



FROM ALLY TO AMBIGUITY: INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS AT A CROSSROADS

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Abstract:

Marked by political interregna, social mobilization, and civil rights movements; contemporary South Asian geopolitics have significantly challenged the conventional understandings of sub-regional politics. This article examines the changing contours of India–Bangladesh relations following the ouster of the Hasina regime in 2024. Employing three interlinked levels of analysis (a) India’s coercive economic policies, border practices, and increasingly ambiguous connectivity commitments; (b) Bangladesh’s domestic political reordering; and (c) Dhaka’s strategic realignment toward Pakistan and China. The article argues that the aftermath of July revolution might not only reshape India–Bangladesh relations in days to come but will also contribute to a structural recalibration of sub-regional power dynamics, unless India seeks to recalibrate its westward neighbourhood strategy.

Keywords: India-Bangladesh Relations, Regime Compatibility, Security Dilemma, Dhaka's Foreign Policy Pivot, Non-political Exchanges.

Titulo en Español: *De la alianza a la ambigüedad: Las relaciones entre India y Bangladés en una encrucijada.*

Resumen:

Marcada por interregnos políticos, movilizaciones sociales y movimientos por los derechos civiles, la geopolítica contemporánea del sur de Asia ha desafiado significativamente la comprensión convencional de la política subregional. El presente artículo examina los contornos cambiantes de las relaciones entre la India y Bangladesh tras la destitución del régimen de Hasina en 2024. Empleando tres niveles de análisis interrelacionados (a) las políticas económicas coercitivas de la India, las prácticas fronterizas y los compromisos de conectividad cada vez más ambiguos; (b) el reordenamiento político interno de Bangladesh; y (c) el reajuste estratégico de Daca hacia Pakistán y China. El artículo sostiene que las secuelas de la revolución de julio podrían no solo remodelar las relaciones entre la India y Bangladesh en los próximos días, sino que también contribuirán a un reajuste estructural de la dinámica de poder subregional, a menos que la India intente recalibrar su estrategia de vecindad hacia el oeste.

Palabras Clave: *Relaciones entre India y Bangladesh, compatibilidad de regímenes, dilema de seguridad, giro en la política exterior de Daca, intercambios no políticos.*

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1. Introduction

The relationship between Bangladesh and India is of profound significance and multifaceted complexity, deeply rooted in historical, geographical, and cultural bonds. Over the past decade, the two nations have resolved their longstanding land boundary dispute through the landmark Land Boundary Agreement, thereby laying the groundwork for the development of essential infrastructure. This, in turn, has facilitated enhanced transboundary connectivity across roads, rail, and inland waterways, transforming bilateral cooperation and regional integration. India's former Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, who had also served as high commissioner to Bangladesh from 2016-2019, points out, "*We have made massive progress with Bangladesh in the last 15 years, more than what we did in the previous 35 years.*" Once central to India's *Neighbourhood First* and *Act East* strategies, Bangladesh emerged as the largest recipient of Indian Lines of Credit (amounting to around US \$7.2 billion). Simultaneously, Bangladesh became one of India's top-five export destinations in Asia and a leading source of India's tourist outflows. As a willing partner, Dhaka actively supported New Delhi's regional connectivity ambitions, facilitating the integration of road, rail, energy, and digital infrastructures across their shared borders³.

The wheels of misfortune in the bilateral relationship began turning when Sheikh Hasina Wajed's regime collapsed in 2024. This event marked not only a transformative moment for Bangladesh, but also a significant setback for India's interventionist strategy⁴. Since August 2024, after Hasina's interregnum and exile, the ties between New Delhi and Dhaka have sharply deteriorated, reaching their lowest point in three decades⁵. With a new government in power, bilateral relations have declined sharply. Although India has long regarded Bangladesh as a key strategic partner in South Asia, its recent actions appear increasingly punitive: New Delhi has imposed sudden trade restrictions, staged public demonstrations, and adopted a more aggressive strategic posture. The growing rift reflects New Delhi's profound displeasure with Dhaka's political shift, underscoring the fragility of a relationship once grounded in mutual trust and shared regional ambitions⁶. As a result, establishing a sustainable, trust-based relationship grounded in justice and equality has become a significant challenge.

To systematically analyze developments over the past year, this paper is organized into six sections. *Section 1* examines the emergence of suspensions, bans, and trade restrictions between India and Bangladesh, particularly concerning goods and bilateral projects. *Section 2* investigates India's renewed "push-in" policy toward Bangladesh under the new regime. *Section 3* explores the evolving relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan over the last 54 years and examines how this shift affects regional dynamics. *Section 4* addresses India's security dilemma arising from the triangular relationship among Bangladesh, Pakistan, and China, and its implications for India's eastern and northeastern borders. *Section 5* analyzes how the trial of Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka became a significant point of contention between New Delhi and Dhaka. The final section discusses recent initiatives and diplomatic engagements between India and Bangladesh, suggesting there may still be room for rapprochement.

³ Chakraborty, Sushovan and Sinha, Riya: "What about trialure for India-Bangladesh Connectivity?", *CSEP*, 7 August 2025, at <https://csep.org/blog/what-future-for-india-bangladesh-conntrialabout-ectivity/>.

⁴ Dixit, Kanak. Mani: "The Diplomatic debacle" *Frontline*, Vol. 41, n° 18 (September 2024), pp. 42-46, at <https://frontline.thehindu.com/world-affairs/bangladesh-india-relations-sheikh-hasina-narendra-modi-neighbourhood-first-policy-south-asia-diplomacy-debacle/article68580081.ece>

⁵ Subramanian, Nirupama: "India's Treatment of Muslims has repercussions [An interview with the Bangladeshi economist Debopriya Bhattacharya]", *Frontline*, Vol. 42, n° 8 (May 2025), p. 73.

⁶ Rahman, Zillur: "Bangladesh India Diplomatic Tensions 2025: Bangladesh and India's new strategic dilemma", *The Daily Star*, 2 July 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/geopolitical-insigabout-trialaboutectionhts/news/bangladesh-and-indias-new-strategic-dilemma-3930346>.



