



Research Paper

The Political Parties and the Political Crisis in Bangladesh: A Study on the Formation of Electoral Alliances

Nazma Ater

Abstract

The formation of electoral alliances is one of the remarkable issues in the contemporary political culture of Bangladesh. Elections are not usually held nowadays without the formation of an alliance. Therefore, political alliances play a very significant role in the analysis of the political culture of Bangladesh. The purpose of this research is to explore the chronological development of electoral alliances in pre- and post-independence Bangladesh, to evaluate the challenges of electoral alliances in the context of political culture and the growth of democracy in Bangladesh, and to investigate the Paradigm shift of Electoral Alliance in Bangladesh Politics. Data has been collected from secondary sources using qualitative methods in order to elaborate on the objectives properly. The findings of the study highlight that political parties are generally more active in forming alliances before elections for different ideologies and views. Nevertheless, these solely election-centric political alliances are depends on the sole purpose of seizing power or taking advantage of opportunities offered by being close to power, ignoring the welfare of the people as a whole. Therefore, there is a breakdown in the alliance after the election if the outcome or the calculation becomes unfavorable. In this case, these political parties are seen leaving one alliance to be part of another alliance due to various interests.

Keywords: Electoral Alliances, Political Parties, Political Crisis, and Bangladesh

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I. Introduction

The formation of political alliances is one of the most debated issues today especially in the context of national elections in Bangladesh. There is a culture of election-forming alliances in almost all countries regardless of whether they are developed or underdeveloped states. The 'Jukta Front' election of 1954 was unique incidents in the history of Pakistan period. On the other hand, it was the result like political parties led coalition election in India too (Hussain, 2008). The culture of coalition elections was introduced in Bangladesh country through the fifth parliamentary elections in 1991. When the military regime of Ershad was overthrown in a mass uprising in December 1990, Bangladesh entered the "Third phase" of democracy and the term "Third Phase" became popular then (Khan, 2001). The famous political scientist, Samuel Huntington, divided the historical evolution of a democratic country into three phases. The journey of democracy has not been smooth for Bangladesh, as it is for this new type of democratic country in the third phase. Bangladesh has failed to consolidate democracy. However, it has failed to institutionalize the fundamental bases of democracy too (Huntington, 1991).

Political parties in Bangladesh formed alliances with consideration ideological and political interests. A fifteen-party alliance was formed consisting of the Awami League and like-minded parties, a seven-party alliance was formed led by the BNP, and a five-party alliance was formed consisting of the leftist parties before the parliamentary elections of Bangladesh in different elections period (Hossen, 1996). The manifesto of the three alliances stated that the military rulers in the past have perpetuated many undemocratic rules in the electoral system, especially since the government always tries to influence the election results in their favor. Therefore, in order to make the election acceptable, free and fair, the 1991 parliamentary election was held under a neutral, non-partisan caretaker government. The BNP formed the government after winning the election. Unfortunately, this party deviated from the promise given in the manifestos of the three alliances and decided to hold the next election under its own control. The Awami League-led opposition alliance started a mass movement in 1994 for an election under a caretaker government. Then the caretaker government system was

institutionalized in February 1996 through the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution (Prothom Alo, 2015). For the first time this year, an election was held under a caretaker government in Bangladesh.

The bipartisan politics led by the BNP and the Awami League gradually expanded from 2001 to 2017. It can be noticed that, from that time, the expansion of a kind of competitive practice of forming alliances with smaller parties led by these two main parties (Islam, 2003). Besides, the Awami League's "The Grand Alliance" and the BNP's "Oikko Jote" were widely discussed in the 2018 election. However, the alliance's politics naturally fade away in the days following the election. The two main parties are not giving much importance to the alliance partners. No action from their alliance is visible either. Now it is a burning question in public opinion and in the political arena: what is the future of this power-centric "Coalition Politics"? In the current context, the BNP as a single party and alliance is almost stagnant in Parliament and on the field, whereas the Awami League as a single party is very strong in Parliament and on the field. Therefore, the politics of the alliance is losing its relevance, as some experts have given their opinions regarding the above-mentioned issues (Bhorer Kagoj, 2020).

Bangladesh frequently deviates from democratic practice due to insecurity in coalition politics and violent politics. Therefore, international organizations disagree with us being labeled as democratic environment. Nevertheless, there are both possibilities with problems of coalition politics for a country (Norman, 1995). The possibility of forming an alliance is increased for various reasons followed by the participation of political parties and voters. The prospect is that, in that sense, the elected government cannot be arbitrary under the pressure of the allied parties. However, the problem with political alliances is that the political parties that associated with them do so for the sake of their interests and greed. They ignore principles and ideals that interfere with the welfare of the people and hinder healthy political culture and atmosphere.

