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THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES IN BANGLADESH: ASSESSING INDIA'S CHALLENGES AND CHINA'S PROSPECTS IN THE POST-HASINA ERA

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ABSTRACT

Geopolitical landscape of Bangladesh is going through significant shifts following the departure of Sheikh Hasina in 2024. In the midst of student protests supported by the Bangladesh army, she resigned and escape to India on 5th August, 2024. This situation has left a power vacuum and created a climate of political uncertainty specifically for India. Hasina had been a strategic partner to New Delhi for many years. She provided the influence of India in South Asia as well. However, her exit has introduced new challenges for India especially when China is increasing its influence in Bangladesh through various projects and agreements. Now this is a great opportunity for China to expand its power in the region. The evolving situation in Bangladesh has significant consequences for security of India. It also has great implications for broader geopolitical interests for India keeping in view the China's growing presence in the region. In response, India will more likely to reevaluate its foreign policy approach. It will try to balance its relations with Bangladesh and address the increasing Chinese involvement there. This article also examines the expected shifts in Bangladesh's foreign policy, which is anticipated to gravitate further toward military cooperation with China and increased Chinese investment. These developments could redefine the regional security architecture in South Asia, with broader implications for India's role and the overall geopolitical landscape of the region.

Keywords: Geopolitical Shifts, Bangladesh, India, China, Post-Hasina Era, Strategic Challenges, Regional Security, Power Dynamics.

Introduction

Sheikh Hasina resigned after the massive student protests across Bangladesh supported by the army on 5 August, 2024. It leaves a significant power vacuum in the region. Now that Muhammad Yunus leads an interim government but the political future is unpredictable in Bangladesh. Hasina's power was one of most dependable partners of India. It helped New Delhi to increase its geopolitical influence in South Asia. Her departure now introduces new complexities for India as it is trying to handle the evolving political authority in Bangladesh and its regional consequences.

On the other hand, the influence of Beijing in Bangladesh had been growing through infrastructure projects as well as strategic agreements in the presence of Haseena government. However, she had strong ties with India that created obstacles and limited the interests of China in the region¹. After her resignation, the foreign policy of Bangladesh may shift and offer China new opportunities to enhance its strategic advantages. This shift creates huge challenges for India that could increase security concerns as it has lost a key regional partner.

This study examines the evolving geopolitical landscape and the security challenges India may face in the presence of China as it is already strengthening its economic and strategic presence in Bangladesh. It looks at the increasing Chinese investments and expected military cooperation in the post-Hasina era. This might shift regional power dynamics and impact security and influence of India. This research provides deep analyses of the strategic challenges India faces in this changing geopolitical environment by analyzing the evolving alliances and emerging threats.

Background

India and Bangladesh have a significant historical relation since the independent of Bangladesh in 1971. India played an extensive role by supporting the independence movement in Bangladesh and even went to war with Pakistan. The intervention of India helped Bangladesh to create an independent state. Since then, both states have the deep and close relationship that has influenced strategic and security outlook of India throughout the history. Bangladesh holds a great importance for India. It is not only important for India as a neighboring country but also as a key strategic partner in regional security especially regarding Northeastern region of India. This region has

¹Shannon Tiezzi, "China Treads Cautiously After Hasina Is Driven From Power in Bangladesh: For China, Hasina's ouster brings dreaded instability – but also a potential opportunity", *The Diplomat*, no. 121, August, 07, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/china-treads-cautiously-after-hasina-is-driven-from-power-in-bangladesh/>

historically been vulnerable to insurgency and political instability. India closely looks at political developments in Dhaka and understands that the internal dynamics of Bangladesh can directly affect the security of its own borders and its Northeastern states. Any political shifts in Bangladesh are of immense interest to India especially in the light of the deep historical ties and the potential consequences for regional stability.

Sheikh Hasina won for the fourth time in 2024 as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. She strengthened her position as the longest-serving leader in the history of Bangladesh. It entered with India entered what many have described as a "golden era" of mutual relations under her leadership. Hasina played a great role in reducing insurgencies in Northeastern states of India that was one of the main concerns of India. Both countries expanded their cooperation in main areas that include defense, energy and transit. This further strengthened their bilateral relationship. Despite all of these achievements, there were still unresolved issues like Teesta River water sharing, the Rohingya refugee crisis and time-to-time disputes related to the border. These issues continued to challenge their relationship occasionally.

