**An Overview on**

**Political Culture of Bangladesh**

***Abstract***

Political culture is a distinctive and patterned way of thinking about how political and economic life ought to be carried out. A political culture consists of fundamental assumptions about how the political process should operate. For example, Americans assume that when an election is lost, the loser will accept the results and not hinder the winner from taking office. We frequently ask why Bangladeshis ignore laws and policies, intended for the common good, and do not do what they know is right. The issue is really bound up in the political culture we generated over the years. This study provides an overview of the political culture and its various typologies. It analyses and expressed the political culture of Bangladesh. The study is based on review of existing secondary sources.

**Keyword:** Political Culture, Parochial, Subject, Participant, Political Ideology

**Introduction**

Every society has a culture that differentiates its members' values and life styles from those of other societies. The anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn defined culture as "the total life way of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group." Or culture can be regarded as that part of the environment that is the creation of man." Most social scientists seem to agree that culture shapes or influences social action but does not fully determine it.

Culture is only one of many factors that may give form and direction to human behaviour. We are interested here in the portion of the general culture of a society that can be designated political culture: widely held values, beliefs, and attitudes on what governments should try to do, how they should operate, and relationships between the citizen and government. Political culture is one of the main factors of policy environment in Bangladesh. It has great influence on policy making. Our political culture is democratic and but less tolerant.  We all believe in democracy and the right of everyone to be heard. There also exists participant political culture though sometimes it goes toward wrong direction. The Dictatorship of famous political leaders, martial laws, political violence, faulty Election system, red-tapism was also the feature of Political Culture in Bangladesh for last 4 decades.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to enhance knowledge about the political culture of Bangladesh. Though political culture are subjects of much popular discussion and debate in the media, academic research and empirical data on political culture have been limited. The specific objectives of the paper are as follows:

To know about various types and components of political culture.

To know the relationship between political culture and policy environment.

To know about the political culture of Bangladesh.

**Rationale of the Study**

The term 'political culture' is used in the field of social science. It refers to historically-based, widely-shared beliefs, feelings, and values about the nature of political systems, which can serve as a link between citizens and government. Different countries have different political cultures, which can help us understand how and why their governments are organized in a certain way, why democracies succeed or fail, or why some countries still have monarchies. Understanding our own political culture can also provide clues to political relationships, such as those we share with each other or our government.

**Methodology**

Data were collected from various published documents in the form of books, journals, government circulars, newspapers, research reports and internet browsing. Books and Journals have provided theoretical knowledge regarding the Political Culture of Bangladesh.

**Conceptions**

Political culture has been and remains an important concept for many political scientists, and it will probably always be so. Aristotle, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Alexis de Tocqueville, and other great students of politics sought to understand and explain political culture even when they did not use the term. Political scientists who have made political culture central to their research programs include Gabriel Almond, Harry Eckstein, Daniel Elazar, Ronald Inglehart, Robert Putnam, Sidney Verba, and Aaron Wildavsky. Almond and Verba’s The Civic Culture (1963) and Putnam’s Making Democracy Work (1993) and Bowling Alone (2000) are modern classics of political-cultural studies, and Elazar’s The American Mosaic (1994) should become one.

**Political Culture**

Political culture refers to those ideas, values, attitudes or orientation about a political system which is acceptable to and shared by the majority of the people in the state. The term political culture will be more assertive when it will be explained in the realm of politics. So, it means that within a group and society there is diverse strands of opinions about a political system, norm and beliefs.

Definitions of political culture are many and varied.

Roy Macridis writes of it as the 'commonly shared goals and commonly accepted rules'. a Samuel Beer made the concept of one of four variables crucial to the analysis of political systems.

According to Beer, the components of the culture are values, beliefs, and emotional attitudes about how government ought to be conducted and about what it should do.'

Robert Dahl has singled out political culture as a factor explaining different patterns of political opposition. The salient elements of the culture for Dahl are:

1. Orientations of problem-solving; are they pragmatic or rationalistic?

2. Orientations to collective action; are they co-operative or non-co-operative?

3. Orientations to the political system; are they allegiant or alienated?

4. Orientations to other people; are they trustful or mistrustful?

Lucian Pye has been particularly concerned with the aspects of political culture pertaining to political development in the new states. For Pye the indicators of a nation's political culture include such factors as: the scope of politics; how ends and means in politics are related; the standards for the evaluation of political action; the values that are salient for political action.