2. Tensions and Transition: Analyzing Shifts in Bangladesh-India Dynamics

Bangladesh's internal and external political dynamics underwent significant shifts. Internally, there were meetings with Army generals and chief advisers, while externally, Bangladesh's strained relations with India deepened. On May 17, 2025, India restricted the import of readymade garments, fruits, and processed food from Bangladesh through its land ports. Bangladesh may now export only to India through the seaports of Kolkata and Nhava Sheva (Mumbai). This comes a month after Bangladesh halted yarn imports from India through land ports. The restrictions, however, do not apply to the import of fish, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), edible oil, and crushed stone. In response to these restrictions, Bangladesh has canceled a defense contract worth Rs 180.25 crore with a Kolkata-based company⁷. Earlier, on April 9, India withdrew a transshipment facility that allowed Bangladesh to export goods to global destinations—excluding Nepal and Bhutan—via Indian ports and airports⁸. Total bilateral trade between Bangladesh and India officially amounted to approximately \$10.5 billion in the fiscal year 2023-24. The balance was heavily in India's favor, resulting in an annual trade surplus of \$7.4 billion. Bangladesh imported around \$1.6 billion worth of cotton yarn from India in 2024. Its total apparel exports were over \$38 billion that year, with more than \$1.0 billion in goods exported via Indian land ports⁹.

Although Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman stated that Bangladesh would not take any countermeasures¹⁰, one of the advisers, Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan, has suggested that Indian restrictions will help Bangladesh become self-reliant. He did not, however, elaborate on how this self-reliance would be achieved¹¹. Reports indicate that a majority of listed state-owned enterprises (SOEs) incurred combined losses totaling Tk 1,401 crore in the first nine months of the current fiscal year¹². After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5 last year, Indian authorities restricted visas for Bangladeshis. Then the situation changed after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5¹³.

Moreover, the Indian Visa Application Center (IVAC) in Satkhira has officially closed. The center remained open for two months after the Awami League government fell on August 5. However, the office has been locked since then. It is worth noting that the Indian High Commission commenced operations of the Visa Application Center by renting a flat in Sangram Plaza, Itagachha, Satkhira, from January 1, 2019. For a long time, thousands of people in the

⁷ “India restricts Bangladesh garment, food imports through land ports”, *The Financial Express*, 17 May 2025, at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/india-restricts-bangladesh-garment-imports-to-kolkata-mumbai-seaports-curbs-northeast-land-portin>.

⁸ “India bars import of Bangladeshi RMG, fruits via land ports”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 17 May 2025, at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/381535/india-bars-import-of-bangladeshi-rmg-fruits-via>.

⁹ “Dhaka readying response as India seals land-ports to Bangladeshi products”, *The financial Express*, 19 May 2025, at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/dhaka-readying-response-as-india-seals-land-ports-to-bangladeshi-products>.

¹⁰ “Bangladesh will not take countermeasures against India”, *Bonik Barta*, 21 May 2025, at <https://bonikbarta.com/bangladesh/uFaZT5Nn7aakRv0v>.

¹¹ “Indian restrictions to help become self-reliant: Asif”, *Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha*, 21 May 2025, at <https://www.bssnews.net/news-flash/275220>.

¹² Islam, Rafiqul: “Most listed state companies incur loss in 9 months”, *The Business Standard*, 20 May 2025, at <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/stocks/most-listed-state-companies-incur-loss-9-months-1146801>.

¹³ “Bangladeshis again in top 5 in list of foreign tourists in India”, *Ittefaq*, 23 September 2025, at <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/753380/>.



district used to apply for visas to travel to India through this center¹⁴. Additionally, India blocks the July coup documentary on YouTube¹⁵.

Furthermore, the Indian government has suspended cross-border railway projects with Bangladesh, worth approximately ₹5,000 crore, citing political unrest and safety concerns. This decision impacts at least three active projects and five planned surveys, disrupting a key connectivity route for India's northeastern states. India is now actively exploring alternative connectivity routes through Nepal and Bhutan, with new project plans estimated at ₹3,500–4,000 crore¹⁶. New Delhi invites Bangladesh to the Meteorological Department's 150th anniversary. However, Bangladesh will not attend the event due to government restrictions on non-essential foreign travel. Bangladesh Army chief General Waker-uz-Zaman will not participate in a crucial international counter-terrorism conference in New Delhi later this month — a decision that Dhaka's security officials describe as a “conscious strategy” to avoid unwanted scrutiny amid deteriorating ties with India¹⁷.

While India-Bangladesh relations largely depend on regime compatibility, these recent actions and reactions suggest India may be disengaging from a more active role in the South Asian region, irrespective of China's aspirations to engage India there. India is positioning itself for a more prominent role on the global stage. Meanwhile, India is also focusing on expanding its local business. These suspensions could limit the arguments of anti-India factions who claim India only benefits from its relationship with Bangladesh, as the suspensions reveal a more complex reality.

3. Push-ins

On May 10, 2025, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters at a press briefing in Guwahati that the Indian government has now adopted a “push back” policy for undocumented immigrants from Bangladesh and Rohingya refugees. The announcement came amid reports in the Bangladeshi media that the Assam government and the Border Security Force (BSF) had pushed hundreds of undocumented people into Bangladesh, including 78 in the Sundarbans area. The term “pushback” first appeared in official records in 1989 when the Union Home minister under the Congress government¹⁸.

However, scrutiny of parliamentary records shows that the term seemed to have been used even earlier: in 1979, when the then Minister of State for Home Affairs, Dhanik Lal Mandal. In 1992, the P.V. Narasimha Rao-led Congress government at the centre, under pressure from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), rounded up hundreds of so-called illegal Bangladeshis from Delhi and forcefully sent them to Bangladesh through the West Bengal Border. The drive was named “Operation Pushback”. After that, in 2017, months after anti-Rohingya violence hit Myanmar's Rakhine State, the BSF said it was raising five additional battalions to “Push Back” Rohingya refugees from India's borders¹⁹.

¹⁴ “Indian Visa Application Center closed in Satkhira”, *Dhaka Post*, 1 October 2025, at <https://www.dhakapost.com/country/398942>.

¹⁵ “India blocks July coup documentary on YouTube”, *Dhaka Post*, 18 September 2025, at <https://www.dhakapost.com/international/395881>.

¹⁶ “India halts railway projects linking seven sisters to mainland via Bangladesh”, *The Business Standard*, 21 April 2025, at <https://www.tbsnews.net/foreign-policy/india-halts-railway-projects-linking-seven-sisters-mainland-bangladesh-1121521>.

¹⁷ Roy, Ujjal: “Bangladesh Army chief skips key counter-terror meet in Delhi”, *The CSR Journal*, (October 2025), at <https://thecsrjournal.in/bangladesh-army-chief-skips-key-counter-terror-meet-in-delhi/>.