All the countries in the world have not been able to make equal progress in the process of establishing democracy and forming governments in a democratic way. Because a political culture conducive to democracy is needed to establish a democratic system of governance. But in this country today, no matter what a party's ideology is, no matter how much it develops, no matter how much it works for the welfare of the people, when it comes to elections, concerns about the certainty of victory arise (Jahan, 1987). At present, the political reality of our country is that no party is capable of forming a government alone. Again, those parties that do not have even 1% of the votes, some of which are titular and some of which are not even registered, are seen to compete to form alliances with those small parties (Ahmad, 2000). Political alliances are formed in power politics on the basis of various calculations of interests. Therefore, frustration, dissatisfaction, conflict, mistrust, and conflict of interests are created within the alliances. For this reason, the breakdown of those alliances devoid of ideals is inevitably seen (Sing, Mishra 2004). It makes the overall political culture morbid and leads politics towards a degenerate culture. Governments, political parties, and the constituents should all have a clear understanding of the general issues and prospects of coalition politics. Then the country and the nation will be able to play an important role in bringing about a healthy political culture and consolidating democratic practice.

There is a total of 193 (one hundred ninety-three) political parties in this country, including registered and unregistered parties (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2020). However, currently there are 44 (forty-four) registered political parties according to Bangladesh Election Commission's report. In the Eleventh Parliamentary Election in 2018, it was seen that the alliance politics in the country was visibly divided into two sections, and all the political parties were divided between the two alliances too (The Daily Jugantor, 2019). Therefore, it is very important to know the activities and role that indicates how the problems and crises of such political alliances affect the overall development and democratic progress in Bangladesh. Hence, this research has been found to present an overall image of the problems and crises that are created by the formation of alliances before the elections by the political parties to seek their own interests. Therefore, the objective of this research is respectively to explore the chronological development of electoral alliances in pre- and post-independence of Bangladesh, to evaluate the challenges of electoral alliances in the context of political cultural and growth of democracy in Bangladesh, and to investigate the Paradigm shift of Electoral Alliance in Bangladesh Politics.

II. Research Methodology

A qualitative method has been followed in order to complete this research. The research has been carried out in light of reviewing and analyzing the information and data collected from secondary sources. A number of data related to this research has been collected from different national and international books, journals, articles, newspapers, the internet and different websites as part of the secondary sources. Relevant domestic articles and research collections regarding coalition politics and related issues have played a significant and pioneering role in collecting data. In particular, the election-centric news published in various daily newspapers recently and the data obtained from it. On the other hand, the researcher reviewed the data and information of the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC). However, the author categorically analyzed the

1954-2020 as the formation of the 'Jukto Front' to the Grand Alliance was first incident of electoral alliances in Bengal history.

III. Literature Reviews

Coalition politics is a speculated issue in elections and government formation irrespective of developed-underdeveloped and East-West sides. Nevertheless, no significant research on coalition politics has been observed chronologically. Therefore, a kind of theoretical emptiness can be noticed on this topic. In the context of Bangladesh too, there are no primary books or articles on this topic available. For these reasons, some of the primary and secondary research, books and articles on coalition politics, have been reviewed here.

International Perspective

E. Wright, William (Ed) (1971) has provided a comparative discussion of political party activities and roles in democratic and political systems. The study focuses on the political party system, democratic practices within the party, the type of leadership, the electoral process, government formation, the role of the opposition party in parliament, and, most importantly, political participation, and the socio-economic and psychological order of the people in the context of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Italy and other western countries. Raisa, Ali (1996) has highlighted the importance of free, fair, and credible elections in strengthening the democratic system as well as the limitations of the democratic system of government, the weakness of the electoral process, democracy, and the prospects and conditions of the electoral process in the Indian context.

Sing, Mahendra Prasad, and Dr. Anil Mishra (Ed) (2004) in the context of India, have elaborately explained the coalition politics and historical context of the government system formed by the coalition politics, electoral system, process of forming a government, parliamentary activities, and the role of allied parties in parliament. Above all, the researchers have sought in-depth analysis of the theoretical aspects and practical crisis of coalition politics and coalition government in India, which has been conducive to the present research.

Bangladesh Perspective

Rounaq Jahan (2015) explored the visible negative role of political parties in the political development of Bangladesh. According to the researcher, despite the effective role that has been observed in nation building and the establishment of democracy, since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, political parties have been actually failing to execute democratic opportunities. In particularly, four notable political parties, such as Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiyo Party, and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, are moving away from the practice of democracy so much that the lack of democratic practice within the party is widely observed. Nevertheless, these four parties become prompt in the calculation of forming an alliance in an election for the sake of self-interest and political interest. According to the researcher seems that it is ominous for the overall politics.

In his research, Al-Masud-Hasanuzzaman (2009) discusses in detail and analyzes the parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh, the National Parliament, party system, caretaker government, and theoretical concepts of governance, along with the activities of the post ninety-four national parliaments, supervision, and committee system, as well as the nature and features of the party system. Here the researcher emphasizes an issue in the discussion of the activities of the four post-ninety-one national parliaments and the nature and features of party politics, namely that the politics of forming alliances among political parties has gradually expanded in the four parliamentary elections. Badrul Alam Khan (2015) has elaborated on his research into this crisis of national politics. In his research, besides identifying the sources of conflict in the politics of Bangladesh, the author has added the ways of short-term and long-term solutions to these problems in the last chapter. The most notable aspect of this study is that the researcher has identified five sources of political conflict in this country: a) Conflict in the realm of nature and faith; b) Conflict of identity, which is nationalism-centric; c) Conflict of state structure and democratization; d) Conflict of individual-centered politics; and e) Conflict between rural and urban. According to the researcher, the conflict of contemporary politics in Bangladesh is visible through the formation of alliances. Basu et al. (2019) in their research have analyzed the fundamental and inevitable issues of politics along with the nature of politics in Bangladesh, the weakness of the government, the isolated activities of political parties, democratic practices, citizenship and values, civil society, local government and political change, transparency and accountability. Analyzing the culture of politics in Bangladesh, the researchers pointed out the undemocratic and non-ideal political practices of political parties, and they also mentioned that such a culture encourages alliance formation in politics.

