

Parliamentary democracy in bangladesh assignment



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Parliamentary Democracy in Bangladesh Abstract The focus of this paper is to review the era of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh since its emergence in the year 1991. The raison d'être of our war of independence was parliamentary democracy, and that commitment had been reflected in her Constitution in 1972. Still 20 years took for the light to shine in her political history which was already marked by a mixed and scandalous culture. Parliamentary democracy first came into being in 1991 when Bangladesh national party, one of the two ever present force in political arena took power after national election.

The main emphasis is on the working of parliamentary democracy after 1991. The total review is based on the time length that holds the history of democracy in Bangladesh after 1991 and is derived mostly from the national events and their consequences. Introduction South Asian countries have had a variable democratic history since their emergence from British colonial rule in the late 1940s. The region's political diversity is exemplified by monarchical rule in Nepal, long running armed struggles in Sri Lanka, alternating military and civil regimes in Bangladesh and Pakistan and India's established democratic system.

In the midst of all these and the events those inspire this variety, Bangladesh also shares a history unique for its ups and downs. Democracy is a form of government that was sought by every Bangladeshi. But the breakout from Pakistan has left some stills. The 15 years period of mainly military rule was to define the course of history only for the mass upsurge of late 80's and the unity of the political parties against the cause paved the way for a parliamentary form of democracy in Bangladesh.

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It was the people who brought about the change but the road after 1991 is much worse than it was thought to have been. Our achievements in the field of democracy and development are not noteworthy. The nation has failed to put democracy into practice. Parties voted into power to strengthen democracy have all failed to encourage its values. The country today is riddled with various problems threatening the very development of democracy in Bangladesh. However the prospects for a politically developed and economically prosperous Bangladesh is marked by people's eagerness towards democracy and progress.

Conceptual analysis Democracy

The term democracy is derived from the Greek words, "demos" and "Kratos", the former meaning the people and the latter power. Democracy thus means power of the people. Definitions of democracy differ in their content and application. Democracy, according to the Greeks is the Government in which people rule over themselves. Aristotle considered it as a perverted form of government.

Herodotus says, the democracy denotes that form of government in which in the ruling power of the state is largely vested in the members of the community as a whole. Karl Marx said Democracy is the road to socialism. In words of President Abraham Lincoln who in his famous Gettysburg speech said, It is a "government of the people, by the people and for the people".

Parliamentary Democracy

Parliamentary Democracy is a representative democracy where government is appointed by representatives as opposed to a 'presidential rule' wherein the President is both head of state and the head of government and is elected by the voters.

Under a parliamentary democracy, government is exercised by delegation to an executive ministry and subject to ongoing review, checks and balances by the legislative parliament elected by the people. Parliamentary systems have the right to dismiss a Prime Minister at any point in time that they feel he or she is not doing their job to the expectations of the legislature. This is done through a Vote of No Confidence where the legislature decides whether or not to remove the Prime Minister from office by a majority support for his or her dismissal.

Parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh Inception Since independence in 1971, democracy has been in crisis in Bangladesh. The country was born out of a long democratic movement initially aimed at achieving autonomy for the rights of the majority population of Pakistan. Towards the end of this movement almost the entire population of Bangladesh was drawn in an armed struggle to establish their rights of self-determination .

The cherished goal of democratic rights of the people were enshrined in the constitution of the country in 1972 but in less than two years after the first parliament was elected, the structure and character of the fundamental law of the land was changed and the country's political system was turned into a one-party structure. The war torn country had her glorious son Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the driving seat till 1975. But the period marks a huge variety and subsequent changes in the principles upon which democracy is run.

All political parties were dissolved and all newspapers were banned except four to be retained by the state; the fundamental rights were suspended and

made non-enforceable and the judiciary was reduced into a subservient agency of the executive branch of the state . Still presidential form of democracy prevailed under our great leader. After 1975 this country was mainly run by military backed puppet governments . Time to come was unpredictable and politics was in turmoil. The political parties were in no man's land. Practice of democracy was nowhere to be seen.

