Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Bangladesh

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Abstract: A stable political system and the democratic government may not be possible in the absence of political party. Political party is one of the key factors of democratization process. In Bangladesh, parties have both positive and negative roles in democratic consolidation. In fact, political partieshave the image of the paradoxical role in Bangladesh. The main objective of the article is to analyze the role of political parties in democratic consolidation in Bangladesh. The study is based on secondary data, i.e. books, journals, newspapers and magazines etc. This study found that the major political parties of Bangladesh partly failed to reach an agreement of arranging credible election, transferring power and institutionalizing democratic institution. Moreover, these parties also failed to institutionalize democracy within the party.

Keywords: Political Party, Democratic Consolidation, Bangladesh Institutionalizing.

Introduction

Modern democratic system mostly depends on the activities of political parties. Political parties are considered one of the central components to the proper functioning of representative democracy (Jahan, 2014). Moreover, strong Political Parties are essential for sustaining democracy.'The political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the political parties' (Schattschneider, 1942: 1). To a certain extent, it is impossible to run a democratic government without the help of political parties as they have quite a lot of important functions to the government. In addition,a strong political party can make positive contributions to the nationalist and democratic movements. On the other hand, a weak political party fails to strengthen democratic practices within party, constrains consolidation of democracy (Jahan, 2014a). In Bangladesh, political parties played a significant role in the liberation war as well as in many other democratic movements. Nevertheless,political parties in Bangladesh have miserably failed to establish democratic practices within the party system. That has negative impact on democratization process in the long run. the role of political parties in democratic consolidation. The qualitative method is used to explain the role of the political party in democratic consolidation.

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Conceptual Framework of Democratic Consolidation

Democracy has its roots in ancient Greece. The word comes from Greek demos (the people) and Kratos (rule). Most of the scholars agree on lexical meaning of democracy "the rule of the people". Influential for modern politics (with regard to a frequent referencing) is the "Gettysburg Address" of the U.S. president Abraham Lincoln, who coined democracy as a "government of the people, by the people and for the people". But there is some complexity on the practical meaning of 'rule' and lack of consensus on the practical meaning of democracy. Therefore, the debate about democracy has been going on for centuries and the debate is constantly developing new understandings, which can be placed into a continuum that ranges from maximalist to minimalist approaches.

The minimalist democratic scholars such as Adam Przeworski, Joseph Schumpeter, Karl Popper, William Riker, and Russel Hardin focus on the electoral system and they didn't set any condition for democratic outcomes. According to Przeworski (1999), democracy is "a system in which parties lose elections". He argues that the essential value of democracy is in the peaceful transfer of power through regular elections. Schumpeter (1950)defines democracy as a method of transferring decision making power to individuals who have gained power through a competitive struggle. Huntington like Schumpeter also emphasizes on competitive elections for effective power as the essence of democracy. Popper (1963) argues that democracies are a system wherein one administration can be replaced by another without bloodshed, which to him indicates elections.

On the other hand, maximalist theorists of democracy argue that without effective guarantees of civil liberties, elections do not constitute democracy, and that a "procedural minimum" for defining democracy must include not only elections but reasonably broad guarantees of basic civil rights such as freedom of speech, association and assembly. Therefore, maximalist scholars of democracy have identified further characteristics to meaningfully constitute a democracy. Among them, Robert Dahl (1971) mentions three essential conditions for well-functioning multiparty democracy such as a) extensive competition by political candidates and their groups or parties; b) political participation that provides the choice for the electorate to select candidates in free and fair elections; and, c) civil and political liberties that enable citizens to express themselves without fear of punishment. Larry Diamond (1995:11) defines that democracy is "not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organizational and informational pluralism; extensive civil liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations); effective power for elected officials; and functional autonomy for legislative, executive and judicial organs of government".

Despite the differences in how democracy is defined, there are two basic assumptions of democracy, namely, that all people are equal (equality) and that all people are free (liberty). In addition, certain minimum conditions must be met in order for a system to be labeled

democratic i.e. respect for human rights and the rule of law; collective deliberation, choice and participation; representative and accountable government. Democracy emphasizes that values should not be forced upon any people, and stipulates liberty, the separation of power, majority rule, and the sovereignty of the people. Democracy gives primacy to the political and moral values of equality, reciprocity, and respect for the views of others.