¹⁸ Choudhury, Angshuman: “Is India perfecting a menacing deportation policy”, *Frontline*, Vol. 42, n°10 (June 2025), p. 46, at <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/human-rights/india-pushback-policy-2025-assam-deportation-rohingya-migrants/article69583482.ece>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.



However, with the dramatic change in government in Dhaka in 2024, this mutual understanding may be fraying at the edges—India’s renewed pushback policy appears more forceful and systematic than before. Bangladeshi Border Guard sees it as “push-ins” and therefore “Push-ins” are creating new tensions between India and Bangladesh.

The Border Security Force (BSF) reportedly pushed 62 Indian citizens into Bangladesh through the riverbed of the Sundarbans in Satkhira.²⁰ The Indian government pushed back 300 undocumented migrants via the land border on 4 May²¹, and alleged reports of attempted push-in of 750 people through the Bijoynagar Upazila border in Brahmanbaria, have been highlighted in the Bangladesh media. The Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) and residents in these borderlands are on high alert, fearing that such incidents may be repeated²².

Concurrently, the 'push-ins' process continues. It is reported that on May 17, the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained 28 individuals, including women and children, who were reportedly pushed across the border into Bangladesh by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in various areas of the district²³. Notably, on the same day, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and India's Border Security Force (BSF) held a flag meeting in Chuadanga to discuss various border issues²⁴.

The Border Security Force of India pushed 113 more people into Bangladesh through the borders in Jhenaidah, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, and Habiganj on 25 May 2025. Of them, 54 were pushed through two border points in Jhenaidah, 21 through one border point in Moulvibazar, and 19 each through separate points in Habiganj and Khagrachari, according to the officials of the Border Guard Bangladesh and the police. Indian Security Force (BSF) reportedly pushed 43 more people, including women and children, into Bangladesh through the borders of Dinajpur, Sylhet, and Kurigram on 28 May. In Dinajpur, the BSF pushed 11 women and two men into the district through Enayetpur border under Biral upazila²⁵.

The Border Security Force of India pushed at least 95 more people into Bangladesh through several border points in six districts on 30 May. With these, the BSF and the Indian Navy have forced at least 1,201 people into Bangladesh through 17 bordering districts since May 7, according to the Border Guard Bangladesh²⁶.

The Indian Border Security Force and police pushed 44 more people into Bangladesh, including 13 Rohingyas, through several border points in Mymensingh, Panchagrah, Moulvibazar, and Dinajpur districts in June 2025. The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) has sent back six Bangladeshis from the same family through the Thakurpur border in Damurhuda upazila of Chuadanga on 14 June 2025. With the latest push-ins, the number of people,

²⁰ Sardar, Assaduzaman: “62 Indian nationals enter through Sundarbans river route”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 10 May 2025, at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/380842/62-indian-nationals-enter-bangladesh-through>.

²¹ “Push-ins: India claims they are sending back Bangladeshis held without documents”, *The Business Standard*, 15 May 2025, at <https://www.tbsnews.net/foreign-policy/push-ins-india-claims-they-are-sending-back-bangladeshis-held-without-documents>

²² “Push-in attempt late at night, BGB-BSF retreats due to public action”, *Bonik Barta*, 16 May 2025, at <https://www.bonikbarta.com/bangladesh/5TdpxM7A5uclS3dW>

²³ “India pushes 28 more people into Bangladesh”, *New Age*, 19 May 2025, at https://www.newagebd.net/post/foreign-affairs/265170/india-pushes-28-more-people-into-bangladesh#google_vignette

²⁴ “BGB-BSF held flag meeting at Chuadanga over border issue”, *BBS*, 17 May 2025, at <https://www.bssnews.net/news/274037>

²⁵ “Indian BSF reportedly pushes 43 people more into Bangladesh”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 29 May 2025, at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/382612/indian-bsf-reportedly-pushes-43-people-more-into>.

²⁶ “India pushes 95 more people into Bangladesh”, *New Age*, 31 May 2025, at <https://www.newagebd.net/post/foreign-affairs/266311/india-pushes-95-more-people-into-bangladesh>.



including Rohingyas and Indian nationals, India has pushed into Bangladesh since May 7, has exceeded 1,500, with 54 more cases reported in five incidents²⁷.

Bangladesh has been in touch with New Delhi regarding reported border incursions and recent restrictions on the import of Bangladeshi goods through Indian land ports²⁸. This open-door diplomacy offers a glimmer of hope for both countries. Very recently, on Friday (September 19) at around 10:30 pm, BSF members handed over 18 people to the BGB, police, and the executive magistrate during a flag meeting near Main Pillar No. 147 at the Kazipur border in Gangni upazila²⁹.

The Border Security Force of India has recently pushed at least 122 Rohingyas, including 48 registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in India, into Bangladesh. The Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner said that they could detect 117 Rohingyas, including 43 registered by the UNHCR in India, who were pushed into Bangladesh by the BSF, in different camps in Cox's Bazar until May 25³⁰.

4. Pakistan-Bangladesh bonhomie

A distinct lack of 'mutual sensitivity' prevails in current India-Bangladesh ties, which is essential for a healthy bilateral relationship. While the interim government has repeatedly accused India of allowing 'its territory to be used for destabilising purposes in Bangladesh' by allowing 'Sheikh Hasina to speak,' it has itself focused on building a relationship with its historical adversary—Pakistan. Marking a significant departure from the Awami League's traditional stance, during his brief tenure, Mohammad Yunus has met Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif twice to discuss enhancing bilateral ties. Accordingly, plans are in place to resume direct flights, and Dhaka has lifted visa restrictions for Pakistani passengers. In response, Islamabad has waived visa fees for Bangladeshis³¹.

With Yunus treading the same path as Khaleda Zia, 11 high-level delegations from Pakistan and Bangladesh have reciprocated, and many important decisions have been taken on training, joint exercises, weapons procurement, and intelligence sharing³². Between November and December 2024, two Pakistani cargo ships arrived at Chittagong port, carrying nearly 1,000 containers of industrial materials, including soda ash, dolomite, and marble blocks, as well as garments, raw materials, sugar, and other products. This is the first time since 1973 that Pakistani ships have been allowed to enter and dock at Bangladeshi ports without inspection³³. Pakistan has moved swiftly to seize the opportunity and offered Dhaka the use of its Karachi port. The timing of the move is crucial, coming weeks after India banned the import of jute products³⁴.

