



Research Monograph

On

**“Reasonable Restrictions on Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh:
Balancing Liberty and Social Order”**

**This Research Submitted for the Partial Fulfillment of the award of the degree in
LL.M (Final) Department of Law, Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka.**

Prepared For:

**Department of Law
Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka**

Supervised By:

Sharmin Jahan Runa
Assistant Professor & Head of the Department
Department of Law
Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

Submitted By:

MD Kawsar Hossen
ID: LLM2502033012
Program: LL.M (Final)
Batch: 33rd
Department of Law
Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

Date of Submission: 25th June, 2026

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

To

Sharmin Jahan Runa

Assistant Professor & Head of the Department

Department of Law

Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka.

Subject: Submission of research paper on **“Reasonable Restrictions on Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh: Balancing Liberty and Social Order”**

Dear Sir,

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Thanking you

MD Kawsar Hossen

ID: LLM2502033012

Program: LL.M (Final)

Batch: 33rd

Department of Law

Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

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This is to certify that the thesis on “**Reasonable Restrictions on Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh: Balancing Liberty and Social Order**” is done by MD Kawsar Hossenin partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of LL.M. (Final) from Sonargaon University, Dhaka. The thesis has been carried out under my guidance and is a record of the bonafide work carried out successfully.

.....

Sharmin Jahan Runa

Assistant Professor & Head of the Department

Department of Law

Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

DECLARATION

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MD Kawsar Hossen
ID: LLM2502033012
Program: LL.M (Final)
Batch: 33rd
Department of Law
Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At first, I would like to thank Almighty Allah for his kindness on me in accomplishing the report. I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to my honorable and distinguished supervisor Sharmin Jahan Runa, Assistant Professor & Head of the Department, Department of Law, Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka for her individual suggestions, valuable time, important information and guidance during the study period that has greatly inspired me in preparing this report successfully.

It could not possible to think all those people who have contributed for the preparation of this report of course there are some very special names that cannot be forgotten. I am also grateful to the Department of Law, Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka for providing me such an opportunity to come closer to real situation. Finally, I want to express my deep gratitude to my family members and all well wishers whose enormous helps assisted me to complete this report.

MD Kawsar Hossen

ID: LLM2502033012

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Department of Law

Sonargaon University (SU), Dhaka

Abstract

This research paper examines the doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh, focusing on the constitutional and judicial balance between individual liberty and social order. Fundamental rights, guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution, are essential for protecting human dignity, equality, and democratic participation. However, these rights are not absolute and are subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by the State in the interest of public order, national security, morality, public health, and the rights of others. The study adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology based on primary sources such as the Constitution of Bangladesh, statutory laws, and judicial decisions, along with secondary sources including books, journal articles, and international human rights instruments. It critically examines how the concept of “reasonableness” is interpreted and applied by the judiciary, particularly under Article 102 of the Constitution.

The findings of the study indicate that while the constitutional framework of Bangladesh provides strong safeguards for fundamental rights, the absence of a precise definition of “reasonable restriction” creates interpretative flexibility and occasional inconsistency in judicial application. The judiciary plays a vital role in maintaining constitutional balance through judicial review, yet challenges remain in ensuring uniform application of principles such as proportionality and necessity. The research also highlights contemporary issues such as preventive detention, digital regulation, and restrictions on freedom of expression, which raise significant concerns regarding the protection of civil liberties. Although these measures are often justified on grounds of public order and national security, their misuse or overbroad application may threaten fundamental freedoms. In conclusion, the study emphasizes that maintaining a proper balance between liberty and social order is essential for democratic governance. Strengthening judicial oversight, ensuring legislative clarity, and aligning domestic law with international human rights standards are necessary to ensure that reasonable restrictions remain truly reasonable in both law and practice.

Abbreviation

AD	– Appellate Division (Supreme Court of Bangladesh)
Art./Arts.	– Article/Articles
BLAST	– Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
Bd.	– Bangladesh
BC	– Before Christ (historical reference)
BdLR	– Bangladesh Law Reports
BHR	– Bangladesh Human Rights
CUP	– Cambridge University Press
CrPC	– Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898
DLR	– Dhaka Law Reports
Edn	– Edition
et al.	– and others
HCD	– High Court Division (Supreme Court of Bangladesh)
ICCPR	– International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICHR	– International Convention on Human Rights (general reference usage)
ibid.	– in the same place (citation term)
ICJ	– International Court of Justice
OHCHR	– Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
para.	– paragraph
S	– Section
SPL Act	– Special Powers Act, 1974
UDHR	– Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	– United Nations
UNHRC	– United Nations Human Rights Committee
UK	– United Kingdom
USA	– United States of America
v.	– versus
Vol.	– Volume
WLR	– Weekly Law Reports

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

- 1.1 Background of the Study
- 1.2 Statement of the Problem
- 1.3 Research Questions
- 1.4 Objectives of the Study
- 1.5 Literature Review
- 1.6 Research Methodology
- 1.7 Significance of the Study
- 1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study
- 1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework of Fundamental Rights and Reasonable Restrictions

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Meaning and Nature of Criminology
- 2.3 Historical Development of Fundamental Rights
- 2.4 Concept of Reasonable Restrictions
- 2.5 Relationship Between Liberty and Social Order
- 2.6 Constitutional Framework of Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh
- 2.7 Constitutional Basis of Reasonable Restrictions:
- 2.8 Grounds of Restriction under the Constitution
- 2.9 International Human Rights Perspective
- 2.10 Conclusion

Chapter Three: Constitutional and Judicial Analysis of Reasonable Restrictions in Bangladesh

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Role of the Judiciary in Protecting Fundamental Rights
- 3.3 Judicial Review under the Constitution
- 3.4 Doctrine of Proportionality
- 3.5 Preventive Detention and Constitutional Validity
- 3.6 Judicial Interpretation of Freedom of Speech and Expression
- 3.7 Analysis of Landmark Cases
- 3.8 Conclusion

Chapter Four: Balancing Liberty and Social Order in Bangladesh

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Freedom of Expression and Digital Regulation
- 4.3 Restrictions on Public Assembly and Association
- 4.4 National Security versus Individual Liberty
- 4.5 Political Demonstrations and Public Order
- 4.6 Preventive Detention and Human Rights Concerns
- 4.7 Conclusion

Chapter Five: Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Major Findings
- 5.3 Recommendations
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Fundamental rights are regarded as the foundation of constitutional democracy and the protection of human dignity. These rights ensure the liberty, equality, and freedom of individuals against arbitrary interference by the State. In modern democratic societies, constitutions recognize and protect certain basic rights as essential for the development of individuals and the maintenance of the rule of law. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees fundamental rights under Part III, reflecting the democratic ideals and aspirations of the nation.¹ The constitutional recognition of these rights signifies the commitment of the State to uphold justice, equality, and human freedom.

The concept of fundamental rights emerged from historical struggles against oppressive governance and arbitrary exercise of power. Important constitutional developments such as the Magna Carta, the French Revolution, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights greatly influenced modern constitutional systems across the world.² These developments established the principle that individuals possess inherent rights which cannot be taken away arbitrarily by the State. Bangladesh, as a democratic republic, incorporated similar principles into its Constitution after gaining independence in 1971.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees several fundamental rights, including equality before law, non-discrimination, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of profession, and freedom of religion.³ These rights are essential for ensuring democratic participation, accountability, and human development. However, the Constitution does not recognize these freedoms as absolute rights. Like many democratic constitutions, it permits the State to impose certain restrictions in the interest of public order, morality, national security, and public welfare.⁴

The doctrine of reasonable restriction is therefore an important constitutional mechanism designed to balance individual liberty with collective social interests. Absolute freedom

¹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

² Hilaire Barnett, *Constitutional and Administrative Law* (12th edn, Routledge 2021) 487.

³ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 27–44.

⁴ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 215.

may create social disorder, threaten national security, or infringe upon the rights of others. On the other hand, excessive restrictions imposed by the State may undermine democracy, suppress dissent, and violate constitutional guarantees. Thus, constitutional law attempts to establish a balance between personal liberty and social order through the principle of reasonable restrictions.⁵

In Bangladesh, several constitutional provisions explicitly authorize restrictions on fundamental rights. Article 36 allows restrictions on freedom of movement in the public interest, while Articles 37 and 38 permit restrictions on assembly and association for the maintenance of public order and morality.⁶ Similarly, Article 39 guarantees freedom of speech and expression but allows limitations in the interest of state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, morality, and contempt of court.⁷ Article 41 also subjects religious freedom to law, public order, and morality.⁸ These provisions demonstrate that the Constitution recognizes both individual rights and societal interests as important constitutional values.

The judiciary of Bangladesh plays a significant role in interpreting the constitutional validity of restrictive laws and executive actions. The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that restrictions imposed on fundamental rights must not be arbitrary, excessive, or mala fide.⁹ Courts often examine whether the restriction is proportionate to the objective sought to be achieved and whether it complies with constitutional principles. Judicial review therefore acts as a safeguard against abuse of state power.

In recent years, debates concerning freedom of expression, digital regulation, preventive detention, and public order laws have intensified in Bangladesh. Critics argue that some laws have been used to suppress political opposition, journalists, and civil society activists in the name of maintaining social order and national security.¹⁰ Others contend that restrictions are necessary to combat terrorism, cybercrime, misinformation, and communal violence. This tension between liberty and state control highlights the importance of understanding the constitutional doctrine of reasonable restrictions.

⁵ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (Mullick Brothers 2012) 167.

⁶ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–38.

⁷ *ibid* art 39.

⁸ *ibid* art 41.