Nowadays democracy is treated as the most acceptable way of governance. Regarding democratic values, Peters (1981: 38) says, ''Democracy is a way of life in which high value is placed on the development of reason and principles such as freedom, truth-telling, impartiality, and respect for persons, which the use of reason in social life presupposes''.

There is no single definition of political parties. A political party can be defined as an organized and presumably durable association, either of individuals or of distinguishable groups of individuals, which endeavours to place its members in governmental offices for the purpose of bringing about the adoption of favoured political policies or programmes. MacIver defines the political party as an "association in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government" (MacIver, 2013: 396). Huckshorn (1984) says thata political party is an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of government. Downs (1957) says party is "a team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election". Schlesinger (1991) defines that a political party as a group organized to gain control of the government in the name of the group by winning election to public office. Aldrich (1995) says that political parties can be seen as coalitions of elites to capture and use political office, but it is more than that. It is an institutionalized coalition, one that has adopted rules, norms and procedures.Leacock says "By a political party we mean, more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit. They share or profess to share the same options on public questions and by exercising their voting power towards a common end, seek to obtain control of the government (Leacock, 1921: 311)." According to Gilchrist (1921:327) "A political party may be defined as an organized group of citizens who profess to share the same political views and who, by acting as a political unit try to control the government." Andrew Heywood (2002:222) says, "a political party is a group of people that is organised for the purpose of winning government power, by electoral or other means". Parties are often confused with interest groups or social movements. Political parties may seek political power through elections or revolutions.

According to article 152 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, political party "includes a group or combination of persons who operate within or outside Parliament under a distinctive name and who hold themselves out for the purpose of propagating a political opinion or engaging in any other political activity". Additionally, according to political parties' ordinance 1978, "political party" includes a group or combination of persons

who operate under a distinctive name and who hold themselves out for the purpose of propagating any political opinion or engaging in any other political activity".

Political parties have essential functions including aggregating citizen's interests, forming a government, developing and promoting policy position and programmes, and grooming and selecting political leadership (Carothers, 2006). The major role of political parties are interest aggregation and articulation, political recruitment and socialization, representation and mobilization, facilitating accountability of government, connecting citizens with the government, parties can create political legitimacy for regimes, conciliate and manage conflict among competing groups, facilitating national integration, and promoting political stability. In recent years, academics and practitioners of democracy-building projects have heightened the role of political parties in promoting and consolidating democracy (Jahan 2014).

Scholars have different views of democratic consolidation. Schmitter defines the minimalist conception of a consolidated democratic regime as "the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solution that has emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that is reliably known, regularly practised, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives that participate in democratic governance"(Schimitter, 1992:424).

Linz (1990:158) considered consolidated democracy as one in which "none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider (s) that there is an alternative to the democratic process to gain power and that no political institutions or groups have a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. To put it simply democracy must be seen as 'the only game in town'." Democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and about the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game (Akubu and Yakubu, 2014).

The Building of a consolidated democracy involves in part an affirmation and strengthening of certain institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights, which were created or recreated during the course of the first transition (Valenzuela, 1990:4).

According to Diamond, democratic consolidation means the quality, depth, and authenticity of democracy in its various dimensions: "political competition becomes fairer, freer, more vigorous and executive; participation and representation broader, more autonomous, and inclusive; civil liberties more comprehensively and rigorously protected; accountability more systematic and transparent" (Diamond, 1995:171). Democracy can be consolidated when it can avoid democratic breakdown and erosion by 'eliminating, neutralizing, or converting disloyal players'(Schedler, 1998).

On the other hand, Diamond (1996:7) argues, "Democratic consolidation is obstructed

by or destroyed causally by the effects of institutional shallowness and Decay. If they are to become consolidated, therefore, electoral democracies must become deeper and more liberal. This will require greater executive (and military) accountability to both the law and the scrutiny of other branches of government, as well as the public, the reduction of barriers to political participation and mobilization by marginalized groups; and more effective protection for the political and civil right of all citizens."

