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The Bangladesh crisis: a wake-up call for south Asia

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Abstract: Eliminating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh sparked protests, and military intervention in South Asia is a significant factor. Using a qualitative methodology that combines document analysis and a review of various literature, this study looks into the reasons behind the crisis and how events unfolded by different actors involved and ended between countries within the region.

Results show the steady decay of democratic standards during the 15 years of Hasina's reign, with suppression of speech, curtailment of dissent, and election rigging. Low-level discontent caused by intractable socio-economic inequities, rising prices, and unemployment combined with ethnic issues (not least discrimination against minorities) increased social tensions. The crisis was further complicated by external interference from regional powers, particularly India and China, which challenged the sovereignty of Bangladesh.

Reservation schemes meant to uplift these marginalized groups were subverted for political advantage, based on which tensions and inequality only increased. The crisis highlights the visceral need for democratic norms, inclusive governance and equity, and resilience to external interference. It details the regional consequences of the crisis, which range from potential spill-over in neighboring states to disruption of regional trade and investment to possible rising instability. It urges South Asian countries to lower their political temperature, re-commit to democratic norms and values, strengthen socioeconomic realities, and institutionalize regional cooperation to avoid a repeat of such crises.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Democracy, Democratic Norms, Military Intervention, Political Crisis, Protests, South Asia.

Introduction: The fall of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024 has reverberated across South Asia, with weeks of student-led protests and civil unrest, culminating in the army eventually removing her

from power, leaving the nation adrift and the region holding its breath (Rahman, 2024; Sharma, 2024). The culmination of her 15 years in power — during which Bangladesh has achieved unprecedented economic growth and development since independence in 1971 — brings deep fears for the future of democracy and stability, not only in Bangladesh but for much of Asia South. It has dived the nation into a gloomy sort of uncertainty, anticlimactic bringing back the political stagnation and instability that Bangladesh has dealt with in most of history (The Daily Star, 2024). This was "a huge blow to democracy in South Asia" (The Hindu, 2024).

Bangladesh has had a lengthy and often violent political past filled with coups, killings, and authoritarianism. However, the current crisis is different: It combines mass street power with military intrusion into civilian areas of operations and the fantastic appointment of Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus to head a government temporarily. The protests were "the largest and most sustained anti-government demonstrations in Bangladesh's history" (The New York Times, 2024). The military intervention is "a dire precedent for the region" (The Kathmandu Post, 2024).

This crisis faced its nascence over the years, where, on the one hand, with an exclusive focus on economic development, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina strayed her government away from resident-oriented democracy by rising authoritarianism through unbridled suppression of dissenting voice(s), revocation of freedom of speech and assembly along with the battering and twisting over the democratic process. The erosion of democratic norms and institutions paved the way for discontent to grow, finally boiling over into mass protests due to a combination of socioeconomic grievances, ethnic and religious divisions, and rising levels of frustration with the political elite. There has been a "shrinking space for democratic norms, the emergence of illiberal forces, and an unpredictable political environment" in Bangladesh (Diamond, 2023, pp. 25-37). This erosion of democratic space has directly limited the critical components of "polyarchy" — participation and opposition — that a healthy, stable democracy relies on (Dahl, 1971).

Set initially off by students' pleas for changes in education reforms, the protests have rapidly developed into an all-encompassing movement with the support of civil society groups, opposition parties, and some leaders from the ruling Awami League. Such mobilization expresses an increasing challenge to democracy and the growing populist backlash against the established political regime (Muller, 2011).

Frustration over the lack of political engagement and growing centralization of power among a few is demonstrated in the protests occurring in Bangladesh" (Mehta, 2023).

The protests' size and intensity surprised the Hasina government, revealing a softer underbelly to what it thought was power it could lean back on. The military, which had not intervened until this point, came in to 'bring order back' at the helm of violence engulfing the situation. The military move, however, turned in a practical sense into a coup and made Hasina resign while paving the way for an interim government led by Muhammad Yunus -- much respected for his microfinance and poverty alleviation work. More than just historical, this intervention illustrates precisely why we must guard against arbitrary rule and serve other students of power, showcasing the pitfalls of opening such a wide legal door to executive discretion (Dicey, 1885).

Yunus, a political outsider without prior experience in government, was brought on board to restore some semblance of stability and credibility to the beleaguered political system. This hints at alternative leadership when a political crisis strikes and the hope for a clean slate (Paris, 2002). Economic and social change is a powerful force that creates transition pressures and new leadership groups (Lipset, 1960).

The Bangladesh crisis has deep regional significance as other South Asian countries continue to confront the same problems: failed democracy, entrenched socio-economic disparities, extensive ethnic and religious polarization, and potential external interference. This crisis was a sober reminder of the tenuousness of democracy, political stability, and the fragility of politics across the region. It highlights the necessity for South Asian countries to maintain democratic standards, promote inclusive governance, address socio-economic inequalities, and uphold non-interference in internal matters by external forces.

It specifically focuses on the root causes of the aforementioned political crisis, the role of different actors, and its implications for other South Asian countries. It also aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of this critical issue. This study aims to provide insight into the crisis and potential preventive strategies so that challenges of democracy and stability facing the region are appropriately addressed by exploring these factors in connection with the overall work.

RESEARCH METHOD

The document analysis and literature review used in this study are based on holistic qualitative research approaches to learning about the complex political environment of Bangladesh. They rely on close

reading—not of secondary literature but of original documents: government papers, international organizations, and the local press. With these resources, we learn about the socio-political situation from eyewitnesses, allowing us to analyze why this crisis persists.

