Political Culture of Japan : Relevance for Bangladesh

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History is in the making in Japan. The landslide victory of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the Lower House Election held on August 30, 2009 has brought about a remarkable change in the conservative political culture of Japan. Japan's democracy was characterized by one party dominance. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), a right wing conservative party ruled Japan for about six decades since its inception in 1955 with eleven months interval in 1993. Support towards liberal progressive politics by majority Japanese voters indicates a major shift in political culture of Japan.

The idea of political culture is as old as Plato and Aristotle. Political philosophers like Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Max Weber all were aware of the importance of religio-politico-cultural values, customs and traditions, public opinion, beliefs, sentiment and attitudes. However, the concept political culture was implicit in their writings. The term political culture was first used by Gabriel A. Almond in his article "Comparative Political Systems", *Journal of Politics*, Volume 18 (1956). Intimately linked with "behavioral revolution", "political culture entered the lexicon of political science in the late 1950s and early 1960s[1] Almond's development of the concept of civic culture as the best form of political culture resembles Aristotle's mixed government as the best attainable form of government represented predominantly by the middle class, but oligarch, rich, well-born and the poor also represented. The book *Civic Culture Revisited* written by Almond and Verba was a significant contribution[2] to the literature of political culture. But the most important contribution was The *Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in the Five Nations* by G. A. Almond and Sydney Verba. Almond argues that every political system represents a corresponding political culture. By political culture he means attitudes and orientation of citizens towards authority and their beliefs, values and feelings for the political system as a whole. It also includes the orientation of "self" as an actor in the political system. Political culture is the result of political socialization process by which a citizen's attitudes towards authority, his political ideas and beliefs are inducted in his mind as he grows from childhood to adulthood. Almond and Verba in their classic book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1963) de-

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1   Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky, "Political Culture", *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, vol. 1, p.507.

2   For details of three phases of political culture study, see, Larry Diamond (ed.) *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries* (Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., U.S.A., 1994), pp. ix–xii.

veloped a model of political culture which included three sub-types: parochial, subject, and participant[3]. They argue that a particular mixture of these political culture which they call mixed political culture or civic culture is the basis of developed democratic system of the United States and the United Kingdom.

Political Culture of Japan

The Japanese Voter (1991)— the book written by Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kohei, Ichiro Miyake, Bradly M. Richardson and Joji Watanuki is the first comprehensive study of voting behavior and political culture written in English. This excellent study identified some factors for example, "relative absence of economic voting, the weak role of the media, the continuing importance of cultural values, the enormous stability in voting patterns, and the effects of the unusual Japanese electoral system,"[4] which are embedded in Japanese political culture.

Categorization of Japanese Political Culture

If we categorize political culture broadly, Japan has *hoshu-kakushim* similar to the meaning of left-right (progressive-conservative) ideology in the western sense of the term. Support for pre-war regime and rearmament of Japan were the salient features of *hoshu* and *kakushim* characterized by the support for an anti-prewar regime and opposition to the rearmament of Japan. However the old concept of *hosu-kakushim* has changed since 1970s. "According to Kabashima and Takenaka, *hoshu* meant support for small governments, market economy, and economic development. On the other hand, *kakushim* meant support for big government, equality, and participation."[5] Another Japanese scholar Hirano conducted a survey and found that there were "still safety assurances, participation and equality and neo-conservatism axes in the ideology structure of Japanese voters."[6] Japanese political culture, however, has three orientations—1) developmental orientation, 2) the principles of co-existence, and 3) holistic philosophy. Uniform or strict categorization of political culture may not be possible or applicable to all circumstances. However, if we want to fit Japanese political culture into Almond and Verba's three-fold classification (the parochial-subject culture, the subject-participant culture, and parochial-participant culture), Japan's political culture seems closer to subject-participant political culture.[7] However, three trends of political culture are prevalent in the Japanese society:

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3   For categorization of political culture, see, G. A. Almond and Sidney Verba (eds.) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 17–27.

4   Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kohei, Ichiro Miyake, Bradley M. Richardson and Joji Watanuki (eds.), *The Japanese Voters* (Yale University Press, New haven and London, 1991), p. coverpage.