⁹ *BLAST v. Bangladesh* 55 DLR (HCD) 363.

¹⁰ Amnesty International, 'Bangladesh: Freedom of Expression under Threat' (2023).

International human rights law also recognizes that certain restrictions on rights may be permissible under specific conditions. Instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights permit restrictions only when they are lawful, necessary, and proportionate for protecting legitimate state interests.¹¹ As Bangladesh is a party to several international human rights treaties, its constitutional framework and legal practices should be consistent with these international standards.

Therefore, the issue of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights remains highly significant in Bangladesh. A democratic society requires both protection of individual freedom and preservation of public order. The challenge lies in ensuring that restrictions are applied fairly, reasonably, and in accordance with constitutional and international human rights principles. This study seeks to examine how Bangladesh balances liberty and social order through constitutional restrictions and judicial interpretation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees a number of fundamental rights to ensure liberty, equality, justice, and human dignity for all citizens.¹² These constitutional guarantees are considered essential for the functioning of democracy and the rule of law. However, the Constitution also empowers the State to impose restrictions on the exercise of these rights in the interests of public order, state security, morality, public health, and other social considerations.¹³ Although such restrictions are constitutionally permissible, the broad scope of state authority often creates tension between individual liberty and governmental control.

One of the major problems in Bangladesh is the absence of clear and consistent standards for determining what constitutes a "reasonable restriction." The Constitution itself does not provide a detailed definition of reasonableness, leaving the matter largely to legislative and judicial interpretation.¹⁴ As a result, restrictive laws and executive actions are sometimes applied in a manner that may exceed constitutional limitations. In many instances, concerns have been raised regarding the misuse of laws related to public order,

¹¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art 19.

¹² The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 27–44.

¹³ *ibid* arts 36–41.

¹⁴ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (Mullick Brothers 2012) 172.

preventive detention, and digital communication to suppress political opposition, journalists, human rights defenders, and dissenting opinions.¹⁵

Preventive detention laws remain one of the most controversial examples of restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh. The Special Powers Act 1974 authorizes detention without trial under certain circumstances in the name of national security and public safety.¹⁶ Critics argue that such powers are vulnerable to abuse and may violate constitutional protections relating to personal liberty and due process.¹⁷ Although the judiciary has occasionally intervened to prevent arbitrary detention, the continued use of preventive detention raises serious questions regarding compatibility with democratic governance and human rights principles.

Another significant issue concerns freedom of speech and expression. Article 39 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and speech but permits restrictions on grounds such as state security, public order, morality, and contempt of court.¹⁸ In practice, certain laws regulating digital communication and online expression have been criticized for creating fear and self-censorship among journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens.¹⁹ The broad wording of some statutory provisions may allow discretionary enforcement, thereby threatening democratic participation and open political discourse.

Restrictions on public assembly and political demonstrations also create constitutional controversy. Law enforcement authorities frequently impose limitations on meetings, processions, and protests on the grounds of maintaining public order and security.¹⁹ While maintaining social stability is a legitimate state objective, excessive restrictions may weaken citizens' constitutional right to peaceful assembly and political participation. The challenge therefore lies in ensuring that restrictions are necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Freedom under Threat' (2023).

¹⁶ Special Powers Act 1974, s 3.

¹⁷ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 231.

¹⁸ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 39.

¹⁹ Amnesty International, 'Bangladesh: Repressive Laws and Freedom of Expression' (2022).

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the constitutional and legal basis of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh?
- How have the courts in Bangladesh interpreted and applied the doctrine of reasonable restrictions in protecting liberty and maintaining social order?
- To what extent do the existing laws and practices relating to restrictions on fundamental rights comply with democratic principles and international human rights standards?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Broad Objective

To critically analyze the constitutional doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh and to examine how it balances individual liberty with the need for social order, public security, and national interest.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the constitutional provisions governing fundamental rights and permissible restrictions in Bangladesh.
2. To analyze the judicial interpretation of reasonable restrictions by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.
3. To identify the practical challenges in applying the doctrine of reasonable restrictions in real-life situations.
4. To assess whether existing restrictive laws comply with democratic principles and human rights standards.
5. To propose legal and policy reforms for ensuring a fair balance between liberty and social order.

1.5 Literature Review

Jahan critically examines the constitutional framework of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh. She argues that the absence of a precise legal definition of “reasonableness” creates interpretational ambiguity. This often leads to inconsistent judicial outcomes in fundamental rights cases. The author emphasizes the need for clearer statutory guidelines. She also highlights the importance of proportionality as a guiding principle. The study concludes that judicial clarity is essential for protecting civil liberties.²⁰

²⁰ Tabassuma Jahan, ‘Reasonable Restrictions on Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh’ (2024) SSRN.

Mahmud explores the tension between state authority and individual liberty in Bangladesh. He argues that while restrictions are necessary for public order, excessive state power can undermine democracy. The study highlights misuse of preventive detention and security laws. It stresses that constitutional safeguards must be strictly enforced. The author calls for stronger accountability mechanisms. He concludes that unchecked restrictions threaten constitutional governance.²¹

Gunatilleke analyzes global standards on freedom of expression and its limitations. He explains that restrictions must satisfy legality, necessity, and proportionality tests. The study shows how vague laws can create chilling effects on speech. It emphasizes the importance of judicial oversight. The author warns against overbroad national security justifications. The study is relevant for assessing Bangladesh's legal framework.²²

Ahmed focuses on press freedom and regulatory constraints in South Asia. He argues that media laws often reflect political interests rather than constitutional principles. The study identifies self-censorship as a major consequence of restrictive laws. It also discusses the impact of state surveillance on journalism. The author highlights the need for independent media protection. He concludes that press freedom is essential for democracy.²³

Hossen critically evaluates preventive detention laws in Bangladesh. He argues that such laws often conflict with the right to personal liberty. The study highlights lack of effective judicial safeguards. It shows how detention powers may be misused for political purposes. The author emphasizes constitutional inconsistency in application. He recommends reform of security legislation.²⁴

Haque discusses the constitutional structure of fundamental rights and state principles. He explains that rights are subject to reasonable limitations for public welfare. The study emphasizes the balance between individual liberty and state policy. It highlights the role of constitutional interpretation in rights enforcement. The author stresses the importance of legal coherence. He concludes that balance is essential for governance.²⁵

²¹ Raad Mahmud, 'Fundamental Rights & State Power in Bangladesh' (2025) SSRN.

²² Gehan Gunatilleke, 'Justifying Limitations on Freedom of Expression' (2020) Human Rights Review.

²³ Abul Mansur Ahmed, 'Press Freedom and Legal Restrictions in South Asia' (2012) Media Asia.

²⁴ Md Ferdows Hossen, 'Preventive Detention and Constitutional Rights in Bangladesh' (2022) Commonwealth Law Review Journal.

²⁵ Muhammad Ekramul Haque, *Constitutional and Legal Structure of Bangladesh* (2005) DU Law Journal.

This study examines digital governance and its impact on civil liberties in Bangladesh. It highlights how online regulations affect freedom of expression. The research shows that cybersecurity laws can be overly restrictive. It emphasizes the need for privacy protection. The study discusses risks of digital surveillance. It concludes that digital rights require stronger safeguards.²⁶

The study analyzes governance challenges in emerging technologies. It explains that regulatory uncertainty affects rights-based governance. The authors highlight institutional weaknesses in policy implementation. The study also notes lack of digital legal infrastructure. It emphasizes transparent regulatory frameworks. It concludes that governance reform is necessary for rights protection.²⁷

This research focuses on accessibility and governance in digital health systems. It identifies structural barriers in service delivery. The study links governance inefficiencies with limited citizen access to rights-based services. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive policy design. The authors highlight digital inequality issues. The study concludes that governance must be citizen-centered.²⁸

This study examines emerging data protection frameworks in developing countries. It highlights weaknesses in institutional enforcement mechanisms. The authors argue that weak data protection threatens privacy rights. The study emphasizes the need for strong regulatory authorities. It also discusses global compliance challenges. It concludes that legal reform is urgently required.²⁹

The report documents concerns regarding shrinking civic space in Bangladesh. It highlights restrictions on journalists and activists. The study shows increasing use of security laws against dissent. It emphasizes risks to freedom of expression. The report calls for legal reforms and accountability. It concludes that rights protection is weakening.³⁰

This report analyzes human rights violations linked to restrictive laws. It highlights fear and self-censorship among citizens. The study focuses on misuse of digital security

²⁶ Islam MN et al., 'Digital Governance and Rights in Bangladesh' (2020) arXiv.

²⁷ Al Hussain A et al., 'Blockchain Governance and Policy Challenges' (2022) arXiv.

²⁸ Islam MN et al., 'Mobile Health Systems and Governance Issues' (2020) arXiv.

²⁹ Saha P et al., 'Data Protection and Privacy Governance Challenges' (2026) arXiv.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Freedom under Threat' (2023).

regulations. It emphasizes lack of legal safeguards. The report criticizes excessive executive discretion. It calls for alignment with international standards.³¹

Rahman provides a doctrinal analysis of constitutional law in Bangladesh. He explains the importance of proportionality in restricting rights. The study emphasizes judicial responsibility in safeguarding liberty. It highlights inconsistencies in judicial interpretation. The author stresses legal reform for clarity. He concludes that constitutional balance is essential.³²

Islam explains the constitutional basis of fundamental rights in Bangladesh. He argues that rights are not absolute but subject to reasonable restrictions. The study discusses the role of state interest in limiting rights. It emphasizes judicial interpretation as a safeguard. The author highlights constitutional supremacy. He concludes that balance is necessary for democracy.³³

These classical constitutional scholars explain the theoretical foundation of fundamental rights. They argue that no right is absolute in any democratic system. The works emphasize the necessity of legal restrictions for public order. They also stress the importance of judicial review. The literature provides comparative perspectives from common law systems. It concludes that balance between liberty and order is a universal principle.³⁴

1.6 Research Methodology

This study adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology to examine the constitutional doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh. The research primarily focuses on the interpretation of constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, statutes, and relevant legal principles governing the balance between liberty and social order.