However, an influential and widely used definition suggests that consolidated democracy refers to 'a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules and patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase "the only game in town", behaviorally, attitudinally and constitutionally' (Linz and Stepan,1997:20). 'Behaviorally' means that no significant actor's attempt to use non-democratic means to obtain their goal; 'attitudinally' implies that democratic procedures and institutions are considered by the vast majority to be the preferred way of organizing politics, and 'constitutionally' signifies that actors – governmental as well as non-governmental, are subject to the laws and institutions of the democratic process (Linz and Stepan, 1997:6).

Political Party and Democratic Consolidation

Political parties are the gatekeepers and the political barometer for measuring the degree and effectiveness of the practice of democracy. Political parties, the heart of democracy, are one of the key factors of a stable political system in a country.

Philippe Schmittersays that three generic types of intermediaries - the political parties, the interest associations and the social movements, play a significant role in the consolidation of new democracies. Butpolitical parties remain dominant in structuring the electoral process, governing and perhaps even in the 'symbolic integration' of citizens into the democratic process (Schmitter, 2001).Thomas Carothers argues that efficacious democratic parties do not necessarily emerge out of repeated election unless there are other factors present such a mobilize mass public, civic organization, funds and access to state resources (Carothers, 2006). Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour MartinLipset(1989) argue that consolidation of democracy depends on at least one party developing their overall institutional strength (coherence, complexity, autonomy and adaptability). Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner emphasize on minority rights and representation (Diamond and Plattner, 1994). On the other hand, Donald Horowitz (2007) emphasizes the importance of well-designed federalism.

In Crotty's view, "Democratic government is unlikely and may not be possible in the absence of competitive political parties... Orderly government, much less a democratic polity, cannot exist without some form of stabilized party representation" (Crotty, 1993), and more recently Seymour Martin Lipset speaks of "(t)he indispensability of political parties" (Lipset, 2000). An interest in the role of political parties is of course not only due to the transition to multi-party democracies but reflects a change in approach in political

science more generally. Under various headings, political scientists have taken a renewed interest in the study of formal political institutions, including political parties (Peters, 1999).Certainly, there is a widespread assumption that parties play or can play a crucial role in democratic consolidation.

Without Political Parties, democracy will never be established and at the same time, Political Parties should have the capacity to represent citizens and the ability to govern for the public good (Norris, 2005). Political Parties perform many functions like ensuring a free, fair and credible election, facilitating the parliamentary government, formulating public policies, promoting public opinion, providing political stability etc. (Pakbir, 2018). Generally, a Political Party seeks to influence government policy and for the purpose of winning government power, by nominating their candidates in electoral and other means. Among the stakeholders, political parties are required to perform an important part as they deploy the candidates for the people to vote and also make sure the government carries out their duties as expected to uphold people's rights.

Role of Political Parties in consolidating democracy in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, political parties have the image of paradoxical roles. Political parties have a positive image for their contributionto the nationalist movement, and in restoring democracy in the 1990s. On the other hand, the parties failed to strengthen democratic practices within their own parties as well as in the state mechanism. Role of political parties in Bangladesh is puzzling and run counter to the theories of political development. Jahan (2014) explains these paradoxical roles of political parties in Bangladesh which are discussed below.

First, based on empirical evidence of western liberal democracies, theories of party development say that a two-party system would result into political stability. But in Bangladesh, two-party system has created political confrontation and instability.

Second, it is supposed that regular free and fair elections and the rotation of power between parties would institutionalize electoral democracy over time. But in Bangladesh, the two main parties, Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), could never reach into an agreement on basic rules of organizing credible elections acceptable to both sides.

Third, according to institutionalist theorists, spread of party organization and partisan identity contribute to greater institutionalization of parties. In Bangladesh, the parties exhibit significant organizational weaknesses and factional contestations and conflicts to grab public resources.This hascontributed to a high level of intra-party violence.