5   Miho Nakatani, *New Political Culture with Comparative Perspective*, Studied independently Meijigakuin University, Japan, p. 4.

6   Hirano Hiroshi, 2005, "Nihon ni okeru seisaku sōten ni kansuru yūkensha ishiki to sono henyo," in Kobayashi, Y. (ed.) *Nihon ni okeru yūkensha ishiki no dotai*, Tokyo: Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, pp. 61–80. (Quoted from Nakatani Miho, "New Political Culture with Comparative Perspective" Meijigakuin University, Japan.)

7   See, *The Civic Culture*, pp. 23–26.

1. Authoritarian-conservative:

One trend is authoritarian-conservative, which lacks much political knowledge. Elderly people with prewar mentality, less educated rural people and women are mostly represented by this category. Age is an important factor in Japanese mass political behavior. Despite the introduction of democratic type of constitution after the World War II and granting of freedom of thought and expression and political rights, these elderly people are very much emotionally attached to the prewar traditional values and Emperor. "As a result of their value preference, older tended to support the preservation of prewar values." Statistics showed that 81 percent of voters aged 60 and over supported the conservatives, while the support of age group between 50 to 59 was 75 percent in the elections of 1955.[8] The support of age group 60 and over in 1958 election was 77 percent. The age group 50 to 59 extended their 70 percent support to the conservatives in the same elections.[9] Gradual erosion of conservative votes since 1955 was noticeable. Votes received by LDP in 1993 were as low as 36.6 percent. Inclusion of new voters in the voters list possibly explains the cause of this decline.

Although ambivalence and negativism are the central theme in the political behavior of the Japanese in general, these characteristics and 'do not know' category are much higher among authoritarian conservative type. They proved their ignorance specially on policy issues, although with the wave of industrialization and modernization the degree of 'do not know' category is on the decrease.

As these people are politically indifferent mainly because of the lack of political knowledge, they tend to follow the group decision and suggestions of the local bosses. The high rate of voters' turn out among them is remarkable.[10] Many are of opinion that these people think voting as a duty, rather than political right.

2. Centrist-progressive Political Culture:

Confrontation between conservative and progressive ideologies generated another variety of political culture. Middle aged people are motivated and activated largely by these conflicting ideas. Political involvement and participation is high among these voters. These people are the most mobilized and active during the election.

Anti-feudalism, anti-militarism, and revised Constitution of 1947 containing democratic ideals created the atmosphere for the growth of many organizations and movements for farmers, labors and women in the post war Japan. With it emerged an anti-conservative and anti-American forces backed by the group of journalists, intellectuals and followers of socialist parties. They wanted to abrogate the Security Treaty with the United States and see Japan as unarmed neutral state as written in Article 9 of the Constitution. Leftist challenges to the conservative "paradise" also stimulated students' movements

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8　Jōji Watanuki, "Social Structure and Voting Behavior" in Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kōchi, Ichirō Miyake, Bradley M. Richardson and Jōji Watwnuki (eds.), *The Japanese Voters* (Yale Unversity Press, New Haven, 1991), p. 57.

9　See, ibid., pp. 58–59.

10　"The 1955 System in Japan and Its Subsequent Development", *Asian Survey*, vol. XXV111, No. 3, March 1988, p. 297.

and a number of consumer movements such as environment movement, consumer movement and the like. But unarmed neutrality, non-acceptance of Self Defense Forces, abrogation of Security Treaty and socialistic economic model raised some confusion and demanded clarification to meet the realities in the then Japan. The progressive force failed to give answers to those quarries and faced the decline of support.

On the other hand, with the election held in 1946 the smaller parties vanished from the scene and the conservative forces amalgamated to form the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1955. LDP ruled Japan for about six decades with only one exception in 1993 when it formed coalition government with Socialist Party and two other small parties. However the LDP government was confronted with two problems- security and economic development. The government was quick to adopt pragmatic measures by renewing the Security Treaty and implementing state aided capitalist system as a model for economic development. Economic miracle and political stability through 'pork barrel' distributive politics paved the way for the LDP to lead the country in a conservative direction linking politics and economy together. The predominant position of the LDP created the imbalance in representation in the Diet. The progressive forces and conservative elements were still divided on the issue of defense, Self Defense Forces and diplomacy. Failing to exert their influence in the Diet, the progressive forces "took to political activities outside the parliamentary hall with the help of journalist."[11] At this point there was mass demonstration and media, leftist intellectuals and writers showed their sympathy to this progressive politics.

