Characteristics of Political Culture in Bangladesh:
A Critical Analysis from the perspeactive of Political Development and Under development

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Abstract: *Bangladesh is not free from the legacies of political culture prevailing in the least developed countries around the world. The political culture of this nation seems to be frequent practices of conflicts between the individuals, groups and organizations of the society. The instruments of political culture that shape the political institutions do not work properly in this society. Since independence, Bangladesh could have hardly achieved a stable and vibrant political process that needed for her nation building. Moreover, the major features in recent political arena of Bangladesh are destructive, which have an adverse effect on the state of good governance. This paper is firstly an attempt to focus on the theoretical aspects of political culture. Secondly, this article is an effort to reveal the historical as well as current trends of political culture of Bangladesh. Finally, some recommendations are made regarding how to come out from those destructive features of political culture.*

Introduction

Political culture in a society is always seemed to have been related with political development and political underdevelopment. It is the sum of the fundamental values, sentiment and knowledge that give form and substance to political process (Pye, 1995). A well-functioning and vibrant political culture contributes to the uniform political development of a society while the absence of this is responsible for the rise of underdevelopment in political sphere in the society. In the development context, Bangladesh is at present a nation of democracy around the world and a parliamentary form of government is running the state machinery. For underdevelopment context, in contrast, the country so far is not free from the legacies of political culture prevailing in the least developed countries. Indeed, political culture is regarded as a system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values, which defines the situation, in which political action takes place

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(Gabriel & Sidney, 1963). Political culture has now acquired the status of a heuristic device as a tool of analysis. It has indeed become as an important parameter for the analysis of political system. The dominating trait of political culture of this country is to disseminate the social, political and cultural ethos of liberation war among the people of society. It might be worth-mentioning here that in the cause for establishing a democratic society, Bangladesh is born as a result of blood-spattered national liberation war against Pakistani occupational forces in 1971. The people of all spheres of Bangladesh society including political parties, armies, intellectuals, students, peasants and labors had sacrificed a lot in this war of liberation. Since the inception as a new nation, people of this land are seemed to be democratic and patriotic by nature. This trait of this nation always led them to fight against the evils in the way to uphold the course of democracy in society. If we analyze the main trends of our political culture, we definitely see emphatic presence of willingness to adhere to democratic principles (Choudhury, 2010). But it is also true that the democratic process in our country has suffered so many set-backs. For Bangladesh, popular democracy is far from the reality, where democratic process ends after an election and authoritarian administration takes over immediately under the umbrella of democracy. A society with a democratic commitment turns around the dynamics of a multi-party system. Bangladesh is an evolving young democracy practitioner and it has experiencesed of glory and derailment in its march to achieve democratic perfection. In this march, there are so many political parties exist in the country. However, the principal parties have been the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The interrelationship between these political parties becomes very rasping and has emerged as the most critical problem facing the nation at this moment. This paper looks upon the contents of the conflict in political culture and tries to understand how they drive on Bangladesh towards a politically underdeveloped society.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of political culture is a recent term, which seeks to make more explicit systematic understanding associated with old concepts, such as political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national political psychology and the fundamental values of the people. The concept of political culture can be seen as a natural evolution in the growth of the behavioral approach in political analysis.

Political scientist conceptualizes political culture in terms of values, norms, beliefs, symbols etc (Bhuiyan, 1991). The term was first employed by Lenin (cited in White, 1979) and its first use in English can be traced to Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the middle of 1930s (Khan, et al., 2008). They used the term to refer to the role of education and mass media in the Soviet Union (Brown, 1979). One way to understand political culture is in terms of the shared paradigms that co-exist within a single particular society. In this milieu, it is a distinct and

patterned form of political philosophy that consists of beliefs on how governmental, political, and economic life should be carried out. Political cultures also create a framework for political change and are unique to nations, states and other groups. On the basis of political participation and level of political development, Gabriel and Sidney (1963) outlined three types of political culture in society. First: parochial-citizens are distant and unaware of political phenomena; Second: subjective-citizens are aware of politics, its actors and institutions; Third: participatory-citizens are able to influence the government or system as well as are affected by it and are congruent with a democratic political structure. It might be argued that the first and second types is similar to the present political culture of Bangladesh that leads this land towards a politically under developed society while the third type is on the trajectory to come over the scene and if so, it may contribute to Bangladesh towards the development of a politically sound society.

The political development in this country coexists with the process of democracy to perfection. For Schumpeter (1976:269), democracy is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. According to Sharma (1995), democracy provides an opportunity for the people to choose among competing elites. For Schmitter and Karl (1996:49), "modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rules are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives." What these trio statements convey us for understanding democracy in a society is unfolding the absence of such themes in Bangladesh political arenas. The dream this nation had developed in this regard with their glorious revolution for liberation has vanished away in the course of mal practices of raring political institutions in the society. In micro level, democracy is now considered as a failure phenomenon in this society. In addition, tyranny of majority in all respects as well as intolerance of minor opposition have, frankly speaking, made this parliamentary democracy dead in the bud. Because, as argued by Touraine Alain (1997:150), democracy presupposes the acknowledgement of the other as subject; and a democratic culture is a culture that recognizes political institutions as the primary locus of that acknowledgement. Moreover, corruption and politics have emerged as twin brothers in this society that ruin the last spell of political democracy

