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Proportional Representation in Bangladeshi Election System for Democratic Sustainability

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Abstract: This narrative review investigates how the Proportional Representation (PR) may be a solution to the Bangladeshi election system, as a way of enhancing democratic sustainability. The First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system that Bangladesh uses now has repeatedly given disproportionate results between the number of votes and the number of seats, leaving smaller political parties, women, minority groups and various political viewpoints unrepresented. These imbalances have helped in polarizing politics, poor representation of opposition and decreasing citizen confidence in elections. Based on academic sources, policy reports, media articles, and comparative international experiences, this review will examine the theoretical underpinnings of PR, its benefits in democracy and whether PR is applicable to the Bangladesh political environment. The paper has pillared the relevance of PR in promoting fairness in elections, inclusive representation, less win-takes-all politics, and post-election conflicts. The study examines reform efforts underway in Bangladesh, such as those of the civil society organizations and the Electoral Reform Commission, political and constitutional issues relating to switching to PR. The review provides an analysis of the criticisms of PR, including the issue of stability of governance, complexity in administration, and constitutional viability and outlines the possibility of a hybrid and a staged reform as possible avenues to implementation. PR is not a panacea, but its slow and gradual implementation may lead to dramatic effect on democratic consolidation, political accountability, and long-term democratic sustainability in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh; democratic; election; proportionate representation (PR); proposal; vote

1. Introduction

On the 5th August of 2024, Bangladesh witnessed a dramatic political change. A short-lived but powerful student-led anti-discrimination movement—amplifying the voices of millions brought the downfall of the 15 years of Bangladesh Awami League (AL) government, known for its authoritarianism that survived in power at the expense of destroying political, economic, legal, judicial and electoral institutions. The downfall of the regime inspired for a new Bangladesh with the promise of preventing the prospect of future authoritarianism, for which massive reconstruction of various public and private institutions was deemed essential. An interim technocrat government was formed on August 8 to steer the desired reforms before an elected representative government is put in place. Among a dozen plus reform committees formed, an important one is the Electoral Reform Committee tasked with identifying the problems with the existing electoral laws and practices, and suggesting the necessary reforms.

One of the most important aspects of the reform debate appears to be the electoral system itself (The Independence 2017). Bangladesh currently follows the Majoritarian or Single Member Plurality System which is instrumentalized by the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) or “Winner-Takes-All” (WTA) methods, where the candidate with the maximum votes wins the seat. Although this method is straightforward and popular, it has long been criticized for producing disproportionate outcomes, where a party can secure an overwhelming majority in Parliament with only a small margin of the total vote share (Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis 2005). This often leads to the concentration of power in large political parties degenerating into authoritarianism while marginalizing smaller parties and dissenting voices (Norris 2004). The fallen AL government allegedly took the unfair advantage of the majoritarian system in favor of its authoritarianism which made the politically conscious communities of the nation disillusioned with the system. An alternative electoral system became imperative.

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A popular alternative electoral system in practice in many advanced and consolidated democracies in contrast to Majoritarian System is named the Proportional Representation (PR) system. Under a PR system, parliamentary seats are allocated to political parties in proportion to the percentage of the total national votes they receive in an election. The system ensures better and fairer representation of the people as well as the parties in the legislature (Shakil and Kaniz 2013). Not only does the system ensure greater inclusivity and power-sharing avenues, but it also helps dismantle the structural capabilities of the majority system that patronizes authoritarianism (Lijphart 2015). However, the PR system is not a monolith, rather it has many varieties.

The PR system has gained increasing popularity in the post-war democratic practice. On a global scale, countries aspiring to build truly representative and participatory democracies are increasingly adopting PR systems. As of 2023 data, 91 out of 170 countries worldwide—approximately 54%—utilize some form of proportional representation (Martínez 2023). The adoption rate is even higher among developed nations, with about 70% of the 36 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) employing PR systems. All the democracies in Europe with the anomaly of the UK practice the PR system. Sri Lanka has been using PR system decades ago, and Nepal used a mixed proportional system in its 2015 Constitution, which has led to the country gaining better political inclusivity and stability (Hachhethu 2022). The Bangladesh after the revolution is in a crossroad. The new political realities in Bangladesh are worthy of a new electoral system that can bring about fairer representation, and keep the political power on check. This paper advances the suggestion that Proportional Representation system will be a more viable and more appropriate system of electing in a sustainable and responsible democracy in Bangladesh. With this in mind, the paper shall delve into the reasons as to why the proportional representation system now is a must, how the system can introduce a more inclusive and balanced system of representation and governance in Bangladesh, and how the world can be able to draw upon the world experiences in order to reshape the electoral system and democracy in Bangladesh.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Informants.

