

Mapping Political Consensus Building Magnetic Touch of Thematic and Pragmatic Dimensions

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Mapping Political Consensus Building

Magnetic Touch of Thematic and Pragmatic Dimensions

My mind thinks; my soul speaks

Dream comes first, drill next. Dream is the first step towards reality. Dream always precedes practicality. If we have no dream, then we have no drawing. Dream is to theorize, done is to realize. We must have some values, ethical-moral judgment; some standard of looking at things. And these are *a priori* – intellect-centered, indeed. Theory comes from both mind and mundane, and when it is applied to life system, then it becomes visible as practice, and called empirical. Mind and intellect are intertwined and are certainly ahead of catchy and crude reality.

Abstract

Developing sustainable consensus on fundamentals and making rock-like solid unity covering the entire geography of human beings for establishing a humane state entity and humane governance domain, have been confronting us as great challenge. In this connection, keeping space for freedom and toleration both by proponents and opponents, position and opposition, ruling and non-ruling, power elite and non-power elite as well as different groups, sectors and interests along with the multitudes at large is a compulsion. Pluralism in political and other system is a must. Inclusiveness is the breeding ground of consensus. This challenge must be met at all costs. Cohesive and coherent configuration for achieving common cause and goals are basic conditions of consensus. It must not be imposition but voluntary. It must be leading to broad unity and opinion-convergence along with inclusiveness, involvement, sense of belongingness, proper and active participation, empowering people for ascertaining their opinion and voice taken into consideration in concrete terms for arriving at decisions of decisive consequences. It should be based not on top-down or trickle-down, rather on bottom-up as well as local and grass-root initiatives essentially. Informed public, conscious and active citizenry, gladiator people, and watchdog electorates; fair and free electoral process; and people's opinion, voice, consent, verdict, mandate and judicious decision sanctified and legitimized by their votes should get prime and highest consideration through consensus. Consensus is shared understanding. It is a basic consequence of confluence of culture with institutional norms. Political consensus on fundamentals is a kind of coherent, codified, cohesive process of state operation, political interactions and governance functioning, which is

based on people's will, common and collective welfare, and supported, guarded, certified and legitimized by the people. Consensus is social and political solidarity erected on moral foundations as John Locke propounded. Consensus is agreed approach to basic problems. Consensus is homogenous stand regarding high policy. Consensus is convergent views about key issues. Consensus is identity and unified attitude, and way of looking at things on fundamentals. Consensus is to achieve a balance between subject and approach. Principal reminder is:

The lesser the consensus on fundamentals, the higher the possibility of governance failure;

The greater the consensus on fundamentals, the higher the possibility of governance success.

Conceptual and empirical critique

We are reformers in spring and summer, but

In autumn and winter we stand by the old.

Reformers in the morning, conservatives at night.

Reform is affirmative; conservatism, negative.

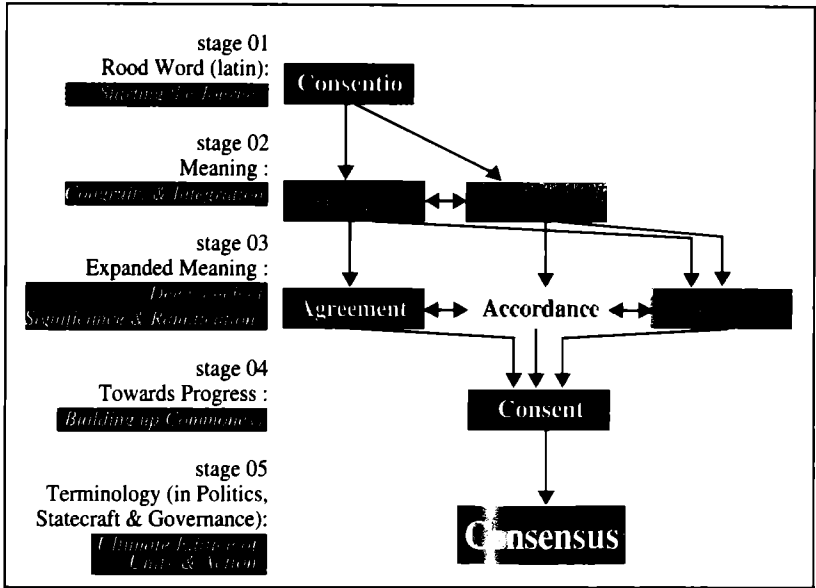
Conservatism goes for comfort; reform for truth.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson (1849)

Consensus: Etymology and origin

The word 'consent' comes from the Latin word 'consentio' meaning 'feel together'; 'agree' etc. From consentio the present terminology of consensus derives itself. Its general meaning is 'agreement', 'accordance', 'unanimity'. In Political Science, consensus should be given a very special position and place and it should be developed as a theory and practice simultaneously by describing itself as 'political-consensus' and 'politics of consensus'.

Graph 01 : Etymological reflection of development of consensus terminology



Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

Graph 01 given above represents consensus etymology. From graph 01 prepared by the present author, one can see that development of consensus terminology may involve and pass through five stages starting from consentio to consensus. Stage 01 is root word in Latin; that is consentio. Stage 02 involves two words. These are feeling together and agree. That means sense of belongingness; remaining together sentiment and agreeing situation are created. In stage 03 agreement grows, accordance comes out, and unanimity develops. In the stage 04 clear and marked progresses are seen. Consent is exhibited because of the simultaneous presence, concurrent effectiveness and cumulative resulting consequences of five qualitative positive trends. These are: feel + agree + agreement + accordance + unanimity. Once consent is given, found in action, and led towards fruitful sanction, then in stage 05 consensus is established in reality. This is how from etymological origin through a cognitive and creative path-breaking, the conceptual epistemology of political consensus erects its paradigm.

In search of consensus: gesture from a self-made theory to practice

Let us decide, what is to be done at this critical juncture of indigenous and international turbulent reality; surroundings almost out of control; a pandemonium of recalcitrant nature, those have led us at the point of

collapsing edge; throwing us in the midst of a cyclonic storm or earthquake in metaphorical senses, both at home and abroad across transnational, regional and continental boundaries affecting the entire globe and the total human entity as a whole. Turbulence and trauma have taken over; peace and progress have fallen under tremendous jeopardy. Would consensus be really helpful combating the pandemonium and its trauma and trouble? Can epistemology with normative and behavioral mix-up; and theoretical and practical consonance build up a nexus, a consort for evolving a high and broad consensus on fundamentals and developing a dinky domain for millions of compatriots in the Bangladeshi nest?