The research by Hakim, Muhammad A. (1993) is fundamental research regarding the political party system and elections in Bangladesh. In this study, the researcher explains the reasons and consequences of the increasing significance of "coalition politics" through the re-introduction of the parliamentary system in the fifth national election held in 1991. In particularly, the researcher in his research profoundly discussed the pros and

cons of the election held on February 27, 1991 in a comprehensive manifesto of the three alliances formed under the caretaker government for the first time in the history of Bangladesh after the fall of the military regime of the Ershad government. Choudhury, Dilara (1994) has delineated the practice and structure of party system in politics of Bangladesh in her research, alliance in political culture, military intervention in politics, non-political authority and the causes of increasing power of bureaucrats, increasing power of ruling party and lack of effective role of opposition in parliament and the existing political and constitutional crisis in the country.

Mannan, Md. Abdul (2005) has delineated the limitations of the democratic system and the electoral process in the politics of Bangladesh. In this study, the researcher referred to the historical context of British colonial rule as well as the democracy and elections in the subsequent Pakistan period when explaining the democratic system and electoral process. The democratic practices within the party and the role of alliances in elections in the context of four prominent political parties in Bangladesh such as the Bangladesh Awami League, BNP, Jatiyo Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami. Hossain, Mr. Arman (2009) has elaborately analyzed the overall role and activities of two political parties in Bangladesh, such as the Jatiyo Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, as well as their development, political practice, tendency to making alliances in elections with the two main political parties, such as the Bangladesh Awami League, and BNP, to form a government since the re-introduction of the parliamentary system in 1991, the conflict within the party and alliance, and the sources of their income. In his research, Tareque Samsur Rahman (1999) has discussed the evolution of political parties in Bangladesh over the past 25 (twenty-five) years in his research. He has found in the research a total of 161 (one hundred sixty -one) political parties in our country, most of which are titular and unregistered. In the study, he mainly discussed the ideologies and programs of the prominent political parties in Bangladesh. The scenario that comes from the study is that most political parties do not represent the welfare of the people. The researcher has also observed that the expansion of alliances in politics is taking place since the main objective of the political parties is to secure power and ensure their own interests.

Reviewing the above research, discussion, explanation, and analysis of coalition politics, it seems that although the problem or crisis of coalition politics has been discussed and researched, there is no specific discussion and research about the formation of electoral alliances of political parties in Bangladesh or political crisis in the context of Bangladesh. The research on the formation of electoral alliances of political parties in Bangladesh and the political crisis will play a significant role in depicting the overall scenario of political practice in Bangladesh from the 'Jukto Front' to the Grand Alliance or till the time (1954-2018). On the other hand, it determines the crisis of forming such an alliance as well as explaining the actual role of coalition politics in the country through analyzing the effective role of political parties in the development of democracy at present.

IV. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Conceptual underpinnings.

Coalition politics

Coalition politics generally refers to a formal mutual interaction with specific goals between two or more political parties. Coalition politics also refers to political alliance, front or bloc. A political alliance is formed based on some common interests, strategies or ideologies for the purpose of forming a government in a democratic way in a parliamentary system of government. Therefore, political alliances can be stable or even temporary. The history of forming alliances or fronts in politics is nothing new. Many countries in the world have a history of forming alliances in politics. Currently, coalition governments are in power in many developed and underdeveloped countries of the world.