Election	Year	Political Party	Vote Share (%)	FPTP (Seats Won)	PR (Seats Won)
5 th	1991	BNP (Winner)	30.8%	140	93
		Awami League	30.1%	88	90
		Others	39.91%	72	117
6 th	1996	Awami League (Winner)	37.4%	146	113
		BNP	33.6%	116	101
		Others	29.90%	38	86
8 th	2001	BNP (Winner)	40.83%	193	124
		Awami League	40.2%	62	120
		Others	19.97%	45	56
9 th	2008	Awami League (Winner)	49.0%	231	147
		BNP	33.2%	30	99
		Others	17.28%	40	54

Source: Author collected from different sources given to reference and bibliography lists.

Bangladesh has struggled to have a democratic system that is founded on universal suffrage since its independence in the year 1971. Nevertheless, the nation still experiences a common set of problems in regard to the establishment of a stable democracy over half a century later (Rule and Joseph 1994). Currently, Bangladesh has a majoritarian or Winner Takes All (WTA) system of elections officially referred to as the FPTP system. In this model, the candidate with the largest number of votes in an electorate is declared the winner of the seat by default and all other candidates (some of which can lose by a small margin) are left without a representative (Islam 2016). Such an approach frequently results in imbalanced outcome and is deemed as one of the greatest obstacles to holding equitable, free, and reliable polls. The existing system contributes to political instability and undermines democratic culture as opposed to promoting democratic stability (Ombler 2006).

In contrast, the PR system is widely regarded as delivering more equitable and stable outcomes that more accurately reflect the popular will. The PR system allocates parliamentary seats in proportion to percentage of the total national votes every party receives, thereby ensuring that a broader spectrum of political voices is represented (Rashid 2007).

While there are sixty registered political parties in Bangladesh, the country's political landscape is essentially dominated by three major parties - Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Bangladesh Jamayete Islami (BJI), and Bangladesh Awami League (AL)* (banned) (<https://www.ecs.gov.bd/page/political-parties>). However, neither of the parties can garner enough majority required to form the government, which forces them to take help of smaller third parties (Ohiduzzaman 2010). This has resulted in developing a two-plus party system in the country. For the sake of convenience, the two major parties have developed the culture of 'alliance' system where smaller parties often join these two major parties not out of ideological alignment but as a survival

strategy, with their role reduced to supporting the electoral strategies of larger parties and be partner in forming the government (Mill 1861).

The drawbacks of both the Majoritarian and alliance system are many (Jones 2015). Firstly, these are manipulative rather than true representational in nature. Secondly, many of the smaller parties are often one-man parties and fail to get elected. Thirdly, the smaller parties are often non-representational of the electorates at all. And last but not least, those smaller parties often help the major parties turn authoritarian. However, one aspect of the Majoritarian and Alliance system is commendable which is its coalition form of government with whatever limitations inherent in it (Boix 1999).

Since even major parties fail to garner simple majority votes or seats in the majoritarian system, and they remain dependent on smaller third parties leading to forming coalition government, it is better to move to the Proportional Representation system which guarantees better competition, fairer representation, better coalition bargaining, and more accountable government. The system also more effectively checks major parties from being dominant and authoritarian.

2. Proportional Representation (PR)

PR is an electoral system that ensures political parties receive seats in proportion to the percentage of votes they secure. The primary goal of this system is to provide fair representation to all voters, regardless of their political beliefs. The PR system comes in many varieties and complexities such as Party-List Proportional, Mixed-Member Proportional, Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV), Single Transferable Vote (STV), Parallel Voting (PV) and Party Block Voting (Ace Project 2017). A brief description is offered here to understand the most popular types.

Party-List Proportional Representation

This is the simplest one and used in many countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, where voters vote for parties listed on the ballot paper, and seats are allocated to parties in proportion to the number or percentage of the total national votes they receive (Udu et al. 2014). The parties then have the discretion to choose their representatives. In this system, it is the party's political manifesto that matters, not the representatives. This is probably more conducive for Bangladesh.

Countries using Party-List PR include:

- *Europe: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.*
- *Asia: Israel, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Philippines, Turkey.*
- *Africa: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.*
- *Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.*

Closed Party-List Proportional

In this system, the party gives a specific list of candidates who are placed in numerical order of preference. Voters only vote for the party. No option to choose the candidates. Party and candidates will win according to the % of vote it gets. This system is applicable in multi-member constituencies.

Open Party-List Proportional

In this system, the party gives a specific list of candidates, but the candidates are not placed in numerical order of preference. Voters can choose candidates from the list. Wining depends on % of votes the party gets.

Mixed-Member Proportional

This system uses two votes by voters, one of which is a vote for an elective individual in the city and the other is a vote to an elective party. This model is alternatively known as the best of both worlds, as it has the direct representation of the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) systems as well as the fairness of proportional systems as in use in Europe. With MMP, each representative is assigned specific number of seats, and the rest of the seats are apportioned to parties according to their portion of party votes. The role of this system is to minimize the partisanism and increase fairness (Norris 2004).