Western political scientists have advanced some approaches and theories useful for the study of political development and change in Asian countries. Islam (2003) has applied the following approaches to study the Asian politics: Easton's systems analysis, Gabriel's structural functional systems frameworks, Kautsky's Neo-Marxist school approach, A.G. Frank's underdevelopment thesis and Pye's

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psychological behavioral theory. Estone views politics as the authoritative allocation of values for a society and political life as a system surrounded by a variety of environments. Political systems exist in the changing environment by its adaptability in achieving authoritative allocation of values as an equal distribution of political power, fundamental needs for human survival and economic well-being. The process continues as outputs is communicated to the public by means of feedback channels and hence, may affect demands and level of support. Bangladesh has hardly achieved this authoritative allocation of political institutions and her process of feedback channels to hear the voice of the people are functionally ineffective at large with the absence of freedom of the mass media. Turning to Almond's structural functional framework where he notes that all political systems posses political structures and political functions and the structure of a political system may differ depending on 1) the degree to which there is differentiation or specialization of political roles, structures and subsystem; and 2) the autonomy of subordination of those roles, structures and subsystems to each other. However, the specialization of political role or the autonomy of subordination of those roles is rare phenomena between the political systems and in the political developments of Bangladesh since her inception in 1971. Frank's thesis on the 'development of underdevelopment' in Latin America is a good example in the study of politics for underdeveloped countries. From his historical observation that Latin America suffers from a colonial underdevelopment, which makes its people economically, politically and culturally dependent, not so much on themselves or on each other as on a foreign metropolitan power. The history of political developments of Bangladesh, as a part of colonized undivided Indian subcontinent, is engrossed with the British colonial legacies that are mostly responsible in making of political underdevelopment in the Bangladesh society according to Frank's thesis. Kautsky's Neo-Marxist approach attempts to develop some very broad generalizations and hypothesizes about the politics of societies undergoing the process of change from agrarianism to advanced industrialization, which could correctly be compared with those components of Bangladesh society, although the transformation of agrarian society into an industrial one is still on process for Bangladesh. Lucian Pye's approach has examined the political culture of Burma in historical perspective from colonialism to nationalism and the psychology, personality and behaviors of politicians, administrators and ex-communists within the changing social structure and setting in Burma. In this connection, it must be worth mentioning here that Bangladesh has suffered a significant period of her age by military regimes that change the psychology, personality and behavior of politicians that has made them vulnerable to their political commitment for society. Ultimately, a large group of corrupt and intermediary political opportunists have developed by the umbrella of political parties under the direct

patronization of military administration. After the fall of military regimes a mal practice has begun to erupt in the major political currents to absorb the ex-military high officials as their party officials, MPs and Ministers that, in fact, has undermined the ability of political leadership as well as has started to give lease of the political parties to cantonment. The number and rank of military ex-official absorbed more in a party, the possibility of a party to rise on power has become easier. These unhealthy practices in the major political parties in the post-1990 mass revolution have diminished the possibility of a nation to get rid of army intervention in politics for ever and had made the head down of political leadership to the foot of the cantonment.

Khan, et al., (2008) uses the following three structural model to explore the nature of political culture in Bangladesh; Atomism, patron-clientelism and neo-patrimonialism. They also used the term 'parochial' to illustrate the divided political party in Bangladesh. The term 'atomism' means high level of individualism. By 'individualism' here means that individuals are geared to maximizing their individual gains without considering its cost to the community. The patron-clientelism is an asymmetrical and unequal relationship in which a number of people, as client, are dependent on a powerful patron for security, protection or valuable services. In return, the client provides political support to the patron and act as his/her vote bank (Alavi, 1976). In Bangladesh, leaders seem to provide party activists with money or other material resources for getting their political supports particularly in all elections. Even the supporters are benefited during the election of party officials. By 'patrimonialism' it refers to a regime type where the ruler consider the nation, state or domain as his/her personal property. The ruler is free to do with the staff and the subjects. In Bangladesh, most of the political leaders tend to be authoritarian. Political parties manifest very little in their inner democracy. Leaders are arbitrary in their decision making and prefer their kinsmen and clients in key decision-making position. Families and extended kinship groups and even dynastic factors play an important role in politics (Khan, et al., 2008). The term 'parochial' means that specific groups have built-up ideologies and cultural perceptions that tend to justify the activities of the group as an insular. Other group are regarded as different, outsider and mistrusted (Khan, et al., 2008). Lijphart Arned (1984), shown that plurality, parliamentary-plurality, and parliamentary-PR system- are represented among the firmly established Western democracies. He has focused on the 14 cases that unambiguously fit these three categories. The US is the one example of presidentialism combined with plurality. There are four cases of parliamentarism-plurality (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK) and nine democracies of the parliamentary-PR type (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden).