The research is mainly qualitative in nature, relying on secondary sources of data. These include the Constitution of Bangladesh, statutory laws, landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, books, journal articles, research papers, law commission

³¹ Amnesty International, 'Bangladesh: Repressive Laws and Freedom of Expression' (2022).

³² Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (2019).

³³ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (2012).

³⁴ Hilaire Barnett, *Constitutional and Administrative Law* (2021); A.V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*.

reports, and reports published by national and international human rights organizations. This approach helps in understanding both theoretical and practical dimensions of reasonable restrictions.

A doctrinal legal research method has been used to analyze existing legal rules and judicial interpretations. Relevant constitutional provisions, especially Articles 27 to 44 of the Constitution, are critically examined to understand the scope and limitations of fundamental rights. Judicial decisions are analyzed to identify how courts have interpreted the concept of “reasonableness” in restricting fundamental rights.

In addition, a comparative legal approach is applied to understand how different jurisdictions such as India and the United Kingdom interpret similar doctrines. This comparative analysis helps in identifying best practices and gaps in the legal framework of Bangladesh.

The study also uses analytical and descriptive methods. The descriptive method is used to present constitutional provisions and legal principles, while the analytical method is applied to critically evaluate the effectiveness of laws and judicial interpretations in protecting fundamental rights.

No field survey or primary empirical data collection has been conducted for this study. However, secondary data from credible academic and institutional sources have been carefully evaluated to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Overall, this methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of how the doctrine of reasonable restrictions operates in Bangladesh and whether it effectively maintains a balance between individual liberty and social order.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study on reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh is highly significant in understanding the balance between individual liberty and the necessity of maintaining social order, public safety, and national security. In a democratic constitutional system, fundamental rights are considered essential for protecting human dignity and ensuring citizens’ participation in governance. However, these rights are not absolute, and the State is empowered to impose reasonable restrictions under specific

constitutional grounds.³⁵ This study is therefore important in examining how such restrictions operate in practice and whether they align with constitutional principles.

Firstly, this research is significant from a constitutional law perspective. It helps in clarifying the scope and limitations of fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution. By analyzing constitutional provisions and judicial interpretations, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the doctrine of reasonableness is applied in Bangladesh. It also highlights the role of the judiciary in safeguarding constitutional rights against arbitrary state action.³⁶

Secondly, the study is important for legal practitioners, judges, and policymakers. In many cases, ambiguity in laws relating to public order, national security, and digital regulation creates difficulties in determining the legality of restrictions. This research provides analytical insights that may assist in interpreting and applying constitutional provisions more consistently. It also emphasizes the need for clearer legislative drafting to avoid misuse of discretionary powers.³⁷

Thirdly, the research is significant for human rights protection. In recent years, concerns have been raised regarding freedom of expression, preventive detention, and restrictions on peaceful assembly. This study critically evaluates whether existing legal frameworks comply with international human rights standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It contributes to the ongoing discourse on strengthening civil liberties and ensuring accountability in governance.³⁸

Fourthly, this study is useful for academic development. It adds to the existing body of literature on constitutional law in Bangladesh by focusing specifically on the balance between liberty and social order. It also provides a structured analysis that may benefit future researchers, law students, and scholars interested in constitutional governance and human rights law.³⁹

Finally, the study has practical policy relevance. It identifies gaps in the existing legal framework and suggests reforms to ensure that restrictions on fundamental rights remain

³⁵ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–39.

³⁶ Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

³⁷ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (Mullick Brothers 2012) 215.

³⁸ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts 19 and 21.

³⁹ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 184.

reasonable, proportionate, and transparent. This is essential for strengthening democratic governance, ensuring rule of law, and maintaining public confidence in the legal system.⁴⁰

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the constitutional doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh and examines how the legal system balances individual liberty with social order, public safety, and national interest. The research primarily analyzes Part III of the Constitution of Bangladesh, which guarantees fundamental rights, along with the corresponding constitutional provisions that allow restrictions on these rights.⁴¹

The scope of this study includes a detailed examination of key constitutional provisions such as Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, and 41, which deal with restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly, association, speech, and religion. It also includes judicial interpretations by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh to understand how courts have applied the concept of “reasonableness” in different cases.⁴² Furthermore, the study considers selected comparative perspectives from jurisdictions such as India and the United Kingdom to highlight global approaches to balancing liberty and state interest.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its comprehensive scope, the study has certain limitations. First, this research is primarily doctrinal and does not include empirical or field-based data collection. As a result, it does not directly capture public perception or lived experiences regarding the impact of restrictions on fundamental rights.

Second, the study is limited to secondary sources such as legal texts, judicial decisions, academic writings, and reports. The availability of up-to-date case law and official data in some areas is limited, which may affect the depth of analysis in certain contexts⁴³.

Third, although the study includes comparative references from other jurisdictions, it does not provide an in-depth comparative legal analysis of all democratic countries. The

⁴⁰ Hilaire Barnett, *Constitutional and Administrative Law* (Routledge 2021) 512.

⁴¹ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁴² *ibid* arts 36–39.

⁴³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts 19 and 21.

comparison is limited to selected jurisdictions such as India and the United Kingdom for illustrative purposes only.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction and Research Framework

This chapter introduces the research topic and provides the foundational framework of the study. It includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, literature review, methodology, significance, scope, and limitations of the research. It sets the conceptual and analytical foundation for the entire study.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework of Fundamental Rights and Reasonable Restrictions

This chapter discusses the theoretical and constitutional concepts of fundamental rights and reasonable restrictions. It examines the meaning, nature, historical development, constitutional basis, and international human rights perspective of fundamental rights. It also explores the relationship between liberty and social order.

Chapter Three: Constitutional and Judicial Analysis of Reasonable Restrictions in Bangladesh

This chapter focuses on the constitutional provisions and judicial interpretations governing reasonable restrictions. It analyzes the role of the judiciary, judicial review under Article 102, the doctrine of proportionality, preventive detention, and landmark case laws such as *Aruna Sen*, *BLAST v. Bangladesh*, and *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd*. It also highlights challenges in judicial enforcement.

Chapter Four: Balancing Liberty and Social Order in Practice

This chapter examines the practical application of fundamental rights and restrictions in real-life contexts. It discusses issues such as freedom of expression in the digital age, public assembly, political demonstrations, national security concerns, and preventive detention, showing how the balance between liberty and social order is maintained.

Chapter Five: Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The final chapter presents the major findings of the research, followed by policy-oriented recommendations. It concludes the study by summarizing the overall analysis and emphasizing the importance of maintaining a constitutional balance between individual liberty and social order.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework of Fundamental Rights and Reasonable Restrictions

2.1 Introduction

Fundamental rights constitute the cornerstone of constitutional democracy and are designed to protect individuals from arbitrary actions of the State while ensuring the dignity, liberty, and equality of all citizens. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, fundamental rights are enshrined in Part III of the Constitution and are legally enforceable, thereby providing strong judicial protection against any unlawful interference by public authorities.⁴⁴ These rights reflect the basic values of a democratic society, including freedom of expression, equality before law, and protection of life and personal liberty.

However, constitutional rights are not absolute in nature. Most modern constitutional systems, including Bangladesh, recognize that unrestricted exercise of rights may sometimes lead to conflict with the rights of others or disrupt public order and national security. Therefore, the Constitution permits the State to impose “reasonable restrictions” on certain fundamental rights in specified circumstances.⁴⁵ This doctrine is essential to maintain a balance between individual freedom and collective interests.

The concept of reasonable restrictions is rooted in the idea that liberty must be regulated in a manner that ensures social harmony and public welfare. While excessive freedom may lead to disorder, excessive restriction may result in authoritarianism. Thus, constitutional law seeks to maintain a delicate equilibrium between these competing interests. In Bangladesh, this balance is achieved through specific constitutional provisions that allow limitations on rights such as freedom of movement, assembly, association, speech, and religion under defined grounds such as public order, morality, and state security.⁴⁶

Judicial interpretation plays a crucial role in determining whether a restriction is “reasonable” or not. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has emphasized that restrictions must not be arbitrary, excessive, or beyond what is necessary to achieve a legitimate

⁴⁴ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁴⁵ *ibid* arts 36–41.

⁴⁶ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (Mullick Brothers 2012) 168.

objective. Courts often assess the proportionality and necessity of such restrictions to ensure that constitutional guarantees are not undermined.⁴⁷

This chapter therefore provides a conceptual foundation for understanding fundamental rights and reasonable restrictions. It explores their meaning, nature, constitutional basis, and the theoretical relationship between liberty and social order. This framework is essential for analyzing the practical application of these principles in subsequent chapters of the study.