However, economic prosperity, political stability and group oriented culture prevented progressive politics having much success. Furthermore, because of their consensus politics, both progressive and conservative did not want to wreck the parliamentary politics. "Therefore, conservative political forces have sought to reincorporate the leftist into the parliamentary arena, while the leftist camp, which has many legislators who come to form labor unions, also sought to work together with the conservatives in order to provide constituency service."[12] From that time onward political culture of Japan has been on 'calculation' of how to gain 'economic pie' from government appropriation. The politics of Japan looked like convergence although the progressive forces mainly the socialists until 1994 were still able to maintain the consistent opposition to conservative attempt to amend the Constitution to enable Japan to be rearmed, to curtail over emphasized trend of individualism and the like.

The failure to radicalize politics by offering a pragmatic acceptable alternative solution to those problems and of course the collapse of socialist ideology globally threw a death blow to the progressive politics in Japan. Adding to that, a socialist leader Tomiichi Murayama, by accepting the offer to become Prime Minister, led coalition government in 1993 and finally invited the miserable death of his party. Just for the sake of power, he turned about 180 degrees by sacrificing his lifelong socialist principles to

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11 Jun'ichi Kyōgoku, *The Political Dynamocs of Japan*, (University of Tokyo Press, 1987), p.23.

12 Ibid., p. 24.

compromise with the LDP's conservative ideals. Just before the Lower House election held in October 20, 1996, Takako Doi who had been the President of the party from 1986 to 1991, was invited to regain the image of the party. But the damage that had already been done was so deep that the party did fairly bad in the election. It lost half of its pre-election seats, gaining only 15.

However, the whole process of struggle and conflict between conservative and progressive forces was perhaps the most stimulating healthy period from 1960s and early 1980s for political involvement as well as political participation by the Japanese citizens especially by the middle aged people. This was also the golden period for Japan to "catch up" with the West and establish herself as the number two economic superpower only after the United States.

3. New Political Culture (NPC):

Higher education, exposure to politics through media, communication and traveling abroad have created one type of political culture that is prevalent mostly among the young generation. Their attitude towards politics is some how apathetic, they do not want to get involved in politics or to belong to any political party. They are also "free of any social pressure to vote in a particular way."[13] Some of course argue that they also do not know how to make linkage with the "machine politics." It can also be said that it is the failure of the political leadership not being able to fit the young generation into Japanese political arena.

Pessimism in politics of course has its root in social norm in Japan. But high information technology has tremendous influence in creating negative attitude towards politics by exposing information about corruption, selfishness, and money politics of the politicians. High degree of 'do not know' can also be found among them. But unlike the first 'do not know' category, they are not ignorant of policy issues and other aspects of politics. They are quite aware, well informed, politically conscious and have considerable concern over politics. Their apathy and ambivalence arise from the fact that political environment and politicians cannot create much appeal to them. The formation of their mental frame, because of their education, knowledge and rich information, always conflicts with their desire to see the politicians to be clean and selfless. They however do not want any radical or revolutionary change or to be the younger samurai. They feel that the things are not going well, but they are not prepared to work or give much thought to the problems. Moreover the young generation does not have any problem of 'catching up' as their fathers and grand fathers had. They can now easily set aside the less important troublesome issue like politics. Negative feeling about politics is not only inflicted in the minds of the young generation, it is a problem for all well informed Japanese voters, especially in the urban areas. The gradual decreasing scale of voting behavior pattern and disinterest shown by voters in the successive elections until 2005, when LDP prime Minister charismatic Koizumi gave some hope for change and reform, was alarming. But after Koizumi none of the three LDP Prime Ministers (Sanju Abe, Fukuda and Tarō Asō) had ability and charisma to offer the Japanese citizens something new and better than

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13   *Asian Survey*, op. cit., p. 297.

the 'status quo'. Voters turn out in the election of August 30, 2009 was quite satisfactory. They wanted a real change by giving DPJ a chance to offer the country a new kind of political culture different from LDP's age old traditional, conservative, clientelist and centralized politics.