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Early in the post world war-II eras, majority of countries in east and Southeast Asia had democratic political system. Over time, however, many of these were supplanted by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. By the early 1970s, only Japan retained a fully democratic system, with Malaysia and Singapore belonging to the category of semi democracy (Allagappa Muthiah, 1995). The February 1986 'people power' revolution in the Philippines, However, marked the beginning of a return of democracy in the region. Democratic transitions followed in South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, and Thailand, as well as in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. By January 1996, Freedom House judged that 117of the world's 191 countries were formally democratic-the most ever in history. After the Second World War, when the process of de-colonization started in Asia, there was a great optimism in the mind of the Asian leaders, who led their countries independence movement, about their countries future. The Asian leaders regarded the political ideology and value system developed in the imperialist West, i.e. liberty, equality, democracy and participation as appropriate values for adaptation by the Asian countries (Jahan, 1976).

In the political development of South Asia, India is comparatively a stable democratic country because it is able to hold elections to change leadership through democratic processes. India has the political institutions, i.e. the efficient bureaucracy, institutionalized political party system, dense networks of autonomous voluntary associations and mass media to pursue a persistent democracy (Paul, 2006). These not only check and scrutinize state power; they also enhance the legitimacy of democracy by providing new means to express political interest; increasing the political awareness, efficacy, and confidence of citizens; and training and recruiting new political leaders. So, in comparison, the politico- electoral process in India is much more enduring and resilient because of its plural culture, democratic moorings and secular ethos (Chaudhuri, 2009). On the other hand, Pakistan has a turbulent relationship with democracy since its inception in 1947. Since the martial law of 1958, Pakistan has had a presidential form of government, except for a few years when Z. A. Bhutto was the prime minister. In the late 1970s, General Zia-ul- Haq restricted the power of democratic institution through 8th amendment to the constitution. Like Bangladesh, the people of Pakistan have experienced all sorts of government. Big business houses and top-ranking officials with the eager connivance of the ruling elites used to dominate the political structure and institutions till the military capture of power in Pakistan. A political culture of democratic governance remained ever elusive in the history of Pakistan.

Another approach to the question of political development is found in the analysis of Alternative Courses of Political Development by Edward Shills. He outlines a model where the criteria of political development are based on the western value system, but he also offers a typology or political systems that

accommodate the non-western types. These criteria lie in the Shills' conceptions of political development as 'the model regime of civilian rule through representative institutions in the matrix of public liberties'. Shills offers five types of political systems as indicating different courses of political development. First, political democracy which is characterized by (a) the stability, coherence and effectiveness of ruling elite; (b) the practice and acceptance of opposition; (c) adequate machinery of authority for the protection of constitutional order; (d) the institutions of public opinion; and (e) the civil order, which based on civility, would embrace a sense of nationality, interest in public affairs, legitimacy of the political order, a sense of dignity, and the obligations and the consensus regarding values, institutions and practices. Second, tutelary democracy, the traits of which are (a) a stronger and more authoritative executive than that in political democracy: (b) identity of the party with government; (c) discipline through the influence of personality; (d) a diminishing of the powers of opposition; and (e) that the rule of law, however, continues. Third, modernizing oligarchy, implying (a) an urge to modernity and to unity: (b) apprehensions regarding the overwhelming power of traditional elements; (c) a higher concentration of authority; (d) an organized ruling elite and an elaborate bureaucracy; and (e) the lack of an ideology in particular. Fourth, totalitarian oligarchy, constituting (a) an ideology as the state doctrine; (b) an organized small clique; (c) the absence of an opposition; and (d) total government control. Fifth, traditional oligarchy, characterized by (a) a dynastic constitution and palace rule; (b) kinship and a personal choice of advisers: and (c) traditional beliefs and institutions. In the history of political development, Bangladesh could never be able to achieve the conditions for the development of a political democracy as outlined by Edward Shils. However, the type of tutelary democracy might be present in the post 1990s regimes under the government of Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina while a type of totalitarian oligarchy was found under military regimes from the mid of 1975 to the end of the 1980s.

Historical Background: From Pakistan to Bangladesh

The political history of Bangladesh is a short one, even when this includes the pre-liberation period or what can also be called the Pakistan era (Khan, et al., (2008: 41). However, this short span of political trajectory could be considered as full of problems and tragedies associated with political experimentation. People of the country, since the end of British colonial rule in August, 1947, have experienced the regimes of many types of governments, presence of an uncountable numbers of political parties, numerous political movements, and uprisings- if not revolutions- military rule, bureaucratic rule, basic democracy, democracy and so on; all these in a short span of less than half a century (Choudhury, 2010). The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 was a unique phenomenon –

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it was the first nation state to emerge after waging a successful liberation war against a post-colonial state. Though the liberation war in Bangladesh lasted only nine months, the nationalist movement that preceded the war spanned the previous two decades. Indeed, the seeds of the Bangladesh nationalist movement were planted very soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. From the very begging, the Bengalis demanded democracy with free and regular election, a parliamentary form of government, and freedom of political parties and media (Jahan,2005). But the ruling elite in Pakistan thwarted every attempt at instituting democracy in the country (Callard, 1957; Sayeed 1967). In this passage to movement for democracy, it would be worth mentioning the events of the glorious role of Language movement of 1952, provincial general election of 1954, six-point's movement of 1966, and Mass movement of 1969, general election of 1970. The nationalist movement first emerged as a struggle to defend and preserved the ethnic- linguistic Bengali identity in 1952 and ends through the victory of 16th December 1971. The clarion call on March 7, 1971 of Bangabandhu for 'muktir sangram' and 'swadhinatar sangram' meant not only freedom from poverty and oppression but also achievement of a democratic independent country (Rashid, 2010) As a new state, it was imperative for the new regime to establish a new political structure and it wanted to follow the Indian pattern of political system, i. e. one of parliamentary democracy with a single dominant party.