Countries using MMP include:

- *Germany*
- *New Zealand*
- *Hungary*

Instant-Runoff Voting Proportional

This system is used in countries like Australia and Ireland where voters rank candidates in order of preference, and the candidates with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

The Single transmittable Vote (STV), is one of the most extensively used styles under Commensurable Representation used in countries like Ireland and Malta. In this system, choosers rank campaigners in order of preference — 1 for their first choice, 2 for their alternate, and so on. The end of STV is to transfer fat votes to other campaigners grounded on namer preferences until the needed number of campaigners is tagged (Charles 1999). The quota for winning a seat is calculated using the Droop formula:

$$\text{Quota} = (\text{Total valid votes} \div (\text{Number of seats} + 1)) + 1$$

For illustration, in a constituency with 10,000 valid votes and 3 seats, a seeker would need 2,501 votes to be elected. However, 499 votes are redistributed to other campaigners grounded on alternate preferences. If a seeker receives 3. The seeker with the smallest votes is excluded in each round, and their votes are reallocated until all seats are filled by campaigners meeting the share.

Countries using STV include:

- *Ireland*
- *Malta*

Parallel Voting System

In this hybrid system, two distinct electoral methods are used simultaneously. For instance, a portion of the seats may be filled using the FPTP system, while the remaining seats are allocated through PR. Unlike MMP, however, the results from the two systems are not linked; they operate in parallel without compensating for disproportionality.

Countries using Parallel Voting include:

- *Italy*
- *Lithuania*
- *North Macedonia*
- *Ukraine*
- *Japan*
- *Russia*
- *South Korea*

3. Methods

This narrative review approach will analyze the role of Proportional Representation (PR) in the Bangladeshi election system and its effects on the sustainability of democracy. The form of the study that will best address this project is a narrative review since the problem of electoral reform in Bangladesh has political, legal, and institutional aspects that can only be interpreted contextually, but not statistically. This research is qualitative and aims at synthesizing existing knowledge and debates, and not creating some new empirical data.

The study is grounded on purely secondary sources. These consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy reports issued by international bodies, documents and reform proposals issued by civil society organizations in Bangladesh and official statements with regards to electoral governance in Bangladesh. Moreover, the recent events and the political reaction to the offered electoral reforms were reflected by reports and analytical articles published by credible national and international media. Contemporary and foundational sources were incorporated to make sure that there is theoretical depth and contextual relevance.

Literature was searched by key words as electoral systems, proportional representation, democratic sustainability, electoral reform in Bangladesh, and comparative electoral practices. Academic databases, institutional websites and reputable online platforms were accessed. More focus was given to the recent publications to capture the recent realities of politics and institutions whereas classic works on electoral theory were also included to offer conceptual framework.

The literature gathered was analyzed and reviewed thematically. The focus was on such issues as vote-seat disproportionality in the current system of the First-Past-The-Post, inclusiveness of political representation, the role of women and minority groups, political stability, efficiency of governance, and constitutional and administrative limitations. Other countries experience in the use of PR or hybrid electoral systems were studied to make comparisons that would be used to provide lessons that can be applicable in the Bangladeshi context. The purpose of the analysis was to find out the common arguments, points of consensus, disagreement, and gaps in the current discourse.

As this paper is based entirely on secondary sources that can be found in the open, the current research does not imply human participants and, therefore, does not need to be ethical. A reference list was used to cite all sources in order to ensure academic integrity. Although the narrative review approach enables a versatile and thorough analysis, it is limited by such factors as its possible interpretation bias and lack of primary empirical evidence. Nevertheless, these shortcomings notwithstanding, the methodology gives a general and situational insight into PR as a possible change element and lays the groundwork of the subsequent empirical and policy-based study on democratic sustainability in Bangladesh.

4. PR System in Different Countries

Various electoral systems are practiced worldwide. Currently, many countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa have adopted PR systems at the national level. As of 87 countries use PR systems to elect their national legislatures. Out of 43 European countries, 40 implement some form of PR for parliamentary elections (Palese 2018). Interest in PR system has been growing globally. For instance, New Zealand, which previously used a majoritarian WTA (Winner-Takes-All) system, has transitioned to PR system. Several developing nations like Sri Lanka and Nepal are also adopting PR systems. Even in the United Kingdom, a shift from WTA to PR is evident in the formation of devolved legislatures such as the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, and Northern Ireland Assembly, all of which are established through PR systems (Douglas 2016). Hence, PR is becoming increasingly popular in the 21st century (Islam 2016). Despite progress in democratization over the past two decades, most Asian countries still adhere to majoritarian democratic systems, particularly the FPTP system. However, some Asian countries have started to reform their electoral systems to achieve more genuine democratic governance (Islam 2026). Among 48 Asian countries, about 12 use PR systems for national elections (IDEA 2021). In South Asia, although all countries claim to be democratic, in practice, they often only fulfill the procedural aspect of holding elections (Himal 2014). Substantive democracy remains elusive. Most South Asian countries still

depend on FPTP systems. Nevertheless, there is a growing consensus among citizens and political parties on the need for electoral reforms, with PR being seen as a viable alternative (Hill et al. 1987).

