

All the prevailing signs suggest that the top politicians of our two major political parties nurture extreme ideas. One side is determined not to sit in any talks with its rival to resolve the political crisis. The other is still determined even after one and a half months of non-stop blockade to continue it. These extreme stand points fail to bring anything positive for people who have been suffering immensely from the war waged by the two feuding sides.

When and how will the war come to an end? Many people think that the warring politicians do not know the exact answer. If both sides do not negotiate, there is only one way for solution: one side must win by eliminating the other.

The prevailing situation is a manifestation of the strategy of the two major political parties-- Awami League and BNP. Take the case of non-partisan caretaker government system. When the AL had raised the demand for the introduction of the caretaker system in 1994, the then BNP-led government rejected the demand. The BNP had termed it unconstitutional, as the caretaker government was consisted of unelected people. Its extreme stance could not yield positive result. Rather it had paved the way for the one-sided February 15 parliamentary election in 1996. Finally, the BNP had conceded defeat to violent street agitation waged by the AL-led opposition parties.

The caretaker government system was proved effective in holding three parliamentary elections which were largely free and fair. But the AL in 2011 had taken stance against the caretaker government system labelling it unconstitutional. The AL-led government unilaterally abolished the caretaker system in June 2011, claiming that the cancellation had ensured people's empowerment. This extreme position has generated present political crisis with a violent movement by the BNP-led alliance. More than 500 people were killed in 2013. The one-sided election was held on January 5, 2014. And the crisis is continuing even a year after that election with more killing and burning.

Extremism Destroys Democracy

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Whenever in power, our politicians talk about people's empowerment. They claim that unelected people can never be allowed to hold onto power – legislative and executive. And interestingly, they offer only election as a means to empower people.

Things are pretty interesting in the UK, the birth place of the Westminster model of democracy. The lower house of the UK Parliament, the House of Commons consists of elected representatives. But the upper chamber of the parliament, the House of Lords consists of unelected people. It has been going on for a few hundred years. The House of Lords plays some significant role in overseeing and reviewing the functions of the House of Commons and the functions of the government as well. There is nothing wrong with the House of Lords' exercise of the state's legislative powers.

Even six prime ministers in between 1837 and 1902 were peers – members of the unelected House of Lords.

The situation in India, the world largest democracy, is almost the same. The lower chamber of the parliament, Lok Sabha is comprised of directly elected representatives while the upper chamber, Rajya Sabha is consisted of indirectly elected people. Alongside the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha also exercises the state's legislative power. Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohon Singh, who led the executive branch of the government, was a

member of Rajya Sabha.

What is the state of democracy in UK and India? The UK has a mature and functional democracy where people's rights always get the priority. India, too, has a very functional and vibrant democracy that keeps the country moving forward.

Can our politicians claim that democracy does not exist in the UK and India? Given the prevailing situation can they claim that democracy exists in Bangladesh? The truth is that extremism in our politics is destroying our democracy.

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.

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