This would have to be made possible for serving the national interests and goals in the best manner through bringing broad-based unity; creating level playing field; giving people at large sense of belongingness; involving them in the affairs of the state and governance; making them true, active and effective participant in the prime concerns, and part of policy decisions at least those of decisive consequences. This would help develop geographical, territorial, national integration; help constructing a common and high political culture; help building bridge between haves and have-nots through fair allocation, proper distribution and maintaining justice of all sorts; help creating elite-mass integration; and also give sustainable effects of the continuous presence of integrative behavioral pattern.

This sort of political consensus on fundamental principles, points, concerns, issues gives rise to national unity on broad-base, solving the problems of horizontal and vertical cleavages; removes contradictions and conflicts; undercuts petty differences and makes national and common cause based edifice to work as inspiration of unity and to reach the goal set for the nation possible at the highest extent, reaching the horizon and touching the glittering silky line.

Through this sort of political consensus, the crises of identity, integration, legitimacy, participation, distribution and penetration are met successfully. It brings governance capability of making sound and functional relationship through two way channels of feedback mechanism between input and output ends; between demand and support, and decisions and actions; between political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication and efficacy on the one hand, and rule making, rule application and rule adjudication on the other. It makes possible to

enhance the capability of governance in different sectors through making a balanced order between coercion and conciliation, dictation and compromise lessening the part of imposition and enhancing the part of cohesion, voluntary acceptance and congruence among people's will as the largest, highest and most prioritized state of affairs.

Consensus on fundamentals leads the nation and social order in the direction of equality, capacity and differentiation. Equity and equalizing effects work in positive line with mitigating allocation-misappropriation and system loss along with distributional mal-adjustment and crises. This is a sort of syndrome-combating-method springing out from belongingness, ownership, altruism, common sense of self-preservation and sagacity as etiology for combating statecraft's ineffectiveness, political and institutional dis-functioning and governance failure.

The characteristics of the model that are required for a polity to be developed are being achieved through consensus building both at normative-theoretical stage as well as at empirical and practical field for getting best results through bridging the gaps between mental makeup, psyche, culture and socialization of both people and leadership on the one hand, and practical political life and socio-economic domain on the other. Institutions of sustaining nature and impersonal system-based kinds get formalized, visible, stable, sustained and those functioning accordingly as catalysts.

State with inclusive character; governance with service-orientation; leadership with skill, sagacity, integrity and farsightedness along with servant-type culture, but at the same time with appropriate statesmanship get people's support through legitimate electoral system that is accepted and sanctified by the people. It is to be made possible, because choosing of rulers by the people for the time being for representation and governance, for legislation and execution of policies and programs, becomes possible in this way.

In such a situation, polity, politics, governance, decisions, planning, policy formulation, policy option and alternative choice, implementation, monitoring, achievement and success attainment etc. become all inclusive in the real sense of the term. Through the development of consensus, power transfer mechanism becomes legal, accountable, transparent, regular, legitimized, and peoples' support oriented. Tense and turbulence, trauma and trouble can be avoided in this way.

In such an atmosphere, conflict and confrontation among contending groups and factions calm down; and conciliation, cooperation, cohesiveness and give and take attitude develop. Political system becomes more open and responsive, rather than closed and coercive. Its adaptive, integrative, accommodative and responsive capacity increases day by day towards optimum standard. People at large leave apathy and spectatorship and become gladiators in proper and positive sense of the terms. The capabilities of the state and governance for extractive, regulative, distributive, symbolic, responsive, and service orientation increase in the midst of the presence of effective political consensus.

Instead of growth, GDP, GNP, per capita income, central bank's reserves etc., the new and appropriate scales would become operative. The said categories also remain there for accounts to be kept, but more important would become the HRD, and counting of development would base upon HDI. Suppose, regular calorie intake, informed public, and their involvement, access, entitlement and rights exercised; along with food, shelter, medication, education, security, employment, job opportunity, real wages and above all human dignity etc. would come up and get prioritized.

Note on almost four decades of apathy

The present author in the year 1978 of the last century first wrote an article on politics of consensus and building up of conciliatory sustainable development strategies with the objective and goal to initiate a new sort of theoretical construction to solve burning issues of recalcitrant character along with dealing of problem-ridden, crises-prone, quarrelsome, confrontation-based, faction-oriented, conflict-flaring, infighting-habitual politics of Bangladesh. At that time the very word 'consensus' as political terminology at the field level was not in vogue and known to the academics and to the public at large. Even when the present author tried to use, consensus on fundamentals terminology in Bangla as 'Moulo Neetimalar Oikkyomottah', the scholars from English and Bangla Departments of Dhaka University and other intellectuals gave their opinion against it and tried to convince the present author by saying that for 'consensus' the English word, the Bangla word cannot be 'Oikkyomottah', rather it should be 'Oikkyomoth' and there would be no harm in using later in lieu of former. Intellectuals those who argued with the present author said that people will feel it difficult to pronounce or understand the meaning.

But, consultation of dictionaries and Etymology-search by the present researcher refrained him ultimately from using 'Oikkyomoth', and he used this term in the light of his own understanding. Because of his usual inherent habit of non-conformism with establishment and stagnancy, the term 'Oikkyomottah' was accepted and written by the present researcher. Now, through passing of so many years of experience, the correct position about the referred term is ascertained and everybody uses 'consensus' as 'Oikkyomottah'; not the wrong suggestion given to the present author by intellectuals and faculties of eminence of those days.

However, the present researcher after the first article then published a booklet separately titled as *Moulo Neetimalar Oikkyomottah ebong Bangladesher Rajneeti*. That gained ground and had created a good influence. This is a history of almost four decades back, when the present researcher was teaching at Government and Politics Department, Jahangirnagar University. Meanwhile, the present researcher started and finished his Ph.D. on 'consensus theory' altogether building its theoretical construction, research question and hypothesis of his own and dared to be a trend setter. Though gradually the way of looking at consensus-building has taken change in the understanding of the present researcher, yet the term 'consensus' with its impersonal effects and ramifications has not decreased. Rather it has driven to the front, has gone up and has got priority much more than that of the old days. Today consensus is felt essential to many of the intellects. In fact, it is the principal precondition for any polity to be unified, integrated, peaceful, disciplined, and development oriented. It is a gradual process of development of social order and its populace to look at political, economic, social, cultural problems in a consensual way. This has become an imperative for statecraft piloting and governance functioning.