Finally, the theory of political development suggests that organization of regular election and transfer of power between parties through election will eliminate the need for agitational politics to overthrow regimes. In Bangladesh, agitational politics demanding the overthrow of an elected government has become an integral part of the opposition

party's election campaign. In light of the functions of political parties, the roles of political parties in promoting and consolidating democracy are discussed as follows:

Movements by Political Parties are the key instruments for establishing/promoting democracy. In 1986, 1988, 1996, and 2008 political parties led by AL and BNP, successfully formed a vibrant movement for conducting credible elections for establishing a democratic government. Otherprogrammes like the indefinite boycott of Parliament by the opposition, strikes, street demonstrations, marches have continued until the acting party governmenthad resigned and formulated theNon-party Caretaker Government (NPCG) system to arrange the general election. For instance, during 11th parliamentary election, the BNP-led alliance began street movement demanding for the restoration of the NPCG system and refused to participate in any election under the incumbent AL-led government.

In 1966, the AL placed the six-point demand which raised the voice of the people of East Pakistan. The first point this six-point programmefocused on establishing the people's rights by formulating a parliamentary form of government through direct election. It was a clear reflection of AL's and its leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's commitment to establishing democracy. Actually, the six-point programme was the main charter behind the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent democratic state. So, the political party (AL) played a significant role in promoting democracy. After independence of Bangladesh in 1971, AL introduced the parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh through an election in 1973 with the participation of fourteen political parties. Representation of multi-party in the election process is one of the indicators which demonstrate the presence of democracy in a country. Among the eleven parliamentary elections, four elections (1973, 1996 (February), 2014, 2018) were held under the political government led by a political party and three elections (1979, 1986, 1988) were held under military and quasi-military government that also led by a political party.

However, BNP, one of the major political parties, did not participate in parliamentary election in 1986 for the election was held under the military ruler. This is the first time BNP demanded the end of the military rule though 27 political parties participated in this election. Furthermore, the fourth parliamentary election held in 1988 undersErshad's quasi-military rulewas boycotted by all major parties severa[1] major political parties except just seven miniscule parties. The reason for boycotting election was the absence of a congenial environment necessary for holding a free and fair election. In fact, it was almost certain that the military and quasi-military governments would have never created an impartial environment to arrange a free and fair parliamentary election. In addition, the

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[1] Bangladesh Awami League, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, the Bangladesh KrishakSramikAwami League, the National Awami Party (Muzaffar) and the Workers Party of Bangladesh.

Sixth parliamentary election was also boycotted by all the parties worthy of its name because the AL-led opposition political parties were pressing hard to achieve their demand for election under an NPCG. On the other hand, BNP did not participate in the 10th parliamentary election because the election was arranged by a party government. However, BNP has demanded an NPCG for holding a free, fair, and credible election. After analyzing the trend of participation of political parties in the national elections, it can be said that no political party believe that free, fair and credible elections can never be held keeping a party-government in power.

Table 1: Elections boycotted by Major Political Parties

Election	Number of Party participated in the Election	Boycotted by Major parties
3rd Parliamentary Election (1986)	28	BNP
4th Parliamentary Election (1988)	8	AL, BNP, BJI, CPB and other major parties
6th Parliamentary Election (1996)	41	Almost all major parties
10th Parliamentary Election (2014)	12	BNP led 20 Party Alliance, Left Alliance

Source: Prepared by the researcher

For ensuring transparency, the ruling party enacted the 'The Right to Information Act 2009', 'Whistleblower Protection Act 2011', and 'The Money Laundering Prevention Act', etc. Moreover, UNCAC implementation plan was adopted by the ruling party. In contrast, BNP amended their party constitution by deleting the Section 7 that stated people who are convicted under the President's Order No. 8, bankrupt, mentally disturbed, and infamous for graft and crimes are not eligible to become a member of the party because it

was a threat toKhaleda Zia's political career (Chowdhury, 2018) once she was convicted by the court of law notwithstanding BNP's suggestion that Khadeda was the victim of Sheikh Hasina and Awami League's political vengeance.

