
5. Bangladesh's Recent Political Developments in a Strategic Setting: Crisis in Bangladesh and its Regional Impacts

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Abstract

Bangladesh has become increasingly significant in regional geopolitics as a strategic link between South and Southeast Asia. The FOIP concept, primarily advanced by the United States, Japan, and allied partners, aims to assure a rules-based order, freedom of navigation, and inclusive economic development across the Indo-Pacific region. In this context, Bangladesh's political trajectory, marked by concerns over democratic backsliding, electoral legitimacy, and growing authoritarian tendencies, poses challenges and opportunities for regional actors engaging through the FOIP lens. This paper examines how Bangladesh's internal political dynamics intersect with the broader strategic goals of FOIP, analyzing shifts in diplomatic relations, foreign policy alignment, and regional security cooperation. It also examines the responses of the region's prominent powers, including India, China, and the United States, to Bangladesh's evolving political landscape. Utilizing a qualitative method that draws on policy documents, official statements, expert interviews, and analysis, this paper offers a nuanced understanding of how FOIP affects regional power balances and democratic norms. Ultimately, Bangladesh's domestic political environment might significantly shape the effectiveness and reception of FOIP initiatives in South Asia. This paper highlights the need for a more inclusive approach within the FOIP framework, one that considers political realities while promoting stability, democratic governance, and regional cooperation.

Keywords: FOIP, Bangladesh, South Asia, Strategic Setting, Political development.

1. Introduction

The Indo-Pacific is becoming a hotspot of strategic competition between major world powers, with significant shifts taking place in political, economic, and security relations.¹ The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy, enunciated notably by the United States and Japan along with their partners, is aimed at building a rules-based order, ensuring freedom of navigation, and supporting economies that are open and inclusive in this critical region (Figure 1). In the South Asian context, Bangladesh is strategically important: it is a key link between South and Southeast Asia.² Additionally, the strategic significance has raised Bangladesh's profile in the great game of regional politics, particularly considering its current political transitions, imbued with the labyrinthine mix of obstacles like democratic erosion, electoral legitimacy, and authoritarian impulses. Contemporary Bangladesh's political culture is the legacy of a chronically repressive history of authoritarianism, political violence, and institutional inadequacies. As Bangladesh struggles with these conditions, fresh efforts to promote democratization here underscore a convergence that exists between the goals of the FOIP and the limitations of domestic politics.³ This paper examines how these domestic dynamics affect Bangladesh's relations with major regional powers like India and China, the latter two having articulated their strategic interest in the context of a rising Indo-Pacific narrative.

¹ Alam, M. J. & Akon, M. S. (2023). Japan-Bangladesh Geo-economic Cooperation: The Lens of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) for Peace, Stability and Prosperity, *Asian Review of Political Economy*, 2(5), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44216-023-00015-z>

² Alam, M. J. (2022). Bangladesh-Japan Diplomatic Relations (1972-2022): A New Paradigm of Strategic Partnership. MuktoBuddhi Publishers, Dhaka, Bangladesh; <https://doi.org/10.55156/9789843527455>

³ Alam, M. J. (2022). Japan's contribution to Bangladesh: Aspirations for inclusive development and regional cooperation, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8 (1), 2138150, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2138150>

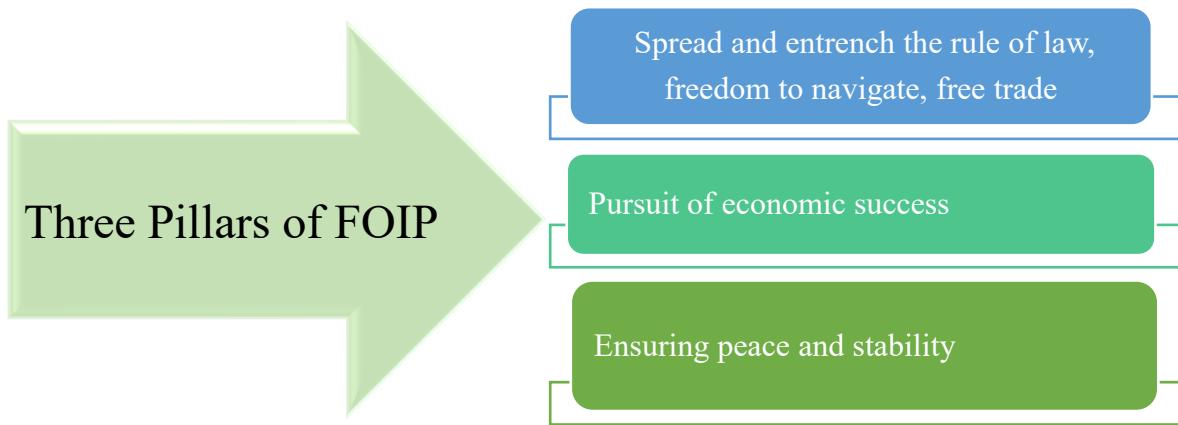


Figure 1. Three Pillars of FOIP.

Source: Created by the Author based on METI, 2021.⁴

In recent years, Bangladeshi politics have been shifting from several decades of repressive authoritarianism characterized by political persecution and electoral fraud to a more uncertain and fluid situation under an interim government. These domestic political trends, dominated by debates over democratization, constitutional revisions, and the popular mandate in the electoral process, intersect significantly with FOIP's strategic objectives. For regional powers like India, China, and the United States, the political path of Bangladesh contains challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis diplomatic engagement and security cooperation.⁵ Given these dynamics, the objectives of this paper are the following:

1. To examine how Bangladesh's internal political dynamics intersect with the broader strategic goals of FOIP in the light of diplomatic relations, foreign policy alignment, and regional security cooperation.
2. To explore the responses of the region's prominent powers, including India, China, and the United States, to Bangladesh's evolving domestic political landscape.

2. Present Status of Political Development in Bangladesh

2.1 Democratic Reawakening: Scope for Just Elections and Political Inclusion

⁴ METI (2021). "FOIP" Free and Open Indo-Pacific
https://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external_economy/trade/foip/index.htmls

⁵ Alam, M. J. (2022). Japan's Foreign Policies in South and Southeast Asia under Chinese Influence: Significance of Bangladesh. *Journal of Japanese Studies: Exploring Multidisciplinarity*, 1(2), 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.55156/jjsem.Jul22.007>

Since the dawn of its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has repeatedly faced authoritarianism under different regimes. However, the Awami regime, which remained in power from 2008 to 2024, led to a severe decline of democracy in Bangladesh. The Awami government not only fostered political partisanship but also hindered the transparency of the judiciary and legislative bodies.⁶ To suppress the democratic environment, the government restored massive arrests, disappearances of opposition leaders, and spontaneous threats to them. More specifically, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the then-major opposition party, was unable to hold any processions properly or carry out its work.⁷ Being surrounded by legal and extralegal dilemmas, the BNP had to undergo several crises, maintaining its student wing and other wings across the country. The situation deteriorated to the extent that the chairperson of BNP, Begum Khaleda Zia, was imprisoned. The repressive nature of the Awami League hindered all avenues for opposition voices to express dissent, organize, or protest. In addition to that, the introduction of the Digital Security Act of 2018 facilitated the suppression of divergent political ideologies in the name of safeguarding national security.