It is interesting to note that almost one quarter of people of Japan belong to NPC category. "NPC features are pervasive among young, educated, affluent, and professional workers."[14] These people are usually involved in the movements for referendum and citizen movements and try to distance themselves from political parties. Their organizations are horizontal as against the hierarchical structure of unions and parties. As a result NPC type people are more independent and have more choices. Their policy preference is to support decentralization and oppose clientelism. A study conducted by Nator discovers that almost one quarter of city mayors belong to the category of NPC. Although the scholars have identified seven characteristics of NPC, "the two main factors that distinguish NPC from old political culture are fiscal conservatism and social liberalism in policy preferences.

Miho Nakatani, Meijigakuin University did an excellent survey on *New Political Culture with Comparative Perspective*. He categorized Japanese citizens into four types: conservative, clientelism, Liberal and New Political Culture type and tried to show how sex, age, education, income and professions were significantly related to those four types of citizens in their attitudes towards political culture. According to the result of his recent survey, almost 40% of age group 20–29 and 29–39 belongs to NPC-type citizens. Around 40% of 20–29 and 30% of 30–39 and 40–49 of age groups are characterized as Liberal. On the contrary, 30% of the 60–69 and 70–79 age groups belong to the category of Conservative and clientelism. In case of education, 36% and 31% of respondents who have under graduate or higher degrees are categorized as NPC and Liberal respectively. On the contrary, 39% and 28% of respondents who have only primary education are categorized as conservative and clientelism, respectively. 42% of people who have 8–10 million yen yearly income are categorized as NPC while 38% of people who have less than 2 million yen yearly income belong to Conservative type. In case of profession, 37% of professionals are categorized as NPC and 32% as Liberal. On the contrary, 35% and 30% of workers in agriculture, forestry, or fisheries fall into the category of clientelism and conservative respectively. So, from this research it is evident that young (age groups 20–39), higher education, higher income and professionals fall under the categories of NPC and Liberal, while elderly people (60–79 age groups), less educated, less income (yearly income less than 2 million), workers are the major characteristics of conservative and clietelism political cultures.[15]

General Election, 2009 and Future Trends of Political Culture of Japan

A General Election for the lower house, The House of Representatives of the Diet, was held on August 30, 2009. The governing party, The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which ruled the country

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14   *The New Political Culture with Comparative Perspective*, op. cit., p. 14.

15   Ibid. pp. 7–10.

since 1955 except for an eleven months period in 1993–1994, was miserably defeated by the opposition The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Out of total 480 seats DPJ won 308 as against only 119 was won by LDP. Vote received by DPJ and LDP was 42.4% and 26.7% respectively. In the last general election of 2005 DPJ managed to win 113 seats receiving 36.44 % of votes while LDP got 296 seats wining 47.77% of votes. In 2009 general election voters turn out was higher compared to the previous elections and popular votes received by DPJ and LDP were 29,784,743 and 18,742,218 respectively.[16] The result was a death blow for LDP but was not unexpected. Pre election public opinion poll conducted by government agencies, mass media, trade organizations and academic researchers predicted the same voting pattern as actually happened in the election. Unbearable distrust for politics, dysfunctional old type traditional politics for long period of time led Japanese voters to try for an alternative system of government which can bring about real change to transform Japan into a country of hope. A former health Minister Koizumi Junichirō who became the leader of LDP in early 2001 and subsequently the Prime Minister, tried to rescue the party and Japan by promising reforms within the party, the government and bureaucracy. Koizumi revitalized the party and the government replacing the old powerful faction leaders by young turks (Koizumi kids). He selected 100 young turks as candidates for 2005 election to contest against veteran opposition leaders. Most of them came out successfully helping LDP in gaining two thirds majority. Such a move was quite break through in Japanese political culture which tend to cling tradition of not offending the elders. With charisma and high popularity Koizumi was able to complete five years term in office with reasonable success and carry through his policy of privatization of postal services. But he failed to broom a future leadership to carry on his policies. Koizumi's young turks were forgotten as they neither had experience nor much roots in Japanese politics. As a result, after Koizumi's departure in 2006, age old traditional politics came back with the return of the faction leaders reinvigorated with full strength.[17] Three Prime Ministers, Shinzō Abe, Yasuo Fukuda and Tarō Asō were weak and incapable. Abe witnessed the crushing defeat in 2007 Upper House election, in which DPJ won nearly 40% of votes against 28% won by LDP. Tarō Asō's derogatory remarks against the voters specially elderly people and his distance from the people gave a final blow to LDP. General election of 2009 was a major shift of political culture of Japan. Right wing conservative party LDP was replaced by DPJ, a centrist liberal party.