Political Parties are supposed to submit their financial audit report (audited by a registered CA firm) to the EC by July 31 of every fiscal year(TIB, 2014). However, a report of Transparency International Bangladesh showed that the income and expenditure records are not properly maintained by the Political Parties (TIB, 2009). Actually, parties did not audit their accounts externally though most of the Parties submitted electoral accounting reports to the EC after the 2008 election. In this regard, Election Commission launched

investigations and took action only in a few cases.

Furthermore, every candidate of election should submit income, assets and liabilities, voluntary contribution and its sources, received from any Political Party, organisation or association, and a copy of the income-tax to the Returning Officer 896. Article 44(CCC) of the Representation of the Peoples Order (amendment) 2009 also states that expenditure of election and its sources has to submit to the Election Commission within ninety days of the election. However, the Election Commission has not taken effective measure in ensuring the accountability and financial oversight of individual candidates and the political parties. In addition, Political Parties are not willing to follow and practice democratic norms and particularly financial discipline. As of August 2012, the Election Commission received 21 out of 38 audit reports from the registered Political Parties in due time. The Election Commission has so far not penalized any Political Party or candidate for breaching the regulations (Global Integrity Report, 2010).

The system of public funding for Political Parties is absence. The Representation of the People Order (RPO) 2009 stated that the Political Parties can receive donations through cheques from any person, company, group of companies or non-government organization but receiving a grant, fund, donation or gift from any foreign individual or organization is prohibited. Election Commission has limited the amount of donations in a year. For instance, Political Parties in a year can receive not more than Tk 0.5 million (equivalent to US$ 7,143) or services and Tk 2.5 million (US$ 35,714) or services from individual and company respectively. However, no punitive measure is mentioned if the above provisions are violated (TIB, 2009). According to The Political Parties Ordinance 1978, all funds of a Political Party must be maintained and operated through a scheduled bank. Studies reveal that Political Parties did not receive donations through the party's bank accounts, as required by law. Instead,the parties receive the donations through the accounts of the Party leader(s). Besides, EC has no mechanism to monitor the financial flow of the Parties. In fact, voluntary donations from wealthy individuals and businesses organizations for parties are a common practice in Bangladesh. The parties seldom submit any financialreport to the EC.

None of the parties has met the RPO guideline of having 33 percent of women in all its committees (Jahan, 2018). The AL has a better record than others. In the top decision-making bodies of the parties, the AL has 25 percent women's representation. AL also has a better record in nominating and getting women elected as MPs from the general seats. However, nearly half of these directly elected MPs are 'proxy' women, inheriting seats from their fathers or husbands. Representation of women in the sub-national level committees is low in all the parties. The representation of religious minorities in the top decision-making bodies of parties is poor in all the parties (Jahan, 2018). Businessmen dominate the top decision-making bodies, particularly in the AL, BNP and the JP.

Role of Political Party in impeding democracy in Bangladesh

In early 1975, AL moved towarda one party system which effectively destroyed the values of democracy. The party was named *Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League* (BAKSAL). All political parties, including the AL, were dissolved and their members were asked to join the BAKSAL. It is widely recognised that a democratic country should have the following characteristics: '---the opportunity to organise and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society. ---- Citizens in a democracy have not only rights but also the responsibility to participate in political systems that, in turn, protect their rights and freedoms' (Kleain, 2011). So, One Party System not only abolishes the country's political system but also breaches citizen's right.