Finer's definition of a nation's political culture seems to concentrate largely on the legitimacy of the rulers and political institutions and procedures. For our purpose, we may regard the political culture as a shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates. It is the 'particular pattern of orientations' in which, according to Gabriel Almond, every political system is embedded.

Different countries have different political cultures. For example, American political culture can be defined according to some basic and commonly shared beliefs, such as our commitment to democracy, equality, free enterprise, and individualism. Concepts related to liberty, nationalism, and reliance on a legislative body, instead of an individual ruler, are also unique to American political culture.

**Components of Political Culture**

* Cognitive Orientation: - It is implied by the amount and the type of the knowledge which the people posses about political problems and events.
* Effective Orientation: - It implies the amount of devotion and interest of the people toward their political system.
* Evaluative Orientation: - While evaluating their political system people try to know if the political system has achieved the objective which it had sought to achieve it.

**Policy Environment and Political Culture**

Whenever make any policy, its environmental influence must be taken into consideration. If environment doesn’t response positively, the output of public policy may negative. Policy Environment means where any policy is made, its outputs are applied and from where the feedback of this policy is taken. It includes political, social, economic culture. There are some actors and factors in policy environment which greatly influence the public policy. Political Culture is one of the most important factors in policy environment.

Interest group

Political parties

Research organization Development partners

Communication Media

**Policy Environment**

**Actors**

**Factors**  F ac F a aacacccctors

Political Culture

Socio-economic Conditions

**Officials**

**Unofficial**

Legislature

The Executive

The Court

Administrative Agencies

Figure: Political Culture is the factor of policy environment.

A political culture is a set of attitudes and practices held by a people that shapes their political behaviour. It includes moral judgments, political myths, beliefs, and ideas about what makes for a good society. A political culture is a reflection of a government, but it also incorporates elements of history and tradition that may predate the current regime. Political cultures matter because they shape a population’s political perceptions and actions.

Governments can help shape political culture and public opinion through education, public events, and commemoration of the past. Political cultures vary greatly from state to state and sometimes even within a state. Political culture of any country influences the policy making processes. In a democratic country, government should consider the peoples participation in policy making. If there exists intra party conflict in any country, it will violate the policy making process.

**Political Culture and Political Ideology**

Political culture is a broader and more basic thing that political ideology.  For example, just about everyone in the Bangladesh shares a political culture.  Our political culture is democratic and tolerant.  We all believe in democracy and the right of everyone to be heard.  So political culture is sort of our deepest attitudes towards how the system should work. On the other hand, Political ideology is a structured set of orientations and beliefs through which individuals understand and interpret politics.

**Types of Political Culture**

Almond and Verba pointed out that individual political orientation can be tapped systematically if we explore the following:

1. What knowledge does a citizen have of his/her political system in general terms, its history, size, location, power, constitutional characteristics and the like? What are his/her feelings towards these systematic characteristics? And what are his/her more or less considered opinions and judgement of them?

2. What knowledge does he/she have of the roles and structures, the various political elites, and the policy proposal that are involved in the upload of flows of policy making? What are his/her feelings and opinions about the structures, leaders and policy proposals?

3. What knowledge does he/she have on the downward flow of policy enforcement, the structures, individuals and decisions involved in these processes? What are his feeling and opinions for them

How does he perceive himself as a member of his political system? What knowledge does he have of his rights, powers, obligations and strategies access to influence? Does he feel about his capabilities? What norms of participation or of performance does he acknowledge and employ in formulating political judgement, or in arriving at opinions? Almond and Verba classify political culture into the followings:

a. Parochial political culture

b. Subject political culture

c. Participant political culture

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Types of political culture** | **System as general object** | **Input object** | **Output object** | **Self as active participant** |
| Parochial | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subject | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Participant | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

**Parochial Political Culture**

In a parochial political culture, system as a whole, citizens have little awareness of or orientation toward either the political system as a whole, the input process, the output process, or the citizen as a political participant. The parochials expect nothing from the system. It is suggested that some African chiefdoms, kingdoms, and tribal societies as well as modem Italy illustrate parochial political cultures.