Additionally, the elections held during this prolonged period of authoritarianism were not conducted under a neutral caretaker government, but rather under the supervision of the Awami League itself. Although the 2008 election was held under a caretaker administration resulting in the victory of the Awami League and the BNP becoming the main opposition the subsequent elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024 were notable for the clear departure from democratic norms. The Jatiya Party was the opposition in both 2014 and 2024, and Jatiya Oikya (led by BNP) was the opposition in 2018. None of the elections earned public confidence as their results have been widely perceived as predetermined by the Awami League.⁸ The surroundings of a free and fair election, with the participation of all political parties, were not assured. More broadly, the opportunities for political opposition and freedom of speech were hampered in every possible way.

However, with great hope and enthusiasm, the July Revolution of 2024 brought down the authoritarian regime and marked the end of the Awami League's rule. Post-revolutionary Bangladesh continues to grapple with the legacy of the revolution and the debate over deemphasizing the role of different social classes.⁹ The

⁶ Hasan, K. (2025). Bangladesh 2009–2024: The Return to Authoritarianism Under the Awami League and its Implications for Political Sustainability. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(4), 1657–1679. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v15-i4/25282>

⁷ OHCHR. (2025). Human rights violations and abuses related to the protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh. In United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/bangladesh/ohchr-fftbs-hr-violations-bd.pdf>

⁸ Hasan, K. (2025). Bangladesh 2009–2024: The Return to Authoritarianism Under the Awami League and its Implications for Political Sustainability. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(4), 1657–1679. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v15-i4/25282>

⁹ Mostofa, S. M. (2024, October 9). The July Revolution and the future of the BNP in Bangladesh - Australian Institute of International Affairs. Australian Institute of International Affairs.

prospects for practicing democracy and conducting free and fair elections are still underway after a long period of authoritarian rule. The political parties are now holding regular meetings, processions, and other events. Student wings of various political parties have become active. Especially the Bangladesh Students League, the student wing of the Bangladesh Awami League, would control university halls and limit the rival students organizations activities, thereby hindering the other student wings from conducting their initiatives successfully. As a result, leaders could not grow, and an imbalance within the wing had taken place.¹⁰

With the end of the repressive political culture, the departure of the Awami League has created more space for other parties, including some new political parties. In addition to the previously registered 55 political parties, 24 more political parties have already registered, and the Election Commission of Bangladesh is still reviewing 65 applications for the registration of new parties. Although many of these parties lack clear ideological foundations, coherent principles, or adequate infrastructure (many of them do not have a party office), the political environment in Bangladesh has become more pluralistic, allowing room for opposition and competition. Among the emerging parties, NCP (National Citizens' Party) has gained notable attention, being led by the frontline leaders of the July Revolution. The party is now expanding its community, forming committees at the district level, universities, and other institutions.¹¹

The engagement of youth in Bangladesh's politics indicates a dynamic shift in the country's political landscape. As the first student-led political party in Bangladesh, NCP might attract some of the country's emerging brilliant minds. The parties' promise to root in transparency, anti-corruption, and participatory governance resonates with a younger, politically aware demographic. The party's rise indicates a generational shift in Bangladesh's political landscape, potentially altering long-standing political dynamics. The interim government intends to organize the election right after the reform without any prior delay. This is partly in response to the demands from major political parties to hold polls by February 2026. With these developments, the prospects for free and fair elections increase. The electoral reform commission has already labeled the Awami regime as catastrophic and has promised to reform the election act to conduct a legitimate election, ensuring all political parties are included.

2.2 Justice and Accountability for Political Victims

<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-july-revolution-and-the-future-of-the-bnp-in-bangladesh/>

¹⁰ NEWAGE. (2025, September 27). DU students, organisations at loggerheads. <https://www.newagebd.net/post/politics/272601/du-students-organisations-at-loggerheads>

¹¹ Saqlain Rizve. (2025, May 6). Political Parties Proliferate in Post-Hasina Bangladesh. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/05/political-parties-proliferate-in-post-hasinahasina-bangladesh/>

The Awami regime practiced state-sponsored violence, such as forced disappearances, arrests, assault and murder, as means of oppression. . Bringing justice to those victims, including their families, has been a priority in post-revolutionary Bangladesh.¹² The interim government established the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearance on August 5, 2024, and it is yet to deliver justice to the victims of the Awami Era. According to the report of the commission, many high-profile military and political figures have been involved in forced disappearances and murders. However, most of the key witnesses of those crimes are now being abducted. Therefore, prompt design and implementation of measures to provide justice for the political victims of the Awami regime has become a priority obligation of the interim government.¹³

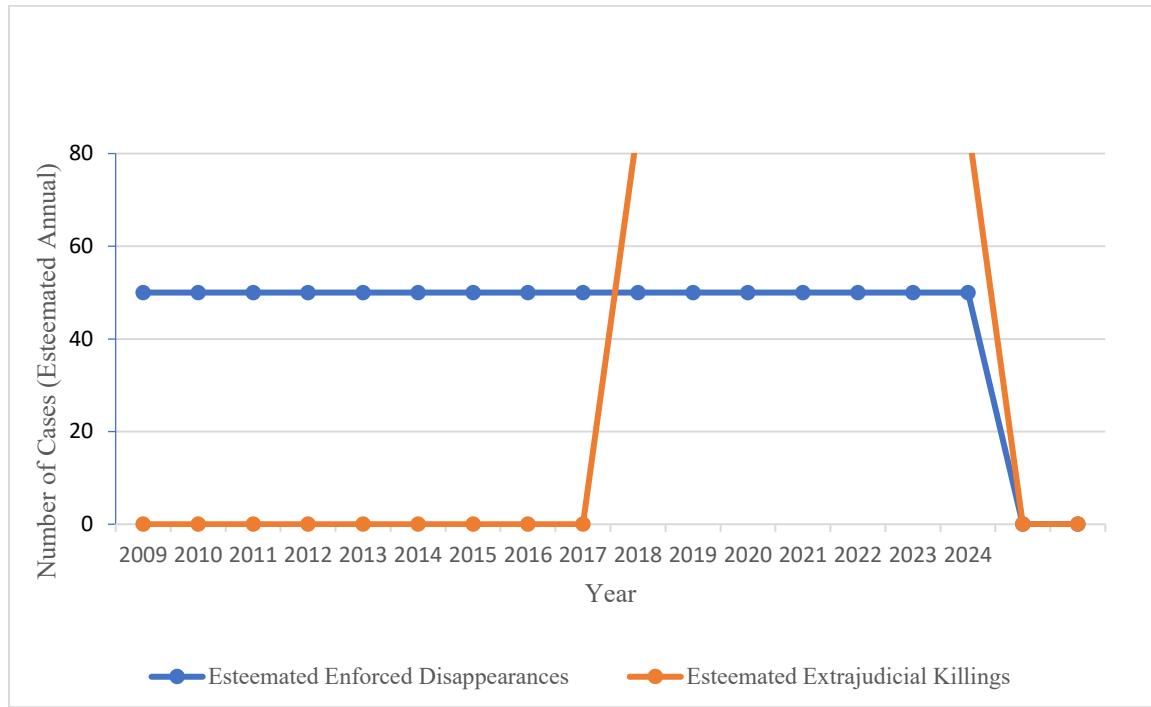


Figure 2. Documented Enforced Disappearances and Extrajudicial Killings (2009-2024)