²⁷ "India pushes 44 more people into Bangladesh", *New Age*, 13 June 2025, at <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/267183/bsf-pushes-15-people-into-bangladesh>.

²⁸ "Dhaka in touch with Delhi over push-ins, port restrictions: Touhid", *BBS*, 21 May 2025, at <https://www.bssnews.net/news-flash/275428>.

²⁹ "BSF sends back 18 Bangladeshis held in Indian jails", *Ittefaq*, 20 September 2025, at <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/752817/>.

³⁰ "48 Rohingyas registered in India pushed into Bangladesh", *New Age*, 12 June 2025, at <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/267052/48-rohingyas-registered-in-india-pushed-into-bangladesh>.

³¹ Bose, Sohini: "India Bangladesh Relations and The Pakistan Wildcard - Expert Speak", ORF, April 2025, at <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-bangladesh-relations-and-the-pakistan-wildcard>.

³² Bhaumik, Subir and De, Abhishek: "Bangladesh Pakistan military ties and concern for India", *India Today*, 21 November 2025, at <https://www.indiatoday.in/opinion/story/bangladesh-pakistan-military-tango-pressure-india-sheikh-hasina-2823670-2025-11-21>

³³ Sharma, Pranay: "A relationship reboot" *Frontline*, Vol. 42, n° 6 (April 2025), p. 63.

³⁴ De, Abhishek: "Pakistan-Bangladesh Karachi port: India link behind Pakistan move to allow Bangladesh to use Karachi port", *India Today*, (October 2025), at <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/pakistan-offers-bangladesh-karachi-port-use-jute-products-what-it-means-for-india-2809445-2025-10-28>



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar holds a July Uprising artwork with Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna on Sunday, Aug 24, 2025. Photo: CA GOB Facebook. Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus has underlined the revival of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as a “top priority” in his talks with the visiting Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar³⁵. On the first day of his three-day official visit to Bangladesh, Pakistan Navy Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf paid a courtesy call on General Waker-uz-Zaman at Army Headquarters yesterday. This marks the first visit made by a Pakistan Navy chief to Bangladesh since the Liberation War in 1971³⁶.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, visiting chairman of Pakistan's Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, paid a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna on Saturday. Emphasising the shared historical, cultural, and people-to-people ties between the two countries, General Mirza expressed Pakistan's desire to strengthen cooperation in multiple sectors. He noted the vast potential to expand trade, connectivity, and investment between Bangladesh and Pakistan³⁷. Importers have recently brought Atap rice from Myanmar, while the government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pakistan³⁸.

Pakistan's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan has expressed interest in importing ships from Bangladesh after visiting shipyards in Chattogram³⁹. The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Pakistan Halal Authority (PHA) to boost the trade of halal products between the two countries. The MoU, signed today (27 October) on the sidelines of the 9th Meeting of the Bangladesh–Pakistan Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in Dhaka, aims to enhance collaboration in standards, certification, and trade facilitation for halal products, paving the way for smoother halal meat imports and exports between the two nations⁴⁰.

This relations spill over in cultural front also, in miw-week in september the first time since Bangladesh became independent in 1971, an event was held at Dhaka’s National Press Club extolling Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a figure of hate to those who founded Bangladesh, as the language movement which eventually metamorphosed into a freedom struggle, started in right earnest after Jinnah ruled in March 1948 that “Urdu and Urdu alone” would be the national language of the newly-formed state of Pakistan⁴¹.

Pakistan has expressed interest in establishing a university branch campus in Bangladesh and enhancing cooperation in the education sector. The country has also offered 500 new scholarships for Bangladeshi students. The Bangladesh-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission (JEC) discussed the issue at its ninth meeting, in the capital on Monday (October

³⁵ Manzur, Syed. Nasim: “Yunus stresses SAARC revitalisation in talks with Pakistan's FM Dar”, *The Financial Express*, 24 August 2025, at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/yunus-stresses-saarc-revitalisation-in-talks-with-pakistans-fm-dar>

³⁶ “Pakistan navy chief visits Bangladesh for the first time since 1971”, *The Daily Star*, 9 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/pakistan-navy-chief-visits-bangladesh-the-first-time-1971-4031226>

³⁷ “Keen to strengthen ties”, *The Daily Star*, 27 October 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/keen-strengthen-ties-4019896>

³⁸ “MoU signed to import of atap rice from Pakistan”, *The Daily Star*, 14 June 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/mou-signed-import-atap-rice-pakistan-3799236>

³⁹ “Pakistan shows interest in shipbuilding industry”, *The Daily Star*, 25 August 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/pakistan-shows-interest-shipbuilding-industry-3970051>

⁴⁰ “Bangladesh, Pakistan sign MoU to boost bilateral halal product trade”, *The Business Standard*, 27 October 2025, at <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/bangladesh-pakistan-sign-mou-boost-halal-trade-cooperation-1270561>

⁴¹ See Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 46.



27)⁴². Dhaka University opens its doors to Pakistani students. According to the revised policy, Pakistani students will be eligible to seek admission to Dhaka University, and Bangladeshi students will also be able to pursue courses in Pakistan⁴³.

Pakistani singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan has announced his highly anticipated concert, scheduled for December 21 in Dhaka, the capital. The event, organised by the *Spirits of July platform*, will take place at the Bangladesh Army Stadium and marks a cultural milestone, as organisers increasingly spotlight Pakistani artists over Indian performers in the post-Hasina era⁴⁴. Pakistani artists are gaining immense popularity in Bangladesh, with singers like Atif Aslam and Ali Azmat, the lead vocalist of the renowned Pakistani band 'Junoon', set to perform in Dhaka for his first solo concert⁴⁵.

5. New Security Dilemma

A destabilised Bangladesh would be India's geopolitical nightmare. It would impose sustained costs on Indian interests, including the potential subversion of India's vulnerable Northeast⁴⁶. Under Hasina's rule, India and Bangladesh undertook several connectivity projects to bring the restive, remote northeastern region closer to the Indian mainland, providing it with easier access to markets in both countries. In the post-Hasina scenario, India's vulnerabilities have increased as Pakistan seeks to establish a presence in Bangladesh that undermines Indian interests⁴⁷.

The Yunus administration released hundreds of hardcore Bangladeshi Islamist militants like Ansarullah Bangla Team's chief Jashimuddin Rahmani, who maintains close ties with Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. More importantly, top terror masterminds from Pakistan have started frequenting Bangladesh. A close associate of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Saeed has twice visited Bangladesh, first in February and then in October this year, spending significant time in border districts such as Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, and Rangpur⁴⁸. Meanwhile, New Delhi's 'Act East' policy, already reeling from the growing turmoil in Myanmar, has suffered another blow from the regime Change in Bangladesh, which can lead to instability in the north-eastern region and increase India's security Challenge⁴⁹.