Bangladesh under the leadership of Hasina tenure faced several domestic challenges. Social unrest that was driven by dissatisfaction after her visit to China in 2023. Opposition parties including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) accused Hasina for serving the interests of India and even called her the "Puppet of New Delhi". This dissatisfaction increased and students started protesting. Situation escalated with the growing discomfort over public sector job quotas as many viewed this system as unfair. Government started crackdowns on these protests that increased the public resentment and the youth unemployment was the final change. The situation escalated and overwhelmed the whole county with the Hasina resignation. The turning point came when the Bangladeshi army refused to enforce a curfew. This led to the resignation of Hasina and the appointment of an interim government. This was a significant blow for India because it did not only lost a long-time ally but also faced uncertainties in its strategic partnership with Bangladesh.²

On the other side, the growing influence of Beijing in Bangladesh has raised significant concerns in New Delhi. China is increasing its influence in Bangladesh through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and other agreements. It is investing heavily in infrastructure projects such as railway, ports and roads. Along with these investments, the military support of China to Bangladesh have increased and complicated the geopolitical

² Faisal Mehmud, "Bangladesh turmoil: Bangladesh PM Hasina's dramatic fall from grace: 5 things to know", *Nikkei Asia*, August 6, 2024, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Bangladesh-turmoil/Bangladesh-PM-Hasina-s-dramatic-fall-from-grace-5-things-to-know>

contest between India and China. The boosting and deepening relation of China with Bangladesh that also includes in defense supply have created discomfort in India. This situation has developed unease in New Delhi as it is trying to maintain its influence in the region and counterbalance the strategic influence of China.

Post-Hasina Political Landscape

Now Bangladesh finds itself maneuvering through a political environment that is getting more complicated and multifaceted after the unexpected resignation of Sheikh Hasina. Dhaka is also trying to find its way in the environment of uncertainty and shifting alliances after her. The interim government now faces multiple and immediate challenges. One of the main challenges for Bangladesh is the need to resolve the concerns of India as it is not just a neighboring state but also has historically been a significant ally for the administration of Hasina. India is also concerned regarding the lawlessness and specifically the safety and security of its Hindu minority population. This concern is rooted in historical precedents of religious persecution that have periodically emerged in the region. Prominent Hindu leaders like Gobinda Chandra Pramanik have expressed fears by emphasizing that Hindus in Bangladesh are currently experiencing the same level of instability as other communities. However the videos surfaced where the Bengali students protecting minorities and guarding the temples.³ Several political factions are competing for power and influence in this shifting landscape. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is also taking advantage on the situation actively. The BNP had been vocal in calling for the removal of Hasina from power. It criticized her government for human rights violations under her leadership. The strategy of BNP includes highlighting the India-Bangladesh Extradition Treaty in its demands. This complicates the diplomatic position of India significantly. This treaty could potentially protect Hasina from extradition as it contains specific provisions. It creates a diplomatic dilemma for India because it results the fallout from her resignation. A new leadership that might be led by economist Dr. Muhammad Yunus will probably face the challenges regarding the delicate balance in foreign relations with India and China. Yunus wants to strengthen relations with India but there are great challenges due to anti-India sentiments in the interim government. These sentiments are specifically from groups like Hifazat-e-Islam. Now different factions in the government and society will deeply analyze interactions of Yunus with India especially

³ Rishi Gupta, "Political Turmoil in Bangladesh: Hasina's Fall, the Rise of an Interim Government, and Regional Dynamics", August, 28, 2024, *Asia Society Policy Institute*, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/political-turmoil-bangladesh-hasinas-fall-rise-interim-government-and-regional-dynamics>

those who are disappointed by the previous administration that has close relationship with Delhi.⁴

On the other hand, China is closely analyzing developments in Bangladesh. It is ready to take any opportunity to enhance its influence in the region. China has historically maintained relations with several political parties in Bangladesh. It has positioned itself as a reliable partner without the historical traumas that are associated with the involvement of India in the region. The changing political situation in the country can create positive circumstances for China to increase its economic and strategic interests. Now that Bangladesh is too much reliant on Chinese investment over the past decade, it is easier for China to expand its influence. The chances for deeper ties are growing between these two states as there are several infrastructure projects funded by China. This situation is complicating the foreign policy of Bangladesh landscape.