DPJ has some policy platforms which include a restructuring of civil service, a monthly allowance for families with children (at 26000 yen per child), a cut in the fuel tax, income support for farmers, free tuition for public high schools, the banning of temporary work in manufacturing, raising the minimum wage to 1000 yen and the halting of any increasing in sales tax for the next four years.[18] Hatoyama coalition government (the coalition consists of Democratic Party of Japan, The Social Democratic Party

16   Japanese General Election, 2009. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_general_election,_2009

17   M. Sirajul Islam, *The Daily Star*, July 18, 2009, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

18   Japanese general Election, 2009.

and The Peoples New Party) has also initiated some basic principles with an aim to transform the political and administrative systems that Japan has maintained since the Meiji era. Two major pillars of this policy are to establish true popular sovereignty and to achieve substantive regionalism as against special interest politics and centralization (since Meiji era) of state power that were the nature of politics of the past. Politics dependant on bureaucracy will be over instead Japan will be governed by politicians and the people in the real sense of the term. Fundamental reforms will be advanced in the national civil service, "totally prohibiting the practices *amakudari* (golden parachuting, i.e. placement of civil servants in post retirement jobs with entities their former government ministries once oversaw) and *watari* (movement between such jobs)".[19] That does not of course mean hammering the bureaucracy. The contribution of brilliant and intelligent bureaucrats will be evaluated carefully. The practice of dual decision making one by the ruling parties and another by the government will be abolished. The power and influence of faction leaders of the dominant ruling party was so great that even the Prime Minister sometimes felt helpless. People are apprehending that such kind of influence might come from Ichirō Ozawa, who is popular among many DPJ Diet Members of DPJ coalition government. Now under the present government decisions will be taken by the Cabinet not by the political parties. Declining population and ageing society are the two acute problems Japan is suffering from possibly for the first time in the history of mankind. So these problems will be taken very seriously in the governmental policy decisions. Hatoyama government's core idea is to turn away from the economy that gives value only to economic rationalism (as it was before) to one that is for the people. Resource distribution will be made in such a way that every citizen of Japan, including minority and disadvantaged, will enjoy basic needs and feel security, peace of mind and a purpose of life and thereby economic growth will be determined according to the domestic demands. With regards to foreign policy, new government's intention is to make Japan "a dignified nation that works to create world peace and resolves problems through an independent foreign policy". A proactive foreign policy will be developed rejecting extreme bilateralism. As for close and equal Japan-Us alliance, confidence building measure will be the first priority that will enable both Japan and The US to talk frankly and directly. By addressing the issues like elimination of nuclear weapons, global warming and the resolution of north-south disparities, Japan wants to be more active player in the international arena. For the same token, Hatoyama government will build up a healthy diplomatic relations with the countries of Asia-Pacific region. Thus, 1) 'popular sovereignty under which the daily lives of people take the highest priority; 2) regional sovereignty, under which public administration is to be placed in the hands of local people; and 3) self support and coexistence, under which individuals aiming to stand entirely on their own feet respecting others and providing mutual support'—these are the three ideals which the new government is committed to realize.