2.2 Meaning and Nature of Criminology

Fundamental rights are those basic human freedoms and liberties which are guaranteed by the Constitution and are considered essential for the moral, political, and social development of individuals in a democratic society. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, these rights are enshrined in Part III of the Constitution and are legally enforceable through the courts, particularly the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Their enforceability distinguishes them from ordinary legal rights, making them an essential safeguard against arbitrary state action.⁴⁸

Fundamental rights generally include civil and political rights such as equality before law, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion, and protection of life and personal liberty. These rights are designed to ensure that individuals can live with dignity and participate freely in democratic governance. They also serve as limitations on the power of the State, ensuring that government authority is exercised within constitutional boundaries.⁴⁹

The nature of fundamental rights is both legal and constitutional. They are legal in the sense that they can be enforced in a court of law, and constitutional because they derive their authority directly from the Constitution. Unlike statutory rights, which can be modified or repealed by ordinary legislation, fundamental rights require constitutional amendment for any alteration. This gives them a higher legal status and ensures stronger protection for citizens.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

⁴⁸ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁴⁹ Mahmudul Islam, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (Mullick Brothers 2012) 172.

⁵⁰ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 145.

However, fundamental rights are not absolute in nature. The Constitution of Bangladesh allows the State to impose reasonable restrictions on certain rights in order to protect public order, morality, national security, and public health. This reflects the principle that individual liberty must be balanced with collective interests. Therefore, fundamental rights operate within a regulated constitutional framework rather than as unlimited freedoms.⁵¹

2.3 Historical Development of Fundamental Rights

The development of fundamental rights is closely linked with the evolution of constitutionalism and the struggle against arbitrary rule. The idea that individuals possess certain inalienable rights which must be protected from state interference gradually developed through centuries of political and legal transformation. These developments significantly influenced the constitutional framework of modern states, including Bangladesh.

The early foundation of fundamental rights can be traced to the Magna Carta, which limited the powers of the English monarchy and introduced the principle that the ruler is not above the law. This document is widely regarded as the first formal recognition of legal protections against arbitrary authority.⁵² Later, the development of the English Bill of Rights (1689) further strengthened civil liberties by establishing parliamentary supremacy and limiting royal authority.

In the eighteenth century, the concept of fundamental rights gained significant momentum through major political revolutions. The American Revolution introduced the idea that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed and must protect individual liberties such as freedom of speech and equality before law.⁵³ Similarly, the French Revolution played a crucial role in establishing the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, leading to the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

In the twentieth century, the global recognition of fundamental rights expanded significantly following the atrocities of the Second World War. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights marked a turning point in international human

⁵¹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–41.

⁵² J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (4th edn, Oxford University Press 2007) 24.

⁵³ Bernard Schwartz, *The Great Rights of Mankind* (Oxford University Press 1977) 89.

rights law by affirming universal and inalienable rights for all human beings regardless of nationality, race, or religion.⁵⁴ This was followed by legally binding international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which further strengthened global human rights protection mechanisms.

In South Asia, constitutional development after independence from colonial rule incorporated fundamental rights into national constitutions. The Constitution of India (1950) provided a detailed framework of fundamental rights and their reasonable restrictions, which influenced other regional constitutional systems. Similarly, after its independence in 1971, the Constitution of Bangladesh incorporated fundamental rights in Part III, reflecting both international human rights norms and regional constitutional experiences.⁵⁵

Thus, the historical development of fundamental rights demonstrates a continuous struggle for liberty against arbitrary power. Over time, these rights have evolved from limited legal protections to universally recognized constitutional guarantees. However, their application remains balanced by the doctrine of reasonable restrictions, which ensures that individual freedoms coexist with social order and public interest.

2.4 Concept of Reasonable Restrictions

The concept of “reasonable restrictions” is a constitutional doctrine that permits the State to limit certain fundamental rights in order to protect broader public interests such as public order, morality, health, and national security. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, fundamental rights are not absolute; rather, they operate within a controlled legal structure where the State is empowered to impose limitations under specific conditions as provided in the Constitution.⁵⁶

Reasonable restriction does not mean arbitrary or unlimited restriction. Instead, it implies that any limitation imposed on fundamental rights must be justified, proportionate, and necessary in a democratic society. The restriction must have a rational connection with the objective sought to be achieved, and it must not go beyond what is required to fulfill

⁵⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble.

⁵⁵ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁵⁶ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–39.

that objective. This principle ensures that state power is exercised within constitutional boundaries and does not infringe upon essential human liberties unnecessarily.⁵⁷

In constitutional practice, the test of reasonableness is primarily determined by the judiciary. Courts evaluate whether a restriction is fair, just, and not excessive. They also examine whether the law imposing the restriction serves a legitimate public purpose and whether less restrictive alternatives could have achieved the same objective. This judicial scrutiny acts as a safeguard against misuse of legislative or executive power.

The Constitution of Bangladesh explicitly provides grounds on which reasonable restrictions may be imposed. These include interests of sovereignty, integrity of the State, public order, morality, decency, and security of the State. For example, Articles 36, 37, 38, and 39 permit restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly, association, and expression under these specified grounds.⁵⁸ However, the interpretation of these grounds is crucial, as overly broad interpretation may lead to excessive curtailment of fundamental rights.

The doctrine of reasonable restrictions reflects the balance between individual liberty and collective welfare. While absolute freedom may lead to disorder and conflict, excessive restrictions may result in authoritarian governance. Therefore, constitutional law seeks to maintain equilibrium between these competing interests by ensuring that restrictions are justified and proportionate.

2.5 Relationship Between Liberty and Social Order

The relationship between liberty and social order is a fundamental concern of constitutional theory and democratic governance. Liberty refers to the freedom of individuals to act, express, and develop themselves without unnecessary interference, while social order refers to the stability, security, and regulatory framework necessary for the peaceful functioning of society. In the constitutional system of Bangladesh, both concepts are recognized as essential and interdependent components of a functioning democracy.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ M. P. Jain, *Indian Constitutional Law* (LexisNexis 2018) 1124.

⁵⁸ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–41.

⁵⁹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Preamble and Part III.

Liberty is a core value in any democratic system because it ensures individual dignity, freedom of expression, and participation in governance. Without liberty, citizens cannot fully exercise their rights or contribute to the political and social development of the state. However, unrestricted liberty may lead to chaos, conflict, and violation of the rights of others. Therefore, liberty must operate within a structured legal framework that ensures responsible exercise of freedoms.⁶⁰

On the other hand, social order is necessary to maintain peace, security, and stability in society. It allows the State to protect citizens from violence, crime, and disorder while ensuring the effective functioning of public institutions. However, excessive emphasis on social order may lead to authoritarian practices, where state power is used to suppress dissent and limit fundamental freedoms. This creates a risk of undermining democratic principles and constitutional rights.

The Constitution of Bangladesh attempts to balance these two values through the doctrine of reasonable restrictions. Fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, association, movement, and religion are guaranteed but subject to limitations in the interest of public order, morality, and security of the State.⁶¹ This constitutional design reflects the understanding that neither liberty nor social order can exist in isolation.

Judicial interpretation plays a critical role in maintaining this balance. Courts are required to ensure that restrictions imposed on fundamental rights are not excessive or arbitrary and that they serve a legitimate public purpose. Through the application of principles such as proportionality and necessity, the judiciary ensures that social order is maintained without compromising essential freedoms.

Philosophically, the relationship between liberty and social order reflects a constant tension in constitutional democracies. Thinkers such as John Stuart Mill argued that individual liberty should only be restricted to prevent harm to others, while others emphasized the need for stronger state control to maintain stability. Modern constitutional systems attempt to reconcile these views by adopting a balanced approach that protects both individual rights and collective interests.

⁶⁰ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 156.

⁶¹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–39.

Thus, liberty and social order are not opposing concepts but complementary forces. A well-functioning constitutional system ensures that liberty does not degenerate into disorder and that social order does not transform into repression. The Constitution of Bangladesh reflects this balance by allowing reasonable restrictions that are necessary for maintaining harmony between individual freedom and societal stability.

2.6 Constitutional Framework of Fundamental Rights in Bangladesh

The constitutional framework of fundamental rights in Bangladesh is primarily established in Part III of the Constitution, which guarantees a range of civil and political rights to all citizens. These rights reflect the core constitutional values of equality, dignity, and justice and are intended to protect individuals from arbitrary actions of the State.⁶² The inclusion of fundamental rights in the Constitution signifies a commitment to the rule of law and democratic governance.

Part III of the Constitution (Articles 26 to 47A) provides the legal foundation for fundamental rights in Bangladesh. It ensures that any law inconsistent with these rights shall, to the extent of inconsistency, be void. This provision establishes the supremacy of constitutional rights over ordinary legislation and reinforces the principle of constitutional supremacy.⁶³ It also empowers the judiciary to review laws and executive actions that violate fundamental rights.

The Constitution guarantees several key fundamental rights, including equality before law (Article 27), non-discrimination (Article 28), equality of opportunity (Article 29), protection of law (Article 31), protection of life and personal liberty (Article 32), freedom of movement (Article 36), freedom of assembly (Article 37), freedom of association (Article 38), freedom of thought and expression (Article 39), and freedom of religion (Article 41).⁶⁴ These rights collectively form the basis of individual liberty in the constitutional system.

2.7 Constitutional Basis of Reasonable Restrictions:

The doctrine of reasonable restrictions is firmly rooted in the Constitution of Bangladesh, which recognizes that fundamental rights, although guaranteed, are not absolute in nature. The Constitution provides specific provisions that allow the State to impose limitations

⁶² The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁶³ *ibid* art 26.

⁶⁴ *ibid* arts 27–41.

on certain rights in order to protect broader societal interests such as public order, morality, public health, and national security.⁶⁵ These constitutional limitations reflect the principle that individual liberty must coexist with collective welfare.