Source: Author drawn based on The Daily Star (2025).¹⁴

Although the framework for justice and accountability has now been established, the solutions cannot be implemented quickly. Many higher-ranked officials often fail to understand the reforms and are

¹² Debasish, N., Sajal, R., & Oliver, T. S. (2024). The culture of political violence and punishment in Bangladesh: the role of political parties and civil society. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 59(20). <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/culture-political-violence-and-punishment>

¹³ Rahman, S. (2024, December 18). A wake-up call for India's strategic interests. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/geopolitical-insights/news/wake-call-indias-strategic-interests-3778561>

¹⁴ The Daily Star. (2025c, March 25). Checks and balances are key to the success of reforms. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/checks-and-balances-are-key-the-success-reforms-3856446>

disinterested in coming forward as witnesses. As a result, obtaining testimony from lower ranked officers have become challenging. Further, they have been threatened and terrified. However, to eradicate the issue, the interim government is trying its level best to ensure the safety of the witnesses who are providing testimony to bring the people under jurisdiction who were directly or indirectly involved with the disappearances or helped in the escape of the influential Awami individuals.¹⁵

The family members of the victims of the Awami League are continuing to hope that their loved ones will come back. Killings without any judicial order, abduction, and detention have been normalized and from 2009 to 2024 there are 750 recorded cases of documented disappearances by secret agents. More precisely, since 2018, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has been accused of extrajudicial killings of nearly 600 people. Even the police officials, including a few high-ranking individuals, were marked by the Biden administration for violating human rights and abusing people.¹⁶

There were even secret prisons labeled as (the House of Mirrors) Aynaghor' by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) that consisted of about 700 to 800 prisoners. Approximately 2.5 BNP members were witnesses to a politically motivated prosecution.¹⁷ The police remain silent about the inhuman acts committed by the Awami members. Especially the Bangladesh Student League, the student wing of the ruling party, was a matter of concern to the people. Both in educational institutions and in other places, they have committed several killings, rapes, and other assaults.¹⁸ However, the political umbrella was saving them. In addition, the former prime minister did not discourage the acts but somewhat influenced them to maintain her power for an extended period.

Now that the Awami Government has departed, the floor has opened for justice for the political victims of the regime. Already, the former prime minister and other Awami leaders and workers have been issued with arrest warrants by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) for their engagement in murders, forced disappearances, massacres, and crimes against humanity during the mass uprising in July and August 2024,

¹⁵ Rahman, M. M. (2025, June 30). Enforced disappearances: Justice must be done. The Financial Express. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/columns/enforced-disappearances-justice-must-be-done>

¹⁶ Jazeera, A. (2021, December 11). Bangladesh protests U.S. sanctions against RAB, security chiefs. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/11/bangladesh-protests-us-sanctions-of-its-top-security-chiefs>

¹⁷ Ellis-Petersen, H., & Rahman, S. A. (2023, November 10). Full prisons and false charges: Bangladesh opposition faces pre-election crackdown. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/10/bangladesh-opposition-crackdown-election-sheikh-hasinahasina -awami-league-bnp>

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State. (2023). Country reports on human rights practices: Bangladesh. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/bangladesh>

in October of the same year.¹⁹ As of November 2024, prosecutors at the ICT have filed at least 80 complaints against former high-ranking officials and others.²⁰

However, justice for the victims of the Awami regime is still progressing. The post-revolutionary government has proposed reforms in six key areas, including the judiciary, the constitution, the administration, the police, the electoral system, and the anti-corruption commission.²¹ These initiatives are instrumental in restoring public confidence in state institutions. They also help rebuild the credibility of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, which were previously seen as tools of political repression. In the long run, such reforms strengthen democratic resilience and lay the groundwork for sustainable governance.

2.3 Strategic Realignment: Diversified Foreign Policy and Diplomatic Balancing

To pursue its economic goals and avoid single-power reliance while navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of South Asia, Bangladesh has maintained alliances with both China and India over the years. In general, both countries seek to exert their influence over the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, which creates a security concern for both countries. To compete with China, India has already started developing relationships with countries across the Indo-Pacific and Europe. Both countries have an urgent need for economic competition, which enables them to maintain a race in trade and commerce. Given this scenario, Bangladesh has consistently sought to maintain diplomatic relations with both India and China. Being surrounded on three sides by India, its geographical position is undeniable. Similarly, as an Asian economic giant and one of the world's leading economies, fair relations with China is essential for a growing and developing country like Bangladesh.

On March 19, 1972, a friendship treaty was issued between Bangladesh and India.²² Due to the broader similarities between the cultures, traditions, and linguistic preferences of both countries, Bangladesh and India have maintained healthy relations through trade, military cooperation, and other bilateral agreements. Although Bangladesh has contradictions with India regarding the allocation of river water, the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and killings at the border, it cannot deny

¹⁹ PTI. (2025, January 6). Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal issues second arrest warrant against ex-PM Hasina. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/bangladesh-international-crimes-tribunal-issues-second-arrest-warrant-against-ex-pm-hasina-3342910>

²⁰ Fortifyrights. (2025, February 14). Bangladesh: Ensure Justice for Victims of Security Forces' Crackdown, Reform Domestic Tribunal. Fortify Rights. <https://www.fortifyrights.org/bgd-inv-2025-02-14/>

²¹ NewsOnAir. (2024, September 12). Bangladesh Interim Government to create six commissions for sector reforms. <https://www.newsoneair.gov.in/bangladesh-interim-government-to-create-six-commissions-for-sector-reforms-2/>

²² Chowdhury, S. (2020). Bangladesh-India relations: history and the way forward. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 15(3), 191–198. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48630179>

India's influence. The former government played a pivotal role in this policy direction.²³ The government of India also did not want to lose its grip on Bangladesh, as this would reduce China's dominance in South Asia, given Bangladesh's strategic location, and to restore the investments of India. China, on the other hand, could make significant contributions to Bangladesh's economy and security. China's interest lies in establishing a substitute entry route to the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal. This highlights their need for trade and the importance of energy supply from the Middle East, followed by Africa.

Additionally, China aims to utilize Bangladesh's labor market, which offers labor at a lower rate. All these factors together helped Bangladesh maintain harmony with both countries. Specifically, Bangladesh has successfully maintained the principle of 'friendship to all and malice to none' as outlined in its Constitution to date.²⁴

In the case of India, after August 5, 2024, students and masses called for the end of India's aggression in Bangladesh, keeping in mind its diplomatic relations. The previous unequal incidents add fuel to this move. However, the state-to-party relationship between Bangladesh and India, which was a relationship between the Awami League and India, came to an end as soon as the former prime minister departs. Although the former prime minister is still residing in India, and they have not provided a justification for this act, tension arises automatically. Even after the departure of the Awami regime through the July uprising, many mainstream media outlets in India wanted to portray Bangladesh as having communal riots. All these factors together loosen India's influence in Bangladesh. As a result, the post-revolutionary state and the Yunus government began to open more relations with China. Apart from that, Dr. Yunus asserted his visit to China as 'a new stage' for China-Bangladesh friendship.²⁵

FOIP's framework has encouraged Bangladesh towards multilateralism without breaking ties with the previous ones. The internal democratic situation and the external geographical shifts inspire it. The renewed relationship with Western forces underscores Bangladesh's commitment to upholding human rights and preserving democracy. Currently, Bangladesh is maintaining a 'strategic hedging' approach with countries in the Indo-Pacific region and balancing its relations with multiple power centers.²⁶ With the end of the Awami

²³ Sufian, A. (2020). Geopolitics of the NRC-CAA in Assam: Impact on Bangladesh-India relations. *Asian Ethnicity*, 23(3), 556–586. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1820854>

²⁴ Datta, S. K. (2021). China-Bangladesh-India Triangular Cooperation: Options for Bangladesh. *Journal of Indian Research*, 9(1), 1-14.