During the long term (1976-1990) of military rule the institutions which have been mostly damaged but which are considered as the pivotal force is the party system in the country The shift of power in military had given rise to two autocratic rulers President Ziaur Rahman and President Hussain Mohammad Ershad , the later running a notable 9 years rule before handing over the power to a caretaker government in1990. The election that followed brought about Bangladesh National Party to be the political party to govern Bangladesh for the preceding 5 years to come.

The historic 12th constitutional amendment bill that was passed in the Jatiya Sangsad on 6 August 1991 introduced parliamentary form of democracy in place of the presidential one. Begum Khaleda Zia, wife of Late President Ziaur Rahman took oath as the prime minister under the new system on 19 September 1991. Parliaments in Bangladesh The complete list of all the parliaments of People's Republic of Bangladesh is stated in the following table. 5th parliament(1991-1996) In 1990 the country was freed from the clutches of military rule and the peoples' sustained struggle for democracy has at last triumphed.

The historic 5th parliamentary election under the Acting President Justice Sahabuddin Ahmed. In 1991 by the 12th Amendment of the constitution government was reverted again to parliamentary form after 16 years. The starting of the second parliamentary democracy seemed fine and enthusiastic but lastly the celebrated 5th parliament also like every other previous parliament in the country could not complete its constitutional duration after only 4 years and roughly 8 months. It was to dissolve under the pressure of the opposition movements. The ruling party BNP has, in any was, and failed to make a positive turn towards the development of democracy. The case of 5th parliament, the major opposition party Awami League (AL) was not given adequate time in parliamentary deliberation and as a result they boycotted the parliament. The ruling elite did not show much tolerance as was necessary for bringing the opposition into parliament and they forcefully run the parliament as long as two years ignoring the opposition. Lastly the BNP government denied to hold the 6th parliamentary election ignoring the opposition and it proceeded to contest the election with some sudden hand-picked parties as the military dictator Ershad frequently did. This was a flagrant wrong done by a democratically elected government and showed the lack of political foresight. Following boycotts by main opposition party Bangladesh Awami League, BNP won the uncontested elections. This is why the 6th parliament had only 7 days life. Amidst protests, they were made to cave into Awami League's original demands, dissolve the parliament, and hold elections under a neutral caretaker government after the enactment of the 13th amendment. This negative trend in parliamentary democracy that is the trend of political intolerance done by the BNP government has proved the crisis of constructive leadership in the <https://assignbuster.com/parliamentary-democracy-in-bangladesh-assignment/>

history of democracy in Bangladesh . 7th parliament (1996-2001) 7th parliamentary election was held under the neutral Caretaker Government with some hopes and aspiration and the majority voted for the Awami League. Sheikh Hasina formed what she called a “ Government of National Consensus” in June 1996, which included one minister from the Jatiya Party and another from the Jatiya samajtanrik dal, a very small leftist party. The new government of AI (1996) also practiced like the before BNP government without opposition participation. Ordinance making power was being used in the same way, policies concerning national interests or economy for example making water treaty, making CHT agreement, declaring two days public weekly holidays, declaring 30% quota in public services for freedom fighters’ families etc. had been declared in public gatherings and press avoiding the parliament . Sessions of parliaments were being held for a very shorter period At the end of 1996, the BNP staged a arliamentary walkout but returned in January 1997 under a four-point agreement with the ruling party. The BNP asserted that this agreement was never implemented and later staged another walkout in August 1997. The BNP returned to Parliament under another agreement in March 1998.. Thus the trend was still in the negative direction, the parliament, as the most important institution of democracy still remained a mere Cinderella body. Opposition parties have staged an increasing number of nationwide general strikes, rising from 6 days of general strikes in 1997 to 27 days in 1999.