But what is more important and to be noted here that very astonishingly there is a dearth and want of books and articles on consensus very badly. Some books have been collected by the present researcher this time by October 2016. But most of the books have given the word 'consensus' as the title or subtitle on the first cover without almost no-reference inside either in short or in detail, or even gone to the extent of not giving a single reference in the index also. Others have somehow referred the word consensus just as passing reference and negated consensus as something not acceptable or as fraud. Some have wrongly equated consensus with majoritarian democracy.

However, it's actually true that consensus allows opinion difference and conflict also up to a certain extent. Then it goes for undercutting the petty differences and bones of contention and gives conscious and careful mindset and effort for unity building. It does not hit the social common edifice. It allows concurrence, conciliation, convergence, confluence, cooperation, cohesion, and coherence which make stability and sustainable development possible. Actually consensus is building up of societal edifice and corresponding political umbrella of unification where points of unity are more important, where basic minimum accordance is required, where congruence and confluence are seen as preconditions, where combat and removal of quarrel are encouraged, and contention, cleavage, conflict and factional infighting of all sorts are discouraged through developing required integrative, behavioral, psychological, cultural, political pattern. This is being done on the basis of accepting some fundamental principles of state policies as common will, common cause, common ground, and common property within the perimeter and parameter of people's social contract.

This is obviously a pity that that the researchers both in Bangladesh and abroad, especially the political scientists have not felt encouraged developing a theory of consensus. No reason or argument is found proper and sound for this apathy, negligence or mere ignorance.

However, this is the rationale for which the present researcher and author, as a typical nonconformist against immobility, has once again become interested to set his course on nontraditional line. He wants to fix-up his self-directed new course; reflects his repeatedly refined new pathology; prescribes his ground-growing and path-breaking solution to the problem-ridden politics of Bangladesh in a new way, from a new angle of vision, and from a new dimension. He wants to be the trend setter with this matter of grave concern and of top most importance, as he was the same almost forty years back. He wants to be the character of Moliere (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), the French playwright of 17th century and wants to build up his trend-setting formulae for the pathology of disease of the political domain of any country and especially of Bangladesh.

After all, we have to start from some point. Stagnancy must be broken. What is required is to welcome the new if it tends to prove itself beneficial for multitudes, for societies, for countries, for territories, for geographies, and for the human kind all over the world. But, closing eyes for the new or apathy for the change towards positive direction is

not a good or healthy sign. This should not be a sound society where and when silence of grave is preferred; where and when mobility, dynamics, and change are not taken as signals of vibrant lives and well-functioning political order. Though it is not a change of the system at the outset, but change in the system at least leading towards the direction where the social order, status quo, establishment, statecraft, governance mechanism, and intellectual domain– all prefer to go by the order of the day. They usually take the stand of 'go with the wind' or 'be Roman while in Rome' like situation which would be challenged if not today, possibly tomorrow, and certainly day after tomorrow.

Consensus: mapping of high ideals of social entity and political order

Developing a theoretical framework from altogether different angle is a compulsion. Identification, definition, and explanation of consensus should be given basis on creative details.

A list can be made as follows for mapping up:

1. Building social contract
2. Developing social edifice
3. Empirically reached focal points
4. Central paradigm largely accepted
5. Broad based integrative issues
6. Common assumption for stable continuity
7. Arranged formulae for dynamic and steady progress
8. Setting of perimeter and parameters
9. Determining set of policy options
10. Horizontal and vertical gap bridging
11. Justice and fair order society
12. Evolving homogeneity
13. Inclusiveness and equalization
14. Wide-spread acceptance of collectivist solution and process
15. Focus primacy and continuity
16. Common ground for combating social problems
17. Consensual behavioral pattern

Consensus building: on points of priority

1. Consensus on constitution
2. Consensus on institutions
3. Consensus on fundamentals
4. Consensus on power transfer mechanism
5. Consensus on issues of grave concern

6. Consensus on desired goals
7. Consensus on legitimacy formulae
8. Consensus on ideological doctrines
9. Consensus on form of government
10. Consensus on functional pluralism
11. Consensus on electoral process
12. Consensus on people's verdict
13. Consensus on ethics and morals
14. Consensus on civility
15. Consensus on policy matters
16. Consensus on policy implementation
17. Consensus on policy continuation
18. Consensus on Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
19. Consensus on give and take and mutual understanding
20. Consensus on leading modes to develop sustainable integrative behavioral pattern
21. Consensus on evolving cultural unity among diversity

Consensus for what

1. For ascertaining common cause
2. For achieving common goals
3. For ensuring general good and welfare
4. For attaining broad based integration
5. For reaching cleavage-free unification
6. For making basic understanding
7. For conciliating among conflicting and contending groups
8. For constructing mutual trust and toleration
9. For developing mutual cooperation

Consensus: dimensions and aspects desired

1. Constitutionally formidable
2. Legal-jurisprudentially understandable
3. Socially cherish-able
4. Culturally suitable
5. Nationally undeniable
6. Geo-politically amicable
7. Morally supportable
8. Economically justifiable
9. Administratively practicable
10. Implementation-ally feasible
11. Commonly recognizable
12. Politically acceptable
13. Ultimately tenable

Consensus hypothesis in metaphoric form

High consensus, high afford;

Less consensus, less accord;

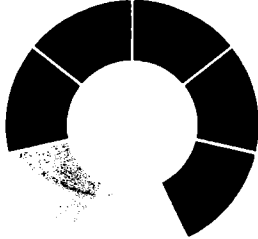
No consensus, no abode.

VIBGYOR Concept of Political Consensus

Political Consensus may be compared with VIBGYOR Spectrum Concept (07 in 01). A Graphic design has been given below representing development of political consensus that may take the form of VIBGYOR (Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange and Red). Political consensus in principles and in practices having seven aspects with its features becomes 07 in 01 and that makes ultimately the symbolic white color denoting the highest sanctity and legitimacy given by the body politic. People at large and state and governance process simultaneously are in topmost obligation to abide by this political consensus which is becoming the soul of the social contract and state order. This political consensus directs the state, governance and citizenry; guides them and makes possible the march forward towards new horizon where common cause of the society, mass welfare of the entire geography, collective security and future of the country stand on self-sustained ground. The real significance, all comprehensive contributions and the far reaching effects of political consensus may be understood from this simultaneous theoretical and empirical convergence.