Case Study:

India

India has a bicameral congress conforming of the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and the Rajya Sabha (Upper House). The Lok Sabha comprises 545 seats, of which 543 are directly tagged from single-member constituencies using the FPTP system. The Rajya Sabha can have up to 250 members, 238 of whom are laterally tagged by state houses (Election Commission of India 2020). The results of the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections have highlighted the major limitations of the FPTP system in a country with a vast and diverse voter base. This has led to increasing calls from political parties and civil society to reform the FPTP model. PR is viewed as a potentially more effective alternative (Misra 2018).

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a bicameral National Assembly, composed of the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders) and the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People). The Wolesi Jirga comprises 249 members tagged through the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) system. This method does not allow political parties to consolidate their positions effectively. A proportional representation system, particularly a closed-list variant, may better promote party development and ethnic balance (Ghadiri 2010).

Nepal

Nepal's unicameral Constituent Assembly consists of 601 members. Of these, 240 are directly elected, 335 are chosen from party lists under a PR system, and 26 are nominated by the interim government. The PR list requires that at least 50% of candidates be women and also includes quotas for indigenous groups, Madhesis, Dalits, backward regions, and other minorities (Election Commission of Nepal 2020).

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's congress has 225 members, with 196 tagged from 22 multi-member sections and 29 named from a public list. The country follows an open-list PR system, allowing choosers to elect up to three preferred candidates. However, alternate-preference votes are redistributed, making it a two-step voting process (Election Commission of Sri Lanka 2019). If no seeker secures a maturity.

Other South Asian Countries

Other South Asian countries—such as Pakistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and the Maldives—still rely on the FPTP electoral system. However, growing awareness and civil discourse about electoral reform suggest that PR could offer a more equitable alternative for these nations in the future (Ghadiri 2010).

Regional Overview of PR Usage

- *Europe: 40 countries (approx. 65%)*
 - *Asia: 12 countries (approx. 19%)*
 - *Africa: 10 countries (approx. 16%)*
- (Source: Palese, 2018; IDEA, 2021)*

5. Overview of PR Systems in Bangladesh

Following the establishment of Citizens for Good Governance (SUJAN), Bangladesh established an Electoral Reform Commission on October 3, 2024. Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar was in charge of the commission. Its key activities were to revise national voter list, enhance independence and the powers of the Election Commission and propose improvements to existing system of elections. Among its main suggestions was to have a Proportional Representation (PR) system and a two-house (bi-chamber) parliament. The commission was to produce its final report to the Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus by January 2025. The suggestion to have a PR system has sparked its interest in that it would enhance democracy in Bangladesh. Advocates believe that PR would enable smaller political parties to have a fair representation, decrease the hegemony of just one political party and decrease political tension following elections. Transparency International Bangladesh is of the opinion that PR would enable it to have fair and transparent elections and avoid undue power control by a single party. Another point made by SUJAN is that PR would bring more women and minorities into the parliament. They facilitate other reforms, which include the separation of powers by having two chambers of the parliament, imposing term limits on the head of the executive, and making the required changes to the constitution.

The proposal is highly opposed even though it has these possible advantages. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has not agreed to full and partial adoption of PR; it was probably because the existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) system favors major parties in the acquisition of seats. Other members of the reform commission have also expressed that PR might not make it to the final report as it will need constitutional amendments which is beyond the authority of the commission. Large reforms have historically been fought against by major political parties who tend to allege that the reform may be detrimental in terms of political stability or even slowing down the national development. The other criticisms are that PR may undermine the central government power, slow the decision-making process and make the leadership less effective.

SUJAN has proposed to solve these concerns by adopting a mixed system that has a two-chamber parliament. In this model, a house would be elected using the current FPTP system and the other would be elected using PR. The goal of this strategy is the stabilization of politics and the increased equality of political representation and sharing of power with other groups. Bangladesh is in the present day utilizing FPTP system in both national and local elections. In this kind of system, the winner goes on to get the most votes even when the majority is not achieved. This usually gives rise to unjust outcomes. As an example, during the 2018 national election, the Awami League received approximately 47.5% of the votes but received 87.3% of parliament seats. At the

same time, the BNP along with other parties got over 50 percent of the votes but attained few seats. These results are not indicative of the actual preferences of voters, and they bring up the issue of democratic fairness. Due to these problems, a good number of analysts feel that Bangladesh should have electoral reform. The experience of other countries indicates that PR systems are capable of being more representative of political diversity and opinion of the population. Nevertheless, PR introduction in Bangladesh would have to be planned, revised into constitution and agreed upon politically. Consequently, scholars propose a step-by-step intervention, including the need to test PR in smaller regions, implement it partially, or even experiment with a bicameral system before everything is implemented.

6. Justifications for the PR System in Bangladesh

PR system can ensure balance between votes and seats, meaning a party gets seats in proportion to the percentage of votes it receives. It can provide adequate representation for smaller parties, minorities, and diverse groups. PR system promotes political diversity and ensures that every vote counts.