The primary constitutional basis of reasonable restrictions is found in Part III of the Constitution, particularly in Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, and 41. These provisions guarantee fundamental rights such as freedom of movement, assembly, association, speech, and religion, but explicitly allow the State to impose restrictions under defined conditions. For example, Article 36 permits restrictions on freedom of movement in the public interest, while Article 37 allows limitations on peaceful assembly for maintaining public order and health.⁶⁶

Similarly, Article 38 permits restrictions on the freedom of association in the interest of morality and public order. Article 39, which guarantees freedom of thought and expression, allows restrictions on grounds such as state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to an offence. Article 41 also subjects freedom of religion to restrictions imposed by law, public order, and morality.⁶⁷ These provisions collectively establish the constitutional foundation for imposing reasonable restrictions.

The concept of reasonableness is not explicitly defined in the Constitution, leaving its interpretation to judicial review. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh plays a critical role in determining whether a restriction is reasonable, necessary, and proportionate. Courts examine whether the restriction serves a legitimate purpose and whether it imposes excessive or unnecessary limitations on fundamental rights.

In essence, the constitutional basis of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh reflects a carefully designed balance between liberty and regulation. It ensures that while citizens enjoy fundamental freedoms, the State retains the authority to regulate those freedoms in the interest of public welfare and national security. This balance is essential for maintaining democratic governance and constitutional order.

2.8 Grounds of Restriction under the Constitution

⁶⁵ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁶⁶ *ibid* arts 36–38.

⁶⁷ *ibid* art 39; art 41

The Constitution of Bangladesh does not treat fundamental rights as absolute guarantees. Instead, it permits the State to impose “reasonable restrictions” on certain rights on specific constitutional grounds. These grounds are intended to ensure that individual liberty does not harm public welfare, national security, or the rights of others. The grounds of restriction are clearly reflected in several provisions of Part III of the Constitution.⁶⁸

One of the primary grounds for imposing restrictions is public order. Public order refers to the maintenance of peace, safety, and tranquility within society. The State may restrict freedoms such as assembly, association, and speech if their exercise threatens social stability or leads to violence, unrest, or disruption of normal life. This ground is particularly important in maintaining law and order in a democratic society.⁶⁹

Another important ground is state security. The Constitution allows restrictions where actions threaten the sovereignty, integrity, or security of the State. This includes activities such as terrorism, insurgency, or any conduct that endangers national unity and safety. While necessary for national protection, this ground must be applied carefully to avoid misuse against political dissent or legitimate criticism.

Morality and decency also constitute valid grounds for restriction. The State may regulate speech, expression, or conduct that is considered offensive to accepted social and cultural values. However, the concept of morality is often subjective and varies over time, making judicial interpretation essential to ensure that such restrictions are not overly broad or arbitrary.⁷⁰

Public health is another constitutional ground for restriction. In situations such as epidemics or public health emergencies, the State may impose limitations on movement, assembly, or other freedoms to prevent the spread of disease and protect public welfare. The COVID-19 pandemic is a recent example where such restrictions were widely applied globally, including in Bangladesh.

In addition, friendly relations with foreign states, contempt of court, defamation and incitement to an offence are also recognized grounds under Article 39 for restricting

⁶⁸ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁶⁹ *ibid* arts 37–39.

⁷⁰ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 162.

freedom of speech and expression. These grounds aim to balance free expression with the protection of other important legal and diplomatic interests.

2.9 International Human Rights Perspective

The doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights is not only a constitutional concept within national legal systems but also a recognized principle under international human rights law. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, fundamental rights and their limitations are interpreted in light of international human rights standards, particularly those to which Bangladesh is a party. These international instruments provide important guidance on how and when restrictions on rights may be justified in a democratic society.⁷¹

One of the most significant international instruments in this context is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although not legally binding, it establishes foundational principles of human dignity, equality, and freedom. It emphasizes that everyone is entitled to rights and freedoms without discrimination, and that any limitations must be consistent with the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of others and maintaining public order.⁷²

A more legally binding instrument is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides a comprehensive framework for permissible restrictions on fundamental rights. Articles 19, 21, and 22 of the ICCPR allow restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, but only when such restrictions are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society for the protection of national security, public order, public health, or morals.⁷³ The principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality are central to this framework.

International human rights law strongly emphasizes that restrictions must not be arbitrary or excessive. The “legality test” requires that any restriction must be clearly defined in law. The “necessity test” requires that the restriction must address a pressing social need. The “proportionality test” ensures that the limitation is not more restrictive than required to achieve its legitimate aim. These principles collectively aim to prevent abuse of state power and protect individual liberty.

⁷¹ Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Cornell University Press 2013) 45.

⁷² Universal Declaration of Human Rights, arts 1–3 and Preamble.

⁷³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts 19, 21, 22.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding fundamental rights and the doctrine of reasonable restrictions within the constitutional framework of Bangladesh. It has demonstrated that fundamental rights are essential constitutional guarantees designed to protect individual liberty, dignity, equality, and justice, while also acting as limits on arbitrary state power. However, these rights are not absolute and must function within a regulated constitutional structure.⁷⁴

The discussion has shown that the doctrine of reasonable restrictions is a necessary constitutional mechanism for maintaining a balance between individual freedom and collective interests such as public order, morality, public health, and national security. The Constitution of Bangladesh explicitly permits such restrictions under Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, and 41, ensuring that rights are exercised in a manner consistent with societal welfare and constitutional order.⁷⁵

It has also been established that the determination of what constitutes a “reasonable restriction” is primarily a judicial function. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh plays a crucial role in reviewing whether legislative or executive actions are arbitrary, excessive, or disproportionate. Through judicial interpretation, the courts ensure that constitutional rights are not undermined under the guise of public interest or security concerns.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the historical and philosophical evolution of fundamental rights shows that they emerged from long struggles against authoritarian governance and have been strengthened through international human rights instruments. Instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reinforce global standards of legality, necessity, and proportionality in restricting rights.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁷⁵ *ibid* arts 36–39, 41.

⁷⁶ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

⁷⁷ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts 19, 21, 22.

Chapter Three: Constitutional and Judicial Analysis of Reasonable Restrictions in Bangladesh

3.1 Introduction

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh establishes fundamental rights as justiciable guarantees that protect individuals from arbitrary state action. However, these rights are not absolute; rather, they are subject to “reasonable restrictions” imposed under specific constitutional provisions in the interest of public order, morality, public health, and national security. This dual structure creates an ongoing constitutional balance between individual liberty and the needs of the State.⁷⁸

This chapter focuses on the constitutional and judicial analysis of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh. It examines how the Constitution authorizes limitations on fundamental rights and how the judiciary interprets and applies the doctrine of reasonableness in different cases. In doing so, it highlights the role of the courts in ensuring that restrictions do not become tools of arbitrariness or abuse of power.⁷⁹

A key feature of constitutional governance in Bangladesh is judicial review under Article 102, which empowers the High Court Division to enforce fundamental rights and examine the legality of state actions. Through this power, the judiciary assesses whether restrictions imposed by law or executive orders are consistent with constitutional standards. This ensures that the supremacy of the Constitution is maintained and that fundamental rights are meaningfully protected.⁸⁰

The concept of reasonableness is central to this judicial scrutiny. Since the Constitution does not explicitly define “reasonable restriction,” courts have developed interpretative principles based on proportionality, necessity, and fairness. These principles help determine whether a restriction is justified or whether it excessively infringes upon individual liberty without sufficient legal justification.⁸¹

Therefore, this chapter provides a doctrinal and analytical framework for understanding how constitutional provisions and judicial interpretation collectively shape the

⁷⁸ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁷⁹ *ibid* arts 36–41.

⁸⁰ *ibid* art 102.

⁸¹ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

application of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh. It sets the foundation for examining specific judicial decisions and practical challenges in subsequent sections of this chapter.

3.2 Role of the Judiciary in Protecting Fundamental Rights

The judiciary plays a central and indispensable role in safeguarding fundamental rights within the constitutional framework of Bangladesh. As the guardian of the Constitution, the judiciary ensures that the rights guaranteed under Part III are not merely theoretical declarations but enforceable legal entitlements. This protective function is essential for maintaining the rule of law and preventing arbitrary actions by the legislature and the executive.⁸²

A key aspect of judicial protection of fundamental rights is the exercise of judicial review. Under Article 102 of the Constitution, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has the authority to review the legality of laws, administrative actions, and executive orders. Through this power, the court can declare any law or action inconsistent with fundamental rights as void to the extent of such inconsistency. This mechanism ensures constitutional supremacy over ordinary legislation.⁸³

The judiciary also plays an important role in interpreting the scope and content of fundamental rights. Since constitutional provisions are often broadly worded, courts are required to interpret their meaning in light of constitutional values, democratic principles, and international human rights standards. In doing so, the judiciary helps to evolve the dynamic understanding of rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and right to life and personal liberty.⁸⁴

In addition, the courts ensure that any restriction imposed on fundamental rights satisfies the requirement of reasonableness. Although the Constitution permits limitations on certain rights, such restrictions must not be arbitrary, excessive, or disproportionate. The judiciary evaluates whether a restriction serves a legitimate public purpose and whether it is necessary in a democratic society. This ensures that state power is exercised within constitutional limits.⁸⁵

⁸² The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

⁸³ *ibid* art 102.

⁸⁴ Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

⁸⁵ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 203.