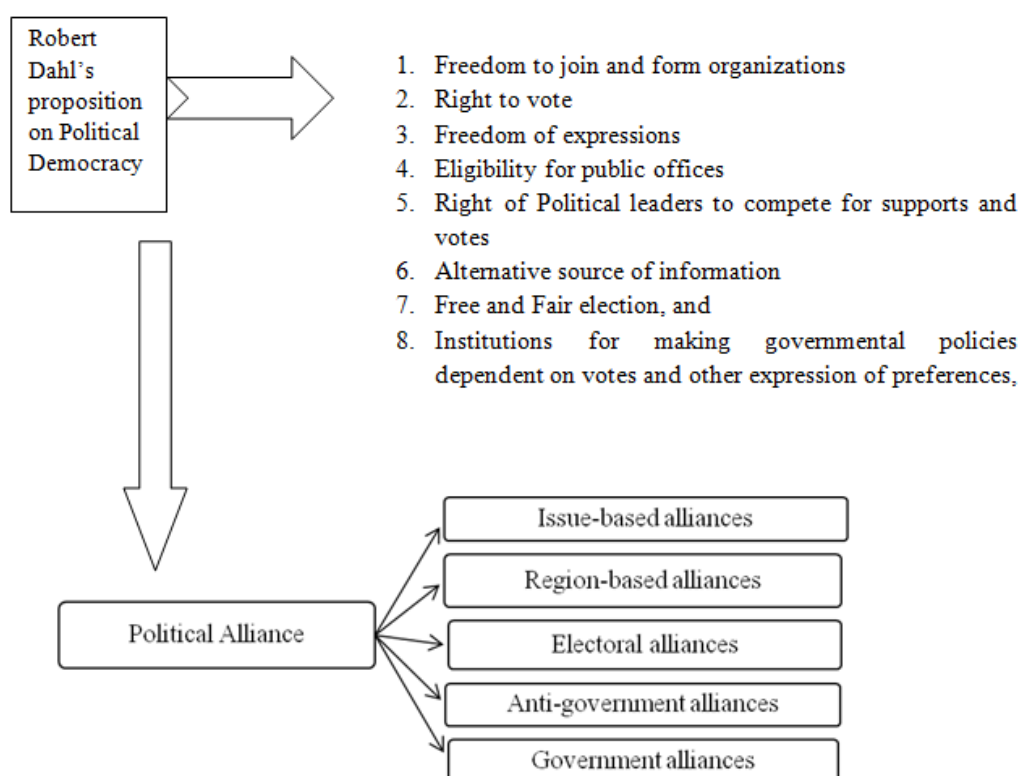
The trend of coalition politics is noticeable in the recent political context of Bangladesh. Political alliances are usually formed when political parties make a simultaneous movement to achieve some common goals and demands without sacrificing their party existence, ideology, and principles (Haque, Alam, 2014). It is referred to as a political alliance if more than one big or small political party unites through mutual agreement and adopts a specific program for different reasons, having a specific ideology for meeting one or more demands related to the national interest, such as an anti-authoritarian movement, a movement for the establishment of democratic rule, an issue-based movement to build public opinion on any urgent issue or strategy to resist political opponents. According to Altman, a political alliance is defined when one or more parties come together to achieve a specific goal, especially when political parties unite for a certain purpose in pursuit of a common interest and become committed to protecting their own interests after achieving the goal (D. Altman, 2000). A political alliance is an organization consisting of several parties to unite the maximum population of a state for the purpose of implementing a joint program in the national interest and for the welfare of the people or to deal with political opponents (Bhuiya, 1992). An alliance, therefore, is the unity of several political parties to achieve a common goal. An alliance can be formed among several political parties on the question of elections or any movement (Rashid, 1999). Alliances are usually formed with congenial parties and individuals, and the alliance usually survives till the objective is achieved (Hossen, 1996). At the same time,

coalition politics is alliance-centric politics, or politics conducted in alliance. Coalition politics is considered a system conducted and recognized at a national and international level at present. There is no constitutional barrier to conducting coalition politics in our country.

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

4.2 Theoretical Framework

Based on political context, ideology, program, etc., different forms of political alliances can be observed. A Political alliance can be divided into three groups, such as the Opposition Alliance, the Electoral Alliance, and the Parliamentary Alliance. Parliamentary alliances can be further divided into two sub-categories, such as the government coalition and the opposition coalition (Hussain, 2008). Political parties are again seen to form two types of alliances in the context of election, such as the Pre-Electoral Alliance and the Post Electoral Alliance (Mustafa, 2008). Reviewing the political context, ideology, programs, etc. of Bangladesh since independence, five types of political alliances can be seen. i) Issue based alliances, ii) Region based alliances, iii) Electoral alliances, iv) Anti-government alliances, v) Government alliances (Haque, Alam, 2014).



Source: Rahman and Mahmud, 2009; Haque, Alam, 2014

Figure 1: Democracy and the Formation of Electoral Alliances of Political Parties in Bangladesh

Electoral Alliance

There is a tendency among political parties to form election-centric alliances across Asia, including South Asia. In general, if the opposition faces obstacles from the ruling party in political participation or programs, or when the practice of democracy is disrupted during the elections held under a military government, an alliance is formed among the political parties before the election (Akther, 2006). The issue of participation in the elections in a coalition has become continuous and important for the prominent political parties in Bangladesh for the last three decades. Alliances are formed before elections only to overcome the electoral experiment and secure power in the multi-party-political system of different calculations. Different election-centric polarizations are created in politics. The calculations, initiatives and eagerness of small and large political parties to form alliances make the electoral field festive. The parties calculate different equations in the politics of voting, and in the twists of the equations, the alliance is sometimes broken and reformed. Therefore,

these alliances are sometimes seen as short-term and sometimes long-term (Khan, 2001). Such alliances are seen to be broken after the determination of victory or defeat in the election in many cases.

Analyzing the activities of alliances; it has been seen that anti-government alliances are formed to oppose the government before the elections and coalitions are formed to form the government after the elections. However, voting and anti-government politics are the main aspects of the alliance (Amar Desh, 2018).