The very next day, after Sheikh Mujib return to Bangladesh from Pakistan prison, announced the Provisional Constitutional Order which stipulated a parliamentary form of government for this newly born country (Bangladesh Observer, Jan 12, 1972). But only after three years, by an 'amendment' of the constitution passed in the Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad, the AL regime change the form of government from a parliamentary to a presidential one, replaced competitive party system parliament by a one-party system. Only one party, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) was allowed to function in the country (Khan, 2009) and restricted civil liberties and the power of the courts (Bangladesh Observer, Jan 26, 1975). However, this change could be regarded as the progress of a socialist regime under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib. On August 15, 1975 the gruesome military coup overthrew the AL government by assassinating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his entire family and relatives numbering eighteen (Muhith, 2007). On 3rd November, 1975, just nearly three months after the killing of Bangabandhu, in a further military coup, the same member of Armed Forces those who were responsible for august massacre killed the country's national leaders including Syed Nazrul

Islam[1], Tajuddin Ahmed[2] A. H M. Kamruzzaman[3] and Capt. Mansur Ali[4] in the central jail in the capital. This event brought extreme political instability manifesting itself in coups and countercoups. In the protest of jail killing, on November 3, 1975, a countercoup was led by Major General Khaled Mosharraf, was derailed by another coup four days later by radical soldiers under Lt. Col. Abu Taher (Khan, 2009). Therefore, the counter coup in protest of jail killing failed to sustain in the scene. It paved the way for the emergence of a Martial Law regime under the leadership of Major General Ziaur Rahman. However, within about a year's time, he lifted martial law, restore multi-party rule and hold both presidential and parliamentary elections (Siddique, 2006). In the later period, he continued presidential form of government under the direct control of military power elites. The political history of Bangladesh was again black spotted by an abortive coup of May 30, 1981 allegedly by Major General Abul Monjoor, GOC, Chitagong Garrison (Khan,2009). In this military coup, country's President Ziaur Rahman was killed in Chittagong. They killed Ziaur Rahman in their fourth coup attempt (Ziring, 1992), following a change in the position of President with his Vice-President Justice Abdus Sattar. On March 24, 1982, General Hossain Mohammad Ershad, the then Army Chief, ousted the government of Justice Abdus Sattar and seize power through a military coup (Siddiqui, 2006). The nine years of Ershad's autocratic rule was terminated by a mass upsurge in 1990. Since then, politics of Bangladesh has been dominated by AL and BNP and parliamentary democracy, mostly tutelary in type, is practiced as the political system where the prime minister is the head of the government.

Political Culture and Political Development

Political development includes the development of economy, modernization of political system, advance of administrative and legal system, mass participation in politics, building of democracy, modernization of power and multi-dimensional progress of social change etc. Though these traits of political developments are applicable for western societies, at the same time, these can be applied in the

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[1]The Vice President of the immediate past Bangabandhu Government in 1975. He was also the acting President of the Bangladesh Government of Exile during the liberation war of 1971.

[2] The Finance Minister (resigned) of the immediate past Bangabandhu Government in 1975. He was also the Prime Minister of the Bangladesh Government of Exile during the liberation war of 1971.

[3] He was the commerce Minister of the immediate past Bangabandhu Government in 1975. He was also the Minister of Home affairs, Relief and Rehabilitation of the Bangladesh Government of Exile during the liberation war of 1971.

[4] He was the Prime Minister of the immediate past Bangabandhu Government in 1975. He was also the Minister of Finance and Planning of the,   Bangladesh Government of Exile during the liberation war of 1971.

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developing countries, whereas the development in political arenas is going to be developed. In Bangladesh case, these ingredients of political development is flourished and progressed under the democratic regimes of post 1990 periods. Very few years ago, the separation of judiciary from the executive branch, for instance, is being well recognized as the development of legal system as independent part of government. Simultaneously, the masses from all sphere, enthusiastically have been taking part in the national elections and other politics related actions and programs. Moreover, the establishment and gradual progress of democracy has been proved through the formation of democratic government, although the political power is practiced by a small clique under the political administration, which is largely comprised of the leadership with the combination of totalitarian and traditional oligarchy. However, major trends in the political development of this country are portrayed in the below.

Parliamentary Form of Government

After long 16 years of presidential form of government, Bangladesh return to the parliamentary form of government through the 12th amendment act in September, 1991. In their findings Khan, et al., (2008) have shown that 40.6% of their respondents believed that parliamentary form of govt. is a pre-condition for democracy. Although the relation between the treasury and opposition bench in parliament does not work with healthy practices, the institution has been working as a last snapshot for keeping alive the democratic rule in the country. The monopoly of the domination of the parliament by treasury bench in every space of parliamentary activities, however, turns the opposition frequently to be inactive left-out members of the body. The parliamentary democracy continues here with many loopholes and major injuries, and unlikely to embrace setbacks to maintain the continuation of rule of democracy in society.