In this these societies, there are no specialised political roles; headman ship, chieftainship, shaman ship are diffuse political-economic-religious roles, and for members of these societies the political orientation of these roles are not separated from their religious and social orientations. A parochial orientation also implies the comparative absence of expectations of change initiated by the political system. The parochial citizen expects nothing from the political system. Even larger scale and more differentiated polities, however, may have predominantly parochial cultures. But relatively pure parochialism is likely to occur in simpler traditional systems where political specialisation is minimal. Parochialism in more differentiated political systems is likely to be affective and normative rather than cognitive. That is to say, the remote tribesmen in Nigeria or Ghana may be aware in a dim sort of way of the existence of a central political regime. But his feelings toward it are uncertain or Types of Culture System as general object Input Object Output Object Self as active participant Parochial Culture 0 0 0 0 Subject Culture 1 0 1 0 Participant Culture 1 1 1 1 negative, and he has not internalized any norms to regulate his relations to it. This type of political system is associated with traditional system

**Subject Political Culture**

In a subject political culture like that of Germany the citizen is oriented toward the political system and the output process, yet has little awareness of input processes or of the individual as a participant. He or she is aware of governmental authority and may like or dislike it, but is essentially passive. The person is, as the term implies, a subject.

The second major type of political culture listed in above table is the subject political culture. In this regard, the subject is aware of specialized governmental authority; he is affectively oriented to it, perhaps taking pride in it, perhaps disliking it; and, he evaluates it either as legitimate or as not. He is also essentially a passive one, meaning he does not take part in any input of government. The citizen also is aware of the outputs of the government - welfare programmes, coercive measures or tax legislation, but plays no part in the inputs. He does not participate and believes he has no influence on the government. In this kind of political culture, the government expects obedience from the people and conformity to its directive without questioning. It is a political culture that is associated with authoritarian rule.

**Participant Political Culture**

In a participant political culture, which Almond and Verba say exists in the United States, citizens have a comparatively high level of political awareness and information along with explicit orientations toward the political system as a whole, its input and output processes, and meaningful citizen participation in politics. They also understand how individuals and groups can influence decision making.

The third major type of political culture, the participant culture, is one in which the members of the society tend to be explicitly oriented to the system as a whole and to both the political and administrative structures and processes: in other words, to both the input and output aspects of the political system. Individual members of the participant polity may be favourably or unfavourably oriented to the various classes of political objects. They tend to be oriented toward an "activist" role of the self in the polity, though their feelings and evaluations of such a role may vary from acceptance to rejection. Such culture is usually associated with democracy where citizens recognise the political system, participate in the put and output process as well as recognise themselves as active participants. Such culture of participation may either negatively or positively oriented.

**Background of Political Culture of Bangladesh**

**Provisional Government**

Bangladesh's first government took oath of office in Meherpur, Kushtia on April 10, 1971, after Major Ziaur Rahman initiated the first revolt with his battalion against a brutal five division army crackdown on the local people of Bangladesh, and declared independence on March 26th 1971 in Chittagong. The Bangladesh Forces was set up and organized under 11 Sectors to conduct all operations pertaining towards independence from Pakistan under the leadership of the Sector and Brigade commanders

**Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, (1972-75)**

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to administrative centre with immense personal popularity but had difficulty transforming this popular support into the political strength needed to function as head of government. The 1972 constitution adopted as state policy the Awami League's (AL) four basic principles of nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy.

After proclaiming a state of emergency, Mujib used his parliamentary majority to win a constitutional amendment limiting the powers of the legislative and judicial branches, establishing an executive presidency, and instituting a one-party system, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), which all members of Parliament (and senior civil and military officials) were obliged to join.

**Ziaur Rahman, (1975-81)**

Successive military coups resulted in the emergence of Army Chief of Staff General Ziaur Rahman ("Zia") as strongman. He pledged the army's support to the civilian government headed by President Chief Justice Sayem. (Background Note, 2008).Acting at Zia's behest, Sayem dissolved Parliament, promising fresh elections in 1977, and instituted martial law. (Background Note, 2008). Lifting the ban on political parties from Mujib's one party BAKSAL rule, he sought to revitalize the demoralized bureaucracy, to begin new economic development programs, infrastructure build up, a free press and to emphasize family planning.