²⁵ Walla, K. (2025, May 23). Bangladesh may have ended its India-China tightrope game, but it must continue to tread carefully. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/bangladesh-may-have-ended-its-india-china-tightrope-game-but-it-must-continue-to-tread-carefully/>

²⁶ Khan, S. E., & Khan, S. E. (2022, December 14). The evolving strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific Region: The need for a Naval Doctrine of Bangladesh. <https://bimradbd.org/journal/article/the-evolving-strategic->

government, security dialogue, energy cooperation, and labor reforms have become key areas of engagement with the U.S. for Bangladesh. Through the Bilateral Defense Dialogue and Security Partnership Dialogue platforms, Bangladesh can now enhance its defense and counterterrorism capabilities.²⁷ The United States' interest in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is another reason for the development in relations between Bangladesh and the U.S.²⁸

For Europe, the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021) states that Bangladesh is a crucial stakeholder due to its entrance to the Bay of Bengal and its demography. The relationship with Europe also deepens concerns about climate change, green energy, and the drive for democracy and media freedom.²⁹ The strategic partnership between Japan and Bangladesh has been in place for years. Japan's FDI and ODA are not new operations for Bangladesh. To reconstruct the Indo-Pacific supply chain, Japan considers Bangladesh a significant trading partner.

The Bangladesh-Australia Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA) deepen the groundwork for economic cooperation between Australia and Bangladesh. Alongside that, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) might open the floor for discussion on climate and health security. Overall, FOIP's influence in Bangladesh is helping the country avoid dependency on any single power bloc, maintain strategic alliances with India and China, and promote a maritime strategy in the Bay of Bengal, thereby opening the way for the restoration of democracy within the country and a shift in foreign policy outside.

3. Research Method

This research employs a qualitative approach and collects secondary data from several sources, including academic journals, books, and research articles. A comprehensive, thematic review of secondary data is conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how Bangladesh's internal political dynamics intersect with the broader strategic goals of FOIP. The review focuses on shifts in diplomatic relations, foreign policy alignment, and regional security cooperation, while also examining the responses of the region's prominent powers—India, China, and the United States—to Bangladesh's evolving political landscape.

environment-in-the-indo-pacific-region-the-need-for-a-naval-doctrine-of-bangladesh

²⁷ Roy, U. (2025, September 3). US 'Deep State' subverted key ministers in Hasina government before regime change, sources claim. The CSR Journal. <https://thecsrjournal.in/us-deep-state-subverted-key-ministers-sheikh-hasina-government-regime-change/>

²⁸ Vedant, P., & PATEL, M. (2023, March 28). Department press briefing [Press release]. <https://2021-2025.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-march-28-2023/>

²⁹ European External Action Service (EEAS). (2024, November 11). EU Indo-Pacific strategy. EEAS. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eu-indo-pacific-strategy-topic_en

In addition to reviewing secondary data, the study also collects primary data from twenty participants selected through purposive sampling (Table 1).

Table 1: Detailed sampling of the study

Participants' group	Sample size	Sample selection criteria	Tools/Instruments
People whom the former government oppresses, and Expert interviews	20	The former government oppressed selected people and experts in the field	Semi-structured questionnaire for KIIs
Total	20		

Source: Created by the Author.

This research used semi-structured interview questionnaires to collect its primary data. The data triangulation technique employs many sources in alignment with the recommended protocols. Secondary data was collected from several sources, including academic publications and national databases. This research primarily relied on transcripts and recorded replies to obtain its results. This research systematically categorized the data into themes and subthemes using logical methodologies and subsequently reached conclusions via data comparison and cross-checking with other stakeholders.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Repeal of the Digital Security Act: Revitalizing Democratic Space and Media Freedom

The repeal of the Digital Security Act 2018, following the departure of the Awami regime, has reopened the floor for freedom of expression and the right to oppose, thereby securing the democratic environment of the country.³⁰ The Digital Security Act was preceded by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006, which was revised in 2013. This act was intentionally imposed on people to prevent them from expressing anti-government opinions online and simultaneously hindered individuals and critics to evaluate the country's overall progress or decline in economic, political, and social terms. From a broader perspective, the media house became a submissive instrument of the government. Several journalists, bloggers, and other individuals were held accountable for expressing their views on freedom. From 2013 to 2018, the Bangladesh

³⁰ Amnesty International. (2024, August 12). Bangladesh: Interim Government must restore freedom of expression in Bangladesh and repeal Cyber Security Act. <http://amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/bangladesh-interim-government-must-restore-freedom-of-expression-in-bangladesh-and-repeal-cyber-security-act/>

police filed nearly 1,300 cases under the provisions of the Digital Security Act.³¹ Although the government decided to nullify five objectionable sections of the act in 2018, this decision did not restore the already lost democratic environment of Bangladesh. However, the misuse of these sections in an exploitative manner soon led media houses to refrain from highlighting the government's incapabilities and disparities. Being a tool for arresting without a warrant and restricting bail, the Digital Security Act caused multiple instances of harassment of politically opinionated people.

One respondent added,

“Bangladesh’s democracy has regained much-needed breathing room following the rescinding of the Digital Security Act. For years, that law choked off journalists and citizens, rendering freedom of speech nearly impossible.”

Victims of the Act include:

- Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed, a renowned author and social activist, was arrested under the Digital Security Act. After being in police custody for ten months, he died on February 25, 2020. He was denied bail six times by the court before his death.
- Mr. Ahmed Kabir Kishore, a social activist and cartoonist, who the court also denied bail six times, was tortured in custody. However, after several protests and an international outcry, he was finally freed along with six others in February 2022.
- Mr. Shafiqul Islam Kajol, a journalist, was charged with spreading offensive information about the Awami League.