Provision of Non-party Caretaker Government System

The thirteen amendment of constitution on 26 March, 1996, introduced the form of non-party caretaker government, a unique system for holding free and fair election in this country. This caretaker system provides the opportunity to a peaceful transition of power. After completion of five years term, the party in power has to transfer power in the hand of a non-party caretaker government and after a free and fair election, the caretaker government (CG) has to transfer the power to an elected government. But unlike the first, second and third CG, the fourth CG was formed under President Iaj Uddin Ahmed, which was not supported by the then opposition AL and other parties. At this stage, the country was passing through a serious political turmoil, especially between the major political parties including the AL and the BNP. In this critical juncture, the Armed Forces intervened in the scene that seized the power of President as the Chief of

CG. Dr. Fakruddin Ahmed, the then governor of Bangladesh Bank was chosen by the Armed Forced as the new chief of the CG. It became generally known as the 'Army backed government'. He stayed in power for more than his stipulated ninety days and in the name of reforming the political institutions in the country, his government arrested a large of top political leaders including Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia under the charge of corruption. This brought about huge dissatisfactions in the political arena of the country. However, they were under pressure to transfer power to elected representatives of the country. At last, after two years of their period, they were compelled to transfer power to an elected government. The general election of 1996, 2001 and 2008 were held under this system and the result of the election were accepted by all the voters; and the international, national or independent observers opinioned that the elections were held in a free-fair and peaceful environment. Such a process of peaceful transition of power is a positive sign of democratic development in the country.

Parliamentary Standing Committees

The composition, extent and jurisdictions of the committees have been outlined in the Article 76 of the constitution, which empowered the parliament to formulate standing committees following the rules of parliamentary procedure. At present, 48 standing committees are functioning in the 9th parliament and its chairpersons are non-minister MPs (Hossain, 2010), which make the minister accountable to the parliament as well as to the electorate. It seems to be a good gesture of our MPs that although they did not participate in the parliament session, they join the committee meetings and made valuable contribution in resolving problems (Islam, 2003). In the 5th Parliament 1465 meetings were held, took 2237 decisions and presented a total of 41 reports before the parliament. In the 7th parliament it was 1274 meetings, 3940 recommendations and 29 reports. In the 8th parliament 1242 meetings were held, took 6734 decisions and presented 48 reports before the parliament. The 9th parliament started it function on 25th January 2009, and till September, 994 meetings were held and 21 reports were present before the parliament (JS Secretariat). In the leading parliamentary democracies, the committees are treated with difference and their suggestion and recommendations are seriously honored (Islam, 2003).

Two-party System

Bangladesh started with a single party dominant system under a parliamentary form of democracy and the ruling AL maintained its dominance in the first three years (Jahan, 2005). A key characteristic of the post, 1990s democratic era is the prevalence of two-party dominant system in the political process of Bangladesh. If the results of 1991-2008 elections are examined, it reveals (Table 1) a unique trend of continuous predominance of two major parties: the AL and the BNP,

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which is very congenial for parliamentary democracy. Although there are the presence of some other parties like JP (the party of former military dictator) and Jamat-e- Islami Bangladesh (the party linked with collaborating forces during liberation war), which have won some seats in the every parliamentary election of post-1990 periods. However, these parties did never win the popular supports and could not be able to secure the required seats to be the main stream political parties in the country. These parties only do help the major two parties to be in power sometimes under the configuration of jote or alliance as seen in the parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2008.

Table 1: Result of parliamentary election, 1991-2008 (No. of Seats)

Year of Election	Awami League	Bangladsh Nationalist Party
1991	88	140
1996	146	116
2001	64	319
2008	230	30

Source: This table is constituted on the basis of statiscal report on parliamentary elections held in the year of 1991, 1996, 2001, 2008, displayed by electin commission

Independence of Judiciary

Independence of judiciary means a fair and neutral judicial system of a country. This can afford to take its decisions without any interference of executive or legislative branch of government. An independent judiciary free from influence of legislative and executive organs of the state is the prime requirement of a democratic state. Article 22 of Bangladesh constitution states: "The State shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive organs of the State." BNP and AL first included separation of the judiciary in their election agenda during their movement for the restoration democracy against the military dictatorship of General Ershad. Both the AL and the BNP lingered the process during their tenures. During the tenure of the caretaker government of Dr. Fakaruddin Ahmed, the separation of judiciary took effect from November 1, 2007. Part VI of the constitution deals with the judiciary. Article 7 provides that all powers in the Republic shall be effective only under and by authority of the constitution. The responsibility of seeing that no functionary of the state oversteps the limit of his power is, a necessity, on the judiciary. Article 35(3) of the constitution provides "Every person accused of a criminal offence shall have right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by the law. Article 116A provides for independence in the subordinate

judiciary while Article 94(4) demands independence of the Supreme Court Judges.