Graphic representation of political consensus

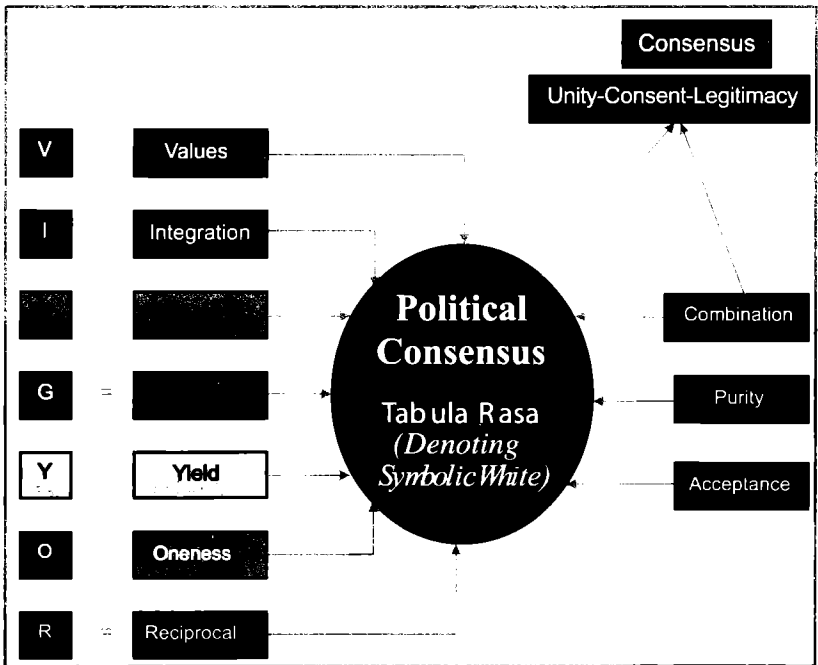
Graph 02:

VIBGYOR Spectrum Concept 07 in 0	Reform and commitment for truth	Political Consensus Core 07 in 01
Violet		Fundamentals
Indigo		Values
Blue		Constitutionalism
Yellow		Programs and Priorities
Orange		Integrative Behavioral Pattern
Red		SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)

Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

In the graph 02 given above, the left portion is of VIBGYOR. This abbreviation represents seven colors and these 07 colors are in seven look with variety and diversity serving innumerable functions assigned to them. But ultimately, these are in unity among diversity. Correlations among these are to make cosmic planning and unity successful by developing white as lowest common denominator (LCD) and as point of super unity simultaneously in dialectical form and content. This is also reflecting sanctity, purity and tabula rasa for human and other species to watch and to work accordingly. Left portion of the graph helps understand the middle and round portion revolving white from all sides. In the same way, the right portion represents core of 07 in 01 consisting of fundamentals, values, constitutionalism, problems and issues, programs and priorities, integrative behavioral pattern, and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). These 07 core or key aspects make the sanctified white in metaphorical sense creating consensus in the political domain of the state entity.

Graph 03: VIBGYOR Spectrum Concept: A Creative golden mean



Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

In graph 03 given above, VIBGYOR is explained in altogether different way but emphasizing the same paradigm of consensus. Here in the left side, V represents values, I represents integration, B represents blessings, G represents grace, Y represents yield, O represents oneness, and R represents reciprocal. These 07 qualities once again make tabula rasa denoting symbolic white and widespread legitimacy. This tabula rasa keeping itself in the middle and in the midst of all develops political consensus. In the right portion, it is seen that three qualitative standards of combination, purity and acceptance do emerge because of left side's input support of 07 aspects. Now, through two-way channels of communicative actions and constant feedback operation, consensus develops and sustains through unity, consent and legitimacy. Thus, consent becomes stage 04 of graph 01 leading towards stage 05 or final stage of consensus from consent. It also connects itself with the right portion of graph 02 describing 07 core aspects leading to tabula rasa once more. Symbolically this becomes white or clean slate given in graph 02 and graph 03 remaining in the central position. It is to be taken as normative, theoretical, explanatory perception and conceptualization giving support for workable consensus at empirical stage in the practical field. This would probably stand a serious testimony for conceptualization and practice. This would face an acid test of both a priori method and action method. Thus, political consensus would become core and edifice of the statecraft, political system and governance process covering and converging as well as controlling and codifying norms, procedures, standards, way of looking at things, orientation, actions and implementation domain.

Chart 01: VIBGYOR Spectrum Concept: Key for governance success

07 in 01

Why should VIBGYOR be taken metaphorically as reflection of consensus?

Rationale:

Consensus takes shape

- 01 Combination of multiple and variety;
- 02 Reflection of congruence and confluence;
- 03 Demonstration of unity in diversity;
- 04 Attainment of coherence and cooperation;
- 05 Practicality of interrelations, interactions and mutual dependence;
- 06 Closeness of way of looking at things and worldviews;
- 07 All colors and categories ultimately directed towards sanctity and legitimacy, reflecting tabula rasa - white and clean slate; that is the highest social welfare oriented humane goals participated by all, inclusive in nature.

Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

The above explained coherence, congruence, confluence through linkages and connectivity of different sorts make the rationale of VIBGYOR as metaphorical reflection of consensus as articulated in the chart 01 spectrum concept for developing consensus leading to governance success.

Thematic summary put forward

From the above points and the VIBGYOR concept of political consensus and its graphic design, political consensus may be defined as broad agreement and similar opinion shared by the people at large. It may be a sound judgment arrived at, by most of the concerned population over issues confronting the society making coherence and cohesiveness possible with steady and sustaining dynamism. It is the highest and most practicable solidarity of sentiment and belief reflected on issues and problems and areas of grave concern to be taken as fundamental duties of statecraft to be performed, leadership to be given direction, and governance policies to be translated into action. Principles, policies, strategies and techniques are essentially affiliated with consensus keeping in line with its fundamental requirements to be met for attaining common goals and general welfare of the society. But here it may be made very clear that consensus cannot be equated with majoritarian democracy as some authors have tried to analyze, because majoritarian democracy is the reflection of peoples will through only voting mechanism in and during elections and that is given for the time being to demonstrate support for a particular party. That support is not

necessarily a factor for prolonged life and action process. It is mere a temporary phenomenon as against consensus to be taken as a prolonged, sustained and relatively a tangible reflection of high political culture as well as a permanent one much more connected with the multitudes as basic constituency and builder of Social Contact. Hence, the difference between consensus and majoritarian democracy must be categorically understood in order to avoid misleading points either of directive goals or of action procedures.