Mr. Abu Zaman, an ordinary farmer, was also accused of spreading false information on social media, despite not having a smartphone. Several minors were sent to juvenile correction centers for posting anti-Awami League posts on social media.³²

³¹ Rafah, J. (2023, April 4). The Digital Security Act, 2018 and its implication for human Rights | CGS. CGS. <https://cgs-bd.com/article/13441/The-Digital-Security-Act%2C-2018-and-Its-Implication-for-Human-Rights>

³² Riaz, A. (2021, December 9). How Bangladesh’s Digital Security Act Is Creating a Culture of Fear. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/12/how-bangladesh-s-digital-security-act-is-creating-a-culture-of-fear?lang=en>

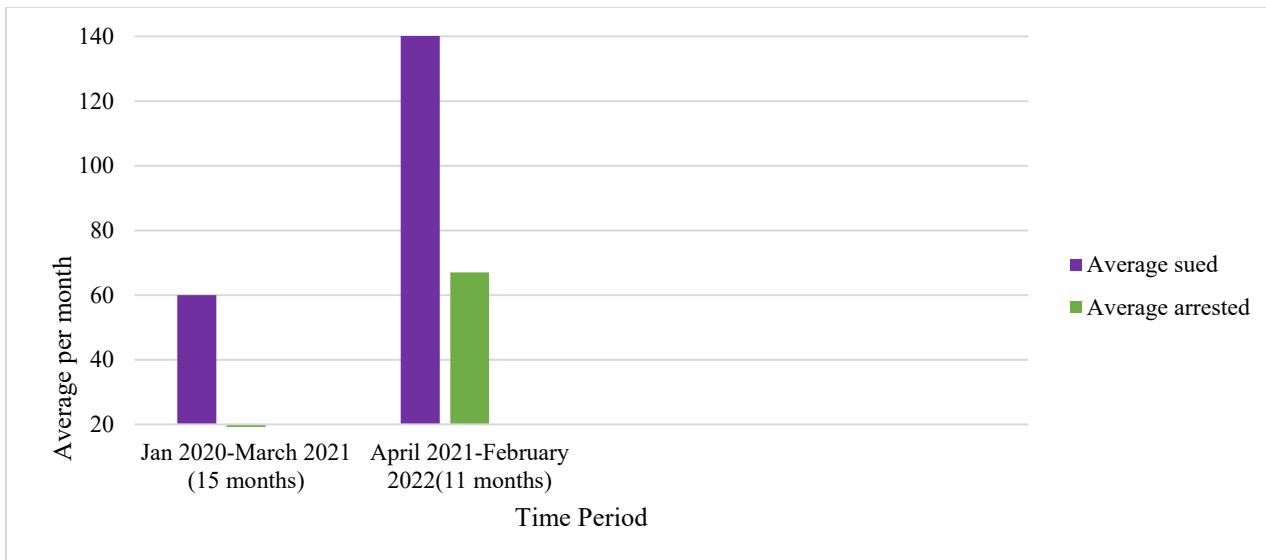


Figure 1. The average number of people sued and arrested under the Digital Security Act per month
 Source: Author drawn based on the Daily Star, 2025.³³

Figure 1 shows the average number of people who were sued and arrested from January 2020 to February 2020. A report from the Center for Governance Studies demonstrates that, in each of the 11 months leading up to February 2022, 147 people were prosecuted and 67 were arrested under the Digital Security Act. Between January 2020 and March 2021, 61 individuals were accused and 18 were arrested. The report also reveals that among 315 arrestees, 80 were politicians, 59 were journalists, and 47 were students. Overall, within a period of two years, 2244 people were accused in 890 cases. Among the 508 petitioners, 33% were affiliated with the Awami League, and police filed 22% cases. These figures highlight the misuse of the law by the ruling party and the security forces under government supervision, despite several media reports indicating that more than 1,500 cases were filed under the Digital Security Act from January 2020 to March 2021. Additionally, 925, 1189, and 1128 cases were filed in the consecutive years of 2018, 2019, and 2020. To summarize, by February 2022, 207 journalists had been prosecuted, with national-level media houses filing 70 cases and local-level media houses filing 117 cases.³⁴

One participant added,

“Bangladesh’s decision to repeal this act is a step toward democratic accountability. The media and the people can now question the rulers without the perpetual fear of being penalized.”

The repeal of the act has now made it easier for the media house to produce authentic news, promote freedom of occupation, and demand transparency from the legislative body. The abolishment of the act

³³ The Daily Star. (2025, March 25). Checks and balances are key to the success of reforms. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/checks-and-balances-are-key-the-success-reforms-3856446>

³⁴ Ibid

empowers individuals with their freedom of speech and space for opposing views, thereby revitalizing a key ingredient of democracy. Following the end of self-censorship, journalists now face no legal restrictions on reporting. Therefore, the abolition supports press freedom and demands continuity in the days to come, especially after the inauguration of the elected government.

One participant added,

‘This was never a security law. It was about control. Its amendment is finally giving people the ability to speak without the fear of prosecution or persecution.’

4.2 Shift in Indo-Bangladesh Relations: From Party-to-State to State-to-State Engagement

India’s influence in Bangladesh has historically been channeled through strong ties with the ruling Awami League, often raising concerns about external interference in domestic politics. Immediately after independence, as a country that had been a victim of war, it needed a firm hand.³⁵ That urgency led to a 25-year-long treaty with India. India’s assistance during the war of independence and the immediate treaty with Bangladesh opened the Bangladesh-India strategic relationship. The relationship with India fluctuated during different regimes. However, the Awami League government strengthened the tie again in 2009. The first bilateral trade agreement was also signed in 1972. Following that, an inland water transport agreement and a three-year trade agreement took place.³⁶ In 2010, the former prime minister’s visit to India paved the way for several agreements on transit access, port access, and infrastructure development assistance. However, the 54-year strategic relationship with India was not equally beneficial to Bangladesh. The Teesta water-sharing agreement is still unsigned.³⁷ India has also secured transit rights, the opportunity to export electricity, access to the Chattogram and Mongla ports, and connectivity to its roads, waterways, and railways, as well as access to India’s northeastern states. All these benefits accrued to India through coastal shipping, border markets, trade agreements, the diesel pipeline, electricity exports, and lines of credit, whereas Bangladesh received few loans and limited duty-free access.³⁸

One political scientist added,

³⁵ Islam, A. (2024, June 6). India’s influence in Bangladesh: Support or meddling? dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/en/indias-influence-in-bangladesh-support-or-meddling/a-68432609>

³⁶ Bhattacharya, J. (2025). Post-Hasina India-Bangladesh relations: Implications for Northeast India. Jadavpur Journal of International Relations. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09735984251342025>

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Hossain, S. (2025, May 29). 54 years of Bangladesh-India relations: Who gained what? Prothom Alo English. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/jfbppoutbo>

‘By prioritizing institutional linkages over partisan ones, it can be more balanced in its diplomacy in South Asia. It fits with regional frameworks such as the FOIP that are about sovereignty and stability.’

However, the former prime minister’s regime, and the Awami League as a party, established a strong alliance with India and demonstrated strong loyalty as well. In the 2008 election, India favored the former prime minister’s return to power.³⁹ India also supported the 2014 national election, whereas the U.S. and Europe even questioned the authenticity of the election. The continuous support for the Awami League marginalized the BNP and other political parties, helping the Awami League to establish authoritarian rule.⁴⁰ To build a stronger orientation in the Indo-Pacific, India utilized these measures, and to symbolize utmost loyalty, the former prime minister remained closely aligned with India. As a result, Bangladesh bore the consequences.

One participant added,

“India had initially recoiled at the prospect of Bangladesh’s new interim government but has since shown a readiness to hit the reset button. This shows both countries accept that they must work together, irrespective of party loyalties.”

Following August 5, 2024, recent developments suggest a shift toward more institutional, state-to-state relations, thereby reducing the perception of favoritism or dependency on a particular political entity.⁴¹ Also, India’s dominant posture in South Asia has already loosened its ties with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. At this point, the interim government is choosing official and institutional ties with India, keeping in mind its previous history of aggression and spreading misinformation regarding minorities after the departure of the former prime minister. Although India strongly criticized the interim government’s first days due to Bangladesh’s shift in foreign policy and India’s urgency in establishing control in the Indo-Pacific, India now proposes to start over again.⁴² It refers to trade, common exchange, and other bilateral relations, specifically between two states. This transformation aligns with FOIP’s emphasis on sovereignty and regional balance. A

³⁹ Datta, S. K. (2021). China–Bangladesh–India Triangular Cooperation: Options for Bangladesh. *Journal of Indian Research*, 9(1), 1-14.