3.3 Judicial Review under the Constitution

Judicial review is a fundamental constitutional mechanism through which the courts ensure that legislative and executive actions conform to the Constitution of Bangladesh. It serves as a safeguard for protecting fundamental rights and maintaining the supremacy of the Constitution over all other laws. In Bangladesh, judicial review is primarily exercised by the Supreme Court, particularly the High Court Division under Article 102 of the Constitution.⁸⁶

Through judicial review, the courts have the authority to examine the legality and constitutionality of laws, administrative decisions, and governmental actions. If any law or action is found to be inconsistent with fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution, the court may declare it void to the extent of such inconsistency. This ensures that state power is exercised within constitutional limits and does not infringe upon individual liberties.⁸⁷

Judicial review in Bangladesh plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance between fundamental rights and reasonable restrictions. While the Constitution allows the State to impose restrictions on certain rights, such restrictions must be reasonable, lawful, and proportionate. The courts assess whether such restrictions serve a legitimate public purpose and whether they go beyond what is necessary to achieve that purpose. This judicial scrutiny prevents arbitrary or excessive interference with fundamental rights.⁸⁸

The doctrine of constitutional supremacy forms the foundation of judicial review. Article 7 of the Constitution declares that the Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic, and any law inconsistent with it is void. This provision empowers the judiciary to invalidate unconstitutional laws and uphold the integrity of the constitutional framework. Judicial review therefore acts as a check on both legislative and executive excesses.⁸⁹

3.4 Doctrine of Proportionality

The doctrine of proportionality is a key principle in constitutional adjudication that ensures any restriction imposed on fundamental rights is fair, necessary, and not excessive in relation to the objective sought to be achieved. In the constitutional

⁸⁶ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 102.

⁸⁷ *ibid* art 26.

⁸⁸ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

⁸⁹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 7.

framework of Bangladesh, this doctrine plays an increasingly important role in evaluating whether “reasonable restrictions” on fundamental rights are valid under the Constitution.⁹⁰

At its core, proportionality requires a balance between the severity of the restriction on individual rights and the importance of the public interest being protected. A restriction will only be considered valid if it is suitable to achieve a legitimate aim, necessary in the sense that no less restrictive alternative exists, and balanced so that the harm to individual rights is not excessive compared to the benefit to society. This prevents arbitrary or disproportionate interference with constitutional freedoms.⁹¹

The doctrine of proportionality is closely connected with the concept of “reasonableness” under the Constitution. Although the Constitution of Bangladesh does not explicitly mention proportionality, the judiciary has increasingly relied on it as an interpretative tool to assess the validity of laws and executive actions that restrict fundamental rights. This reflects a broader trend in constitutional law towards more structured and principled review of state action.⁹²

3.5 Preventive Detention and Constitutional Validity

Preventive detention refers to the detention of a person without trial, not as a punishment for a past offence but as a precautionary measure to prevent future harm to public order, national security, or state interest. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, preventive detention is a controversial but constitutionally recognized mechanism under certain conditions. It represents a significant limitation on personal liberty and therefore raises serious concerns regarding constitutional safeguards and human rights protection.⁹³

The Constitution of Bangladesh permits preventive detention under Article 33, which provides certain procedural safeguards for detained persons. These include the requirement that a person must be informed of the grounds of detention as soon as possible, the right to make a representation against the order, and review by an advisory

⁹⁰ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 36–39.

⁹¹ Aharon Barak, *Proportionality: Constitutional Rights and their Limitations* (Cambridge University Press 2012) 131.

⁹² Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

⁹³ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 33.

board. However, the Constitution also allows detention in specified circumstances where it is deemed necessary for state security or public order.⁹⁴

In practice, preventive detention is primarily governed by the Special Powers Act, 1974, which empowers the government to detain individuals for extended periods without formal charges or trial. This law has been widely debated due to concerns that it may be used for political purposes or to suppress dissent. Critics argue that such detention undermines the fundamental right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 32 of the Constitution.⁹⁵

From a constitutional perspective, the validity of preventive detention depends on whether it satisfies the requirement of reasonableness and procedural fairness. Although the State has the authority to detain individuals preventively, such power must be exercised in strict compliance with constitutional safeguards. Any arbitrary, mala fide, or excessive use of this power may be challenged before the courts through judicial review.⁹⁶

3.6 Judicial Interpretation of Freedom of Speech and Expression

Freedom of speech and expression is one of the most essential fundamental rights in a democratic system. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, this right is guaranteed under Article 39 of the Constitution, which ensures the freedom of thought, conscience, and expression. However, the same provision also permits reasonable restrictions on specific grounds such as state security, public order, morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to an offence.⁹⁷ This dual structure creates a constitutional balance between liberty and regulation.

The judiciary plays a crucial role in interpreting the scope and limitations of freedom of speech and expression. Since the Constitution does not define the precise boundaries of “reasonable restrictions,” the courts have the responsibility to determine whether a restriction imposed by law or executive action is justified. In doing so, the judiciary

⁹⁴ *ibid* art 33(4)–(6).

⁹⁵ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 32; Special Powers Act 1974, s 3.

⁹⁶ *Aruna Sen v. Government of Bangladesh* 27 DLR (HCD) 122.

⁹⁷ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 39.

ensures that freedom of expression is not curtailed beyond what is necessary in a democratic society.⁹⁸

The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has consistently emphasized that freedom of speech is the foundation of democratic governance, enabling public debate, accountability, and transparency. However, it has also recognized that this freedom is not absolute and may be restricted when it threatens public order, national security, or the rights of others. The courts therefore apply a balancing approach, weighing individual liberty against societal interests.

Judicial interpretation also requires that restrictions on freedom of speech must be lawful, reasonable, and proportionate. Vague or overly broad restrictions are often viewed with suspicion by the courts because they may lead to abuse of power or self-censorship. The judiciary has, in several instances, intervened to prevent arbitrary interference with expressive freedoms, reinforcing the importance of constitutional safeguards.

3.7 Analysis of Landmark Cases

Judicial decisions play a crucial role in shaping the doctrine of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh. Through landmark cases, the Supreme Court has clarified the scope of fundamental rights and the limits of state authority. The following cases are particularly significant in understanding how courts interpret constitutional guarantees against arbitrary or excessive restrictions.

3.7.1 Aruna Sen v. Government of Bangladesh

In *Aruna Sen v. Government of Bangladesh*, the High Court Division examined the legality of preventive detention under special security laws. The case involved detention without trial, raising serious concerns about personal liberty guaranteed under the Constitution. The Court scrutinized whether the detention complied with constitutional safeguards under Article 33.

The Court emphasized that preventive detention must not be arbitrary and that the grounds of detention must be clear, specific, and relevant. It further held that vague or indefinite allegations cannot justify deprivation of liberty. This judgment reinforced the

⁹⁸ Mizanur Rahman, *Constitutional Law of Bangladesh* (3rd edn, Mullick Brothers 2019) 188.

principle that even preventive measures must satisfy the test of reasonableness and procedural fairness.⁹⁹

The case is significant because it established early judicial sensitivity toward safeguarding personal liberty against executive misuse of detention powers. It highlighted that constitutional guarantees cannot be suspended indirectly through vague administrative action.

3.7.2 BLAST v. Bangladesh

In *Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) v. Bangladesh*, the High Court Division addressed issues relating to arbitrary detention, custodial rights, and access to legal remedies. The case focused on the protection of fundamental rights under Article 32 and the requirement of lawful procedure in deprivation of life and liberty.

The Court emphasized that every deprivation of liberty must be strictly in accordance with law and must satisfy constitutional safeguards. It also reinforced the importance of judicial review in protecting individuals from unlawful detention and abuse of state power. The judgment expanded the scope of fundamental rights enforcement in Bangladesh¹⁰⁰.

This case is important because it strengthened the judiciary's role as a protector of human rights and reaffirmed that state authority must operate within constitutional limits.

3.7.3 Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh

In *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh*, the Appellate Division dealt with the constitutional validity of certain governmental actions affecting constitutional governance and rule of law principles. The Court made significant observations on the supremacy of the Constitution and the importance of democratic principles¹⁰¹.

The judgment reaffirmed that all state actions must conform to constitutional provisions and that the Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic. It also emphasized that arbitrary or unconstitutional actions cannot be justified under any legal or administrative

⁹⁹ *Aruna Sen v Government of Bangladesh* (1975) 27 DLR (HCD) 122.

¹⁰⁰ *BLAST v Bangladesh* (2003) 55 DLR (HCD) 363.

¹⁰¹ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

authority. This case is considered a milestone in strengthening constitutional supremacy in Bangladesh.

The case is highly significant because it reinforced judicial commitment to protecting constitutional order and ensuring that fundamental rights are not undermined by state actions.

The enforcement of fundamental rights in Bangladesh through judicial mechanisms faces several structural, procedural, and practical challenges. Although the Constitution provides strong safeguards for fundamental rights and empowers the judiciary under Article 102, the effective realization of these rights is often constrained by institutional and socio-political factors.¹⁰²

One of the major challenges is the delay in the disposal of cases. Judicial proceedings in Bangladesh are often time-consuming due to a large backlog of cases, limited judicial capacity, and procedural complexities. As a result, individuals seeking urgent constitutional remedies may not receive timely relief, which weakens the practical effectiveness of fundamental rights protection.

Another significant challenge is the lack of consistent judicial interpretation. The concept of “reasonable restrictions” is inherently flexible, and courts sometimes adopt varying standards in different cases. This inconsistency can create uncertainty in legal outcomes and reduce predictability in constitutional adjudication.

Executive influence and institutional pressure also pose challenges to judicial independence in certain sensitive cases involving national security, public order, or political issues. While the judiciary remains constitutionally independent, external pressures may affect the practical enforcement of fundamental rights in controversial matters.