First- Avoid the Misuse of Vote

The proposal of fixing the electoral system, in particular, the proposal of changing the First Past the Post (FPTP) system needs further discussion and analysis. The future research on the pros and cons of various electoral systems, including Proportional Representation (PR), is required in the atmosphere of Bangladesh political geography, in order that the informed decision can be made regarding the acceptance of different reforms. It is not always the case that electoral system change will result in improvement, but instead another avenue of more undemocratic behaviors will be opened. In our country, significant pressure arises both ahead and after choices — colorful attempts at manipulation and influence are frequently seen, especially under the “Winner Takes All” (WTA) system. In this system, there's a repeated tendency to misuse the voting process in colorful ways. still, under the PR system, there's no direct link between original voting results and the election of original leaders to parties. As a result, original politicians would not have the same violent interest in original vote issues as ahead. This can reduce the pressure for vote apparel and electoral fraud and dwindle the significance of muscle power and fiscal influence. choices under the PR system are likely to calculate less on violence (Lijphart 1985). Also, this system significantly reduces the compass and incitement for redrawing constituency boundaries (Daily Star 2014).

Second- Representations of all National Stakeholders

Women's representation in politics in Bangladesh is extremely slow and limited. In moment's world, women's political participation is essential not only for popular development but also for women's commission. Critics argue that the weakness in women's political participation is due to colorful reasons, similar as family and childcare liabilities, negative stations and demarcation by political parties, conservative religious and artistic morals, unstable socio- profitable conditions, the electoral system, type of governance, and fiscal constraints (Rule and Joseph 1994). In the lately held 11th public election, only 22 women were directly tagged out of 299 seats. This means that women's direct representation in congress is lower than 8 — not indeed reaching double integers. Including the 50 reserved seats, the total chance of womanish members in congress stands at 20.3 (Dhaka Tribune 2019). The PR system can insure further indifferent representation for women. nonstop exploration since themid-1980s shows that further women are generally tagged under the party list PR system compared to the majoritarian system (Norris 1985; Matland 1998; Reynolds 1999; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Siaroff 2000; 2001). This trend is observed not only in established republic but also in developing countries. In the commensurable system, ‘quarter magnitude’ — i.e., the number of seats in a single electoral quarter — is an important factor; the use of largemulti-member constituencies increases the liability of taking further women (Norris 2006). The PR system increases women's chances of entering congress. At the same time, it challenges the dominance of large political parties, thereby supporting popular pluralism. Studies have shown that in countries where PR systems are enforced, women are tagged at a rate three times advanced than under FPTP systems.

Third- Avoiding Blame-Game

The FPTP electoral system allows expansive openings for manipulation to secure palm. Under this system, election results frequently fail to gain public acceptance. The losing party constantly accuses the winning party and boycotts. In the 2018 public election, Dr. Kamal Hossain, president of the Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF), stated, “There has been vote thievery across the country. He further declared, “We reject the results of this farcical election and demand a new election under anon-partisan government” (VOA 2019). This system allows colorful forms of abuse in the voting process. On the other hand, the PR system creates a direct connection between original vote issues and administrative representation. As a result, original political leaders' particular interests in original voting dwindle. also, with reduced pressure for vote manipulation, the significance of muscle power and plutocrat also decreases (The Daily Star 2014). thus, choices under the PR system are more likely to be free, fair, and respectable, with results that are more readily accepted by both the winning and losing parties.

Fourth- Encourage Good Works Rather Purchasing Leader

In a popular system, the part of Members of Parliament is largely significant. Unfortunately, political parties presently prioritize plutocrat and muscle power in seeker nominations. Retired civil and military functionaries are given preference, while good, devoted grassroots leaders are frequently sidelined. Due to the FPTP system, unqualified and unhappy campaigners are constantly nominated and get tagged. As a result, the size of congress is adding, but its effectiveness is deteriorating. Likewise, the majoritarian FPTP system favors unskillful fat elites who help the institutionalization of popular responsibility in Bangladesh. The PR system increases the possibility of nominating and taking better and further good campaigners. In this system, people bounce for a specific party list. Accordingly, political parties are impelled to include nationally honored and competent individualities in their lists. In this way, the PR system can encourage the involvement of high- quality individualities in politics (The Daily Star 2014). The PR system, a seeker does not bear an absolute maturity to be tagged. rather, a specific share must be fulfilled, which is determined by a legal formula (Know Your Council 2020).