Bangladesh has long been ruled by military dictators, namely, GeneralsZiaur Rahman (1975-1981), Hussein Muhammad ErshadErshad (1982-1990). Although both military dictators founded the political party by using state machinery, most notably the intelligence agencies for increasing the political support to legitimize their activities (Jahan, 2018), in reality, the formation process of the political party followed the top down approach rather than a bottom-up approach where people's demand was not reflected. According to Jahan (2018), 'Break away groups from existing parties as well as some retired civil-military bureaucrats and technocrats joined their parties'. Nevertheless, army-backed political parties conducted three parliamentary elections (in 1979, 1986, and 1988) with the participation ofvarious political parties. These elections were widely perceived as manipulated and rigged (Jahan, 2018). Again, the political opposition had to function within strict limit which was a clear violation of democratic values. Though the participation of political parties in the national election was designed to make a transition toward democracy, the elections were widely perceived as being engineered by the ruling regime where the opposition parties operated under strict control and elections were held when the country was under Martial Law (Jahan, 2018). The sixth parliamentary election in 1996 under BNP, and 10thParliamentary election in 2014 and 11th Parliamentary election in 2018 under AL government were widely manipulated and rigged. In fact, democratic values will never be upheld if the parliamentary election were conducted under the military regime or party government.

It has already been mentioned that major political parties had boycotted the parliamentary elections in 1986 (BNP), 1988 (AL, BNP), 1996 (AL), and 2014 (BNP) respectively as these boycotting parties were demanding an election-time NPCG. Surprisingly, political parties, especially AL and BNP, had changed their positions for capturing the state power. For instance, BNP boycotted the 1986 and 1988 and the 2014 electionsto force their demand foran NPCG but the BNP herself did not want to arrange an election under NPCG while they were in power in 1996. Moreover, in 2006, the then BNP government allegedly attempted to manipulate the NPCG system by appointing"partisan" person as chief election commissioner. Accordingly, in 1996 AL started a campaign to institutionalize an NPCG

system to organize future parliamentary elections. The AL succeeded in forcing the BNP to accept the NPCG system which was institutionalized through the 13th amendment of the constitution in the parliament formed through the sixth parliament election which was boycotted by almost all parties led by the AL. However, the NPCG system under which three elections were organized in 1996, 2001 and 2008, was abolished in June 2011 by the 15th amendment of the constitution by the AL government. The amendment followed a Supreme Court judgment which declared the NPCG system as unconstitutional.

In Bangladesh, there is no law to regulate the internal democratic decision making of Political Parties in Bangladesh (TIB, 2014). However, ensuring intra-party democracy is a major concern for establishing a democratic form of government. RPO mentioned preconditions to registered political parties for ensuring intra-party democracy. According to RPO (Section 90B), a Political Party, desiring to be registered with the Commission, should have specific provisions in its constitution such as: to elect the members of the committees at all levels including members of the central committee; "to fix the goal of reserving at least 33% of all committee positions for women including the central committee and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020; to prohibit formation of any organization or body as its affiliated or associated body consisting of the teachers or students of any educational institution or the employees or labourers of any financial, commercial or industrial institution or establishment or the members of any other profession; to finalize nomination of candidate by central parliamentary board of the party in consideration of panels prepared by members of the Ward, Union, Thana, Upazila or District committee, as the case may be, of concerned constituency" (GoB, 2009). Furthermore, Jahan (2018) identified six criteria to assess the intra-party democracy of political parties. The six criteria are: leadership selection, candidate nomination, policy-setting, representation of social diversity, campaign and party funding and party induced violence.

 The constitution stipulates that the leadership positions should be elected in the council meetings of all major political parties such as the AL, BNP, JI, and JP. According to the AL party constitution (Bangladesh Awami League,2019), the council shall consist of a fixed number of councilors, elected by the District units of Awami League and different Metropolitan City units of Awami League at an interval of three years. Though the Awami League had made Hasina its president in the 1981 National Council and since then she has been heading the party (BDnews24, 2019). AL is followed her leadership around40 years.In case of the BNP, the election of its chief is supposed to be done through National Council(BNP, 2019). In reality, since 1983 Begum Khaleda Zia has remained thehead of the BNP (Khan, 2017). JP was established in 1986. From then Hussein Muhammad Ershadremained its president for more than 30 years till his death in his 90s. According to JI, Ammer-e-Jamaat is supposed to be elected in the National Council and he will be elected with the secret ballots of the members in the national council. The duration of the National Council will be for three years (BJI, 2017). Actually, two persons had held the

position of president/Ameer of the JI for long time. From 1969 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2016, Ghulam Azam and Nizamee held the position of president/Ameer of the Jamaat respectively (Khan, 2017).

