

Bangladesh Situation and Challenge to Security in India

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Abstract

During the cold war, Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state in South Asia on December 15, 1971. The country's economic, military, and political assistance in the liberation war brought India very close to achieving alliance. In March 1972, a historic peace and friendship agreement was signed between the two countries. Relations took a strong shape during Mujibur Rahman's rule; they took a somewhat narrow shape during the BNP period. However, above all, close relations have been observed during the Hasina Government, which is an example in world politics. Bilateral relations have improved from strength to strength through different levels. Recently, the relationship has taken a downturn with the fall of the Awami League regime in the intense anti-discrimination student uprising. An interim government was formed and Mohammad Yunus Saheb took over as its chief advisor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed Mahadaya. However, the situation of not getting wet in the water, giving shelter to Hasina in India can be said to be a big issue for Bangladesh. Since August 5, 2024, the student advisors have expressed their anger over the unresolved issues. India has played a neutral role, although it is trying to keep relations normal for the sake of security, which is a positive aspect. The total border length of Bangladesh is approximately 5138 kilometres, of which 4096 kilometres are with India. Overall, not only internal issues but also international border issues have become a threat to India's security. However, the main objective of this research paper is to analyse the causes of border problems, water distribution, discrimination against minorities, terrorism and discuss its impact on India's national security and bilateral relations and try to find solutions. The information has been collected mainly from primary and secondary data such as various articles, scholarly journals, research papers and observation of the current situation. The paper has followed qualitative and quantitative methods as research methods.

Keywords

National security, border issue, terrorism, BSF, BGB

The main problem highlighted in this research paper is how India's national security is being threatened after Hasina's resignation, and how to find a better way to deal with it.

1. Background

The student movement that started in the country in July against quota discrimination turned into a mass movement as a result of police atrocities by the Hasina government. Which is now recognized as the July Movement by the interim government. However, when India's trusted and close friend Sheikh Hasina fell from power, an interim government was formed with the support of the country's army, BNP, Jamaat-e-Islam and other small parties, where Mahfuz Alam, Nahid Islam, Asif took oath as advisors as representatives of the students. As one after another, they started to adopt a strong anti-India attitude from their government positions. Mahfuz Alam published a map of India's 7 sisters and claimed that they were part of Bangladesh, while July Memorial Foundation president Sarjis Alam, Hasnat Abdullah, Nahidra and others started blaming India for sending Hasina back and other problems. Even former army officers started making threatening remarks unbridled.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his own family on August 15, 1975, the military coup and later the coalition government of several groups including BNP, Jamaat-e-Islam created an anti-India atmosphere, so naturally this is nothing new. Although India did not fall for this propaganda, rather the country always believes that solving any problem through dialogue is the only identity of democracy. The question is how dangerous is so much anti-India and internal instability in the country for India's security?

2. Border issues

Although the enclave issue between the two countries was resolved in 2015, several problems remain unresolved. However, when the Awami League government, which believes in liberal secular ideology, was in power, India did not have to think hard about the border. But recently, the country has been experiencing anarchy, attacks on minority communities, torture, etc., which has put the Indian government on its toes. Since Bangladesh is located on three sides of the land border with India, the pressure of infiltrators is putting India's economic security at risk, while the top terrorists are escaping from jail and returning to the country from abroad, the militant Ghulam Rasool alias Tokai continues to extort money from violent acts. Extremist groups like Ansarulla Bangla Team or JMB members who enter India are carrying out various immoral activities, which is very worrying for India. Since the fall of the elected government in Bangladesh and the passive role of the police and administration, as a result, no one can control anyone, in a word, there is a state of anarchy. Top terrorists like Subrata Bain, alias Babul, Arafat Ibne Masud are freely getting bail from the court, which is not only critical for the security system of Bangladesh, but also the border areas of India are facing more risks than that. Because out of the 4096 km of the land border between the two countries, 3141 km of the fence has been constructed, but the rest of the fence construction work is stuck due to the obstacles of the BGB, some areas which are basically river borders, hilly remote forest areas and some areas of West Bengal due to lack of land.(source- Rahaman md Sayadur and Islam md shariful, 2024) .The issue of not getting land here is nothing but a manifestation of the duplicity of the central and state governments. As a result, the number of infiltrators in the country is increasing, drugs, cattle, various medicines, weapons which have become an illegal and informal trade on a daily basis. For this, the local people of both sides of Bengal are fully involved. They are carrying out illegal activities by transporting goods on their heads, by means of bicycles, rickshaws or bikes. Although the Indian government is using CCTV, Sencer drones for smart surveillance. advance radar system thermal imaging, electric surveillance, enhance security in high-risk zones.