Fifth- Avoid Dependency on Other Parties

Since the fall of the Ershad- led autocratic governance in December 1990 and the restoration of republic, no political party in Bangladesh has been suitable to form a government on its own. Accordingly, major political parties began to calculate on lower or nominal parties, leading to the emergence of coalition politics (The Daily Star 2018). At present, the tendency to form coalitions among political parties has increased, getting part of our popular culture. Over time, politics in Bangladesh has come confined to two main alliances — the 14- party Grand Alliance led by the Awami League (including the Jatiya Party) and the 20- party alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Under the being FPTP system, utmost small parties come part of one of these two alliances. Large parties include lower parties in their coalitions before choices to strengthen their position in congress. These parties attempt to attract choosers by showcasing the number of small parties in their alliance, anyhow of those parties' enrollment status or the effectiveness of their leaders and activists (bdnews24.com 2018). On the other hand, indeed though a many small parties in the coalition may win administrative seats, utmost small parties admit veritably many votes. As a result, without forming alliances with large parties, small parties cannot come part of power. Under the PR system, vote probabilities are directly reflected in seat allocation, which helps avoid misleading and illegal results common under the FPTP system. The seat perk for large parties decreases, and small parties also get a chance to state their opinions in congress. By espousing PR, free and fair competition among all parties becomes possible. sympathizers of small parties frequently have to choose between voting for a likely losing seeker or the lower of two immoralities among the major parties or they come reticent to bounce at all. In short, single- member quarter choices are poisoned against small parties and unfairly cover large parties from competition (Douglas 2016).

7. Challenges of Proportional Representation (PR) in Bangladesh

Despite the fact that Proportional Representation (PR) systems have been touted as being more electorally fair and inclusive, their complete application in Bangladesh has become a major concern due to the political and social peculiarities of the country. Opponents caution that, notwithstanding the advantages of this theory, PR may have unintended consequences that may derail a delicate democracy in Bangladesh. The challenges might be observed politically, institutionally, and socio-culturally. This is one of the problems because the ruling party particularly the Awami League may be benefiting or even enhancing its grip of power with party-list benefits. A PR system can allow strong parties that are resource endowed to be awarded parliament seats in proportion to their vote, without necessarily having to win each individual constituency which may actually entrench the already existing power structures in the guise of democracy but not broadening it.

The second issue is that the parties that have their ideologies considered to be controversial in Bangladesh, namely those that advocate the rights of LGBTQ+ or other progressive values that do not fit the local traditions, might obtain parliamentary representation via PR. In a traditional society, this can trigger a social outrage, divide the policies, and interfere with national unity. PR systems tend frequently to give parliaments which lack an apparent majority and thus have to be coalition governments. A coalition government can be volatile in Bangladesh where the political consensus is poor and the parties are highly divided. The experience of such countries as Italy and Greece demonstrates that the constant fall of the government under PR may hamper the continuity of policies and their economic progress.

PR may undermine direct responsibility since it does not entail voter-representative connections. In Bangladesh, where local development and representation by issue are relevant, this can minimize accountability, where elected members may be more driven by the party interests, adverse to the public interests, and therefore, the political system cannot be trusted. Under PR, small parties can achieve disproportionate power and even form their own coalition administrations against their voter numbers. Although this is likely to provide a voice to minority, it will also allow smaller groups to negotiate, something that is not within their mandate, making it hard to govern and slowing down changes.

PR can motivate parties in accordance with ethnic, religious, regional, or other identity groups. This may further lead to communal polarization, political fragmentation and jeopardization of national unity in a sensitive and diverse society such as that of Bangladesh. Voters may feel disconnected by the PR voting in which citizens do not vote directly on the candidates but on the parties. This would eventually diminish the political participation and instill a feeling that the MPs are not answerable to the voters but only to the party leaders. The coalition governments formed by PR have a tendency of having ideologically different parties and this can give rise to stalemates in policy making. In the case of Bangladesh where long-term development strategies play a vital role, this may make the reforms in education, infrastructure, and the economy stagnate.

The PR systems are also complicated to use technologically relying on rules such as D'Hondt or Sainte-Lague to distribute seats. Since Bangladesh has a poor electoral infrastructure, this complexity may slow down results, be more expensive and risky of errors or manipulation. Lastly, PR can interfere with development locally since MPs represent no particular territories. This may make their attention less centered on local needs, particularly in the rural and less developed areas where parliamentary advocacy and patronization are the major paradigms of acquiring resources and development initiatives.

8. Discussions

A number of conversations have been held then regarding the forthcoming election, where colorful individualities and groups are expressing different opinions. Although commensurable representation (PR) has been batted for decades, lower parties have lately started to gradationally consolidate their demands. Over time, political parties, and conceivably indeed the state ministry, are starting to push this idea forward (Ahmed, 2024). As part of the ongoing reform docket of the interim government, the call for a commensurable electoral system has resurfaced. But what does a commensurable electoral system mean? How does it differ from Bangladesh's traditional electoral system? While some parties, similar as Jamaat-e-Islami, the Communist Party of Bangladesh, and the Gono Odhikar Parishad, want to introduce a commensurable election system as soon as possible, major parties like the BNP are opposing it. According to the World Population Review, 93 countries around the world have different forms of this electoral system. Contrivers of electoral systems have developed colorful ways to achieve commensurable representation, and below are three introductory types of PR described party- list, mixed- member, and single transmittable vote (also called preferential voting).