However, consensus is general concord and harmony of opinion of the countrymen as compatriots for serving common cause and attaining better life for all irrespective of religion, caste, creed, culture, locality, sex, occupation, affiliation and any other petty points of difference and unequal standing. Consensus is primarily the best equalizer. Finding out directions for policy formulation, decision making, and follow up actions for state, governance and leadership are being exhibited in political consensus and these are being enriched by it. Consensus may be best attained through referendum and people's voice, choice, verdict reflecting their consent, sanction and legitimization.

Thus, political consensus means leading total governance by general agreement of the people as a whole over key points of burning concern and challenges faced by the country. Common consent, unanimity, broad unity, large scale harmony, clear assent, true concord and concurrence of positive attitudes and interests are characteristics of effective political consensus among people, groups, elites, and leadership. Political consensus by bridging gaps; determining mutual rights and obligations; fixing up limits and jurisdiction; spelling out specific objectives, goals, directions, and the action programs of the state and governance actually act as soul and central nervous system of the body politic.

Political consensus can be developed both vertically and horizontally. It reduces differences and disunity; undercuts threats of trouble; combats factional infighting; removes odds and obstacles; wipes away cleavages and conflicts. And creates broad spectrum national unity with theoretical and empirical convergence if taken positively with good intention, creative impulse and committed activism.

Political consensus in action

Consensus has a theory-driven part. But, it can be practiced most by basing on practice-driven dimensions. Political consensus on

fundamentals- of policies, issues, problems and solutions granted by the people of the country and obeyed by the authorities, leaderships, elites and people of all strata may be considered as key built-up foundation of any society, state, polity and governance from within and with deepest root.

Consensus is the edifice, the monumental structure over which the statehood is in existent, run, continued and gets functional and utilitarian success. State, politics, power, governance, interactions, allocations, authority, jurisdiction, role, legitimacy, participation, sanction, success, stability, propriety, prosperity, peace and happiness of the people depend upon this basic consensus on fundamentals. This consensus is risk covering, security ensuring, present managing, future looking, and common cause and welfare ascertaining. Consensus on fundamentals gives scope for conciliation instead of confrontation. In lieu of coercion, cooperation becomes possible. Faction, fraction, division, suspicion, monopoly, hegemony etc. are combated by the help of consensus. Disparity both at horizontal and vertical form can be lessened and removed with the help of consensus. Consensus makes possible consultation and coexistence. It reduces turmoil and tension. It removes trouble and trauma.

Fundamental articles of faith regarding statehood and governance and life-system of the people can be obeyed, honored, dignified, enhanced, and practiced through consensus. Hence, fair competition, required conciliation and cooperation, and desired precious convergence for united action and for common cause can be successfully accomplished with the help of consensus on fundamentals and consensual politics. Peace, tranquility, stability, continuity of policy, steady progress and long sustained security and development can be achieved if consensus is developed. Through a consensus construction mutually understood, and agreed cooperation among all classes, groups, sections with heterogeneous interests coming up and essentially unified together with a higher and greater understanding for achieving national interests and common future can be made a reality. To a great extent, the obstacles of material interests and conflicting ways of looking at things can be met through developing consensus. It makes level playing field possible. It keeps everyone on the same plane. It acts as equalizer. It develops humane ground for all.

Accompanying with semblance of inclusive humanitarian and egalitarian stand points; with altruism and moral sentiment for others;

with building up of an all comprehensive way of looking at things in positive direction; with developing a world view among the compatriots, the consensus of social order and politics can bring congruity among different strata of people at large, can bring multitudes of human beings together and unified on the basis of 'we' conceptual and contextual mindset and surroundings respectively. 'We are on the same boat brother'– this can be made true through developing a sound, logical and practical form of political consensus. This gives rise to greater social and political equality, tolerance, and unity creating sense of belongingness of the greatest number of people of the state. Alienation and segregation along with sense of wretchedness may be removed to a high extent. Participatory civic culture may be developed bringing success and sustenance of not only of the polity, but also making governance smooth and successful.

Hypothesis

Hence a hypothesis can be developed here:

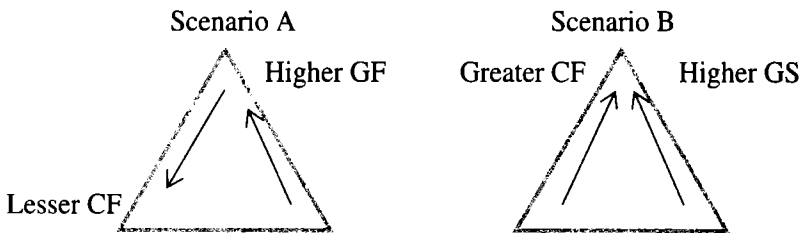
The lesser the consensus on fundamentals, the higher is the possibility of governance failure;

And the greater the consensus on fundamentals, the higher is the possibility of governance success.

Graphic representation of the hypothesis

This hypothesis may be graphically represented in a simple manner as the following:

Graph 04:



Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

Here, CF = Consensus on fundamentals

GF = Governance failure

GS = Governance success

Absence or presence of consensus on fundamentals determines governance failure or governance success respectively shown in the above graph 04. In the above mentioned graph the first and left triangle reflecting scenario A shows inverse relation between CF & GF. The second and left triangle shows the same directive proportionate relations between CF & GS. Here, in both the triangles, CF is the determining variable.

Bangladesh: a test case

If the hypothesis given in this work by the present author is put forward to testify the case of Bangladesh polity, it would be seen that Bangladesh faces the challenge of governance failure, mainly because of the failure in developing a broad-based political consensus on fundamentals and of sustained nature.

The major obstacles in front of Bangladesh polity to face its crises both political and economic, its problem regarding its social order, its instability and factional infighting are because of its narrow political culture and sectorial identities, its difficulties with the running of its statecraft and functioning governance. By establishing a well-accepted order through common goal orientation is the foremost requirement. It is though relative, yet stability of a kind of prolonged nature is desired mainly because of the lack of management skill and political leadership's capability and most importantly under utter lack of political consensus.