⁴⁰ Hasan, K. M. (2020). News framing in Bangladesh, India and British media: Bangladesh Parliamentary Election 2018. *eGrove*. https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd/1888?utm_source=egrove.olemiss.edu%2Fetd%2F1888&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

⁴¹ Park, J. W., Baek, J., & Cho, Y. J. (2025). Does performance rating discrepancy mediate the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job satisfaction? A comparative study of public and private sectors. *Public Personnel Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00910260251369528>

⁴² ICG. (2024). A New Era in Bangladesh? The First Hundred Days of Reform. In International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/344-bangladesh-hundred-days_0.pdf

more balanced relationship with India enables Bangladesh to negotiate on equal terms, particularly on contentious issues such as water sharing, border management, and trade. It also curbs nationalist backlash and enhances Bangladesh's regional diplomatic posture.

One participant added,

'India's role in Bangladesh has been associated with and has been seen as lending objectivity to the Awami League, creating perceptions of bias. This served to strategically gain India, even as Bangladesh was left with less profit, particularly on the lingering issues like the Teesta water sharing agreement.'

4.3 Rohingya Crisis: New Diplomatic Openings

Despite being the country with the highest population density in the world, Bangladesh welcomed 0.7 million Rohingya in 2017. The protracted Rohingya refugee crisis has tested Bangladesh's diplomatic endurance and humanitarian commitment. However, this crisis has been causing security issues for Bangladesh, as borderline criminal activities, criminal offenses, and fake claims of nationality by the Rohingya are taking place. One of the most vital challenges for the interim government is to send the Rohingya back to their home. The interim government is already working on it. Negotiations for sending the Rohingya back to Myanmar have started. The interim government has initiated multilateral dialogues involving ASEAN, the UN, and key regional actors to devise a sustainable repatriation framework. The opening of these diplomatic pathways signals a proactive approach to resolving a critical humanitarian issue. It also reinforces Bangladesh's image as a responsible regional actor committed to international norms.

Although the interim government has taken initiatives to send back the Rohingyas to their homeland, thousands of people have entered Bangladesh. The interim government is looking forward to the high-level meeting organized by the UN, scheduled to take place on September 30, 2025, in New York, to address the Rohingya issue. The meeting would discuss not only the update on the Rohingyas but also other minorities in Myanmar. Following the prior drafting of a resolution on November 13, 2025, the General Assembly looks forward to holding a high-level conference this year on the issue. The chief advisor, during the visit of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, stated the urgency and desire of the Rohingyas to go back to their own country. Reviewing the past, the unwillingness of the Rohingya community was a key point to be considered. However, the visit to Guterres taught him two matters. First, the Rohingyas now want to go back to their homeland, and second, they want the camps to offer better livelihoods. China has been a crucial factor in this matter. If they continuously find economic interest in Rakhine, they might contribute to bridge the matter. The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is a vital component of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as it has the potential to link China's Yunnan Province with Myanmar's vast reserves of energy and natural resources, as well as its access to the Indian Ocean. As the UN's food donation is expected to be half this year

and other challenges in post-revolutionary Bangladesh are increasing, a diplomatic approach is crucial to resolving this matter in the interim.

However, the departure of the former prime minister's government and the renewed emphasis on FOIP can help Bangladesh maintain a better strategic foreign policy now. With its alignment with FOIP's core ideologies, including the rule of law, sovereignty, human rights, and multilateral cooperation, Bangladesh can now capture the attention of FOIP-aligned powers, considering the maritime instability of the Bay of Bengal, economic and social threats, and environmental impacts.⁴³ However, the USA and Europe have already addressed the military attack on the Rohingya by Myanmar as genocide. Therefore, it has now become a humanitarian issue for the powers to solve.

The 46th ASEAN Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur, was chaired by Malaysia under the theme 'Inclusivity and Sustainability,' and focused on the Rohingya issue. The diplomatic approach of Dr. Muhammad Yunus has led Myanmar to announce that this year's election will be its first as a member state of ASEAN. As for ASEAN being an advocate for democracy, equality, and ensuring human rights, the role of ASEAN in solving the matter in the post-former prime minister regime has been a hopeful development. At the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok in April 2025, the dialogue for the Rohingya crisis led Myanmar to take back 180,000 Rohingya. Although Bangladesh has proposed 800,000 names, despite the actual number being more than 1.3 million, the influence of these global platforms is evident.⁴⁴

4.4 Constitutional Reform and the Role of Interim Governance

From the country's birth as Bangladesh to the present day, it has undergone several dynamic shifts in its politics and governance. It has seen military rule, electoral autocracy, and democratic interludes. As the departure of the Awami League raises questions about the legitimacy of the 2014 and 2018 elections, acknowledging and overcoming the democratic deficiencies has been a key challenge for the interim government in Bangladesh.⁴⁵ The report submitted to the interim government by the Constitution Reform Commission (CRC) on January 15, 2025, broadly includes reforms for the decentralization of power, restructuring of the electoral commission, and strengthening of checks and balances. However, different

⁴³ The Diplomat. (2025, August 5). Bangladesh's Post-Hasina Foreign Policy Reset. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/08/bangladesh-s-post-hasina-foreign-policy-reset/>

⁴⁴ The Daily Star. (2025, March 25). Checks and balances are key to the success of reforms. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/checks-and-balances-are-key-the-success-reforms-3856446>

⁴⁵ Rayhan, A. (2024). Sheikh Hasina Prime Minister of Bangladesh: A curse to the nation. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373049565_Sheikh_Hasina_Prime_Minister_of_Bangladesh_A_Curse_to_The_Nation

political parties hold varying opinions on constitutional reform. The urge for a functional democracy, a fair election, and suspicion about the reform altogether blend into the measure of the interim government.

The initial 1972 constitution was formed to ensure parliamentary democracy, guaranteeing civil rights and the separation of powers. However, the regime of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which ultimately led to a military coup in 1975, added a dilemma to the initial vision of the constitution.⁴⁶ Therefore, to ensure judicial independence, separation of powers, and press freedom, the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution was established. Later, the then-presidents of Bangladesh, Major Ziaur Rahman, followed by Hussain Muhammad Ershad, introduced the fifth and seventh amendments to legitimize their positions.⁴⁷ They also validated martial law, keeping this in mind. The continuity of these amendments led to the establishment of a partisan system in Bangladesh, resulting in a politically unbalanced situation. To address the issue and provide a valid solution, the caretaker government system was formed under the 13th amendment. This system opened the scope for a fair election under a neutral government, free from the influence of any specific political party. In 2008, the Awami League government abolished the caretaker government system with the 15th amendment. This empowered the Awami League to hold elections under their supervision, thereby justifying their act of holding unjust elections.⁴⁸ This resulted in vote-rigging, voter suppression, partisan use of law enforcement, and exclusion of opposition candidates in three consecutive elections in the years 2014, 2018, and 2024.