In addition, China's growing footprint in South Asia poses a challenge to India's position as the region's premier power. China has spent billions of dollars in recent years on infrastructure projects in countries in India's neighborhood under its Belt and Road Initiative, and has succeeded in attracting South Asian nations to join its mega connectivity projects, despite India's misgivings about its strategic objectives⁵⁰.

The 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties in March 2025, marked by Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus's visit to Beijing, resulted in the signing of nine new agreements. Two are game-changers: a commercial agreement with China to modernize and expand Mongla Port,

⁴² "Pakistan wants to open a university in Bangladesh! Will also provide 500 scholarships", *Janakantha*, 27 October 2025, at <https://www.dailyjanakantha.com/international/news/869410>

⁴³ Bhattacharya, Kallol: "Dhaka University opens up for Pakistani students", *The Hindu*, 19 November 2024, at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/dhaka-university-opens-up-for-pakistani-students/article68886713.ece>

⁴⁴ Ahuja, Nakul: "Bangladesh ropes in Pakistani singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan for charity concert", *India Today*, 20 December 2024, at <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/bangladesh-ropes-in-pakistani-singer-rahat-fateh-ali-khan-for-charity-concert-scheduled-for-tomorrow-2653017-2024-12-20>

⁴⁵ "Pakistani singer Ali Azmat to perform in Dhaka", *Views Bangladesh*, 18 February 2025, at <https://viewsbangladesh.com/pakistani-singer-ali-azmat-to-perform-in-dhaka/>

⁴⁶ Chellaney, Brahma: "The new great Game", *Open Magazine*, (August 2024), p. 22.

⁴⁷ See Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ See Bhaumik and De, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ See Chellaney, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁵⁰ See Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 65.



secured with a \$400 million loan, and Bangladesh's official invitation to Chinese companies to participate in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP). This Teesta project is extremely sensitive, as it gives China a role in a river system disputed by India and Bangladesh. For Dhaka, it is a vital development; for New Delhi, it is what Indian strategic thinkers call a primary strategic concern⁵¹.

A diplomatic engagement unfolded in Kunming on June 19 when China hosted the foreign secretaries of Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Kunming dialogue is particularly notable for establishing the first formal platform for China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This trilateral format, solidifying into an enduring mechanism, could represent the materialisation of a three-front strategic challenge for India, exerting simultaneous pressure on its western, northern, and eastern flanks⁵².

New Delhi must view the development against a backdrop of growing unease. Bangladesh's participation comes after moves that have already raised concerns in India's strategic circles, including its largest-ever military drill, Akash Bijoy 2025, and credible reports of Chinese assistance in developing the Lalmonirhat airbase, located near the sensitive Siliguri corridor. In January, Bangladesh expressed interest in purchasing the JF-17 Thunder, a fighter aircraft jointly developed by Pakistan and China⁵³.

Bangladesh shares an over 4000 km land border with India, the longest with any neighbour. It is situated east of where West Bengal abuts the Northeast through the narrow but critical Siliguri Corridor, rendering it of vital strategic importance to India⁵⁴. The rise of violent Islamism in Bangladesh, including scores of incidents of Islamist terrorism in this century, has been a growing Indian Concern. Extremists linked with ISIS (Islamic State), AL Qaeda, and the Bangladeshi, Pakistan-backed Jamaat-e-Islami have a long record of assaulting religious and ethnic communities as well as secular, liberal activists. In a destabilised Bangladesh, such forces would proliferate and pose cross-border challenges to India's security⁵⁵.

Previously, under military rulers General Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and later the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami government of Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh provided refuge and weaponry to rebel groups like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) from Assam. This clandestine support involved high-level plotting, confirmed by a former NSI chief who detailed an elaborate operation with Bangladeshi and Pakistani intelligence officials meeting in Dubai to arrange a massive consignment of weapons for ULFA. This plot was only thwarted when the Chittagong police intercepted the entire 10-truckload cache of firearms in April 2004⁵⁶.

With sudden disquiet and unease over recent actions by Bangladesh that India sees as "betrayals of goodwill", given India's proactive contribution to the liberation and creation of Bangladesh in 1971, India has decided to end the era of "ambiguous responses" and warned that acts undermining India's security will be met with a firm response. It could also open the floodgates to the flow of Bangladeshi refugees to India⁵⁷.

⁵¹ Islam, Saiful: "China's New Great Game: How Beijing is Redrawing South Asian Geopolitics", *South Asia Monitor*, November 2025, at <https://southasiamonitor.org/indo-pacific-china-watch/chinas-new-great-game-how-beijing-redrawing-south-asian-geopolitics>.

⁵² Tiwari, Shashank: "Beijing New Club", *Frontline*, Vol. 42, n° 13 (July 2025), p. 59.

⁵³ See Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ "Circle of Fire", *India Today*, 19 August 2024, p. 23.

⁵⁵ See Chellaney, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁵⁶ See Bhaumik, and De, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ See Chellaney, *op. cit.*, p. 22.



As an indication of this new strategic posture, three operationally ready military garrisons along the Indo-Bangladesh Border at Bamuni (near Dhubri), Kishenganj (in Bihar) and Chopra (in West Bengal's West Dinajpur), have been set up to buttress security in the Siliguri Corridor or the Chicken's Neck, a narrow sliver of land connecting India's northeast region with the mainland⁵⁸. New bases in Chopra, West Bengal, and Dhubri, Assam, underline Delhi's growing unease as Bangladesh undergoes a volatile political transition and China deepens its regional footprint⁵⁹.

6. The Hasina Dilemma

Bangladesh's political transition has entered a sharper phase following the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) verdict against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina — and with it, the geopolitics of South Asia has again been pulled into the centre of the crisis⁶⁰. Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and one of her close aides were sentenced to death on 17 November, bringing Bangladesh back into the international media, and also adding an element as a bone of contention between India and Bangladesh relations, over her crackdown on a student uprising last year that killed hundreds of people and led to the toppling of her 15-year rule. The International Crimes Tribunal based in Dhaka, the capital, passed sentence on Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan for their involvement in the use of deadly force against protesters. Hasina and Khan, who fled to India last year, were sentenced in absentia. India has so far declined to extradite them, making it unlikely that they would ever be executed⁶¹.