Because of the lack of consensus, there is no unity of opinion; no congruity of thought and confluence of different stakeholders, sectors, groups, classes and parties about form of identity; form of religious accommodation; form of government; form of power transfer mechanism; form of economy; form of legitimacy; form of participation; form of electoral system; form of accordance regarding mass media operation; form of public empowerment; form of socialization for mitigating its fragmented nature; form of culture to reach the height of high political culture instead of low, parochial, subject, passive cultures; form of mechanism to maintain continuity of policy decisions and strategies; form of national interest-based foreign policy; form of mechanism for improving conditions of toleration, mutual respect, mutual trust, understanding, cooperation, and give and take; form of integrative behavior etc.

These are the reasons which make Bangladesh polity destabilized,

volatile, tension-prone, traumatic, troublesome, difficulty-burdened, war-mongering, uncertain, dysfunctional, and fragile. Individuals, groups, institutions, parties, bureaucracies, law enforcing agencies, defense forces, elite structure and leadership, goal-setting and policy decisions, continuity of plans and programs, and common cause orientation– all are severely and seriously affected. The key reason behind all these problems can be detected with the absence of political consensus of broad-based nature and urgent need to develop the same though over a period of time but at the earliest. This is how consensus comes up as the essential precondition for getting Bangladesh free from mess and to get rid of all out corruption along with freeing itself from unstable political, economic and social order setting.

Eye catching elaboration

In the absence of consensus on fundamentals, politics becomes turbulent, turmoil-centered, troublesome, torture-based and traumatic. Whereas, presence of effective consensus on fundamentals makes politics possible, peaceful, purposeful, pertinent, program-oriented, and pro-active. The present researcher in this article has clearly shown that adaptability and coherence-ability get positive scope and high speed in the presence of consensus. Thus, successful political consensus-building can help the capacity of the structures, institutions, systems, functions, roles, and goal-orientations of the political domain of the state in such a way that, required and sustainable political development and stability can be achieved combating the crises in a fruitful manner keeping methodical, good and balanced pace with sequences. Equality, equity, capability, differentiation and specialization simultaneously become a reality. Universalism, proper performance, and achievement can be established removing particularism, performance failure, and ascriptive considerations. Much more political and positive socialization may be achieved without fragmentation, and greater degree of political unification may become possible in this way. As a result, greater and truer participation, development equity, distributive justice and elite and governance accountability may be ensured. With the increase of problem solving capacity, ability to sustain national goals on rational basis may be achieved removing the obstacles in the way paving the path smooth.

Basic minimum consensus: a sketch for Bangladesh

- 1) It is only people, the multitudes impersonal and unknown, who have fought for Bangladesh in 1971, and have built up an organized country, state and polity for them. Our social contract is consisted of liberation war and its essence. It is for the ordinary people making millions for whom the state should exist. They are the only fundamental and basic constituency. Minus people there is no state, no constitution, no government, no party, no leadership, no authority, no politics, no power, no allocation, no existence of any entity. This is the true article of faith regarding the statehood and governance of Bangladesh. In the total texture of deltaic Bangladesh, people must be made/taken/accepted/ granted/ recognized as highest constituent element. They must be the source of all powers in tangible terms. They are the trustee of the sovereign authority and the trust is given to them by The Almighty Allah. Through inclusiveness, participation, and empowerment; through involvement, access, and entitlement; through referendum, initiative, plebiscite, recall, censure, no confidence, the people as total entity would be the only deciding factor for inclusion or exclusion, for entry or ouster of government. The people would exercise their supreme will and would give legitimacy to the social contract that formed the Bangladesh state through 1971 Liberation War. This is the first basis of consensus (Choudhury, 2015a).
- 2) All the key issues and decisions of decisive consequences, constitutional amendments and acts done must have to be consulted, consented, accepted, granted, ratified, supported, validated, sanctified, and legitimized by the people through direct referendum.
- 3) Severely wounded and self-defeating constitution must be thoroughly overhauled and reframed for satisfying the changing state of affairs, for meeting the needs of the hour, and for facing the challenges that the nation confronts today. In this basic aspect, people must have the final say and only through referendum this can be accomplished.
- 4) Rule of law, separation of power and check and balance must be accepted. Legislature must be effective and functional. Executive must be within limit. Judiciary must not be subservient, and

should be made independent in all forms. Limit of contempt with all good intention should be reconsidered. Article 70, Special Powers Act 1974, provision for emergency and suspension of fundamental rights must be annulled. Torture, illegal arrest, curtailment of rights, coercion of law enforcing agencies, forced disappearance, politically motivated cases and arrest trade, gunfight and killing, and overdoing of agencies must be stopped. Curtailment of liberty of movement, freedom of speech and organization; freedom of all sorts of media; cleansing narrow partisanship, affiliation and ascriptive considerations; and combating bureaucratic plutocracy must be there as top priority. Section 54 and section 161, abuse of remand etc. must be removed and nullified.

- 5) Form of government in general and form of government during national elections must be resettled by taking people's consent and verdict through fairly conducted referendum. Election Commission must be made independent and electoral process must be made free and fair. Level playing field for all concerned would have to be established.
- 6) People must be made real masters; and representatives either at national or at local level along with leader, party bosses, and party cadres must be brought under rules and limits. Leadership must not be mastership. It is mere captaincy, but with public servant-orientation working as service facilitator.
- 7) Party and government must be separated. Leadership of the party must not be government power holders and government power holders must not be party top bosses simultaneously. Inner party democracy and true election system must be in operation from the bottom to the top of the party and government, and national and local level on regular basis. No top leader must be given chance or elected in the party or government for more than two terms either consecutively or intermittently. No topmost leader is indispensable for more than pre-fixed two tenures either in party or in government. After that he/she may remain as ordinary member only.
- 8) Single-handed, highly personalized authoritarian powers and familial tyranny must be sent to the museum of history. Because, these two have contributed most in the development of tyranny; snatched peoples' power; made demos subjects and impotent; destroyed all norms; brought uncertainty and misery for the entire polity.