**Hussain Mohammed Ershad (1982-1990)**

Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Hussain Mohammed Ershad assumed power in the second, but, bloodless coup in March 24th 1982. To strengthen his hold on government Ershad suspended the constitution and citing pervasive corruption, ineffectual government, and economic mismanagement declared martial law

The Jatiya Party won a modest majority of the 300 elected seats in the national assembly. The participation of the Awami League- led by the late Prime Minister Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina Wazed-lent the elections some credibility, despite widespread charges of voting irregularities. Ershad easily outdistanced the remaining candidates, taking 84% of the vote. Although Ershad's government claimed a turnout of more than 50%, opposition leaders, and much of the foreign press, estimated a far lower percentage and alleged voting irregularities.

**Khaleda Zia, (1991-96)**

The centre-right BNP won a plurality of seats and formed a government with support from the Islamic party Jamaat-I-Islami, with Khaleda Zia, widow of Ziaur Rahman, obtaining the post of prime minister. In March 1994, controversy over a parliamentary by-election, which the opposition claimed the government had rigged, led to an indefinite boycott of Parliament by the entire opposition. The opposition also began a program of repeated general strikes to press its demand that Khaleda Zia's government resign and a caretaker government supervise a general election.

The opposition then continued a campaign of Marches, demonstrations, and strikes in an effort to force the government to resign. The opposition, including the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina, pledged to boycott national elections scheduled for February 15, 1996. In February, Khaleda Zia was re-elected by a landslide in voting boycotted and denounced as unfair by the three main opposition parties. In March 1996, following escalating political turmoil, the sitting Parliament enacted a constitutional amendment to allow a neutral caretaker government to assume power and conduct new parliamentary elections; former Chief Justice Mohammed Habibur Rahman was named Chief Adviser (a position equivalent to prime minister) in the interim government.

**Sheikh Hasina, (1996-2001)**

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 Jatiyo Samajtantric Dal, a very small leftist party.The Jatiya Party never entered into a formal coalition arrangement, and party president H.M. Ershad withdrew his support from the government in September 1997. (Background Note, 2008). International and domestic election observers found the June 1996 election free and fair, and ultimately, the BNP party decided to join the new Parliament.

At the end of 1996, the BNP staged a parliamentary walkout over this and other grievances but returned in January 1997 under a four-point agreement with the ruling party.

**Khaleda Zia, (2001-2006)**

The four-party alliance led by the BNP won over a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Begum Khaleda Zia was sworn in on October 10, 2001, as Prime Minister for the third time (first in 1991, second after the February 15, 1996 elections).

Despite her August 2001 pledge and all election monitoring groups declaring the election free and fair, Sheikh Hasina condemned the election, rejected the results, and boycotted Parliament. On August 17, 2005, near-synchronized blasts of improvised explosive devices in 63 out of 64 administrative districts targeted mainly government buildings and killed two persons. An extremist Islamist group named Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) claimed responsibility for the blasts and subsequent attacks on the courts in several districts killed 28 people, including judges, lawyers, and police personnel guarding the courts.

A government campaign against the Islamic extremists led to the arrest of hundreds of senior and mid-level JMB leaders. Six top JMB leaders were tried and sentenced to death for their role in the murder of two judges.

**Political Culture of Bangladesh**

We must acknowledge that when our country's development program is going forward, our political culture is backing up. The subject can be understood with the concept of 'binary opposition'. That is, the country's economic growth, increase in per-capita income, successful childhood of digital Bangladesh, strong leadership in the political arena, advancement of tigers in sports, reaching the top of women's sports in international competition, when the image of the country is highlighting the world, only the politics of mischief is ours Fades. That is, at this point we are passing a completely different time, where both development and non-development are happening simultaneously.