Law Adviser of the interim government, Asif Nazrul, said the government will again request India to extradite Hasina. "If India continues to shelter her, it would be seen as an act of hostility toward Bangladesh⁶²." The Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh stated, "Under the existing extradition treaty between the two countries, this is also an obligatory responsibility for India," the foreign ministry said⁶³. While the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the International Crimes Tribunal is preparing an application to the foreign ministry seeking Interpol assistance in extraditing the duo to Bangladesh, the foreign ministry said it is preparing a letter and may send it to New Delhi in a day or two⁶⁴.

In December last year, the foreign ministry wrote to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, seeking to repatriate Hasina, who New Delhi sheltered after she fled there on August 5, 2024, following a mass uprising. India is yet to respond⁶⁵. But this time, India said it has

⁵⁸ Baruah, Sanjib Kumar: "EXCLUSIVE: No more 'ambiguous' response, India warns Dhaka, sets up 3 military garrisons near border", *The Week*, 6 November 2025, at <https://www.theweek.in/news/defence/2025/11/06/exclusive-no-more-ambiguous-response-india-warns-dhaka-sets-up-3-military-garrisons-near-border.html>.

⁵⁹ Ahmed, Josim: "Diplomacy confronted by strategic realities", *Daily Times of Bangladesh*, 19 November 2025, at <https://tob.news/diplomacy-confronted-by-strategic-realities/>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Alam, Julhas: "Bangladesh's ousted leader Sheikh Hasina sentenced to death for crackdown on student uprising", *AP*, 17 November 2025, at <https://apnews.com/article/bangladesh-hasina-verdict-yunus-security-c1eec828e68460bae66824601a94eaca>

⁶² "Verdict against Hasina a historic moment for Bangladesh: Asif Nazrul", *The Daily Star*, 17 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/verdict-against-hasina-historic-moment-bangladesh-asif-nazrul-4036996>

⁶³ "Sheltering crimes against humanity convicts extremely unfriendly behaviour", *The Daily Star*, 17 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/sheltering-crimes-against-humanity-convicts-extremely-unfriendly-behaviour-4037011>

⁶⁴ "Dhaka to seek Interpol help in getting Hasina, Kamal back", *The Daily Star*, 18 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/dhaka-seek-interpol-help-getting-hasina-kamal-back-4038291>

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*



noted the verdict issued by the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh in the case concerning former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. It said New Delhi remains committed to "the best interests of the people of Bangladesh". "As a close neighbour, India remains committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh, including in peace, democracy, inclusion and stability in that country," read the statement⁶⁶.

Bangladesh and India have an operational extradition treaty, amended in 2016 to ease the transfer of fugitives. Despite this, analysts say Hasina's case will hinge almost entirely on political will. New Delhi has acknowledged it is "examining" the matter. The treaty allows a country to refuse extradition if the offence is deemed "political in character". However, it makes clear that crimes such as murder cannot be treated as political. Yet India retains significant room to interpret the clause as it sees fit, giving New Delhi considerable flexibility in its application⁶⁷.

Hasina, meanwhile, in a statement, said the verdict announced against her today was "biased and politically motivated"⁶⁸. In an interview, she also stated that India has always been and remains Bangladesh's most important ally. She must remain so if Bangladesh's security and prosperity are to be maintained. Suppose there is friction between India and Dr Yunus's unelected administration. In that case, that has nothing to do with me and everything to do with the chaotic, violent, and extremist policies that are taking shape under Dr Yunus's rule⁶⁹."

7. Hope

Indian High Commissioner Prannoy Verma and his wife, Manu Verma, hosted a reception in honor of the Bangladesh women's cricket team at the Indian Embassy in Dhaka, India House. Bangladesh National Women's Cricket Wing Chairman Nazmul Abedin and Shathira Zakir JC were present at the event held on Tuesday (September 16). Shathira will be the first Bangladeshi woman umpire to officiate in the ICC World Cup⁷⁰.

Bangladesh is buying 200 new railway coaches from India. There is a shortage of railway locomotives and coaches. Through a project, the government will purchase 200 new coaches from India to overcome the crisis. This year, the government will add 20 coaches from this procurement. The remaining coaches will arrive in the country in phases, said Fahimul Islam, Secretary of the Ministry of Railways⁷¹. Bangladesh has increased its electricity imports from India and production at its own oil-fired power plants to meet its growing electricity demand. The report said that India's electricity imports to Bangladesh increased by 70 percent in the first seven months of this year⁷².

The government began importing rice from India through the Benapole port in August. Within 21 days of the start of the import, importers have brought in approximately 7,100 metric

⁶⁶ "India responds after Bangladesh's ICT issues verdict on Hasina", *The Daily Star*, 17 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/asia/india/news/india-responds-after-bangladeshs-ict-issues-verdict-hasina-4037081>

⁶⁷ See Ahmed, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ "Sheikh Hasina sentenced to death for crimes against humanity", *The Daily Star*, 17 November 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/sheikh-hasina-sentenced-death-crimes-against-humanity-4036886>

⁶⁹ Laskar, Rezaul H: "Grateful to Indian people for providing me with safe haven: Sheikh Hasina", *Hindustan Times*, 7 November 2025 at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/grateful-to-indian-peopimport's-startle-for-providing-me-with-safe-haven-sheikh-hasina-101762493import's-start644046.html>

⁷⁰ "Indian High Commissioner welcomes Bangladesh women's cricket team", *Bonik Barta*. 16 September 2025, at <https://www.bonikbarta.com/bangladesh/FqdXO1pjOjwQL1xt>

⁷¹ "Bangladesh to buy 200 new railway coaches from India", *Ittefaq*, 15 September 2025, at <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/752033/>

⁷² "Bangladesh increases electricity imports from India", *Kaler kantha*, 12 September 2025, at <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/news/2025/09/12/1576139>



tons of rice from India through the Benapole port. Moreover, several more rice trucks are waiting to enter Bangladesh at Petrapole port, according to importers. According to the latest information, approximately 75 consignments of this coarse rice have entered the Benapole port in 203 trucks over 21 working days⁷³.

Amid tensions between India and Bangladesh over the border issue, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has decided to import 130,000 metric tonnes of diesel from Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) in India⁷⁴. India's total exports for the first half of the current fiscal year, 2025-26 (April-September), stood at \$413 billion, representing an increase of approximately 4.45% compared to the same period last year⁷⁵.