The formation of electoral alliances before and after the elections is a part of the political culture of Bangladesh. The major political parties compete to see how many parties they can include in their favor before the vote. The larger political parties try to align themselves with the smaller political parties in order to increase their influence and secure power in the field of politics. On the other hand, smaller political parties try to be close to power by taking allied positions with the larger parties, thinking that it is not probable for them to escape the seizure of their surety in the elections and go to power alone. Therefore, it is seen that more than one political party has to form a government through a coalition without getting a single or absolute majority of votes in the elections (Norman, 1995). Such a coalition government is seen to be formed by the joint initiative of several parties, depending on the time and situation as required. But in reality, the path of such a coalition government is not pleasant. Congenial political parties must come to the same decision, and public opinion must be fully reflected in the overall activities of the coalition in order to form and run a coalition government.

Moreover, it is important for the allied political parties to have trust and respect for each other, which is not usually observed in all cases. Though it is possible to temporarily solve a country's post-election crisis through the formation of a coalition government, it is not possible to promote the political culture and resolve the political crisis entirely. People often consider the idea of such a government puzzling. This is because such alliances deny the existence of conflict (Allan, 1993).

V. The Chronological Development of Electoral Alliances in Pre- and Post-Independence Bangladesh

The history of forming alliances with political parties of different ideologies and strategies on elections or any other political issue is nothing new in pre-independence and post-independence Bangladesh. The far-reaching history of Bangladesh's politics through many ups and downs has made today's Bangladesh. This homeland is a fruitful consequence of the rise and fall of many empires, including the Aryans, Mauryas, Dutch, British, and French. Nevertheless, it can be seen by reviewing history that such alliances do not last long.

Reviewing the history and continuity of coalition politics in the 49 (forty-nine) years of politics in Bangladesh, two phases can be identified. i) Pre-independence coalition politics and ii) post-independence coalition politics in Bangladesh.

5.1 Pre-independence coalition politics

The first political alliance 'Jukto Front' was formed in the country (then East Bengal) on 4 December 1953, prior to independence on the issue of state language and in the midst of the massive socio-political movements against the ruling Muslim League in order to meet East Bengal's demand for autonomy. In Pakistan, which had just emerged from British colonial rule, there was a mass uprising since the West Pakistani rulers were running the state arbitrarily, ignoring the legitimate rights of the people of East Bengal. Therefore, the people of East Bengal were united in defending their own interests, centering on the first general election of Pakistan. The architects of this unity were Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. They formed the 'Jukto Front' with the aim of jointly fighting the election against the ruling Muslim League (Ahmad, 2000). Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy was the president of the Pakistan Awami League, and Maulana Bhashani was the president of the East Pakistan Awami League. Sher-e-Bangla was the founding president of the Krishak Sramik Party. In addition to these two parties, the Nizam-e-Islam Party, Ganatantri Dal, and Khilafat-e-Rabbani Party were allied parties of the 'Jukto Front'. The ruling Muslim League was defeated miserably by the 'Jukto Front' in that election (Morshed, 2006). The formation of the 'Jukto Front' marked the beginning of a political alliance in the Indian subcontinent as well as in Bangladesh.

5.2 post-independence coalition politics in Bangladesh

Anti-government political alliances were formed at different levels during the rule of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh since independence, demanding the formation of an all-party government, the establishment of a democratic environment, the nationalization of banks, industry, and insurance, and as a protest against the formation of the National Security Force and the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League-BAKSAL (Rahman, 2004). An anti-government all-party action committee was formed on December 29, 1972 and Maulana Bhashani was its chairman in opposition to the government led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in post-independence Bangladesh. This was the first post-independence alliance. The partners of this 15 (fifteen)-point alliance were the National Awami Party (NAP-Bhashani),

Bangladesh Jatiya League, Bangladesh Communist Union, Bangladesh Socialist Party, Bangladesh Communist Party (Leninist), Sramik Krishak-Samajbadi Dal, and Bangla Jatiya League. Their demands were for the resignation of the Bangabandhu government, the establishment of a democratic environment, and the formation of an all-party government (Mallick and Hossen, 1993). Later, in 1973, the Jatiya Mukti Front was formed with eleven organizations under the leadership of Siraj Sikder. Another alliance was formed under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani called the "Sorbadaliyo Oikko Front" in 1974 (BBC News, 2018). These alliances initiated the formation of alliances in independent Bangladesh in the continuity of the 'Jukto Front.'

In the kind of political polarization that took place in the politics of Bangladesh after 1975, the dominance of military rule was well established in the name of democracy in the formation of alliances, and the process of demilitarization led to the expansion of opposition alliances. In this period, disintegration, discord, and new polarization among the political parties centered on joining the alliance and announcing the breakdown of the alliance are the remarkable features of alliance politics (Ali, 2001). Since the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family in 1975, a new political polarization has taken place in Bangladesh. In the transition of power, Ziaur Rahman formed JAGODAL, staying behind the scenes. Later, he formed the Nationalist Front, consisting of the JAGODAL, Muslim League (Shah Aziz), NAP Bhasani, United People's Party, Bangladesh Labor Party, and Bangladesh Tafsil Jati Federation. Ziaur Rahman was introduced as the chairman of the alliance (Rahman, 1990). On the other hand, the Democratic Unity Alliance was formed, consisting of the Awami League, CPB, Jatiya Janata Party, NAP (Muzaffar), Gano Azadi League, and the People's Party (Prothom Alo, 2018).