However, post-revolutionary Bangladesh now aims to establish a democratic nation by practicing decentralization of power. Articles 59 and 60 of the constitution designate the local government as the administrative unit of the government, responsible for distributing laws and orders. It also empowers the local government to prepare and modify budgets, allocate funds, and even impose taxes. The implications of both articles indicate a reduction in the burden on the central government in decision-making at the grassroots level. Moreover, it signifies the importance of the local government being accountable to the central government, which has the power to rule the locality. In matters of grief, the local government of Bangladesh has never been effective. Instead of being reciprocal, power practice has always been one-sided. Primarily, the local government prioritized politically motivated support for individuals affiliated with the ruling party. This justifies why the key purpose of the local government has never been fulfilled. Additionally, the previous

⁴⁶ Reuters. (2024, August 6). A history of coups in Bangladesh From Mujibur Rehman to Sheikh Hasina. The Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2485953/a-history-of-coups-in-bangladesh-from-mujibur-rehman-to-sheikh-hasina>

⁴⁷ Haque, Md. E. (2017). Constitutional Amendments in Bangladesh: Political Trends and Debates. Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities. <https://www.aarcentre.com/ojs3/index.php/jaash/article/view/132/350>

⁴⁸ BBC News. (2011, June 30). Bangladesh ends caretaker government arrangement. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-13973576>

election results have demonstrated the widespread participation of voters from all over the country. To address this issue, revitalizing the local government has been a key component of the solution.

Regular and independent local elections will enable people to practice democracy at the grassroots level, fostering a sense of community and civic engagement. Another key aspect of power decentralization is to lessen the executive power of the center. The abolishment of Article 70, which does not allow a person to vote against their political party, might also help change the power structure of Bangladesh. The eradication of the article can help serve the purpose of parliament more effectively by prioritizing the needs of the people over those of the party, and by being accountable to the people, rather than to the party. The article also hinders the separation of powers and contributes to the concentration of power. Moreover, it portrays the party leader or the prime minister as the symbol of supreme power, along with a few elite politicians within the party. As a result, power remains concentrated at one center, and others evolve around it.

Restructuring the electoral commission is another vital issue for the reformation of the Constitution. The Election Commission is empowered to work independently and follow its principles. However, the Awami regime has disrupted the electoral commission's activities, resulting in two consecutive partial elections. Therefore, post-revolutionary Bangladesh now demands the establishment of a free and independent election commission, ensuring its autonomy and independence.⁴⁹ However, ensuring the accountability of the election commission comes reciprocally with the idea of autonomy. The executive branch needs to free the electoral commission from further interference, and the EC should remain accountable for its mandate and decisions. Lastly, strengthening checks and balances is necessary to reduce power concentration in the office of the Prime Minister, to preserve the impartiality of the judiciary, to strengthen the legislature, and to empower constitutional commissions.

Although the interim government has been proposing and expanding the path for reform through these outcomes, major political parties have differing opinions on structural reforms and the timeframe of the election. With more than 15 political parties submitting their feedback on the reform, the BNP and the NCP, the two most discussed political parties in the country, hold different opinions. Although the former Prime Minister's tenure has been marked by excessive centralization of power, the BNP remains hesitant to it.⁵⁰ It also suggests a bicameral legislature with a 400-seat lower house and a 105-seat upper house, which might help utilize the parliamentary power of the majority.

⁴⁹ Maîtrot, M., & Jackman, D. (2023). Discipline, Development, and duress: the art of winning an election in Bangladesh. *Critical Asian Studies*, 55(3), 424–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2023.2229363>

⁵⁰ Cecchi, R. (2024, October 21). Bangladesh: The forced resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paves the way for a challenging and uncertain political transition. Credendo. <https://credendo.com/en/knowledge-hub/bangladesh-forced-resignation-prime-minister-sheikh-hasina-paves-way-challenging-and>

One respondent mentioned,

‘BNP opposes the idea of a single prime minister serving two tenures, arguing that it hinders parliamentary democracy and imposes constitutional restrictions.’

On the contrary, NCP, supporting the preservation of constitutional principles, proposes a four-year term for each prime minister and strongly advocates for the same person not being elected to the office twice. This indicates the new political parties’ urge to restrain the country from having a further authoritarian regime, considering the previous different regimes. It also recommended a mixed electoral system where the existing system is reflected in the lower house and proportional democracy in the upper house. Overall, to restore democracy and strengthen the local government, the Constitutional Reform Commission has proposed that the Election Commission directly supervise and establish a Local Government Commission, consisting of a Chief Local Government Commissioner and four commissioners, for all types of local government elections.⁵¹ The reform aims to establish a proper template for the upcoming elected governments.

4.5 Convergence and Divergence Among Political Actors

The transition period has revealed convergence and divergence among Bangladesh’s political parties. There is considerable consensus on electoral reform, press freedom, and human rights issues. However, fault lines remain on matters like foreign policy orientation, the level playing field of religion in politics, and economic administration. The ability of political actors to manage these differences through dialogue rather than confrontation marks a departure from past practices. It also highlights the growing institutionalization of Bangladesh’s political culture, a development influenced partly by FOIP’s promotion of democratic norms and governance standards.

Led by a mass uprising, the former prime minister fled the country on August 5, marking the official end of the Awami League’s reign. During the 17 years of the former prime minister’s regime, political parties were able to express their opinions openly, but with greater difficulty.⁵² There was no environment for reaching a consensus on the topic. However, as the situation is now shifting to a more democratic scenario under the interim government, the scope for both convergence and divergence is also emerging. As the interim government took over, all the political parties initially agreed to the structural reform of the country’s institutions for a fair election. The reform included the judiciary, administration, and security sectors. There

⁵¹ Howladar, A. (2025, March 28). Objections to changing country’s name, agrees to change fundamental principles. Prothom Alo English. <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/politics/zolry3d303>

⁵² Curtis, J. (2025). Bangladesh: The fall of the Hasina Government and recent political developments. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10096/CBP-10096.pdf>

is consensus among the political parties on reforming the Constitution to prevent further chances of another authoritarian government taking power.⁵³

Apart from threats and control over the press and media, the former prime minister's regime had taken the lives of many journalists. Not just the threat and fear of death led them to disown press freedom, but also some journalists and press media willingly became accomplices to the autocratic government. To undermine the evidence of media freedom in the country, the Awami League government would provide licenses, financial capacity, professional skills, or capabilities. In this, there was a long-term media dominance by the leading political parties that were in power.

Another political scientist mentioned,

'[...] However, with the fall of the Awami government, the political parties now want a democratic country with press freedom.'

Although the opinion may change in the days leading up to the election and in the post-election period, currently, the political parties align with the statement. The long autocratic period has deprived people of fundamental human rights. Instead, there were imbalances of distribution, politically motivated arrests and crimes by the government, and politicization of educational institutions by the student wing of the Awami League. All these factors together reflect the parties' concern to agree on rebuilding a stronger and safer country for the people. When there is a point of convergence among the political groups, there is also a point of disagreement. The contribution of the political parties to the reform has sparked the first place in the debate. With grassroots-level supporters, the BNP has a pressing need to regain the trust and confidence of the people. The delay of the election might also loosen their probability of coming to power.