Further than 80 of commensurable representation systems worldwide are party- list voting systems, making them the most common form. lately normalized countries like South Africa and numerous European republics have extensively espoused this system. In the party- list system, each party submits a list of campaigners equal to the number of seats to be tagged, which are chosen from large, multi-member sections. Independent campaigners are listed independently on the ballot and are eligible to dispute. On the ballot, choosers elect the party they support, and seats are allocated grounded on the chance of votes each party receives (Balinski and Rida 2011). There are two main types of list systems closed list and open list. In a unrestricted list system, choosers bounce for a party, and the party determines the order in which campaigners are tagged, meaning choosers cannot choose individual campaigners. In discrepancy, an open list system allows choosers to express a preference for both a party and specific campaigners within that party, furnishing lesser name influence in seeker selection.

Mixed- member commensurable representation is also known by several other names, including fresh member system, compensatory PR system, two- vote system, and the German system (Blackburn 1995). It's an attempt to combine a commensurable voting system with a single- member quarter system. In single- member quarter plurality choices, half of the members of the council are tagged (Ghadiri, 2010). To insure each party has the applicable number of seats in the council, the other half are tagged through party- list votes and joined with the quarter members. Proponents argue that mixed- member commensurable voting combines the fairness and diversity of PR voting with the geographic representation and strong electoral ties of single- member plurality voting, making it the stylish of both worlds (Hill et al. 1987). This system was firstly developed in West Germany shortly after World War II, and has ago been espoused in several other countries including Bolivia and Venezuela. It remains one of the least- used PR systems, but in recent times, it has begun to attract a lot of attention.

Worldwide, the single transmittable vote is known by numerous names. In the United States, it's called preferential voting; in Australia, it's appertained to as the Hare- Clark system; and political scientists call it the single transmittable vote. This system uses a vote- transferring process. A simple analogy may be the easiest way to understand how the transfer process works. Imagine a academy class trying to handpick a commission. Any pupil who wants to be a seeker stands in front of the class, and other scholars cast their votes by standing beside their favored campaigners. scholars standing alone beside a seeker snappily realize that this person has no chance of winning, so they move to stand beside another favored seeker to help them win (Larry et al. 2015). Some scholars standing beside a veritably popular seeker might realize that the person formerly has enough support to win, and decide to stand beside another pupil they had also like to see on the commission (Lakeman and James 1959). ultimately, after all these shifts, utmost scholars will be standing beside the tagged campaigners — this is the final stage of the process (Krook 2009).

Bangladesh uses the first- history- the- post (FPTP) system for choices. The winning seeker in a administrative seat is the one who gets the most votes in that constituency. The government is formed by a coalition or the political party that secures the most seats in parliament (Jahan and Amundsen 2012). However, the current political structure of the country could ameliorate, If the FPTP system is incompletely or completely replaced by a commensurable representation system. As a result, peaceful choices and freer, fairer, and more believable representation of choosers in congress through their tagged representatives would come possible.

A major review of the FPTP system is its failure to represent a significant portion of choosers. For illustration, in Bangladesh's 2001 election, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) entered 40.97 of the votes but won 190 out of 300 seats, while the Awami League entered 40.13 of the vote but won only 62 seats. In the PR system, if four parties contest 300 seats and Party A gets 50 of the votes, it'll get 150 seats; if Party B gets 30, it'll get 90 seats, and Parties C and D will each admit 30 seats if they get 10 of the votes each. In this system, indeed parties with minimum support can gain representation. In case of a member's death, the concerned party can fill the vacancy from its original seeker list or appoint a new representative, barring the need for by- choices and reducing costs.

To ensure acceptable representation of women, parties may be needed to submit two seeker lists a general list and a reticent list for women. However, parties must include two women for every ten campaigners, if 10 of seats are reserved for women. For illustration, a party proposing 300 campaigners would nominate 60 women, performing in 60 women MPs without demanding separate choices, thereby simplifying the electoral process. Still, the provision for independent campaigners may be abolished, If the PR system is introduced. Under the current FPTP system, a strong seeker might address several fake or ersatz independent campaigners to gather polling agents and control polling centers. Independent campaigners in a constituency may resort to colorful irregularities to win at any cost, anyhow of namer support. In the PR system, no one can do this across multiple seats. preliminarily, according to the indigenious provision, one could dispute in 300 constituencies. also, in 1984, through an correction to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) 1972, this was limited to five seats. In 2008, the RPO was farther amended to allow contests in only three constituencies. There was no logical base for this.

Still, common practices similar as bribery, violence outside and around polling stations, if such a system (PR) is enforced. The burden of maintaining contact with 300 choosers will also be excluded. Another significant advantage of this system is that the difficulty of submitting original nominations across the country will be greatly reduced (Mesfin 2008; Michela 2018). Nominations would be accepted in the capital, Dhaka — either online or in person. Every name would have a representative in congress. currently, a party can form the government with only 25 of the total votes. This noway happens under the PR system. Still, it must amend its constitution (National Democratic Institute 2006), If Bangladesh wishes to conduct choices under the PR system. still, since there's presently no congress, if this change is enforced by bypassing the constitution, numerous will raise enterprises. For the PR system to succeed, the support of at least the major parties if not all is necessary. However, the electoral process will ameliorate to some extent, If an agreement is reached and the PR system is enforced. Although this system is being blamed in colorful ways. However, also, If major parties snappily publish their list of MPs.