The capability to maintain control and avoid extremism of the interim government is very essential. In addition, to not let the situation further escalate will be essential to ensure stability in this rapidly evolving political environment. India is increasing its border security measures because of the potential unrest and the possibility of flow refugees in the country. This shows that instability of Bangladesh can have implications not only for its own citizens but also for the region. It is extremely important for the new leadership to prioritize balanced foreign relations. It is also essential to resolve the domestic issues that can cause the potential risks. The next step of the new government will decide the future of Bangladesh, as it requires a very balanced approach to navigate the both internal and external pressures.

China's Strategic Opportunities

China is ready to take advantage of the current political changes in Bangladesh to grow its economic and strategic influence in the region. The situation has shifted after the resignation of Sheikh Hasina. This has given Beijing a chance to expand its presence with diplomacy and investments. The new interim government that is led by Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus is presenting China with an opportunity to strengthen ties with all political groups. This shows that interests of China are protected no matter who comes into power in the coming months.⁵

⁴ Shafquat Rabbee, "After Hasina: Cautious optimism for Bangladesh's future", 10 Aug 2024, *AlJazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/8/10/after-hasina-cautious-optimism-for-bangladeshs-future>

⁵ Rakshith Shetty, "India Must Match China's Speedy Moves in Bangladesh's New Political Landscape", September, 23, 2024, *South Asian Voices*, <https://southasianvoices.org/geo-m-in-r-china-indiainnewbangladesh-09-23-2024/>

One of the greatest ways for China to expand its influence in Bangladesh is through military cooperation. Bangladesh has long relied on China for the purchases of defense equipments. This military cooperation could be increased with the new government. Military ties would increase defense capabilities of Bangladesh and give China a strategic advantage in the Bay of Bengal. This would increase the influence of China in South Asia. A closer military partnership could lead to joint exercises and training to create a bond that could deepen role of China in the security of region. China has already increased its power in Bangladesh. It has invested approximately USD \$26 billion from 2016 to 2022. This investment can probably be increased in the post-Hasina era as the interim government of Bangladesh seeks to renew and expand infrastructure development initiatives. Key projects that are funded by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) such as the Karnaphuli Tunnel, the Cox's Bazar airport and railways extending to the Myanmar border are ready to boost influence of China in critical sectors. These infrastructure developments not only enhance connectivity within Bangladesh but also integrate the country into broader strategic defense initiatives of China. This can create a security perimeter for the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).

China has another way to expand its influence that is to build strategic ports and dual-use infrastructure. The planned Chinese submarine base in the Bay of Bengal is one of the key developments. This can be used for defensive and offensive purposes as well. Its location near crucial points like the Strait of Malacca and Andaman-Nicobar Islands of India makes it an important part of maritime strategy of China. China is strengthening its position in South Asia and challenging regional power of India by boosting its military presence in the Bay of Bengal.

Recent diplomatic moves of China show its acknowledgement and awareness of the changing politics in Bangladesh. Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen met with Shafiqur Rahman who is the head of Jamaat-e-Islami. This political party previously was banned under rule of Hasina but recently allowed to resume activities. This meeting shows effort of China to keep its engagement with all political sides and preparation for any changes in the leadership. China tries to protect its investments and maintain its influence in Bangladesh by connecting with various political figures no matter who is in power.

China is growing its influence in Bangladesh and this can have a great impact on the region. India that has had long strong ties with Hasina might find itself pushed aside if it does not engage itself with the new interim government. India's "wait and watch" approach could allow China to increase its influence especially as Beijing builds relationships with political groups like the BNP and JeI. Some Indian politicians and

media are also concerned about regime changes that could be possibly backed by U.S. It could make things even more complicated for India in Dhaka.