¹⁰² The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 102.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed constitutional and judicial analysis of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh. It has demonstrated that while fundamental rights are constitutionally guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution, they are not absolute and may be subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order, national security, morality, and public welfare.¹⁰³

The discussion shows that judicial review under Article 102 of the Constitution plays a central role in protecting fundamental rights by ensuring that legislative and executive actions remain within constitutional limits. The courts act as guardians of the Constitution by examining whether restrictions imposed on rights are lawful, necessary, and reasonable. This reinforces the principle of constitutional supremacy and the rule of law.¹⁰⁴

The chapter also highlighted the importance of key constitutional doctrines such as proportionality and reasonableness in evaluating the validity of restrictions. Through judicial interpretation, courts attempt to balance individual liberty with the needs of society, ensuring that restrictions are not arbitrary, excessive, or disproportionate. Landmark cases such as *Aruna Sen*, *BLAST v. Bangladesh*, and *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd.* illustrate the evolving role of the judiciary in protecting fundamental rights.¹⁰⁵

However, the analysis also reveals practical challenges in judicial enforcement, including delays in justice delivery, inconsistent interpretation, limited application of proportionality, and issues of administrative compliance. These challenges indicate that while the constitutional framework is strong in principle, its effective implementation requires institutional strengthening and greater judicial consistency.

¹⁰³ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* art 102.

¹⁰⁵ *Aruna Sen v. Government of Bangladesh* 27 DLR (HCD) 122; *BLAST v. Bangladesh* 55 DLR (HCD) 363; *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

Chapter Four: Balancing Liberty and Social Order in Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

The relationship between individual liberty and social order represents one of the most significant constitutional challenges in any democratic system. In the context of Bangladesh, this relationship is regulated through the doctrine of reasonable restrictions, which allows the State to impose limitations on certain fundamental rights in order to protect public order, national security, morality, and public welfare. While fundamental rights ensure personal freedom and dignity, social order ensures stability, peace, and the effective functioning of the State.¹⁰⁶

This chapter focuses on the practical dimension of balancing liberty and social order in Bangladesh. It examines how constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights operate alongside state-imposed restrictions in real-life situations. Although the Constitution provides strong protection for rights under Part III, the exercise of these rights is often subject to regulatory controls aimed at maintaining law and order and safeguarding national interests.¹⁰⁷

In practice, tensions frequently arise between individual freedoms and state authority, particularly in areas such as freedom of expression, public assembly, digital communication, and national security. The State often justifies restrictions on these rights on the basis of maintaining stability and preventing disorder. However, such restrictions must always satisfy the constitutional requirement of reasonableness and must not become tools for arbitrary or excessive interference.¹⁰⁸

The judiciary plays a crucial role in maintaining this balance by reviewing whether restrictions imposed by law or executive action are justified under constitutional principles. Through judicial interpretation, courts ensure that limitations on fundamental rights do not undermine the essence of constitutional freedoms. This balancing function is essential for preserving democratic governance and the rule of law.

4.2 Freedom of Expression and Digital Regulation

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democratic governance and a vital component of fundamental rights in Bangladesh. It enables individuals to express opinions, share

¹⁰⁶ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid* arts 36–39.

¹⁰⁸ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

ideas, engage in public debate, and hold public authorities accountable. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees this right under Article 39, which protects freedom of thought, conscience, and speech, while also allowing reasonable restrictions on specific grounds such as state security, public order, morality, defamation, and incitement to an offence.¹⁰⁹

In the modern era, freedom of expression is increasingly exercised through digital platforms, including social media, online news portals, and other internet-based communication systems. As a result, digital regulation has become a significant aspect of state policy. Laws governing cyberspace aim to address issues such as misinformation, cybercrime, defamation, and threats to national security. However, these regulatory frameworks also raise concerns regarding their impact on free speech and the potential for excessive restrictions.¹¹⁰

In Bangladesh, digital regulation is primarily enforced through laws such as the Digital Security Act (now replaced and updated by newer cyber-related legislation). Critics argue that such laws may contain broad and vague provisions, which can be interpreted in ways that restrict legitimate expression. This may lead to self-censorship among journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens due to fear of legal consequences. On the other hand, the State justifies such regulations as necessary to protect public order, prevent cybercrime, and ensure national security.

The tension between freedom of expression and digital regulation reflects the broader constitutional balance between liberty and social order. While unrestricted expression may lead to harm such as defamation, misinformation, or incitement to violence, overly restrictive laws may undermine democratic participation and weaken accountability mechanisms. Therefore, the application of restrictions must always be reasonable, proportionate, and consistent with constitutional standards.¹¹¹

4.3 Restrictions on Public Assembly and Association

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are essential components of democratic participation and are constitutionally guaranteed under the legal framework of Bangladesh. These rights enable citizens to collectively express their views, participate in political processes, form organizations, and engage in lawful public demonstrations. The

¹⁰⁹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 39.

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Digital Laws and Freedom of Expression' (2023).

¹¹¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art 19.

Constitution protects these freedoms under Articles 37 and 38, while also permitting reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order, public health, and national security.¹¹²

Freedom of assembly allows individuals to gather peacefully for demonstrations, protests, and public meetings. However, this right is subject to regulatory control to ensure that such gatherings do not disrupt public order or threaten the safety and security of others. Authorities may impose restrictions such as requiring prior permission for public gatherings or prohibiting assemblies in sensitive areas where there is a risk of violence or disruption. The key constitutional requirement is that such restrictions must be reasonable and not arbitrary.¹¹³

Similarly, freedom of association enables individuals to form political parties, trade unions, and other organizations. This right is fundamental for democratic governance, as it allows collective participation in social, economic, and political activities. However, the State may impose restrictions on associations that engage in activities threatening national security, inciting violence, or undermining public order. The challenge lies in ensuring that such restrictions do not unduly suppress legitimate organizational activity or political dissent.

In practice, tensions often arise between state-imposed restrictions and citizens' exercise of these rights, particularly during political demonstrations or labor strikes. Authorities may justify restrictions on the grounds of maintaining law and order, preventing violence, or ensuring public safety. However, excessive use of preventive restrictions, such as banning assemblies or dispersing peaceful protests, raises serious constitutional concerns regarding proportionality and fairness.¹¹⁴

Judicial interpretation plays an important role in balancing these competing interests. Courts assess whether restrictions on assembly and association are supported by valid legal grounds and whether they are proportionate to the objective sought to be achieved. The judiciary ensures that such restrictions do not become tools for suppressing legitimate democratic expression or political opposition.

¹¹² The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, arts 37–38.

¹¹³ *ibid* art 37.

¹¹⁴ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

4.4 National Security versus Individual Liberty

The tension between national security and individual liberty is one of the most sensitive and complex issues in constitutional law. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, the State is entrusted with the duty to protect sovereignty, territorial integrity, and public order, while at the same time ensuring the protection of fundamental rights guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution. This dual responsibility often creates situations where individual freedoms may be restricted in the name of national security.¹¹⁵

National security is generally understood to include the protection of the State from internal and external threats such as terrorism, insurgency, espionage, and activities that may endanger public safety or constitutional order. To address such threats, the State may impose restrictions on rights such as freedom of speech, movement, assembly, and association. However, such restrictions must always be grounded in law and must satisfy the constitutional requirement of reasonableness.¹¹⁶

On the other hand, individual liberty is a core constitutional value that ensures personal autonomy, dignity, and democratic participation. Excessive restriction of liberty in the name of national security may lead to abuse of power, suppression of dissent, and erosion of democratic principles. Therefore, constitutional governance requires a careful balance between protecting the State and preserving individual freedoms.

The Constitution of Bangladesh allows restrictions on fundamental rights under specified grounds such as “security of the State” and “public order,” particularly under Articles 36, 37, 38, and 39. However, these provisions do not grant unlimited authority to the State. Instead, any restriction must be proportionate, necessary, and consistent with constitutional principles. Arbitrary or overly broad restrictions may be subject to judicial review.¹¹⁷

4.5 Political Demonstrations and Public Order

Political demonstrations are a fundamental expression of democratic participation, allowing citizens to express dissent, demand accountability, and influence public policy. In the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, the right to assemble peacefully and participate in political activities is protected under Article 37 of the Constitution.

¹¹⁵ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Preamble and Part III.

¹¹⁶ *ibid* arts 36–39.

¹¹⁷ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

However, this right is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order, public safety, and national security.¹¹⁸

Public order is a key constitutional ground for regulating political demonstrations. It refers to the maintenance of peace, stability, and social harmony within society. While peaceful demonstrations are a legitimate form of political expression, they may be regulated or restricted if they pose a threat to public safety, lead to violence, or disrupt essential services. Authorities often impose conditions such as prior permission, designated protest areas, or time limitations to ensure that public demonstrations do not escalate into disorder.¹¹⁹

In practice, tensions frequently arise between the right to protest and the State's responsibility to maintain law and order. Political demonstrations may sometimes be restricted through prohibitory orders, dispersal of gatherings, or restrictions on movement in certain areas. While such measures may be justified in situations of genuine risk, excessive or arbitrary restrictions may undermine democratic freedoms and discourage legitimate political participation.

The Constitution requires that any restriction on political demonstrations must be reasonable and proportionate. This means that the State must demonstrate a clear and legitimate purpose for imposing restrictions and must ensure that the measures adopted are the least restrictive means necessary to achieve that purpose. Blanket bans on assemblies or excessive use of force may raise constitutional concerns under Article 37.¹²⁰

The judiciary plays an important role in reviewing restrictions on political demonstrations. Courts assess whether state actions are supported by lawful authority and whether they comply with constitutional standards of reasonableness. Judicial oversight ensures that public order is not used as a justification for suppressing lawful political expression or dissenting voices.

¹¹⁸ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 37.

¹¹⁹ *ibid* art 37.

¹²⁰ *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh* 62 DLR (AD) 298.