On the other hand, the newly formed NCP is also gathering support from the grassroots level. In the case of reform, both parties also have different views regarding the election. NCP is more likely to introduce proportional democracy, whereas BNP is willing to increase the number of seats. Whatever change the interim government might want to make, the consensus of the political parties is needed.

Even in the most critical situation right now, the election timeframe convinces the BNP under certain conditions. In contrast, the NCP opposes the idea of holding an election in favor of reform. Jamaat-e-Islami, a radical Islamic party, on the other hand, marks it as ethically unjustified. The parties are also questioning the neutrality of the interim government, claiming that it prioritizes the interests of one party over others in decision-making.⁵⁴ This frames the development of the political landscape in Bangladesh, opening the floor

⁵³ ICG. (2024). A New Era in Bangladesh? The First Hundred Days of Reform. In International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/344-bangladesh-hundred-days_0.pdf

⁵⁴ The Daily Star. (2025, March 25). Checks and balances are key to the success of reforms. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/checks-and-balances-are-key-the-success-reforms-3856446>

for criticism of the government and its decisions, and represents a more democratic approach. FOIP's promotion of democratic norms and governance aligns with the scenario in Bangladesh. FOIP acknowledges regional stability through reduced practice of unilateral actions, urges adherence to international laws and a rule-based order, and advocates for peaceful solutions to any conflict. This opens the door for financing in development.⁵⁵

4.6 The Role of the US Deep State

In Bangladesh's recent political turmoil (mid-2023 onwards), some commentators speculated that a hidden "U.S. deep state", meaning entrenched intelligence or bureaucratic actors, had influenced events.⁵⁶ This narrative drew on Sheikh Hasina's claims that Washington sought strategic concessions (for example, a military base on St. Martin's Island) and allegedly backed the student-led protests that toppled her government.⁵⁷ However, U.S. officials have flatly denied any such intervention. As President Trump told the press in February 2025, the American "deep state" had "no role" in Bangladesh's crisis. Similarly, the Biden administration's press secretary insisted in 2023 that "we have had no involvement at all" in Dhaka's political change.⁵⁸ Bangladeshi analysts and media commentators note that these denials, along with independent reports, leave no evidence of a covert U.S. plot. In short, while the "deep state" label has been used in political rhetoric, the documented record points to public U.S. diplomacy, not secret meddling, as the source of American influence in Bangladesh.⁵⁹

In fact, U.S. engagement with Bangladesh aligns closely with its broader Indo-Pacific strategy (the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" framework), which emphasizes open economies, democratic institutions, and countering China. The Biden administration explicitly describes the Indo-Pacific as a "shared foundation [...]

⁵⁵ Hisahiro, K. (2024). Japan's Strategic Interests in the Global South: Indo-Pacific Strategy. CSIS. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-strategic-interests-global-south-indo-pacific-strategy>

⁵⁶ Rahman, M. M. (2025, September 28). Deep state and Trump-Modi press briefing. NEWAGE. <https://www.newagebd.net/post/opinion/258187/deep-state-and-trump-modi-press-briefing#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%98deep%20state%E2%80%99%20refers,political%20force%20in%20the%20country>

⁵⁷ Sagar, P. R. (2024, August 14). Decoding the 'long arm of the US Deep State' in Bangladesh unrest. India Today. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/decoding-the-long-arm-of-the-us-deep-state-in-bangladesh-unrest-2582219-2024-08-14>

⁵⁸ Scroll In. (2025, February 14). US 'deep state' had no role in Bangladesh crisis, says Donald Trump. Scroll.in. <https://scroll.in/latest/1079158/us-deep-state-had-no-role-in-bangladesh-crisis-says-donald-trump#:~:text=The%20%E2%80%9Cdeep%20state%E2%80%9D%20in%20the,President%20Donald%20Trump%20on%20Thursday>

⁵⁹ TBS. (2025, February 15). What does the Trump-Modi press briefing mean for Bangladesh? Here's what experts say. The Business Standard. <https://www.tbsnews.net/foreign-policy/what-does-trump-modi-press-briefing-mean-bangladesh-heres-what-experts-say-1068686>

that is free, open, and connected”.⁶⁰ In practice, U.S. envoys have publicly urged Dhaka to hold “free, fair, and impartial” elections⁶¹ and have negotiated defense and trade agreements as part of this agenda.⁶² Scholars argue that Washington’s Bangladesh policy is best understood as “selective interventionism” aimed at strategic goals (like limiting China’s influence), rather than secret regime-change plots.⁶³ In other words, the literature shows U.S. officials working through transparent channels (diplomacy, aid, alliances) in line with Indo-Pacific objectives, not through an unseen “deep state.” This suggests that rumors of a shadowy U.S. network in Dhaka are unsupported by the available evidence.⁶⁴

5. Limitations

This research has some drawbacks or limitations. First, this research selected participants purposively who were oppressed by the former government of Bangladesh and the experts in the field of politics. As a result, the findings can deviate if a random purposive sampling strategy is used to conduct this research. Second, this research was conducted at a time when the former government of Bangladesh had stepped down due to the uprising of the Bangladeshi people. The nature of humans is that while people get oppressed by a party, they

⁶⁰ The White House. (2025, January 10). The United States’ enduring commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2025/01/10/the-united-states-enduring-commitment-to-the-indo-pacific-region/#:~:text=From%20Day%20One%2C%20President%20Biden,connected%2C%20prosperous%2C%20secure%2C%20and%20resilient>

⁶¹ Mostofa, S. M. (2024, April 19). US’s confusing role in protecting democracy in Bangladesh | Review of Democracy. The Review of Democracy. <https://revdem.ceu.edu/2024/04/19/uss-confusing-role-in-protecting-democracy-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=letters%20sent%20by%20US%20Assistant,fair%2C%20impartial%2C%20and%20participatory%20elections%2080%9C>

⁶² Anwar, A., Macdonald, G., Markey, D., & Siddiqui, J. (2022, April 1). Bangladesh’s balancing Act amid the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/bangladesh-balancing-act-amid-us-indo-pacific-strategy#:~:text=The%20future%20is%20likely%20to,deep%20set%20of%20working%20relationships>

⁶³ Mostofa, S. M. (2024, October 9). The July Revolution and the future of the BNP in Bangladesh - Australian Institute of International Affairs. Australian Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-july-revolution-and-the-future-of-the-bnp-in-bangladesh/>

⁶⁴ The White House. (2025, January 10). The United States’ enduring commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2025/01/10/the-united-states-enduring-commitment-to-the-indo-pacific-region/#:~:text=From%20Day%20One%2C%20President%20Biden,connected%2C%20prosperous%2C%20secure%2C%20and%20resilient>

forget about the previous pains suffered by others. As a result, the findings might be deviated once. Finally, the sample size of primary data is smaller than the general. The large sample size might alter the findings to a greater extent.

6. Conclusion

Bangladesh's recent political developments, viewed through the lens of FOIP, suggest a complex yet hopeful trajectory. The interplay between domestic reform and strategic recalibration underlines the importance of both internal agency and external influence. As the country navigates its democratic transition, the support and scrutiny of the international community remain critical. The reemergence of political pluralism, the revitalization of civil liberties, and the repositioning of foreign policy all point towards a more balanced and participatory political order. If sustained, these changes could serve as a model for democratic resilience in South Asia, affirming Bangladesh's place as a vital member in the evolving Indo-Pacific landscape.