From the discussion above one can notice that some of the programs and basic principles of the new government are quite radical and diametrically opposite to traditional politics. For example,

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19   *Basic Principles of Hatoyama Government*, September 16, 2009, p.3.

popular sovereignty against groupism or clientism; regionalism against centralization; government independent of bureaucracy against government's too much dependency on bureaucracy; abolition of *amakudari* and *watari*; curtailment of power of the ruling party, independent foreign policy—all are the major break through from the line of traditional political culture. We do not have the proper data of voting behavior pattern but numerically substantial majority of voters supported and endorsed the left-centrist party like DPJ instead of conservative LDP. In that sense it is the beginning of a new era in the history of political culture of Japan. DPJ received 11042525 more popular votes than LDP (votes cast for DPJ were 29, 784,743 and for LDP were 18,742,218). Who are those voters? Although I do not have the statistics, presumably Liberal and NPC type voters along with emotional or negative votes of elderly conservative people extend their support for DPJ. Tarō Asō hurts the sentiment of the elderly people by saying that the elderly people (who actually built up modern Japan) were the burden on the tax payers.

With 71% public opinion rating for the new cabinet, beginning looks promising. But the massive structural and functional changes Hatoyama government has to undertake to implement the ambitious policies and programs in the realms of politics, economy and society is a huge task. Koizumi's experience could be a good example for Hatoyama. Only time can say whether the current trend of political culture will continue to grow or decay with the malfunctioning of the current government.

How Does Political Culture of Japan Compare with Bangladesh Political Culture and Does It Have Any Relevance for Bangladesh?

Continuity of political system and political culture: Political culture of Japan does have very little discontinuity excepting the defeat of World War II. But Bangladesh political system has miserable experience of several political traumas under foreign rule until 1971 when it finally had a chance to be governed by its own people. So the protest behavior towards the authority created negative political culture in Bangladesh. Although the Bangladeshis got independence, the inherent attitude of negative political culture is still persisting in psyche of the people. On the other hand, lack of rare discontinuity in political system and general loyal attitude towards authority has created a positive political culture of Japan.

Nature of political culture: As against the consensus political culture of Japan, Bangladesh has aggressive or extreme nature of political culture. Because of collectivism, groupism and corporatism Japan still has consensus political culture. A strong and aggressive political leadership cannot grow, and is not desirable or tolerable. But the emergence of strong, sometimes charismatic, leadership is one of the characteristics of Bangladesh politics. As it usually a one-man show, either civil or military, the fall or assassination of a leader creates grave crisis for the whole nation. In 38 years of independence Bangladesh experienced such crises twice, once after the assassination of the first Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 and another after the killing of President Ziaur Rahman in 1981. On both the occasions Bangladesh military were involved. Directly and indirectly, the armed forces of Bangladesh

ruled the country for about 15 years from 1975 to 1990. After a people's revolution in 1990, a free and fair election was held in February 1991 to bring a civilian leader, who was the widow of former President Ziaur Rahman. At that time the leader of the opposition was also a lady who was again the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding leader of the nation. In 1996 election opposition came to power and in 2001 Khaleda Zia came back to power again. Sheikh Hasina formed the government after a victory in the election of January, 2009. It is interesting to note that every alternative election two major political parties led by two powerful ladies are forming government to run the country. Both the parties hardly practice democracy within the party machinery. Decision either in government or in parties are being taken arbitrarily. So consensus political culture except in grave national crisis generally is absent in Bangladesh.

Political power and political culture: In present day Japan the basic necessities of life of every citizen is secured and employment is almost guaranteed. Big companies and self employment are sharing the burden of employment along with the government. Good career building rather than involving in politics is most important here. In Bangladesh with sky high rate of unemployment, high percentage of illiteracy, scarcity of resources, political power is crucial. The party in power controls all avenues of opportunities creating strong and intolerable opposition. The party once voted to power wants to hold it by any means. So, peaceful transfer of power which is one of the essence of democracy is almost absent in Bangladesh. Most of the governments until 1990 fell either by assassinations or by people's revolt. The elections of 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2009 all are held under an abnormal system, conducted by a caretaker government. Thus to hold political power at any cost by the incumbent government and to oust the government even at the cost of national interest are other characteristics of Bangladesh political culture.