Political Culture and Political underdevelopment

The political culture of Bangladesh is termed generally confrontational by nature that involves the divergence of individual political activists' attitudes, groups, organizations, parties and civil society. Almost each and every political party of Bangladesh is derailed from the genuine direction of democratic polity. The political life of the country has dissolved into a polarized confrontation between government and opposition which reinforces a deeply held popular disapproved of the country's political elite (Andaleeb, 2007). Democratic politics requires the art of compromise, a policy of 'give and take', and of course not a policy of 'winner takes all' (Islam, 2003). But in Bangladesh we have progressed very little from the mindset of 'winner takes it all' and the 'loser has nothing to gain' (Khasru, 2010). The government and opposition still remain far from the desire level of interaction and communication expected in a healthy parliamentary democracy. Negativism, intolerance, violence and above all, autocratic tendency have become the invariable contents of our political activity.

Politicization of Bureaucracy

Politicization of bureaucracy started during the Pakistan period, especially in the military regime. However, the trends acquired greater intensity in post-liberation period and posed a serious problem during last decade or so (Mazumder, 2010). Politicization of the administration has been one of the most negative outcomes of the democratic system that destroy both the moral and professional foundation of the civil services. In 90s Bangladesh's civil administration was classified as 'Anti-Mancha' and 'Pro-Mancha' (Khasru, 2010). Recruitment, quicker promotions, lucrative posting, overlooking corruptions and inefficiency became increasingly influenced by party loyalty. The culture of making OSDs, termination of jobs, forced retirement—all are considered as punitive actions for the disloyal to a party government. During a routine question-answer session in parliament on August 25, 2010, it was disclosed that since January 1 last year, 224 officials in different position were made OSDs. One survey indicated that 37% of the civil service respondents believe that political connection and nepotism were necessary for promotion (World Bank, 2002).

Politics of Violence and the Annihilation of Political Leaderships

The politics of violence and the annihilation of political leaderships have become an omnipotent part of political culture in Bangladesh. The exact to number of political killings since independence could not be ascertained. The government

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estimated the figure to be over 6000 including country's Presidents, party leaderships, MPs and many others from different sectors. Since January, 1972 to June 15, 1973 a total of 4925 persons were killed by the miscreants.(Bangladesh Observer, July 7, 1973). Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were killed by military coup in August 1975. President Ziaur Rahman was also killed in a same military coup in May 1981. During Zia's tenure, in the process of suppression of coup against him and to bring the law and order situation under govt.'s control, 1173 soldiers were killed within two months before October, 1977 (Shahjahan, 1996). After the killing of President Zia in 1981, killing for direct political motive was not common till the mid-to-late 1980s (Rahman, 2007). Bangladesh again witnessed a rise in the number of political killings from 1999. The government reported that 101 persons died in prison and police custody during the first 9 months of the year (Rahman, 2007). This trend of killing the political leaders and activists continue till today. The leaders including labour leader Ahsanullah Master MP, lawyer and AL leader Manjurul Imam in Khulna, Professor M. Yunus of Rajshahi University, and internationally renowned personality and former finance minister S.A.M. Kibria MP, AL leader Ivy Rahman all are the worst victims of the politics of killing in recent times.

Intolerance to Oppositions' Views

Tolerance between the leaderships, parties, constituent members is the prerequisite and essence of democracy. Unfortunately, the concept is seems to be disappearing in our country particularly for both of them: those in power and those in opposition. The party in power usually takes advantage of state power to suppress opposition activities. Opposition to ruling government policies are often portrayed as anti-state treasonable activities and the state's law enforcing agencies are used to make politically-motivated arrests and repress opposition members (Haque, 2010).The government party become intolerant of the opposition and easily irritated by criticism. In an opinion poll conducted by Daily Star on August 30, 2010 it was revealed that 87.9% respondent think that political leaders cannot tolerate any sorts of criticism. The parliamentarians often used derogatory terms, such as touts, miscreant or anti-social elements, to describe the political opposition (Jahan, 2005). If we examine the history of behavior pattern of the ruling party, their reaction and reflection—both of AL and BNP, we find that it is full of intolerance that led to jeopardize the growth of democracy. All the political parties in this country who were ever in power enact some repressive laws to punish and eliminate their political opponents.

Culture of Character Assassination

Democracy allows us to express our views, belief and philosophy, but does not permit to behave in an uncivilized way or resort unruly behavior. Street language

has always been crude, but of course it will not in case of parliament. To differ is a democratic right but one should not be abusive. But it became more common in our recent political culture. Our leaders are incapable of using polite language and expression or conducing themselves properly. In recent development of our political culture is to defame our deceased national leaders. The recent wave of character assassination of political leaders betrays unabated and unchanged degeneration of our political environment (Quddusi, 2010).

Practice of Boycotting the Parliament

Absence of opposition from the parliament is our old culture. The culture was born in the 5th parliament when the then opposition AL started boycotting parliament to realize their demand. The then AL lawmakers boycotted 135 out of 400 sittings of the 5th parliament. The boycott culture got a fresh impetus when the then opposition BNP started boycotting parliament. They boycotted 163 out of 382 sittings of the 7th parliament. In the 7th parliament, the then ruling AL, had a strong voice against parliament boycott. But when AL again found itself in the opposition bench in the 8th parliament, it set another example of boycotting parliament from the inaugural session. They boycotted 223 out of 373 sittings of the 8th parliament between 2002 and 2006 (Liton, 2010). Now the main opposition BNP has been practicing this culture in the 9th parliament. The opposition lawmakers boycotted around half the total sittings of parliament in the last 19 years. Since 1991 to November 5, 2009, the parliament had 1241 sittings while the opposition lawmakers boycotted as many as 584 sittings (The Daily Star, Feb. 23, 2010).