It is observed that major political parties did not practice intra-party democracy(Khan, 2017;Jahan, 2018). Furthermore, Councilors delegate their power to their respective party chiefs to select members of all other bodies. In addition, there has been no challenge to Hasina, Khaleda and Ershad for leadership positions in their respective parties. They have always been elected unopposed and given the authority by party councils to select other office bearers. However, in all the parties, there have been changes in the position of the party's general secretary. There were rival candidates and factions supporting different candidates for the party's number two position. But the fate of these candidates was not decided by votes in party councils. Rather, candidates preferred by the party president/ chairman are finally selected.

According to AL party constitution(Bangladesh Awami League, 2019), councilors of the District units of Awami League and different Metropolitan City units of Awami Leagueare supposed to be elected but if any District or Metropolitan City Awami League for any reason fails to hold an election within the fixed dates, fixed by the Bangladesh Awami League Executive Committee, Central Executive Committee then nominates a specified number of councilors. All power goes to the executive committee. In that case, there is no scope to establish an intra-party democracy. In reality, the direct or indirect election system is totally absent in the formation of the local level committee which is formed by the decision of the central level committee.

According to the party constitution of BNP, local level committees (union/ward executive committee, municipality executive committee, Upazila executive committee etc.) will be formed through the election. The tenure of these local committees will be two years. In addition, local level committee of JI (BJI, 2007) is stipulated to be formed through election as AL and BNP. Like AL, BNP and JI did not conduct an election for the formation of the local level committee.

Of the four major political parties (AL, BNP, JI, JP), the AL and the JI made some efforts to follow the Representation of the People's Order (RPO) guidelines during the 2008 parliamentary elections to get the grassroots committees of the parties to prepare a panel of nominees for each constituency (Jahan, 2018). In the AL in most cases, the recommended nominees of grassroots committees prevailed. However, in some cases, the AL ignored the panel nominated by the grassroots committees. The BNP, on the other hand, made no effort to get nominations from grassroots committees. Instead, seven special teams were formed under the leadership of the National Standing Committee (NSC) of the party to collect information from the grassroots and prepare a list of potential candidates before the 2008 parliamentary elections.

Conclusion

In Bangladesh, both the ruling as well as opposition political parties played a crucial role in arranging election which is crucial for democratic system of government. In some cases, at the election time, political parties were united for making their movement stronger against the ruling party. Boycotting the elections by political parties can be considered another indicator of establishing democracy. The BNP in 1986, most parties in 1988, and almost all parties in February 1996 and in 2014 boycottedparliamentary elections. In fact, the democratic form of government always expects the participation of all parties. It is already well established that agitation programs such asstrikes, street demonstration, marches, press conference, seminar, of political parties are common to ensure a free, fair and credible election. The absolute power of the political parties destroys the democratic values which were evident in the process of formation of BAKSAL. The military governments formed the political parties and ruled the state by using their absolute power. History shows that elections conducted by military and/or quasi-Military governments was manipulated and violated the value of democracy as well. Unfortunately, till now, political parties could notearn the people's trust in conducting free, fair, and credible elections.

It is almost common to all political parties in Bangladesh that they sacrificed themselves for ensuring democracy and capturing state power. They, however, remain completely silent about established democracy within their respective parties. Almost all political parties' local level committees are formed unanimously by the decision of the central committee. Furthermore, there is no competitive process to elect a party leader. For this reason, the leader of major political parties can hold the position for more than 30 years. It can be mentioned that all political parties are committed to eliminate corruption, but the reflection of commitment is mostly found in passing the laws and harassing the opposition party members. Furthermore, political parties seldom do audit their financial transactions internally and externally (professional audit company). The sources of fund of political parties are not monitored by the Election Commission. Actually, there is no monitoring mechanism. In addition, the representation of social diversity is partially observed at the national level committee of political parties. Though theoretically political parties are the gatekeepers for the effectiveness of the practice of democracy, in Bangladesh political partieshave mostly failed to consolidate democratic practice within the party and state system as well.

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