too much stubbornness and obstinacy always emasculate a clear vision, subvert the possibility of peaceful political resolution, but open the doors to violence and murder. The BNP led coalitions victory in the election of 2001 was soon followed by violent attacks conflict and the murder of opponents between supporters of the BNP and the AL. (Jahan, 2002:225) Corruption charges brought by the former AL government against the BNP workers were withdrawn. The AL on the other hand, rejected the election results claiming massive vote rigging the fraud, through it could not substantiate its allegations because the vary apparatus overseeing the election that is the caretaker government (CG), the Chief Election Commissioner CEC and the President were installed by the AL. The AL then fell back on two of its old and tried strategies of protest: boycott parliament and call for hartals (strikes). Parliament remained mostly non-functional, because the AL relatedly walked out on boycotted sessions, alleging government restrictions on their participation in parliamentary debates. The AL repeatedly called for the

government's resignation, citing misrule corruption and human rights violation, it threatened street movements to oust the government. (Chowdhury, 2012: 30-31)

On 11 January 2007, a state of emergency was declared and an army-led intervention" installed a non-party caretaker government (CTG) consisting of professional technocrats headed by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmad. This situation was generated by the inability of the governing parties to agree on a mechanism for the forth coming elections, and a period of violent confrontations leaving many dead and fears of further bloodshed and damage. (Khan, 2011:86)

Political stability is very important for democracy building. It apparently requires both just arrangements and general perception. Neither a just order generally seen as unjust nor an unjust order currently seen as just is a good prospect for longevity. In a country for democracy building there is a relationship among justice, legitimacy and stability. The following table is shown the relation.

Actual Situation	Perceived Situation	
	Justice	Lajustice
Justice*	Stability	Weak instability
Lajustice	Unreliable stability (Someone will discover the truth).	Strong instability.

\*In accordance with the requirements of "natural law" or principles that are inherent in the human situation.

Source: Paul. F. delcspinosse, Thinking about Politics, D. Van Nostrand Company, Newyork, 1981, p.277.

During the tenure 2006-2007 the CTG as demonstrated a keen understanding of the link between dysfunctional governance and political violence and enacted a murder of reforms designed to renovate institutions vital to very institutions vital to a sustainable democracy. Among these are strengthened Anti-corruption commission an independent judiciary and public services commission and a revised voters list to screen out fraudulent entries. Indeed, many of these reforms were proposed during the tenure of previous governments who proved unable or unwilling to implement them. A key objective of these reforms has been to create a level playing field for political participation were qualified candidates need to longer rely safely on the patronage of central party offices, need inordinately large sums of money to facilitate comparing or depend on "muscle power" to participate in politics. Their of declared goal of holding elections in 2008 thus offers the promise not only of success for a political party on candidate but a more transparent, sustainable and institutionalized democracy. (Sobhan, :4101-4108)

The 2008 election was followed by massive and violent murders and killings of BNP-led coalition supporters by the thugs of the ruling AL coalition supporters.

The BNP decided to boycott parliament as usual as the AL did during 2001-2006. Parliament has really remained dysfunctional. (Chowdhury, 2012:31)

The defining features of Bangladeshi politics since the new democratic era began in 1991 include the reintroduction of the parliamentary system, holding elections at regular intervals. It becomes possible for the culture of political parties. It is observed that the lasting legacy of government led by political parties try to change the negative politics in Bangladesh. The following table is shown the nature and duration of the different forms of Government with political parties after independence.

Period	Nature of Regime	Duration
December 16, 1971 to March 6, 1973.	Interim Government Multi-party Democracy	1 year 3 months
March 7, 1973 to December 27, 1974	Multi-party Democracy	1 year 9 months
December 28, 1974 to January 25, 1975	Emergency rule	1 months
January 25, 1975 to November 7, 1975	One-party rule under Mujibur Rahman	7 months
August 15, 1975 to November 7, 1975	Military Rule	2 months+
November 7, 1975 to May 30, 1981	Military rule and military dominated civilian regime of General Ziaur Rahman	6 years 6 months
May 30, 1981 to March 24, 1982	Transitional regime headed by Abdus Sattar	10 months
March 24, 1982 to December 6, 1990	Military rule of General Hussain Mohammad Ershad followed by military dominated civilian regime	8 years 9 months
December 6, 1990 to February 27, 1991	Caretaker administration	1 months+
February 27, 1991 to March 30, 1996	Bangladesh Nationalist Party government headed by Khaleda Zia with multi-party parliament	5 years+

	(6 August 1991 Parliamentary system revived)	
March 30, 1996 to June 23, 1996	Caretaker administration	2 months+
June 23, 1996 to July 2001	Awami League government headed by Sheikh Hasina with multi-party parliament	5 years
July 15, 2001 to October 9, 2001	Caretaker administration	2 months+
October 10, 2001 to October 28, 2006	BNP government headed by Khaleda Zia	5 years
6 January 2009 to 24 January 2014	Awami League government headed by Sheikh Hasina with multi-party parliament.	5 years

Source: Ali Riaz, *Inconvenient Truths About Bangladesh Politics*, Prothoma Prokashan, Dhaka, p.10.

## 7. Recommendation

There is a growing awareness in Bangladesh that democracy can be sustained only when political parties make a credible commitment to promote democracy in the country and practice democracy within their own organization.

- Political parties should stop the practice of boycotting the parliament when they are in the opposition.
- Political parties should nominate party candidates for elective offices from panels selected by grassroots committees which are stipulated by the Representation of the People Order (RPO) guidelines.
- Political parties in Bangladesh should prioritize the performance of their democratic roles e.g. interest aggregation and articulation along with political education and socialization.
- The option of funding political parties from the state budget, which is practiced in several European countries, can also be considered.
- Political parties need to prepare plans to improve the social diversity profile of their leadership.

## CONCLUSION

To build democracy is a complex process that needs patience, tolerance, for sightedness and an understanding that no single solution fits all cases. Democratization is a long-process and it must be built from within societies. It can neither be imported nor exported, but it surely can be supported. And as the wind of globalization brings us all closer together, supporting democracy building is now an imperative if we are to ensure that democracy spreads throughout country. Good intentions are an important precondition for democracy building, but today we need to go further. All democracies may agree that democracy building is an important lengthy process. Every country has to find its own way and forms of democracy. Bangladesh is not out of that. Political parties of Bangladesh have a positive image for democracy building, organized movement of the people for democratization that had started since the inception of Pakistan got formal expression in the general elections of 1970. As the sign of democracy, in those elections the AL got the mandate of the people to run the government of Pakistan. The AL, which spearheaded the liberation war, was committed to democratic political system. Despite its commitment to democracy the ruling AL that came to power after the independence and got the mandate of the people in 1973 tried to building democracy. It was quite unusual for a party like the AL that struggled for and emerged to ensure the democratic rights to introduce a one-party system replacing the multi-party system. On the other hand, the opposition political parties were not organized. After that for a long time from 1975-1990 the military government led the power of Bangladesh. In 1991, after long time, BNP formed the government and from this time. Bangladesh goes back to parliamentary form of government. With the reintroduction of parliamentary form of government bottom-up democratic transition occurred and a new era of democracy begins in Bangladesh.

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