Politics of Renaming the Established Institutions

Naming of institution to commemorate persons for their contribution to society is a well-accepted practice. In every society, a few norms are practiced in naming institutions of national importance, especially when dealing with politicians who are still at the helm (Khan, H. Mozammel 2010) But in Bangladesh we observed how the major two parties are engaged in the game of renaming the structure and institutions given by the previous government. According to news paper report, the name of more than 150 institutions that carried Bangabandhu's name, were given new name during the last reign of the BNP. The name of Bangabandhu Bridge, (renamed Jamuna Bridge), Bangabandhu Conference centre (renamed Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference centre) M.A. Hannan Airport of Chittagong (renamed Shah Amanat Airport) all are examples of the renaming game (Anam,2010). In the same way, the present cabinet decided on February 15, 2010, to rename the establishments named after late president Ziaur Rahman, including Zia International Airport which is to be named Hazrat Shahjalal

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International Airport[1] Shaheed Ziaur Rahman University, Barisal, which will be named as Barishal University. According to cabinet decision, Begum Khaleda Zia Medical college and Shaheed Suhrawardi Hospital will be named as Shaheed Suhrawardi Medical college and Hospital while Jamuna multi-purpose Bridge as Bangabandhu Bridge and Dhanmondi women's complex as Sultana Kamal Sports Complex among many others (The Daily Star, Feb 16, 2010).

Withdrawal of Political Cases

It is recognized that one of the most essential functions of a state is the administration of justice. In criminal proceedings, the state itself is a party and is responsible for the prosecution of the offence. In modern countries, there is a public prosecution system to prosecute offenders. In Bangladesh withdrawal of criminal cases has become a matter of great public debate. After BNP-led alliance voted to power in 2001, reportedly it withdrew around 5888 cases to release around 73,541 persons having been politically affiliated with the BNP and its allies. At the same time, names of party supporters, who were accused in around 945 criminal cases, were withdrawal by the then government (Sarker, 2010). Similarly, the present government has taken steps to release large numbers of accused persons by executive action on the basis that these cases are fabricated due to political reason. Till May 5, 2010, the AL government sponsored high-power committee recommended the authorities concerned for withdrawal of 4627 more cases filled by the past Caretaker Government and BNP regime considering those politically motivated(The Daily Star, May 6, 2010). According to the opinion poll by Daily Star 35% said that such withdrawal is happened to benefit the political leaders of the ruling AL.

Street Agitations and Politics to Seize the Works

Although hartal is an age-old democratic weapon of political parties to protest against misdeeds of the government, there is an overtly immature and childish "love and hate" game hovering around hartal in Bangladesh. Those in power hate it, knowing fully well that they used to love it once. Those in opposition tend to love hartal knowing fully well that they used to hate it while in power (Bayes, 2010). Both the AL and the BNP along with their allies had used all possible forms of protest to dislodge their opponents from power and the hartal is their best choice. As a result, over using in recent times had not only turned it grossly unpopular but also utterly ineffective (Quddusi, 2010). According to a survey by The Daily Star and Nielsen on Government's one and half year's performance

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[1] The name of the Airport was originialy proposed after the name of Hazrat Shahajalal at the inception of the project proposal. However, after the death of Gen. Zia President Abdus Sattar change the proposed name of Hazrat Shahajalal and renamed it after Gen. Zia.

rating it showed that 55% respondents believe that hartal is not acceptable now. A study conducted in 2010 has showed that only 15 days of hartal were observed during 1962-71(East Pakistan), only 5 days of hartal were observed during 1972-1975 (AL regime) and 59 days of hartal were observed during 1981-87(First 7 years of Ershad regime). A total of 266 days of hartal were observed during 1991-96 (BNP regime) and 215 days of hartal were observed during 1996-2001 (AL-regime).

Criminalization of Students Politics

Student politics in Bangladesh has a glorious past. Since the liberation war and the movement for restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in the 1990s, the leaders of different student organizations played significant roles during all of our national crises, including language movement. However, it has lost that glory. Now a day, the perception of student's politics has changed. It is widely alleged that activities of the student's wings of both the party-AL and BNP are involves in tender-related violence, extortion, terrorism, bloodshed, killing, robbery establish supremacy on the campus (Panday, 2010). All the campuses of the universities have become a stage of performing the drama of political clashes. The victims, mostly students in the universities, numbering about 74 during these long 39 years, have been the promising sons of the country (Khan, 2010). At present, being a member of a student organization especially the ruling one means free and healthy meal, having an illegal seat in the hall, getting tender involved admission business and even managing a good job.According to news paper report, BCL, the students' wing of the ruling party through its vicious involvement in the admission process minted more than TK.1 crore from three collages of the capital (Nobin, 2010). Another survey conducted by Daily Star on August 29, 2010 manifest that 31% people put current role of BCL as violence, loot, crime killings and 40% think that BCL is ruining the AL's reputation. However, it is well recognized that the same role was played by the JCD while the BNP was in power during 2001-2006.