The people of Bangladesh tend to believe the following about the political system:

**Parliamentary Democracy**

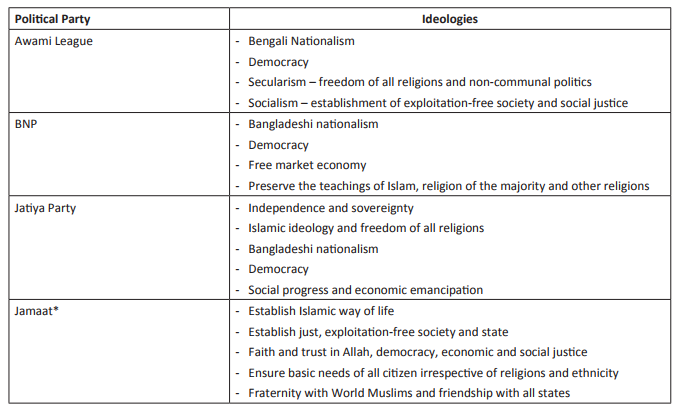
Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy largely influenced by the British parliamentary system. Executive power is in the hands of the prime minister, who is the head of the cabinet, and who must be a member of the 300-seat Jatiya Sangsad (unicameral parliament). She/he recommends the council of ministers to the president. The president is the constitutional head of state and is elected for a 5-year term by the parliament, but plays a largely ceremonial role. The president can act only on the advice of the prime minister, as the presidential power was significantly reduced in accordance with constitutional changes in 1991.

**Women’s interest in politics**

 All adult citizens (18 years old and over) are eligible to vote, including women and ethnic minorities. One of the unique features of the political system in Bangladesh is that 50 seats in the parliament are reserved for female members, and they are elected by the members of the parliament.

**Different political ideologies**

Constitutions of the four political parties specify certain ideological principles and goals. Table 1 illustrates these self-described ideologies. We will discuss the evolution and changes of the ideological principles over time for each of the parties.

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Source: Constitutions of the Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat

**Common leadership pattern**

There are some commonalities in the leadership patterns of political parties in Bangladesh. First, the top party leadership position has remained unchanged for nearly thirty years in the three major parties. Sheikh Hasina has been the president of AL since 1981; Khaled Zia has been the chairperson of BNP since 1984; and H M Arshad Chairman of Jatiya Party since the founding of the party in 1986. Even in Jamaat, Professor Ghulam Azam was the ameer from 1992 to 2000, and Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami from 2000 till his imprisonment on war crimes charges in 2011.

The second common feature shared by the three major parties, AL, BNP and Jatiya Party, is the predominance of dynastic succession. Both AL and BNP are led by two dynastic inheritors. Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Khaleda Zia is the widow of Ziaur Rahman, the founder of the BNP. In BNP, Khaleda Zia’s eldest son, Tareque Rahman has been promoted to the position of the senior vice chairman and is clearly identified as the dynastic successor. In AL, there is no clear dynastic successor to Sheikh Hasina, but speculation has centered around several family members including her sister Sheikh Rehana and son Sojib Wajed Joy. In Jatiya Party, the founding president Ershad is still alive but his wife Raushan Ershad has now been made the leader of the parliamentary party. Another group contesting her leadership is led by Ershad’s brother G M Qader.

The third common feature is the prevalence of familial politics. In AL and BNP many family members (near and extended) of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia have already held important political positions. Though Sheikh Hasina has recently defined her family to include only her sister and their children, seven members of Sheikh Hasina extended family have been elected to the tenth parliament. They include, three cousins, three nephews and the father-in-law of her daughter. Her son, Joy and her sister, Rehana’s son Redwan Siddique Boby have not yet been elected to any political office, but both are involved in party and campaign activities. Joy has also been named the technology advisor to the Prime Minister. In BNP too, in addition to her son Tareque Rahman, Khaleda Zia’s sister was a member of the eighth parliament as well as a cabinet minister. Khaleda’s brother was also a member of the eighth parliament. Three of her nephews were politically influential. In Jatiya Party, Ershad’s brother, sister as well as his wives have been MPs and held various party positions.

**Inter and Intra-Party Conflict Resolution**

The politics of vengeance always comes in our country. Everyday people are being killed in the fire of this political vendetta. People are living in fear. Feeling insecure in your own house. The only reason for this situation is that there is no equal rights politics in the country. Political parties have no respect. There is no national leader by whom the general people will call together or to assist the government. This national leader cannot be created because there is no friendly politics after independence, there is no politics of respect for each other.