Practical Results Championing for an Electoral System

A many days ago Army Chief General Waker- Uz- Zaman stated that, as part of ongoing reforms, the country should transition to republic within 18 months. Meanwhile, Chief Advisor Dr. Yunus mentioned in New York last Tuesday (Wednesday in Bangladesh) that the government will bandy the recommendations entered from colorful commissions with political parties. An election date will be blazoned formerly agreement is reached on reforms and the namer list is perfected. numerous believe this implies it's unclear whether the perpetration of the recommendations will do before or after the election. They argue that enforcing

some abecedarian reforms would bear indigenous emendations. For case, introducing the PR (Commensurable Representation) system in choices also demands indigenous modification. This raises the question Is it possible to amend the constitution without the National Parliament? If not, also the PR system is doubtful to be introduced in the forthcoming election. Indigenous expert Dr. Shahdeen Malik told Kaler Kantho. Still, it can be enforced indeed after the forthcoming election, “If political parties agree to the recommendation of introducing the PR system. It could originally be tested in a limited number of constituencies and gradationally expanded to cover all seats. again, there are differing views. Professor Dr. Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, head of the election covering association JANIPOP, told Kaler Kantho “To ensure fair choices in the country, we must move toward the PR system. The coming public election should follow this model. I believe it's possible to amend the constitution before the election under the action of the current interim government.” Due to limitations in both FPTP (First- Past- The- Post) and PR (Commensurable Representation) systems when used singly, a Mixed Electoral Model which combines rudiments of both — can be considered a more effective and realistic volition in the environment of Bangladesh. Such a system would help insure representative justice, good governance, and responsibility.

Adoption of the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) System

In this system, a portion of Members of Parliament (for example, 60–70%) would be elected from constituencies using the FPTP method, while the remaining 30–40% of seats would be allocated based on the national vote share through party lists. This approach ensures representation of smaller political parties and marginalized communities and finally aids in forming stable governments through party discipline

Vote Threshold for PR Seats with Phased Experimental Implementation

In order to eliminate political fragmentation, minimum threshold (e.g., 5 percent) can be instituted on the eligibility of PR seats. This would assist in isolating the extremist or fringe parties out of the parliament hence ensuring the integrity of the parliament. The threshold in Bangladesh can ensure that major parties do not make government by the assistance of small or one-man parties and will become authoritarian. In order to determine the effectiveness of this mixed system, it can be tested during the selected districts or local government elections. The lessons learned during these trials can avert its application in the national level in the future.

Legal and Constitutional Reforms and Strengthening Political Institutions

In order to ensure an efficient electoral system, it is necessary to have some legal security measures such as: Anti-defection laws, Clear procedures regarding the formation of coalition, Institutional provisions to discourage political blackmail by minor parties. Moreover, there must be an attempt to develop the ability of political parties and MPs to govern the coalition, negotiating policies and democratic dialogue. This plays a crucial role in the success of mixed system. Lastly, the citizens have to be educated on how this new system works and on the effects of their votes on the representation. The legitimacy and the sustainability of electoral changes rely on the public knowledge and political literacy.

9. Conclusions

Bangladesh requires a significant electoral reform to have a more efficient political representation and proper democracy and governance. An overview of elections systems especially the Proportional Representation (PR) indicates that it has a tremendous potential in reinforcing democratic governance. The reason behind this is that it provides equitable representation to different political parties and minorities. Research and articles indicate that PR systems are more representative of the voters and hence more stable (Amy 2014; Lijphart 1985; Islam 2016) because they are more effective than majority-based systems. The PR system can also support the representation in parliament in the context of Bangladesh, particularly enhancing the representation of women and smaller political parties, as the political pluralism and coalition-building are critical in that situation (Dhaka Tribune 2019; Nahar 2017; The Daily Star 2018). Implementation of PR system has problems, however, there are challenges (Moniruzzaman 2009). These involve complicated vote-counting techniques, such as the Single Transferable Vote (Hill et al. 1987; Meek 1994) and the danger of political fragmentation, which requires a compromise between a single government and representative representation. It has been shown in different nations that the electoral reforms should be consistent with the country-specific setting, which means that it has to be harmonized with the political culture and the organization of institutions (Boix 1999). Consequently, based on the experience of the majoritarian electoral system that the country had over the last 50 years, it would be reasonable to assume that the system was not able to bring the quality of democracy that the nation had expected. Thus, there is a strong need to consider an alternative electoral system. The Proportional Representation (PR) system appears to offer a more acceptable option because the system has not only proved to be stable, productive and the most preferred system in most western consolidated democracies but it is also gaining popularity in other non-western young democracies. Nonetheless, any switch to, all parties should have a prudent and participatory discussion. The objective of such reform should be the promotion of trust, accountability and sustainable democratic development. On the whole, the conducted analyses have shown that the character of the electoral system has a profound impact on political processes, and a properly designed and situationally-sensitive implementation of PR system can considerably increase the resilience of the democracies and fairness of political representation.

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