In the history of Bangladesh, for the first time in 1983, it was possible to form a political unity in any issue-based movement with the manifesto of three alliances formed by political parties of different views and ideologies against dictatorship (Khan, 2001). It marked the beginning of democracy by creating a mass uprising and at the same time instilling political trust in the minds of the people, which is one of the characteristics of alliance politics. In 1983, different polarizations took place in the coalition politics against the dictatorship of Ershad's government. The Awami League formed a 15 (fifteen)-party alliance with congenial parties and 7-party alliances were formed under the leadership of the BNP. The allied parties of the 15-party alliance were the Awami League, Awami League (Mizan), Awami League (Farid Gazi), JASAD, BASAD, Gano Azadi League, Workers Party, NAP (Harun), NAP (Muzaffar), CPB, Samyabadi Dal (Toaha), Samyabadi Dal (Nagen), Jatiya Ekata Party, Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal and Jatiya Majdur Party. Under the leadership of BNP, a 7-party alliance was formed (Hossen, 1996). The two alliances joined the movement simultaneously from the beginning. The two alliances demanded the revocation of martial law and elections under a neutral government (Hannan, 2006).

The seventh parliamentary elections were held under the caretaker government in 1996 for the first time in the history of Bangladesh. These alliances were active on the streets for the implementation of free, fair, and credible elections, which triggered a kind of good practice in the political culture. In the context of the coalition movement of the Awami League, Jatiyo Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami centering on the 7th parliamentary elections, the then ruling BNP was forced to implement the caretaker government system by the 13th amendment to the constitution. After winner of the election, the Awami League formed a consensus government with the other two political parties, Jatiyo Party and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JASAD) after winning this election. The four-party alliance was formed by the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote, and Jatiyo Party to conduct the movement as an opposition alliance (Badruddin, 1992).

In 2001, the bipartisan politics of the BNP and the Awami League began to expand. The expansion of a kind of competitive culture of forming alliances with smaller parties under the leadership of these two main parties for the purpose of securing power can be noticed from this time (Islam, 2003). The BNP-led four-party alliance won the 8th national parliamentary election and formed the government at that time.

In this 9th parliamentary election, the Awami League formed a grand alliance of 14 (fourteen) parties with the leftist parties and later with the Jatiyo Party. On the other hand, the four-party unity alliance led by the BNP contested the election. Bangladesh Awami League won the 9th national parliamentary election by a huge margin of votes (Patwary, 2010).

In the 10th national parliamentary election held in 2014, the political position of the two opposition alliances became violent. Therefore, there was a kind of aversion to the election among the people, and the presence of a small number of voters in the polling center was observed. The 10th national parliamentary election in 2014 was held under the party government. This was because the caretaker government system was abolished in July 2011 through the 15th amendment to the constitution. In this election, the two major political parties were so focused on expanding the space of their respective alliances that they focused only on increasing the numbers without considering the qualifications, organizational strength, ideology, etc. of the smaller political parties. In the election, the Awami League-led grand alliance was there and the BNP-led known four-party unity alliance gradually expanded into an 18-party alliance (Syeda, Mohammad, 2014).

The Eleventh Parliamentary Election was held in 2016 amid this reality. Under the leadership of the Awami League, pro Bengali culture, secular ideologies, and socialist parties participated in the elections being organized under the banner of the Grand Alliance and this ruling alliance is very strong now. However, the parties that believe in Bangladeshi nationalism and Islamic values were united under the leadership of the BNP known as the Oikko Front or 18-party alliance (The Daily Samakal, 2018, November). After the formation of the grand alliance government in the 2014 election, the opposition alliance, or the 18-party alliance, could not show much success in anti-government politics in the country. Even in the Eleventh Parliamentary Election in 2018, the United Front, or the 18-party alliance, was toneless.

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

The main goal of the existing culture of political alliance in this country has been to ascend to the center of power for the last three decades. In fact, the formation of these alliances without ideals, goals, and activities is an echo of a futile political process. Therefore, the public is deprived of the opportunity to examine the ideologies and activities of political parties. The culture of forming such alliances makes national politics turbid. Candidates with a lot of money and muscle power compete for a lot of money and power in the name of an election campaign (Mamun, 2004). The big political parties compete, and smaller political parties maintain their existence, and both parties only settle different gains and losses through coalition. Coalition politics is thus identified as an unhealthy competition in the politics of interest and power. Therefore, it goes without saying that there are many obstacles in the field of coalition politics in the evolving trend of political development.

The Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) has a definite obligation to register political parties in elections. The EC introduced the registration system for political parties before the 9th parliamentary elections in 2008. 116 (one hundred and sixteen) applications were submitted in the first year. Only 40 (forty) parties among them were registered subject to fulfillment of conditions. At present, there are 193 parties in our country. 154 (one hundred fifty-four) parties are unregistered parties among them (Bangladesh Election Commission, 2020). At least 14 (fourteen) names of alliances have been found in the Eleventh Parliamentary Elections campaign, where there are 193 (one hundred ninety-three) parties, of which only 40 (forty) parties are registered (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2016). By demolishing the rules and regulations of the EC, the political parties, which are only involved in the politics of self-interest, are forming alliances with most of the unregistered political parties for the fascination to usurping power. This is hindering the progress of political institutionalization and democracy.

In a democratic system of governance, although it is important to give importance to dedicated workers from the grassroots in nominating party candidates in elections, in the cycle of coalition politics, and in different calculations of multiple political parties, the qualified candidates are deprived of getting nominations. Therefore, genuinely sympathetic or dedicated activists are gradually leaving politics. This is frustrating for both democratic progress and politics (Akther, 2006). Even the coalition government is seen to be formed with candidates selected from the anti-liberation forces and convicts. These unacceptable and isolated people are seen to be in power instead of those who will work for independence and patriotism is intact in their politics of the alliance (Azad, 1997). Leaders and activists are also getting divided and frustrated as many unfamiliar faces have been nominated for the last one and a half decades amid the politics of division in coalition politics. (The Daily Ittefaq, 2018). This discourages grassroots and dedicated leaders and workers in politics.

A party can never work independently within an alliance. Parliamentary democracy requires independent programs and activities from every party, big or small, in the country. Due to the alliance, the expression of the independent views of that multi-party democracy is being severely hampered. The path of leadership creation is being obstructed as well as the activities of each party are being limited. The obligation to express a common opinion within the coalition impedes the free thought, expression of talents, and freedom of speech of the members of the legislature, and thus the effectiveness of the parliament decreases. (Haque, Alam 2014).

VII. The Paradigm shift of Electoral Alliance in Bangladesh Politics

With the span of time, it has been observed that the electoral alliances has been shifted into new dimension due to political and personal interest pre-and post parliamentary election of Bangladesh.

In spite of the alliance's politics not gaining much importance in the political culture of Bangladesh after independence, the "coalition politics" has become more important since the mass uprising of 1990, the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, and the election of the fifth National Parliamentary Election. Until 14th National Parliamentary Election, there is no continuity in the formation of electoral alliances.

The foundation of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh is not very indissoluble. Parliamentary democracy existed for a short time from 1972 to 1975. Parliamentary democracy started its journey again in 1991, during the BNP regime. A tripartite alliance formed a massive movement demanding election under the

caretaker government (Hakim, 1993). At that time, the Awami League-led eight-party alliance, the five-party Left Alliance, forming the Left Democratic Unity Alliance and the BNP-led religion-based parties, forming the 'Islamic Oikko Jot' participated in the election in coalition. After the fall of the Ershad government, the fifth national parliamentary election was held on the combined manifesto of these three alliances on February 27, 1991 (Talukder, 1992).

Coalitions participating in the Ninth Parliamentary Elections in 2008 were noticeably concentrating on increasing power by including smaller parties, as the culture of forming alliances was seen to be growing by sacrificing political principles, ideals, and values. In the 9th national parliamentary election, the two main rivals, the BNP and the Awami League, competed to bring the smaller political parties into their sphere of influence. The two main parties became active in forming alliances and grand alliances to achieve this goal.

There is doubt among experts and the general public about the significance of coalition politics in the current political ups and downs (The Daily Samakal, 2018, November). Bangladesh's contemporary coalition politics is clearly divided into two streams.

There is a silent competition to form alliances among the political parties in our country before the elections. Political parties use different tactics to break up other alliances as well as build their own alliances that are larger and stronger. As a result, many parties left the alliance out of self-interest. Thus, just as one alliance is seen to be broken on one hand, a new alliance is seen to be formed on the other hand (Khan, 2001). Therefore, politics revolves around alliance, not ideology. According to political analysts, individual and party interests prevail over ideology in coalition politics. There is a growing tendency for the alliance as soon as the vote comes. There is no ideological motivation behind the formation of these alliances. The present process of unity, or leaving the 20-party alliance or joining the 14-party alliance, is not a matter of ideology but of interest, working behind the scenes (The Daily Jugantor, 2018).

VIII. Findings

The ruling Muslim League was defeated miserably by the 'Jukto Front' in that election (Morshed, 2006). The formation of the 'Jukto Front' marked the beginning of a political alliance in the Indian subcontinent as well as in Bangladesh. During the early period of Pakistan, economic disparity, poor representation of Bengalis in government, and political-cultural repression pursued by the ruling elite of Pakistan accentuated political problems in East Bengal. Most importantly, the deprivation of Bangles of due participation in the decision-making process gave rise to the politics of regionalism in East Bengal. The resultant development was that the political forces of East Bengal were gradually pushed to launch new political platforms and organize movements against the central government based in the western part of the country. Importantly, however, the election result was a signal of the end of the dominance of the national elite in the politics of East Bengal. However, within a year or so after the election, the United Front disintegrated because of clashes of personalities, intra-alliance disagreements and dissension, and divergent party programmes (Banglapedia, 2021). Till today, there was ascendance of 'Jukto Front' in our electoral alliance. Though it formed due to national interest, now electoral alliances are formed due to every single party's own interest. However, the 'Jukto Front' demonstrated the deterioration of alliance. Hence, it shows that, it practices in the political culture.