A picture containing cabinet, furniture

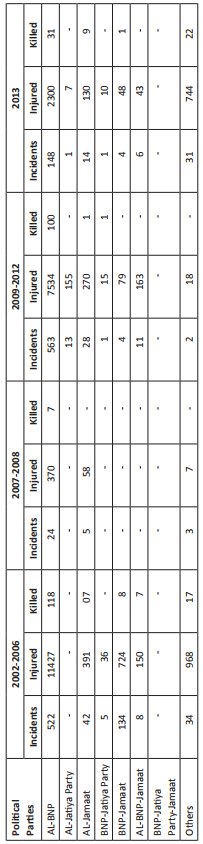
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Table: inter-Party Violence: 2002-2013 intra-Party Violence: 2002-2013

Source: information Desk, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)

**Confrontational politics**

Politics in our country is confrontational in nature where there is no cooperation, trust and solidarity among political parties and groups. There is no census among political parties on issues of national interest. They oppose each other only for the sake of opposition. In our country, there is no sign of absolute tolerance of politics. One leader is busy working to defeat another leader, one group and another. The two pillars of the Parliament are the leaders of government and the leader of opposition. But they sit in the two corners of the parliament without sitting on the front row., as if no one's eyes do not leave anyone. Do not go to any event two. If they go, that is only in an army ceremony though it was also stopped from this year. It is a democratic culture? jealous? Arrogant? When the 9th Parliament was the first sitting, then it was started by the people of obscenity. Members of the parliament had such a poor indication of the leader of the different party that many of the people were shocked. Even the last two leaders Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib and Ziaur Rahman were not spared in this episode.

**Lack of people’s confidence in government**

People’s self-assurance in government and following institutions is a significant criterion of developed democracy. Here, popular support and confidence may be centered approximately three areas: disillusionment—

1. with politicians;
2. with following parties; and
3. With political institution.

In Bangladesh the level of people’s confidence in administration, politicians, affectivity of policies and other following administrative and political institution and services is very low. Politicians and administrator are so corrupted that natives always try to refrain themselves from any treaty as well as intimation with them.

**Restricted political communication**

The contribution of ordinary people in democratic following requires that they have to have the feelings that it is safe to do so. For this, there be supposed to have a unrestricted communication procedure which involve

1. A free push media;

2. Interest groups free from law making and party control;

3.Regular, free plus fair electrons;

4. Effectual law and order situation.

**Attacks on Civil Society**

Human rights groups in Bangladesh face constant obstacles, including escalating harassment and surveillance by police. A new law placed strong restrictions on receiving foreign funds without approval by the NGO Affairs Bureau within the Prime Minister’s Office.

Journalists are also a common target. The editor of the English-language Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam, faces a total of 54 criminal defamation cases and 15 sedition cases. Fifty-five cases have been filed against editor Matiur Rahman and some journalists associated with the country’s highest circulation daily, Prothom Alo, for criminal defamation and “hurting religious sentiment.”

**Freedom of Expression**

Several laws were proposed in 2016 to increase restrictions on freedom of expression. The Distortion of the History of Bangladesh Liberation War Crimes Act provides for imprisonment and fines if details of the 1971 war of independence are debated or disputed. The Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, passed in October, to control nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) will hinder freedoms of expression and association. Proposed Press Council Act amendments include provisions for closing newspapers. The government continues to use the overly broad and vague Information and Communication Technology Act against people critical of decisions and activities of senior government officials or their families.

Bloggers expressing secular views and editors and writers supporting sexual minority rights were attacked in 2016, many of them hacked to death in public spaces. While authorities condemned the attacks, some recommended that individuals holding unpopular views censor themselves, implying that the responsibility for avoiding such attacks lay with the victims.

**Attacks on Minorities**

Several religious leaders were killed or injured in targeted attacks, allegedly by the same extremist Muslim groups that targeted secular writers. In April, the advocacy group Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad said there had been three times more incidents of violence against minority communities in the first three months of 2016 than in all of 2015. Hindu shrines, temples and homes were attacked over the October 2016 Diwali festival. The government responded by arresting several hundred suspects, but some sporadic attacks against the Hindu community continued. Thousands of indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and other areas are at risk of forced displacement.

**Conclusion**

Political culture is trans-mitted from one generation to another by socialization, a process in which the individual, through many experiences with parents, friends, teachers, political leaders, and others, learns politically relevant values, beliefs, and attitudes. Political culture, then, is acquired by the individual, becomes a part of his or her psychological makeup, and is manifested in his or her behaviour.

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