Corruptions Committed by Politicians

Corruption at all levels of politics is now a grave public concern that needs to address as a matter of urgency. In 2001 the Transparency International (TIB) placed Bangladesh at the top of 91 countries indulging in corruption (Dainik Sangbad, June 28, 2001) According to the same agency, Bangladesh has topped the lists of corrupted countries consecutively for the fifth time (Prothom Alo, Oct 18, 2005). However, all the sections of our society and polity are riddled with corruption. Report on corruption, misuse of funds and all sorts of crimes fill the pages of our newspapers day after day. Nelson Opinion Survey (2010), which was

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published in the Daily Star on August 29, 2010, shown that 35% of our people believe that corruptions has increased whereas more people also have lost their faith in the anti-corruption commission, as 43% think that ACC is controlled by the government. Corruption at all levels in bureaucracy is rampant. Bribery is among common practices in our government offices. Since the return of electoral democracy in 1991, bad politics has often stood in the way of good governance. The loyalists of ruling parties have received financial and material rewards from the government, sometimes in violation of established rules and laws (Jahan, 2010) that manifest patron-client relationship of our political culture. In administrative dealings, parochialism has taken up the driving seat. In the case of internal democracy the major two parties lacks behind in this regard. If we see the poster of the parties, we find the symbol of dynasty where the three generation portrait indicates that who will be the successors of party leadership. The major two parties that are pioneers of democracy in the country lack the democratic practices in the selection procedures of their party leadership.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The infrastructure of democracy consists of free media, rule of law, transparency of all government decisions, accountability of government to the people and parliament, independent judiciary, gender equity and vibrant civil society. Peaceful co-existence, tolerance and mutual respect for each other are the basic elements of democracy (Rashid, 2010).The destructive political culture of Bangladesh is a serious hindrance to the strengthening and consolidation of democracy. If the political parties do not learn to compete with a higher degree of mutual respect and sense of sportsmanship, Bangladesh will have a very long walk towards becoming a democracy in a broader sense than just holding free election. Following suggestions are made to get rid of this problem:

1. In our form of government the Prime Minister's power is unchecked and imbalanced. There is a need to make the PM more accountable. There should be a system of check and balance. Both the parliament and the office of the president may be empowered to check the PM's unlimited power.

2. To develop a stable and efficient bureaucracy the government should ensure recruitment of quality person at the entry point, improve terms and conditions of services, inspire and boost the morale of officials and regularize promotion systems and keep bureaucracy free from politicization. In this purpose, the Public Service Commission should be made fully and genuinely independent.

3. If the student organization operate as per their constitutions and free them from political control, only then they return to the golden days of students politics. The meritorious and the efficient will have to be given proper positions. Suppliers of arms to universities, and establishing of arms supply centers near

universities must be wiped out. The residential halls must be searched regularly and thoroughly.

4. If there is a 'code of conduct' for the lawmakers, it would makes the lawmakers   accountable to their conscience, stop the culture of parliament boycott by the opposition, stop character assassination, personal attacks , prevent misuse of their privileges by the lawmakers. Above all it will pave the way in institutionalizing democracy, promoting democratic practices and meeting public expectation.

5. The Anti-Corruption Commission and the election Commission must be strengthened, to an optimum level if governance is to be ensured at the level of decency. Combating corruption is necessary for stimulating economic growth, social development as well as improved political environment.

6. A strong local government system as well as empowerment of local elected bodies is imperative for good governance and democracy. Creating an effective and efficient leadership at the grass roots level helps in the process of ensuring institutionalize democracy.

7. For the sake of rule of law and fair administration of justice, public prosecution should not be appointed on political basis. An independent prosecution system can play an important role to achieve fairness, efficiency and accountability of a prosecution system.

8. Certain measures could be taken to strengthen the role of the individual MPs. Professional training of the MPs and provide sufficient infrastructure facilities to them might help them to exercise their responsibilities. Revising Article 70 of the constitution, which would allow the MPs to speak and vote freely in parliament, obviously play a vital role to smooth functioning of democracy. To combat corruption of the MPs and Ministers, declaration of assets owned by the lawmakers prior to election should be made mandatory and implemented (Haq, 2010). Bangladesh's political situation is surely worsening day by day. In Bangladesh, the confrontational politics has become the order of the day. Conflict-consensus dialect is a fundamental datum in all politics. Consensus on fundamental issues is one of the main features of developed political systems. But in Bangladesh there is no consensus among political parties on issues of national interest.

We have to understand that there are many national issues that need to be addressed successfully. If we are going to reduce poverty, achieve food security, overcome the challenges of climate variability and remove illiteracy, it is imperative for the political leaderships of all parties to work together in being able to reach these goals. To march forward in the 21st century along with other developed and developing countries of south Asia, we need a modern, vibrant, inclusive, pro-people and pro-development politics to be carried forward by visionary crop of educated and enlightened politicians. The people elected the

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members of the parliament to lead the nation, guide the people, help reduce poverty and illiteracy, and above all create a healthy environment for democracy to flourish in.

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