India's Strategic Challenges

Resignation of Sheikh Hasina as prime minister of Bangladesh brings new challenges for India as there is uncertainty in the post-Hasina era. India has had a stable relationship with Bangladesh with government of Hasina, as it was a key ally for India for more than a decade. They worked together on security and regional projects. Now India faces tough challenges, especially related to the border security, regional politics and economic cooperation with the political changes in Bangladesh,

One of current challenges India in the post-Hasina era is managing the extensive 4,096-kilometer India-Bangladesh border. This border has long been a way for smuggling, human trafficking and activities related to the insurgencies. The instability in Bangladesh increases the risk of cross-border infiltration. This has also increased the resurgence of militant groups. Now Delhi will need to increase the security mechanisms of its border. There is a need for heightened vigilance and increased security measures at the border to prevent infiltrations that could destabilize northeastern states of India. There are chances of anti-India elements that can probably seek to exploit the political chaos in Bangladesh.

Northeast of India has historically been sensitive to insurgencies. The extreme situation in Bangladesh could provide a way to rise in separatist movements. Anti-national elements may attempt to fuel unrest in Northeast of India by taking advantage of the chaos in Bangladesh. So it is crucial to safeguard the border and avoid any repercussions of internal security of India from the political unrest in Bangladesh.

The political instability in Bangladesh has great implications for geopolitical situation of South Asia. Bangladesh is not just a neighbor for India but also the greatest ally in initiatives like BIMSTEC and the BBIN framework. The purpose of both of these initiatives is to improve regional and economic cooperation. The regional plans of Bangladesh becoming less cooperative or hostile could face severe challenges and can affect the entire region.⁶

There is uncertainty related to the future leadership of Bangladesh. It makes the situation even more complicated. If the next government is more inclined toward China, it could probably shift the regional balance of power. There could also be a shift

⁶ Dr Amit Kumar, "India and Bangladesh crisis: Uncertain future trajectory of security, economics, and regional geopolitics?", August, 08, 2024, *The Times of India*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/india-and-bangladesh-crisis-uncertain-future-trajectory-of-security-economics-and-regional-geopolitics/>

in power in the Bay of Bengal. China has already been expanding its influence in South Asia and would definitely try to increase its strategic influence in Bangladesh. This would not only challenge the ability of India to maintain its security and economic interests in the region but also to maintain its security in the Indian Ocean where global powers usually compete for power. This would complicate its efforts to manage both regional ties and the greater contest for influence in South Asia.⁷ India and Bangladesh have strong trade relations. India is the second-largest trade partner for Bangladesh in Asia. The two countries have worked together on various economic and infrastructure projects for several years like two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Mongla and Mirsharai, the Akhaura-Agartala rail link as well as the Khulna-Mongla port rail link. These projects are important for "Act East" policy of India. They are also essential to improve connectivity between northeastern states of India and Southeast Asia.⁸

However, political instability in Bangladesh could affect these economic efforts in a terrible way. It can cause delays in the projects like the Maitri transborder pipeline that are intended to transport high-speed diesel from Assam to northern part of Bangladesh. There is also uncertainty about the future of the Teesta River water-sharing agreement that is a contentious issue between the two countries. Economic cooperation of India with Bangladesh might also face significant challenges if China steps in to help Bangladesh.

The new government in Bangladesh has to decide whether to prioritize realistic economic approach to continue increasing its trade relations with India or to adopt a more belligerent stance against India. Both countries could face economic losses if trade relations worsen, as their economies are dependent on each other. However, there are less chances of Bangladesh ruining its relationship completely with India as both have the common economic interests. The challenge for India will be navigating these economic and at the same time, ensuring that its strategic projects in Bangladesh continue to move forward.⁹

⁷Harsh V. Pant, "Bangladesh's New Reality Doesn't Bode Well For India's Security", August, 10, 2024, *Observer Research Foundation*, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/bangladesh-s-new-reality-doesn-t-bode-well-for-india-s-security>