The Ministry of Commerce has granted permission for the shipment to proceed. Consequently, Bangladesh is exporting 1,200 tons of hilsa to India for the Durga Puja festival. Last year, on the occasion of Durga Puja, the Ministry of Commerce had initially decided to allow the export of 3,000 tons of hilsa to India. It reversed this decision and finally allowed the export of 2,420 tons of hilsa. This time, the Ministry of Commerce has permitted the export of half of this hilsa quantity. Previously, the Ministry granted permission to 49 companies⁷⁶.

However, the figures indicate that only 145 tons of hilsa arrived, with 106 tons going to West Bengal through the Petrapole-Benapole checkpoint and 39 tons entering Tripura through Akhaura. This year, the Bangladesh government permitted 37 companies to export hilsa. Only 16 companies were able to export hilsa to some extent. Twenty-one companies were unable to export hilsa to India despite obtaining clearance. Because at the end of the season, there were not 1,200 tons of hilsa in the Barisal-Chandpur area to export⁷⁷.

The four-day exhibition, featuring a collection of exquisite Jamdani saris woven by master artisans from Bangladesh, also showcased vintage pieces dating back to the 19th century. Hamidullah inaugurated the exhibition for the first time on 19 September⁷⁸. Indian product stalls dominate foreign representation at the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF), showing no impact from the Dhaka-Delhi tensions following Bangladesh's political changeover last August⁷⁹.

However, the number of Bangladeshi tourists in the neighboring country has begun to increase again recently. According to the Indian Ministry of Tourism, Bangladesh re-entered

⁷³ “7100 metric tons of rice arrived in 21 days, more Indian trucks waiting to enter”, *Ittefaq*, 30 September 2025, at <https://www.ittefaq.com.bd/754369/>

⁷⁴ “Despite tensions, Bangladesh to continue to import diesel from India”, *The Times of India*, 14 January 2025, at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/despite-tensions-bangladesh-to-continue-to-import-diesel-from-india/articleshow/117218075.cms>

⁷⁵ “India's exports cross \$400 billion in first half of current fiscal year”, *Sarakhon*, 16 October 2025, at <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://sarakhon.com/?p%3D98398&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1762923815015982&usg=AOvVaw2t7JWbkEdTOSq-SIP6MIDJ>

⁷⁶ “1,200 tons of Hilsa going to India for Durga Puja, Ministry of Commerce gives permission for export”, *Prothom Alo*, 8 September 2025, at <https://www.prothomalo.com/business/e1da5yc3xd>

⁷⁷ Chattopadhyay, Anamitra: “Hilsa of the Padma — Myths and Lies”, *Ei Samay*, 9 September 2025, at <https://eisamay.com/blog/padma-ilish-story-myth-and-truth-about-hilsa-from-bangladesh-a-blog-by-anamitra-chatterjee/200424945.cms>

⁷⁸ Khaton, Alimina: “Wear a Jamdani sari and float like air: A Delhi exhibition recreates weightless magic”, *The Print*, 21 September 2025, at <https://theprint.in/feature/around-town/bangladesh-jamdani-sari-delhi-exhibition/2747832/>

⁷⁹ Rayhan, Jahir: “Indian stalls dominate foreign brands at Dhaka International Trade Fair”, *The Business Stranded*, 18 January 2025, at <https://www.tbsnews.net/events/indian-stalls-dominate-foreign-brands-dhaka-international-trade-fair-1046181>



the top five countries by foreign tourist arrivals in April. About 29,000 Bangladeshis visited India that month⁸⁰.

More recently, National Security Advisor to the interim government of Bangladesh, Khalilur Rahman, is going to Delhi on November 19 to attend the National Security Advisors' Conference of the Indian Ocean Region. The Colombo Security Conclave, a conference of five countries in the Indian Ocean, will be held in Delhi on November 20. A source at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka told this reporter that Khalilur Rahman has confirmed his visit to Delhi. However, the High Commission has not yet officially announced it⁸¹.

8. Concluding Observation and Way Ahead

In June of this year, Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser, Md. Touhid Hossain argued that the country's relationship with India requires *rebalancing*. Since August 5, 2024, when former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took refuge in India, Dhaka's interim administration and broader public opinion have strongly criticized New Delhi for its perceived support of the Awami League. To date, India's official response has generally remained diplomatic, prompting speculation that it may be adopting a cautious, wait-and-see approach in the hope that tensions will ease after the next elections.⁸² Since August 5, 2024, when Sheikh Hasina fled to India amid mass protests and political upheaval, Dhaka's interim administration has openly criticized New Delhi for its perceived implicit support of the ousted Awami League regime. India's response, however, has largely remained diplomatic, suggesting a cautious, wait-and-see approach rather than direct intervention. Meanwhile, Tarique Rahman, acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has made forceful remarks about India's role. He said that if India continues to provide shelter to what he terms an "autocrat," then "there is nothing we can do," implying that New Delhi risks becoming unpopular among the Bangladeshi people⁸³.

Meanwhile, leaders of the National Citizens' Party (NCP) have underscored the importance of transcending Bangladesh's historically fraught relationship with Pakistan and forging a more constructive and respectful partnership. During a meeting with Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, the NCP's delegation, led by Member-Secretary Akhtar Hossain, argued that for bilateral relations to improve substantively, Pakistan must address the unresolved legacies of 1971. According to NCP leaders, three core issues remain central: an official apology from Pakistan for the 1971 atrocities, the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis, and the equitable division of pre-1971 assets. They emphasized that any future rapprochement should be grounded in *mutual respect* and a sensitive acknowledgment of historical grievances.⁸⁴

Apart from these political comments, a new trend has been visible in both India and Bangladesh as they search for alternatives, indicating a paradigm shift. The hilsa on Indian dinner plates is more likely to have come from Gujarat's Bharuch than from the traditional sources of West Bengal or Bangladesh, according to a report by the Economic Times. According to the newspaper, Bharuch supplied a record 4,000 tonnes of hilsa in July and

⁸⁰ "Bangladeshi tourists back in top five foreign visitors to India", *Banik Barta*, 23 September 2025, at <https://en.bonikbarta.com/bangladesh/cYRBe3TC04w38KMG>.

⁸¹ Ejaz, Rahid: "National Security Advisor to visit India", *Prothom Alo*, 14 November 2025, at <https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/1sr9730sht?>

⁸² Shibli, Abdullah: "Will the upcoming election stabilise Bangladesh-India relations?", *The Daily Star*, 14 October 2025, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/open-dialogue/news/will-the-upcoming-election-stabilise-bangladesh-india-relations-4009031>.