3. Water Distribution

The Teesta water dispute started after the partition of India in 1947. In 1971, the seeds of trouble sprouted again. In 2024, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, the water resources advisor to the interim government of Bangladesh, said that the Teesta water treaty negotiations would be taken forward, but it remained in the dark. In 1974, the controversy over the construction of the Faraqa Barrage increased. In 1996, a 30-year historic treaty was signed between the two countries on the sharing of Ganga water, the validity of which will end in 2026. However, Bangladesh has repeatedly complained that it has been deprived of its fair rights. Again, despite detailed discussions between Mujib's daughter Hasina and Narendra Modi on the water of the Teesta River, no progress could be made in resolving the problem. A total of 54 rivers has entered Bangladesh from India, among these rivers, the Ganges and Teesta are powerful rivers fed by melting snow (source of Jayaram, Dhanshree Ipd World News 2013). Bangladesh is a major river basin and agricultural country. An estimated 80-85% of the annual water flows from India to the country. There, water is not available when needed, and water is available unnecessarily, causing floods and damaging crops. Naturally, it is not unreasonable to be angry about the water distribution problem. Currently, this anger has become so intense that it is worrying for India, from political party leaders and activists to government advisors and the general public. Amena Mohsin, a professor at the Department of International Relations at Dhaka University, claims that India is stuck due to internal politics. She also said that since Nepal and China are involved in this river, a larger-scale discussion is needed. But India is not willing to discuss with any third party. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claims that the central government cannot take any final decision without consulting her, but this is also true. The people of Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, in North Bengal, are highly dependent on Teesta. Naturally, bringing danger to one's own home and solving the danger of another is unsolvable. Finally, I think that if we want to strengthen the relations between the two countries, we should rise above politics and come to a solution quickly through negotiation.

4. Economic and Trade

During the interim government, we can see that trade between India and Bangladesh has reached its lowest point, which is having a negative impact on the people of both sides. Since various types of food and technological goods can be transported very easily and at low cost through the land share of the two countries, both the people benefit and it is of special significance in terms of national interest. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of India, India imported goods worth more than \$ 10.4 million from Bangladesh in the financial year 2018-2019, which is a record. Although this is considered an important milestone in bilateral trade, India's special germs industry is very concerned about this trend. In this situation, they have strongly appealed to the government to attract money for exports from Bangladesh. Again, the ready-made garments sector of Bangladesh has captured the market in India extensively, which is significant in the national interest of West Bengal. In addition, 98% of the goods have the right to enter India duty-free. Therefore, it can be said that the stability of a government plays an important role in relations. As the only liberal political party in Bangladesh, India's relationship with Awami League is historical. But as for other parties, whether it is Jamaat-e-Islami or BNP, India has not developed a strong relationship with their ideology.

As a result, today Bangladesh's diplomatic and political relations with India are in a very low state, which naturally has an impact on the economic and commercial sectors. Many in Bangladesh feel that the Hasina government has given priority to India's interests, but India has not valued Bangladesh's interests as much in return. Such reactions and anger have been expressed today. Attacks and torture on the country's internal minority communities that hurt India and this has created a storm of protest among

the people of India. From which some decisions have been forced to be taken, such as imposing a ban on the entry of many goods including potatoes, onions, cotton into Bangladesh. Bangladeshi businessmen who used to ship various goods abroad using Indian airports have been deprived of those facilities. Visas were suspended to strengthen security. The Bangladesh government stopped importing from India and started establishing relations with Pakistan, and it has also started to establish relations with China. As a result, it can be seen that the market that India had in Bangladesh is gradually being lost and China is investing a lot of money in multi super hospitals, bridge structures to control floods, which is a kind of threat to India. India is determined to keep a close eye on the current situation in Bangladesh because a ban has been imposed on India's credible political party Awami League, the party will not be able to participate in the elections and the emergence of a new party called NCP, whose convener Nahid Islam has started campaigning to fight the elections with a strong stance against Awami League and against India, keeping the July Revolution in mind. Because even if the date is not fixed, at least the elections will be held in early 2026. However, in this situation, China and Pakistan are trying to take advantage of the rift in relations between the two countries, which is not a good sign for India. Rather, I think it is absolutely necessary for India to hold talks with the interim government, keep in mind its national interests, strengthen security systems, economic, political, and cultural exchanges, respect the fair equality of the two countries, and present the India-Bangladesh relationship firmly in the world by fading the narrative. In the meantime, India, like every time, has announced financial assistance to neighbouring countries in the budget, as well as assistance to Bangladesh despite so many anti-India people. Members of the Indian Parliament have expressed their opinion that India should move forward with the goal of improving relations with Bangladesh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a message of condolence to the many students killed and injured in the plane crash in the northern part of Dhaka city and assured assistance, and even Indian doctors and nurses have reached Dhaka to provide medical services. Again, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee paid a courtesy call on the newly appointed Bangladesh High Commissioner to India and requested him to convey her greetings to Yunus Saheb. So, a positive response is being made from India, which seems to be moving in the right direction.

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