⁸ Dr Amit Kumar, "India and Bangladesh crisis: Uncertain future trajectory of security, economics, and regional geopolitics?", August, 08, 2024, *The Times of India*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/india-and-bangladesh-crisis-uncertain-future-trajectory-of-security-economics-and-regional-geopolitics/>

⁹ Muqtedar Khan and Umme Salma Tarin, "A New Bangladesh Is Emerging But It Needs India Too: Bangladesh's foreign policy work starts with India because it has greater implications for domestic harmony", August, 19, 2024, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/a-new-bangladesh-is-emerging-but-it-needs-india-too/>

The influence of China in South Asia including in Bangladesh, has been growing rapidly over the years. China has built a strong presence in the region through its significant investments in Bangladesh's infrastructure like Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). If a pro-China government were to emerge in Bangladesh, it could challenge more influence of India.

The expanding presence of China in the Bay of Bengal brings both economic and security risks for India. The increasing activity of China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the Bay of Bengal could raise tensions and lead to more competition between India and China for influence in the area. Strategic interests of India in the Bay like protecting its trade routes and ensuring maritime security. This could be at risk if China get larger access to Bangladeshi ports or increases its military presence there.

As a result of that, India will have to increase its diplomatic and military presence in the region. It will have to work with other key regional and international actors such as the United States, Japan and European states that have interests in the Indian Ocean. The strategy of India is to counterbalance the influence of China. This will require careful positioning and an increased focus on multilateral engagement with its other allies.

Domestic political environment of India after the rise of Hindu nationalist policies under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has effected negatively its relations with neighboring countries that include Bangladesh as well. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has fast-tracked Indian citizenship for oppressed minorities in neighboring countries except Muslims. This increased criticism in Bangladesh. Protests erupted during 2021 visit of Prime Minister Modi to Bangladesh. This highlights the growing discontent in the region with internal policies of India.¹⁰

The sectarian and extreme policies of India are becoming more exclusionary. This could damage its liberal credentials in South Asia and make it difficult for its diplomatic efforts to rebuild trust with a post-Hasina government. Failure of India to address concerns about its domestic policies could drive its neighbors away. This situation can drive them toward China that has consistently given its stance as a non-interventionist partner in the region.

¹⁰ Sushant Singh, "Modi's Politics Hinder Neighborhood Ties:

Recent events in Bangladesh show how the Hindu nationalist project has harmed India's regional interests.", August, 22, 2024, Foreign Policy, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/08/22/india-modi-bangladesh-hasina-neighborhood-first-bjp-politics/>

The post-Hasina era has created several challenges for India. These challenges include border security, regional geopolitics and economic cooperation as well. India must navigate a quickly changing environment in Bangladesh. The rise of a pro-China government could further complicate matters because India tries to counter growing influence of Beijing in South Asia. India requires a balance of security, diplomacy as well as strategic engagement to protect its interests in Bangladesh and in the region as well.

Geopolitical Implications for South Asia

The geopolitical landscape in Bangladesh is undergoing a significant transformation, with regional powers like India and China positioning themselves strategically as the country approaches the post-Hasina era. Historically, Bangladesh has been a critical ally for India in South Asia, serving as a buffer against Chinese influence and a partner in regional security and economic initiatives. However, emerging developments indicate a shift in Bangladesh's external relations, challenging India's dominance while providing opportunities for China to solidify its presence.¹¹

India's influence in Bangladesh has faced challenges due to domestic perceptions of interference and contentious issues such as the Teesta River water-sharing agreement and the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.¹² These factors have fueled resentment among sections of the Bangladeshi population, opening the door for alternative partnerships. Meanwhile, China has steadily deepened its economic ties with Bangladesh through infrastructure investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Projects like the Padma Bridge and increased trade cooperation underscore Beijing's growing role as a key partner for Dhaka.¹³

¹¹ Shafi Md Mostofa, "Geopolitics and Revolution: The Superpower Nexus Behind Hasina's Rule and the Future of Bangladesh's Foreign Policy", October, 24, 2024. *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, <https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/geopolitics-and-revolution-the-superpower-nexus-behind-hasinas-rule-and-the-future-of-bangladeshs-foreign-policy/>