⁸³ "Tarique: Sheltering an 'autocrat' is India's choice", *Dhaka Tribune*, 7 October 2025, at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/393397/>.

⁸⁴ "71-issue should be 'dealt' to advance Bangladesh-Pakistan relations: NCP", *Prothom Alo*, 23 August 2025, at <https://www.prothomalo.com/politics/8fbptlp06r>.



August, as imports from Bangladesh have yet to begin and West Bengal's catch has dwindled to less than half of what it produced in 2024⁸⁵.

Leading international clothing retailers in India, including Marks & Spencer, H&M, Zudio, and Lifestyle, are facing supply shortages because imports from Bangladesh are now allowed only through the seaports of Kolkata and Nhava Sheva, resulting in significant supply chain disruptions. The move has led to delays of 2 to 3 weeks in sourcing merchandise, especially in lower-priced categories. As a result, several Indian retailers, such as Lifestyle, Reliance, and Aditya Birla, have begun shifting part of their production domestically⁸⁶. On the other hand, Bangladesh is rapidly emerging as an investment hub for Chinese manufacturers seeking to diversify their production bases, thereby mitigating the high tariffs imposed by the United States on Chinese goods⁸⁷. Until now, India has been exporting the highest number of onions and potatoes to Bangladesh. In the fiscal year 2023-24, India exported 724,000 tons of onions, worth \$145 million. In the previous fiscal year, they exported a total of 671 thousand metric tons of onions. This time, they are seeking alternatives to India for purchasing onions and potatoes⁸⁸.

Therefore, the death sentence delivered to Sheikh Hasina by a tribunal of her own creation is not the conclusion of Bangladesh's political saga, but rather a violent, symbolic inflection point marking the definitive end of one era and the unstable, turbulent start of another. This verdict, shrouded in questions of due process and political expediency, confirms the enduring cycle of political vendetta that has historically plagued the nation, wherein accountability is quickly weaponized into retribution.

The true significance of this shift lies in the rapid restructuring of political power. The vacuum left by the collapse of the Awami League is now a contested space defined by the dual, resurgent forces of the Islamist Right and the reorganized Left. The Islamist Right, spearheaded by the Jamaat-e-Islami, has leveraged this instability to re-enter the mainstream, achieving unprecedented grassroots legitimacy through student union victories that solidify their position as a formidable, disciplined political force. Simultaneously, the Democratic Left Alliance seeks to reclaim the state's foundational narrative, positioning itself as the authentic voice of the 1971 Liberation Ethos in opposition to a new political order.

Crucially, this domestic upheaval in Bangladesh is deeply intertwined with a sharp deterioration in regional security, amplified by a strategic realignment. The interim government's reported release of extremist elements—some allegedly linked to international terrorist networks—raises troubling concerns about a permissive atmosphere for radicalization. This evokes a historic security dilemma for India, reminiscent of periods under previous regimes when Bangladeshi territory was used to shelter and arm insurgent groups operating in India's Northeast. Compounding New Delhi's anxiety is Dhaka's overt diplomatic and economic engagement with India's strategic competitors. The new government is cultivating stronger ties with Pakistan, while simultaneously deepening its embrace of China—securing significant Chinese investments and loans, and positioning Bangladesh as an increasingly

⁸⁵ "India gravitates toward Gujarati hilsa as Bangladeshi imports stall: Economic Times", *The Financial Express*, 4 September, 2025, at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/india-gravitates-toward-gujarati-hilsa-as-bangladeshi-imports-stall-economic-times>.

⁸⁶ "India bars import of Bangladeshi RMG, fruits via land ports", *Dhaka Tribune*, 17 May 2025, at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/381535/india-bars-import-of-bangladeshi-rmg-fruits-via>.

⁸⁷ Uddin, Jasim: "Bangladesh emerging as Chinese firms' investment destination", *The Financial Express*, 25 August 2025, at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh-emerging-as-chinese-firms-investment-destination>.

⁸⁸ "India may reduce potato and onion exports, alternatives are being sought", *Kaler Kantha*, 12 November 2025, at https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/business/2024/12/11/1456249#google_vignette.



important node in the Chinese economic orbit. This realignment is driving substantive economic shifts: as India imposes sudden trade restraints, Bangladesh is actively diversifying its markets for essential goods, challenging India's historical role as a primary regional supplier. Ultimately, Bangladesh appears to be at a critical crossroads. While the transition has replaced one political authority with another, the foundational principles of impartial justice remain contested. The country now navigates a fraught ideological struggle between competing visions for its future, even as its geopolitical pivot projects instability across the region. For New Delhi, the immediate task is to walk a diplomatic tightrope: balancing the sensitive issue of Hasina's extradition with the imperative to devise a robust, multi-stakeholder strategy that safeguards India's northeastern security interests in a neighborhood whose trajectory has once again become unpredictable.

From a realist perspective, if New Delhi seeks to safeguard its core national interests—both within the subcontinent and beyond—it must recognize that Bangladesh is a strategic pivot in its geopolitical calculus. In the wake of Sheikh Hasina's ouster, Dhaka's internal convulsions are not merely domestic disturbances; they carry profound regional ramifications. The reported release of hardline militants, combined with a geopolitical realignment toward China and Pakistan, signals a fundamental shift in Bangladesh's strategic orientation—one that could seriously undermine India's security architecture in South Asia. Given this altered landscape, New Delhi can no longer rely simply on historical affinities or existing institutional mechanisms. It must engage with a more complex Bangladesh—one that is diversifying its alliances and recalibrating its foreign policy. A forward-looking Indian strategy should blend *realpolitik* with principled diplomacy: addressing security concerns while also crafting inclusive economic and regional cooperation frameworks to preserve mutual relevance. India's response, therefore, needs to be multidimensional: strengthening intelligence cooperation to guard against extremist resurgence; revitalizing trade and connectivity dialogues to sustain economic interdependence; and deploying public diplomacy to articulate shared interests that go beyond transactional ties. This requires a leverage that is flexible but not opportunistic. Ultimately, India's broader aim should be to help foster a stable, sovereign, and pluralistic Bangladesh, not as a vassal state in its orbit, but as a genuine partner in regional peace and development. By supporting institutional resilience, democratic renewal, and economic diversification in Bangladesh and India, the two countries can bolster their long-term strategic goals and contribute to a more stable and prosperous South Asia.

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