These alliances initiated the formation of alliances in independent Bangladesh of the continuity of the 'Jukto Front.' During the first post-independence alliance, the notable point was that they wanted a declining ruling government. Its impact is visible in our political culture at present.

Despite the fact that a new alliance formed political polarization after 1975, the country was subject to military rule. Aside from mistrust, devotion and distrust were growing in the political parties and political culture. Due to the influence of this political culture, at present, doubters, and miscreant lack of endurance are usual scene in the politics. Therefore, naturally, the political alliance easily collapses.

IX. Discussion and Conclusion

Presently, politics has not been able to stand with its own backbone, falling into the trap of unconscious speech, as its leaders have fallen into due to a lack of principles and ideology, corruption, interests, consolidating for power and money, vengeance, lack of tolerance, and incompetent political leadership. Moving away from the ideological space, politics is being conducted under the influence of muscle power and money. That is why, even though the country is at the commencement of 51 (fifty-one) years of independence today; the activities of the political parties have always disappointed the people. Therefore, no matter how strong a new political alliance is, the chance of the country and nation's development through it is very small. Besides, the aim of the political parties should be to uphold the national interest by eliminating their narrow interests. At the same time, elections should be participatory, universal and acceptable.

The Awami League government is running the country by securing power for the third consecutive term. Opposition political parties or alliances are also stagnant, so they have no apparent political opponents (The Daily Nayadiganta, 2020). Therefore, in the present context, there is a question about the relevance of the

alliance politics of the Jukto Front to the Grand Alliance (1954-2020). In order to be aligned, like-minded political parties need to come together, which is now missing. At the same time, the political parties should be in line with the demands of the people. Besides, the politics of the alliance has become increasingly insignificant as there is no longer any political instability as before. In this regard, the Awami League as a single party is very strong in Parliament and on the field. There was a time when an alliance was needed, but not now. In the future, the politics of the alliance may not be relevant. However, the politics of the alliance is always relevant and will never lose its importance. The alliance should be ideological, not just election-centric. There are also alliances with like-minded parties. The political alliance's politics were relevant in the past, are relevant now, and will be relevant in the future.

The Awami League led the great liberation war of Bangladesh. Significant political, economic, and cultural development in Bangladesh has taken place during the regime of the Awami League. This traditional party is more likely to succeed in politics if it is able to formulate patriotic and people-friendly policies. On the other hand, the BNP and other opposition political parties should play an effective role as a shadow government in the parliament in a constitutional and democratic way. This requires increasing their organizational strength and reviving the party base. The grand alliance was formed in our country at the eleventh parliamentary election in 2018 under the leadership of the Awami League, which participated in the election, and this ruling alliance is very strong now. The BNP led the formation of the Oikya Front, or 18-party alliance. The Awami League and the BNP, leading the two alliances, should not rely on non-ideological, self-interested, disguised and tumbled partners, but should cautiously nominate honest, competent, and dedicated leaders of the party in the forthcoming elections and speed up organizational activities to continue the ceaseless efforts to establish actual democracy. Then coalition politics will be able to walk on the path of prosperity, abandoning its problems. At the same time, a developing country like ours will be able to play an effective role by avoiding internal political conflicts and violence.

Typically, however, the main objective of this article is to place the recent experience of political alliances that made Bangladesh into historical perspective. Therefore, it can prescribe electoral alliance building in the present context of Bangladesh.

First, in the present context of Bangladesh, there is no single dominant party in Bangladesh and nor a lack of competing political ideologies. Further, in the electoral alliance in 1991 and 1996 elections, there was no lack of competition, and a single party (BNP, then AL) won a governing majority in each case, resulting in stable parliamentary governments. Thus, there is no inherent need for electoral alliances to make the elections competitive or for stability in governance.

Second, the smaller parties have benefited the most from the electoral alliances. Their representation in parliament and their say either in governance or in electoral alliance positions on various issues have increased significantly. The disproportionate influence of the leftist parties on the AL-led EA and that of the religious right on the BNP-led electoral alliances can barely be disputed.

Third, voters cannot choose any more between the stand-alone views of AL or BNP, without yielding unintended support to either the extreme left or the extreme right. The check and balance that is missing in Bangladeshi politics since the winner of electoral alliances in parliament is in sole control of all organs of the government.

Finally, the AL-led or BNP-led electoral alliance can form an overwhelming absolute majority government without the support of the majority of the voters. Thus, with no broad-based electoral mandate, the winning electoral alliances can still bring about major and extensive changes, including constitutional amendments, and importantly, they can do so without such changes being part of their election manifesto. The most recent example is the abolition of the interim caretaker Government system by the ruling AL-led electoral alliance. Regardless of whether such changes are beneficial, the important point is that the electoral alliances in Bangladesh experience.

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