4.6 Preventive Detention and Human Rights Concerns

Preventive detention is one of the most controversial limitations on personal liberty in constitutional law. In the legal framework of Bangladesh, it is recognized as a preventive measure rather than a punitive one, used by the State to detain individuals without trial in order to prevent them from acting in a manner that may threaten public order, national security, or the safety of the State. While it is constitutionally permitted, it raises serious human rights concerns due to its potential impact on individual liberty.¹²¹

The Constitution of Bangladesh permits preventive detention under Article 33, subject to certain procedural safeguards. These include informing the detainee of the grounds of detention as soon as practicable, providing an opportunity to make a representation against the detention order, and review by an advisory board. These safeguards are intended to ensure that preventive detention is not exercised arbitrarily and remains within constitutional limits.¹²²

Despite these safeguards, preventive detention continues to raise concerns regarding compliance with fundamental human rights standards. The primary concern is the deprivation of liberty without trial, which directly affects the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 32 of the Constitution. Critics argue that such detention may be misused for political purposes or to suppress dissent, particularly when vague or broad grounds are used to justify detention orders.¹²³

In Bangladesh, preventive detention is also governed by special legislation such as the Special Powers Act, 1974. This law has been widely debated due to allegations of misuse and arbitrary detention. Human rights organizations have raised concerns that prolonged detention without trial undermines due process and weakens constitutional protections. These concerns highlight the tension between state security and individual liberty.

The judiciary plays a crucial role in reviewing the legality of preventive detention. Courts have consistently emphasized that detention orders must be based on specific, clear, and relevant grounds. Any failure to comply with constitutional safeguards or reliance on vague allegations may render the detention unlawful. Judicial intervention thus serves as an important check against abuse of executive power.

¹²¹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 33.

¹²² *ibid* art 33(4)–(6).

¹²³ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 32; Special Powers Act 1974.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the practical operation of balancing liberty and social order within the constitutional framework of Bangladesh. It has demonstrated that while the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights as essential components of democratic governance, these rights are not absolute and may be subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order, national security, morality, and public welfare.¹²⁴

The analysis shows that areas such as freedom of expression, public assembly, political demonstrations, and preventive detention reflect the most significant tensions between individual liberty and state authority. In each of these areas, the State exercises regulatory powers to maintain stability and security, but such powers must always be exercised within constitutional limits to avoid arbitrariness and abuse.

The chapter further highlights that the judiciary plays a central role in maintaining this constitutional balance. Through judicial review, courts ensure that restrictions imposed by the State are lawful, necessary, and proportionate. This judicial oversight is essential to prevent excessive encroachment on fundamental rights and to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution.¹²⁵

However, the analysis also reveals that practical challenges remain in ensuring an effective balance between liberty and social order. These include the risk of overly broad restrictions, potential misuse of preventive detention laws, and the impact of digital regulation on freedom of expression. Such challenges demonstrate the ongoing need for stronger safeguards and consistent judicial scrutiny.

¹²⁴ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹²⁵ *ibid* art 102; Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

Chapter Five: Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have examined the theoretical, constitutional, judicial, and practical dimensions of fundamental rights and the doctrine of reasonable restrictions in Bangladesh. They have demonstrated that while the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights as essential safeguards of liberty, these rights are subject to limitations imposed in the interest of public order, national security, morality, and public welfare. The judiciary plays a vital role in interpreting and enforcing these limitations to ensure that they remain reasonable, lawful, and proportionate¹²⁶.

This chapter presents the findings derived from the doctrinal analysis and judicial review conducted throughout the study. It also provides critical recommendations aimed at strengthening the constitutional protection of fundamental rights while ensuring that reasonable restrictions are not misused or applied in an arbitrary manner. In doing so, it seeks to address the practical gaps identified in the enforcement and interpretation of constitutional rights.

The study further evaluates how effectively the current legal and judicial framework in Bangladesh balances individual liberty with social order. Although significant constitutional safeguards exist, challenges remain in ensuring consistent judicial interpretation, preventing misuse of restrictive laws, and enhancing public awareness of fundamental rights. These issues highlight the need for continued reform and stronger institutional accountability.

Therefore, this chapter serves as a synthesis of the entire research, offering both analytical conclusions and practical recommendations to improve the constitutional protection of fundamental rights in Bangladesh.

¹²⁶ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

5.2 Major Findings

This study on reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh reveals several important findings derived from constitutional analysis, judicial interpretation, and doctrinal evaluation. These findings highlight both the strengths and limitations of the existing legal framework in balancing individual liberty and social order.

Firstly, the Constitution of Bangladesh provides a strong and structured framework for the protection of fundamental rights under Part III, while simultaneously incorporating provisions for reasonable restrictions under Articles 36, 37, 38, 39, and 41. This reflects a deliberate constitutional balance between individual liberty and collective interests such as public order, morality, and national security.¹²⁷

Secondly, the concept of “reasonableness” is not expressly defined in the Constitution, which creates interpretative flexibility but also legal uncertainty. As a result, courts play a decisive role in determining whether a restriction is reasonable, leading to a jurisprudence that may vary depending on facts and judicial interpretation.

Thirdly, the judiciary remains the principal guardian of fundamental rights through the power of judicial review under Article 102. Courts have frequently intervened to prevent arbitrary or excessive restrictions; however, the application of doctrines such as proportionality is still developing and not always uniformly applied in constitutional adjudication.¹²⁸

Fourthly, preventive detention laws, particularly under the Special Powers Act, 1974, continue to raise serious human rights concerns. Although constitutionally recognized under Article 33, their practical application has often been criticized for potential misuse, lack of transparency, and insufficient safeguards against arbitrary detention.¹²⁹

Fifthly, digital regulation has become a major contemporary challenge. Laws governing online expression, while intended to address cybercrime and misinformation, may in some instances restrict legitimate speech and create a chilling effect on freedom of expression if applied broadly or without clear safeguards.

¹²⁷ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹²⁸ Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298.

¹²⁹ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 33; Special Powers Act 1974.

Sixthly, there remains a persistent constitutional tension between state security measures and individual liberty. Restrictions imposed in the name of public order or national security must always meet constitutional standards of necessity, legality, and proportionality to avoid excessive encroachment on fundamental rights.

Finally, the study finds that public awareness of constitutional rights is limited, particularly among rural and marginalized communities. This reduces effective access to constitutional remedies and weakens the practical enforcement of fundamental rights.

Overall, while the constitutional framework in Bangladesh is robust in principle, its effectiveness depends on consistent judicial interpretation, institutional accountability, and proper implementation of constitutional safeguards.

5.3 Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study on reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights in Bangladesh, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen constitutional governance and ensure a better balance between individual liberty and social order.

Firstly, it is recommended that clearer legislative guidelines be developed to define the scope of “reasonable restrictions.” Since the Constitution does not explicitly define reasonableness, statutory clarification or interpretative standards would reduce ambiguity and ensure more consistent application by administrative authorities and courts.¹³⁰

Secondly, the judiciary should further develop and consistently apply the doctrine of proportionality in constitutional adjudication. A structured proportionality test would help ensure that restrictions on fundamental rights are necessary, suitable, and not excessive in relation to their intended purpose.

Thirdly, reforms should be introduced to ensure greater safeguards against the misuse of preventive detention laws, particularly under the Special Powers Act, 1974. Stronger judicial oversight, stricter evidentiary requirements, and regular review mechanisms could help prevent arbitrary deprivation of liberty.¹³¹

Fourthly, in the area of digital regulation, it is recommended that laws governing online expression be revised to ensure greater clarity, precision, and protection for freedom of speech. Overbroad or vague provisions should be minimized to reduce the risk of misuse and to protect legitimate expression in the digital space.

Fifthly, institutional capacity of the judiciary should be strengthened by increasing the number of judges, improving case management systems, and ensuring timely disposal of constitutional cases. This would enhance access to justice and improve enforcement of fundamental rights.

Sixthly, public awareness programs should be implemented to educate citizens about their constitutional rights and available legal remedies. Greater awareness would empower individuals to challenge unlawful restrictions and promote accountability in governance.

¹³⁰ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹³¹ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 33; Special Powers Act 1974.

Conclusion

This study examined the doctrine of reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights within the constitutional framework of Bangladesh, focusing on the balance between individual liberty and social order. It has been established that fundamental rights under Part III of the Constitution are essential for ensuring dignity, equality, and democratic participation, yet they are not absolute and may be limited under constitutionally recognized grounds such as public order, morality, public health, and national security.¹³²

The analysis shows that the Constitution provides both protection and limitation mechanisms, reflecting a deliberate attempt to balance freedom with responsibility. The judiciary, through its power of judicial review under Article 102, plays a central role in ensuring that restrictions imposed by the State are lawful, reasonable, and proportionate. Landmark judicial decisions demonstrate the courts' ongoing efforts to prevent arbitrary or excessive interference with fundamental rights.¹³³

However, the study also highlights several challenges in the practical application of this doctrine. These include the absence of a precise definition of "reasonableness," inconsistent judicial interpretation in some cases, concerns regarding preventive detention laws, and the expanding impact of digital regulation on freedom of expression. Such issues indicate gaps between constitutional ideals and practical enforcement.

Despite these challenges, the research finds that the constitutional framework of Bangladesh remains fundamentally sound in design. Its effectiveness largely depends on judicial independence, legislative clarity, institutional accountability, and respect for human rights principles. Strengthening these areas is essential to ensure that reasonable restrictions do not become tools of arbitrariness.

¹³² The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, Part III.

¹³³ Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Ltd. v. Government of Bangladesh 62 DLR (AD) 298; The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 1972, art 102.

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