Religion and culture as the components of political culture: Although Bangladesh political culture seems to be secular, religion and culture perform unique role in forming political attitudes, values and preferences. Secular nature of political culture also reflects in the voting behavior pattern. The Jamaat-i-Islami, a political party based on Islamic ideology, gets only around 10 percent of votes. But Islam plays a significant part in the psyche of Bangladeshi Muslims who form vast majority of population, about 88 percent. The two major parties—Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party-exploit the religious sentiment of the people. On the other hand, the influence of religion in mainstream politics is not that visible in Japan. New Cōmeitō (New Clean Government Party) was formed in 1964 as the political wing of Sōka Gakkai an organization affiliated with Nichiren Budhism. The party could not attract much political support until it distanced from Sōka Gakkai in 1970s. It merged with New Peace Party to promote international peace, support social welfare and eliminate political corruption. It started as a centrist party but later moved to more conservative policies of LDP and became one of the coalition partners of LDP government. Now the party ranks third after DPJ and LDP and its performance is better than Communist Party and Social Democratic Party. But its support is only around 8 percent and it received 21 seats in the general election of 2009. Religion may not have that influence in forming po-

litical culture of Japan but strong cultural tradition has great impact in shaping up the political behavior of the Japanese.

Political culture and over politicization: In Bangladesh some people are over politicized. They are usually recruited by the political parties. Over politicization has a traditional history in Indian sub continent. Political elite like M. K. Gandhi, M. A. Jinnah used the people for mass movements. Politically used these uneducated religious people, both Muslims and Hindus, became violent leading to many communal riots and killings of thousands of lives in undivided India. This tradition of over politicization continues in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh have the experience of this kind of mass movements in 1947, which divided India into two India and Pakistan, language movement in1952, secession movement in 1971 which created Bangladesh and mass movement in 1990 which overthrew a military dictator. However, this culture of over politicization does not mean participant political culture. People are mobilized and organized for the time being over particular issue. Although some people are over politicized, by and large political participation of Bangladeshi people is very low because the scope of political participation was barred by prolonged direct and indirect military rule in East Pakistan and later in Bangladesh. It is not the masses but the failure of elite political culture that is mostly responsible for not being able to create participant political culture. We have already discussed in detail the nature of political participation and political culture in Japan.

Politics of confrontation and political culture: Bangladeshis are one of the most homogenous nations in the world. Strong political polarization between the two major political parties led the country into a divided nation. Consensus on decisions of decisive consequences is not possible. Confrontational politics has nothing to do with ideology, it is rather personal and situational. Chronic boycotting of parliament since 1991 by the opposition parties has paralyzed the working of parliamentary government. Thus polarization of politics and confrontational politics are among the main impediments for political development in Bangladesh. Confrontational politics that causes political instability also has tremendous adverse effect on country's economic growth and development. Japan has a non-confrontational society. People want harmonious solution to societal as well as political problems. Japanese politicians would avoid getting involved in confrontation which might hamper the interest of the country.

Is There Any Relevance of Japanese Political Culture for Bangladesh?

Geographical proximity of Japan with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries does not corroborate the closeness of politics, culture or political culture. Since we came under the British colonial rule, we naturally have western orientation, we understand their systems better and we try to follow them. English language helps as an escalator in this regards. However, every country is different, if not unique, generating different kind of political culture. So, it is difficult to prescribe a particular system for a particular country to be followed by other countries exactly the same way. However, by analyzing the behavioral-socio-political-economic characteristics of Japan, one can identify some good examples to

be followed by any country including Bangladesh. 1) Japan's political and constitutional stability is one of the basic reasons for her economic miracle. On the other hand Bangladesh is plagued with political instability which is paralyzing its economic growth; 2) although in Japan consensus politics and decision-making sometimes could be seen as tiring and delaying process, in matters of national issues this is much better than that of confrontational politics; 3) state aided capitalism and corporate management—a Japanese model for development could be of much interest for Bangladesh; 4) the Japanese art of political management of economy by maintaining unity and harmony from production to sale is also an ideal to be learned by Bangladesh; 5) as the social pattern has emerged in Japan represented largely by middle class, the influence of oligarchic authoritarian groups is bound to be diminished and democracy in the real sense of the term will emerge with a focus on the will of the middle class. As the voices of strong middle class will be predominant in the politics of Japan along with the will of fewer rich and poor, the future direction of Japanese political culture is towards the mixed political culture as Aristotle's best form and civic culture as the most democratic political culture developed by G. A. Almond. The future direction of Bangladesh political culture should be the same.