- 9) To bring back power balance, the powers of the Prime Minister and that of the President should be changed. Both must have power to counter balance one another and make the government and its functionaries limited and accountable. The President should be separately elected through a direct election. With this aim in view, French type of balance between PM and President may be accepted.
- 10) On national interest questions and issues; on foreign relations and politics; on geo-political, strategic and security issues; on settlement of bilateral and multilateral issues with neighbors and others; on signing of any treaty or pact and on accepting memorandum of understanding (MoU), on taking initiative to be a member of any forum, or to come out of it; on joining any military or crucial treaty; on giving advantage or corridor, transit, transshipment to any country etc. must be known to and accepted by the people. They must be either given prior knowledge or in case of emergency their sanction and legitimization through clearest verdict in referendum must be taken and that would be treated as final decision.
- 11) Terrorism, counter-terrorism, militancy etc. must be specified and fought taking the people together with their clear support and sanction.
- 12) Food, housing, health, education, employment, security, honor, liberty, respect, equality and opportunity must be given to all the citizens keeping them on the same plane without any special, sectorial, regional, and other narrow considerations.
- 13) Motivated political jargons and manifested practical germs must be removed and dividing people, society and country on narrow party, group and affiliation considerations must be rejected to nullify the divisive heinous process of making the country full of warring camps.
- 14) Since the country has almost 92% Muslim people as single largest with overwhelming absolute majority, hence Islam must get supreme prominence over all others. Proper and effective reflections in this connection must be incorporated in the constitution, laws, rules, procedures, prerogatives, practices so that the honor and practice of Islamic monotheism become possible in the real sense of the term. In all affairs of the society, state, legality, governance, and public life, this basic principle

must come true, permitted, said, acted, operated, and initiated. If any institution, any authority, any group, any quarter, any person, any material, any media or anything else goes against Islam or its practice or dignity, then blasphemy act should be enacted to deal with the matters accordingly. All other religions also would get due importance and would be practiced. This is the standard followed by majority of the Western developed countries, and countries of the peripheries. Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism are recognized by the state and governance as principal religion with greater status in countries like Britain and USA, Israel, India, Thailand and Myanmar respectively. In more than 40 countries of the world, Islam is the principal religion recognized by the state. In this respect there is no exception among religions and religious followers.

- 15) On the issues like economic system, public exchequer, banking and insurance, property limit, market mechanism, food and hygiene security, taxation and VAT, distributive justice etc. should be settled bringing all these aspects under the umbrella of broad national consensus.
- 16) Combating corruption and injustice; misuse of power and abuse of authority; nepotism and favoritism; unlawful exercise and unauthorized force; misappropriation and unearned income; particularistic and ascriptive considerations; imposition of threat and torture would get prime priority. These things must be declared illegal, unlawful, and should be declared as breach of social contract, general will, and the consensus of the people revolving round the political domain, statecraft, social order and governance process (Choudhury, 2015b).
- 17) Betrayal of this basic consensus on fundamentals should be considered as treason and tantamount to betraying the basic social contract of Bangladesh polity created by the people through armed struggle, sacrificing millions, and defeating and overthrowing Pakistani military junta in 1971.

When reason works

Political consensus is politics of accommodation keeping pace for continuity, change, and sustainable development. It tries to catch and cover both the dynamics and dialectics of the subjective and objective conditions of the society. It is the principal source of peaceful transition of society, state and human beings towards steady progress

minimizing costs, jerks and sacrifice on the one hand; and maximizing benefits and welfare to all, through achieving common cause avoiding jeopardy, disruption, turmoil, trauma, instability, uncertainty and disorder on the other.

Consensus politics makes room for criticism and opposition, consensual conflicts, opinion difference, floor-crossing, affiliation-denial on crucial issues, individual liberty, shadow governance and alternative activism keeping the national consensus on fundamentals intact. Undercutting cleavages and confrontation, and emphasizing conciliation and convergence may be taken as two sets of intertwined methods of political consensus theory. These may be effective for conceptual and contextual, theoretical and empirical, operational and functional levels. These scope, space and accommodation may give political consensus a positive impetus for developmental sustainability.

Understanding and touching the horizon

Where there remains political consensus, in such positive environment, the present researcher thinks that there exists greater chance of workable pluralism, institutionalism, constitutionalism, equilibrium, and development thrust. The reason behind is that political consensus at the pinnacle would work as edifice of common cause in such atmosphere. Everything of the statecraft, of the polity, of mutual political interactions, of governance functions, of institutional proximity and operation, of public involvements and participation, of allocation process would go hand in hand with clear objectives and goals having accepted by the concerned people and leadership at large. In the presence of consensus, the probability is much higher that gladiator mass with committed governance and farsighted leadership, and with concerned setting and practical conditions, as the present researcher believes, would run the statecraft in sustained and positive direction and towards achieving declared goals evolving out and revolving round the consensus.

All individuals of the society; all citizens of the state; all members of the electorate; all interests of the country; all circles of the society, all classes, groups and strata of the polity may in this probable way meet at the converging crossroad; come at the highest meeting point of unity, cooperation and integration when they would discover, develop and deliver a basic minimum political consensus on fundamentals as their common shared value designing principles and goal orientations

to be respected, obeyed and implemented with topmost priority by the state and governance as supreme duties of practical action schema. This would be the confluence of all factors and aspects, actors and players, and all other co-sharers and concerned entities involved.

Existence of effective consensus, according to the present author, may be the best practicable and possible confluence center from which travel towards achieving common cause, goals and welfare may be started with the skillful piloting of the leadership and effective functioning of the governance. This would moreover give true testimony of people's status and roles. This would enhance the position of the people from spectators and apathetic level to the height of gladiators. It would empower them, involve them, and make them real participants. They would get access and entitlement not as assurance but as ascertained reality. It would be the proof that they are not servants but masters. It would be the reflection that they would remain aware and vigilant changing their status from the condition of being subjects, and thus they would come up as real controllers. It would be the expression that the people are not auxiliaries but essential. The people would no more be other-directed but self-directed. The total approach and way of looking at things would no more be top-down or trickle down. It would be bottom-up and from grass-root local to central and national, and from regional to international.

Political consensus would be the direction, the basic guideline, the operational manual, the beacon light, the albatross, the light-house, the conscience pricking and speaking essence that would guard the national interests and peoples' common cause and welfare. Political consensus would keep the state and governance process on right track and in constant proper action which would bring and steadily enhance people's prosperity approximately to the most desired optimum standard with balanced objectivity.

What we lack now is the presence of a sound political consensus, and that tells us the whole truth about rotten criminalized politics; dysfunctional institutions; jeopardized human respect and liberty; pandemonium social order; and uncertain common future.

Consensual convergence of values, vertebra and vertex

Let us prefer our own way of looking at things. Let us create our own understanding. Let us develop our own route. Let us give topmost priority to our own agenda, goal setting, target-fixing for honoring our

common will; for achieving our common cause and common welfare; for ascertaining our true progress; and for ensuring our common future. Let us develop a consensus on fundamentals covering all our problems, issues, concerns, aspirations, and make it inclusive and sustainable by giving the vast and basic constituency of our unknown multitudes, our population geography the highest priority not only with their involvement, rather with their effectual belongingness in the midst, at the top and as the principal and self-directed social contract-builder entity.