The important mass media like radio, T. V. were being used as government mouthpieces; the lower judiciary was still dependent on the executive though the government was repeatedly promising to take steps to separate

judiciary from the executive. A four-party opposition alliance formed at the beginning of 1999 announced that it would boycott parliamentary by-elections and local government elections including municipal council elections in February 1999, several parliamentary by-elections, and the Chittagong city corporation elections in January 2000. 8th Parliament(2001-2006)

After completion of 5 years for the first time in democratic Bangladesh , Awami league handed over the power to a caretaker regime under justice Lutfur Rahman as per the constitution. The shift in ruling elite and preparation for election went away smooth . The 8th parliamentary election held on 1st October 2001 saw BNP led alliance attain two third majority while Awami league was left in the parliament with only 62 seats, the smallest opposition after 1991. Khaleda Zia won a second term in 2001. her coalition included several Islamic parties which provoked fear of de-secularization in Bangladesh. In this period Islamic militant extremism targeting courts and imposing social strictures became a serious problem. It came to a head in 2005 with the first suicide bombing and a coordinated bombing. 21st august suicide bombing on opposition rally was aimed to wipe out Sheikh Hasina , one of the two leading political personalities in Bangladesh holding a family history that inspires mass people in politics. Practice of democracy was rare to be seen within the ruling party . Nepotism crippled BNP as situation continue to worsen. The crisis in democratic environment was never fulfilled lthough at last two major parties were rounded up in bilateral talks inside the jatiya sangsad. Caretaker Government(2006-2008) The scheduled election of 2006 did not take place. The caretaker government was accused of BNP bias <https://assignbuster.com/parliamentary-democracy-in-bangladesh-assignment/>

by Hasina and her coalition, who fomented nationwide protests and shutdowns. In January 2007, the head of the caretaker government stepped down, many believe under pressure from the military. Fakhruddin Ahmed, former World Bank economist, was selected to replace him and has committed himself to rooting out corruption and preparing a better voter list.

Emergency law was declared and a massive campaign to crack down on corruption is underway. By July 2007 some 200, 000 people had been arrested. The government says it will hold elections before the end of 2008. In April, Ahmed's administration attempted to reform the political parties by exiling Hasina and Zia, but they backed down amid domestic and international protestations. Hasina, who had been visiting her children in the US, was allowed to return but she faced serious charges, including involvement in the assassination of four political rivals.

In July, she was taken into custody after two businessmen testified that she had extorted 80 million taka from them. This provoked angry protests from her supporters; even her bitter rival Khaleda Zia, as well as six British MPs and MEPs, called for her release. Khaleda herself faces charges of tax evasion. The caretaker government period was a threat to democracy from every point of view. They exercised power over the political parties in such a way, even many famous political activists had their career uprooted and harassed but all for the same outcome in 9th parliament later on.

Bangladesh army prepared a voter list worthy of appreciation which eventually led to 9th parliamentary election in 2008. 9th parliament (2008-)
The 9th parliament came out of a free and fair election after a turbulent time

in the political arena. It was for people to decide the fate of the two political parties and they unanimously voted for Bangladesh Awami League which attained even a greater two third majority than the 8th parliament has seen. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wins the election on December 29, 2008 and the caretaker government ended its authority on January 6, 2009.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina becomes the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the second time. this ongoing period started with a huge obstacle, BDR mutiny. On 25 February 2009, border guards in the Bangladesh Rifles mutinied and killed more than 50 army officers, testing the hold of the new government. The political situation has stabilized since the mutiny. but the democratic challenge of the present era is yet to be fulfilled. It is the promise of our government to put on trial the betrayers of 1971.

A process has already started but only time can tell what lies ahead . The economy of Bangladesh is going through a lot. The share markets are shoring with numerous problems. It is for sure if the promise of Digital Bangladesh is not kept by present government people will lose support and will also lose the smallest hope that remains. Conclusion On a whole it can be rightfully said that Bangladesh born after a bloody struggle has failed to establish democracy as an institution. Democracy was a long cherished dream of the people.

But political parties have repeatedly failed to convince us of their devotion towards a government system hugely popular all around the world. The environment around isn't nurturing any trend but the potential of a truly democratic Bangladesh is worth mentioning. Under great leadership and with

mass support democratic parliament can bring laurels in every field of our national and political lives. It's compulsory to keep the hope up, let's not allow our past to define our future.