¹² Anuttama Banerji, "India Must Settle the Teesta River Dispute With Bangladesh for Lasting Gains: The "Golden Era" in India-Bangladesh relations must also lead to resolution of the most vexing issue between the two", April, 09, 2021, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/india-must-settle-the-teesta-river-dispute-with-bangladesh-for-lasting-gains/>

¹³ Sayantan Haldar, China's Infrastructure Development Projects in Bangladesh, August 21, 2020, *Institute of Chinese Studies*, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/india-must-settle-the-teesta-river-dispute-with-bangladesh-for-lasting-gains/>

Adding another layer to these dynamics, recent positive developments between Bangladesh and Pakistan have further complicated the regional equation. The resumption of sea trade between the two countries after decades of dormancy signals a renewed effort to rebuild economic ties, which could foster a more balanced regional trade network. Pakistan's diplomatic overtures, including high-level engagements and initiatives to repair historical rifts, also reflect Islamabad's intention to strengthen its relationship with Dhaka. In a notable humanitarian move, Pakistan extended economic assistance to Bangladesh during its recent floods, showcasing a spirit of solidarity that has helped soften bilateral tensions. Furthermore, both nations have expressed a shared interest in revitalizing SAARC initiatives, focusing on collective approaches to regional challenges such as economic integration, climate change, and counterterrorism. These efforts not only enhance Pakistan's standing in South Asia but also provide Bangladesh with greater strategic autonomy.

For India, these developments present considerable challenges. Pakistan's improving relations with Bangladesh, alongside China's growing influence, risk undermining India's strategic position in South Asia. The prospect of a revitalized SAARC, with active engagement from both Pakistan and Bangladesh, could shift regional cooperation dynamics, leaving India with less room to assert its leadership.

Conversely, for China, the evolving Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship is a strategic advantage. Improved ties between these two nations complement China's BRI objectives, paving the way for an interconnected economic corridor that includes key South Asian players. Pakistan's active support for Bangladesh in multilateral platforms further aligns with Beijing's regional goals, enhancing its influence across the subcontinent. By incorporating the recent positive developments in Bangladesh-Pakistan relations, the analysis captures the broader complexities of South Asia's shifting geopolitical realities. These developments highlight the interplay of diplomacy, economics, and regional cooperation in redefining power dynamics in the post-Hasina era.

Conclusion

The recent political shift in Bangladesh where there is the departure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the arrival of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus emphasized an important moment in geopolitical landscape of South Asia. This shift is reshaping the internal dynamics of Bangladesh and these dynamics are reflecting across the region as well. It is also influencing the strategic analysis of both India and China. The evolving relationship between Bangladesh and its neighbors will be instrumental in order to determine the balance of power in South Asia because both India and China are competing for influence amid rising regional tensions.

India finds itself at a weak stage because Bangladesh is engaged in its internal divisions and the complexities of governance. The loss of a reliable ally in Hasina has introduced uncertainty into its foreign policy. This is forcing India to reevaluate its strategies in engaging with new leadership of Bangladesh. Concurrently, expanding investments and strategic expansion of China in Bangladesh present challenges and opportunities that could further complicate regional ambitions of India. The interplay of these geopolitical dynamics requires a deep understanding of role of Bangladesh in the broader context of India-China competition for influence in South Asia. In the long term, departure of Hasina may lead to significant implications for regional security and power dynamics. A potential resurgence of extremist groups in Bangladesh, coupled with anti-India sentiment fueled by domestic unrest, poses risks for India's national security and its historical partnership with Dhaka. Furthermore, a shift toward a more pro-China Bangladesh could tilt the regional balance, allowing China to extend its influence in South Asia, particularly in strategic areas like trade, infrastructure, and security.

The evolving situation in Bangladesh serves as a critical reminder of the sophisticated connections between domestic politics and regional geopolitics. There is need for India to adapt its strategies and improves its relationships with its neighbors due to the current shift in tides in South Asia. The future of regional security and stability totally depends on the ability of India, Bangladesh and other South Asian nations to engage in constructive dialogue, build trust and foster cooperation amidst the challenges posed by external powers.