Reflection of the society, overall approach, collective reason, mass involvement, people's participation, common understanding, connectivity, public welfare, general good, convergence of diverse sections, political integration, broad-based national unity, effective formulae and functional process, consent of the people, sanction and legitimacy of the highest order, enjoining values, highest cultural standard, accepted and adapted goal orientation, responsive attitude, acknowledged fundamental principles– all would have to come to a converging point making the entire edifice of consensus feasible one and simultaneously increasing its probability of implementation success.

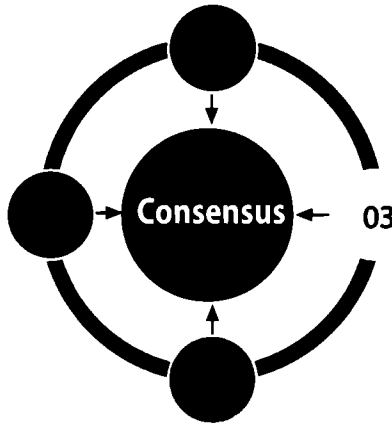
Caution: 04 basic conditions interrelated

Four things must be kept in mind while a society, nation and polity would go for political consensus building. According to present researcher, these are:

- 1) Politics cannot be totally value free;
- 2) Theoretical and practical, normative and empirical, probability and proximity, aspects and dimensions would go hand in hand. Minus one aspect or one sided approach devoid of referred sets would not give pragmatic and positive results;
- 3) Human behavior cannot be studied and applied in a positive channel totally through a scientific method. Art, psyche, mindset and ethics also would have to be included in making a balanced objectivity of things;
- 4) There is no universal paradigm for political analysis. Everything is relative. That actually makes the whole attitude, approach and application truly scientific.

Graphic presentation of 04 preconditions

Graph: 05



Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

Here,

01= No absolute value neutrality;

02= Theory and practice intertwined;

03= Combination of art and science, psyche and ethics for balanced objectivity; and

04= No universal paradigm, but relatively suitable and best practicable should be searched out.

Consensus builders' qualification chart

According to the present researcher, qualification and environment required for consensus building may be proposed in the following way keeping in mind the presence of dual possibilities in the social-political environment when presence of negative loads may jeopardize consensus process, whereas positive convergence may give rise to successful political consensus. A proposed construction process of consensus may be found out from the chart prepared and given below (Chart 02) by the present researcher keeping in mind with utmost importance the hypothesis developed by him in the present write-up and given forward for consideration of political scientists as well as researchers of other allied disciplines along with political actors.

Political consensus: chart for qualifications and required environment

YES consensus	
	'Yes' consensus building capacity: positive dimension
1	Man with empathy
2	Man with self-directed orientation
3	Man against one dimensional thought and with multi-dimensionality
4	Man with creative impulse
5	Man with conciliatory nature
6	Man with integrative behavior
7	Compromise seeker
8	Collaborative negotiator
9	Peace lover
10	Involved and participatory citizens
11	High political culture
12	Active nature of people
13	Open thinking
14	Proactive mind
15	Holistic trend
16	Shared attitude
17	Pluralistic
18	Rational
19	Initiator
20	Gain-gain seeker
21	Win-win seeker
22	Pragmatic
23	Bottom up
24	Aggregating
25	Presence of social contract
26	Grace of strong common sense and cultural support
27	Ethical/moral

Source: Hasanuzzaman Choudhury, 2016

Conclusion

Consensus would be connected with consciousness, congruence and consent. It would link up conceptual and empirical dimensions and would make possible removing the gaps and distrust on the one hand, and bridging the compatriots and elites on the other. It would not probably remain a myth if mind of multitudes may be given mental strength and material support simultaneously with common understanding and zeal along with common effort adjunct with common cause.

We must demonstrate serious ethical and moral response to build up a true political consensus for facing our turmoil-centered present and for securing our common cause and mass welfare based future. These non-separable twin duties would have to be performed as compulsive and essential, if we want to remain in existence as worthy and respected people within the peripheral geography of Bangladesh, amongst the committee of countries under globalized world order but with a glocal (global + local) type umbrella. We must think globally and act locally.

However, this proposed theoretical construction of building up consensus for solving societal, political, economic, cultural and other problems along with statecraft and governance mechanism, may be applied probably in any country and in state entity. Hence, it may be taken as a general construction and formulae for social order to be made dynamic and to be run towards stability, peace and sustained development and progress. Here lies the greatest importance of consensus.

Let us remind ourselves that constraint goes when conscience operates. Political consensus must remain inseparable with our conscience and social contour for facing the challenges in front of us. The obstacles that are being posed as conundrums of the most difficult types may be removed through building up consensus. After all, consensus governance has a scope to base on peoples' rationality and reason, logic and locus standee. It would depend upon peoples' aspiration, desire and expectation. It would have to be done with peoples' inclusiveness, involvement, participation and belongingness. It would reflect peoples' voice, choice and verdict. It would be the victory of peoples' sphere enhancement, empowerment and enlightenment. It would ensure their access and entitlement, and ascertain social, economic and political justice. Integration, deliberation, responsiveness, transparency and accountability might have sincere chance to be functional in the real sense of the term through consensus building. Thus, consensually unified governance has been given topmost importance by the present researcher in his present work. Consensus government may become nearer to peoples' governing, ethically and morally more sound when it

would be springing out from the core of basic largest constituency to whom the social order, the state, the power structure, the governance, the institutional entities, the key players and elites owe too much for their very existence, and for whom they all are legitimized and by whom they are sanctified.

In this connection John Locke's thought may be mentioned. He gave the spirit while giving his idea of consensus that reason could identify divine moral laws that would be acceptable to member of all cultural groups, thereby justifying the authority of the government. Locke correctly understood that consensus is the social and political solidarity on moral foundations (Forster, 2005).

Promise for pluralist prospects and promising future

Bangladesh, our beloved country, and any other country inhabited by human beings cannot be defeated. We, in Bangladesh, must rediscover ourselves with creative impulse and with a broad-minded good will. We must keep in mind that comfortable inaction is much more dangerous and costly, than required uncomfortable action knocking at the door. Hence, we can pronounce both individually and collectively in scale-bound rhythm and symphony the following:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go
And miles to go before I sleep.

--Robert Frost (1923, 1951, 1969)

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