This diverse methodology allows for a more comprehensive, thorough account of Bangladesh's political crisis. By combining qualitative data based on primary sources with relevant theory from scholarly literature, it hopes to build a holistic understanding of the crisis, its underlying drivers, and potential regional outcomes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Gradual Erosion of Democratic Norms: The Slow Disintegration of Democracy: The 2024 political crisis in Bangladesh did not develop overnight but was the culmination of a long and sustained infiltration of democratic norms and institutions by Hasina. Through candlelight and protests, crackdowns and elections frauds — this decline manifested itself over the years in a united assault on democratic values by curtailing free speech, obstructing free assembly, stifling dissent at every opportunity possible (scapegoating critics as traitors), and meddling with elections. The Hasina government was less and less willing to hear criticism over time, throwing opponents in jail and harassing others by any means at its disposal. These tactics range from repressive laws such as the Digital Security Act that stifle online speech to jailing and arresting journalists, activists, and political opposition figures (Ahmed, 2023).

Even third-world countries with good people are still facing lousy rulings and widespread human rights abuses — that is extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture committed by security forces against women with impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2024). In illiberal regimes, power protection and reproduction occur through coercion and fear rather than democratic participation and accountability (Muller, 2011)).

Electoral manipulation further eroded democratic governance in Bangladesh. Schemes like gerrymandering, voter suppression, and intimidation of rival candidates question the legitimacy of elections. There were many irregularities and rigging charges in the 2018 and 2023 elections (The Hindu, 2024). As a result, public confidence in democratic institutions is undermined, and people may lose faith in the electoral process as a means of peaceful political transition (Paris, 2002).

These authoritarian tendencies added up to the slow undermining of democratic norms and institutions that

would eventually breed hostility, resentment, and instability. Illiberal tendencies and the degradation of democratic norms contributed to a fragile political environment in Bangladesh, facilitating the prospect of democratic collapse (Diamond, 2023, pp. 25–37). This closing up of democratic space limited the critical features of polyarchy – participation and opposition – necessary for a democracy to function healthily and sustainably (Dahl, 1971). Dissent suppression and election manipulation undermine the rule of law and foster an environment where arbitrary rule and political instability gain a foothold (Dicey, 1885).

The seeds of the Hasina government's defeat were planted through its gradual slide into authoritarianism despite economic growth. The government's efforts to weaken the basics of democratic rule and instill fear further enraged the masses, laying a foundation for the 2024 political debacle. While the economic performance of these nations presents a silver lining, the crisis highlights that democratic norms and institutions matter much more in the long run, lest we embark on a journey into authoritarianism.

Economic inequality: Bangladesh has been highly developed recently but has a long-standing socio-economic disparity, which led to the 2024 political crisis. The poverty reduction has been impressive, falling from 48.9% in 2000 to 18.7% in 2022, but wealth remains concentrated among a small elite group (World Bank, 2024). About 30% of the national income is controlled by the wealthiest 5% of households, while under 1% goes to the poorest 5%, which nurtures a sense of injustice and resentment among the marginalized (BBS, 2022).

Growing inequality, along with inflation and unemployment, has hit the pockets of citizens hard, eroding their purchasing power and giving rise to social discontent. This hopelessness and despair manifest as a high youth unemployment rate of 12.8% (International Labor Organization, 2023) amidst an inflation rate peaking at a decade-high figure of 9.52% in August 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024).

Government responses, including social safety net programs, have been scrutinized for their lack of comprehensiveness, effectiveness, and progressivity (Rahman, 2023). This has fueled people's disenchantment with the political establishment. Thus, socioeconomic disparity has threatened to maintain quietness and democratic development in Bangladesh. Economic growth can lead to social tensions and instability if pursued without equity (Sen, 2000). Economic hardship and deprivation trigger social protest and political instability (Lipset, 1960)).

The crisis in Bangladesh has reiterated our regional

reality, reiterating the importance of inclusive growth and fair resource distribution in maintaining social harmony and political stability. The political crisis is rooted in the inability to manage these socioeconomic challenges. It is a significant risk to the country's future (Mahbubani, 2018).

Ethnic and Religious Tensions: Even if the Bangladeshi constitution guarantees equal rights and duties to all citizens irrespective of their race or religion, it is difficult for Bangladesh to live in harmony with its diverse population, where ethnic and religious issues are raised from time to time. These tensions, magnified by the Hasina government's perceived favoritism towards the majority Bengali Muslim population against the minority non-Bengali Muslims (most of whom belong to the Mistry ethnic group), have not only led to social unrest but also made a significant impact on the 2024 political crisis (Mohsin, 2022).

Religious minorities, especially Hindus, have been subject to discrimination and violence; they have faced attacks on their temples and forced conversion to Islam, as well as land grabbing (Rahman, 2023). As a result, this persecution sowed fear and insecurity, which led to social unrest and distancing from the state (ASK, 2024). Likewise, the provision of land to ethnic minorities has not only created discrimination but also conflict over ownership (Mohsin, 2022).

This exclusion of minorities from the national framework has eroded national cohesion and ownership (Wakeel, 2005). Excluding groups adversely affects social cohesion and augments conflict (Sen, 2006). The Hasina government's inaction on minority grievances only added fuel to the fire of communal tensions and paved the way for later political turmoil.

In addition, growing religious extremism, along with the perception among a large section of the population that the government is appeasing Islamist outfits/forces, has also led to polarization and aggravated intergroup/ community tensions (Chowdhury, 2024). This type of appeasement enhances radicalized and insecure advent on behalf of minorities (Jaffrelot, 2016).

These factors have been primarily responsible for a deeply divided society and, ultimately, the 2024 political crisis, with these tensions simmering underneath the surface. The crisis highlights the necessity of redressing ethnic and religious grievances while advancing inclusive governance if stability and social cohesion are ever to be ensured in Bangladesh.

The Dangers of Foreign Interference: Notably, the 2024 political crisis in Bangladesh was primarily of internal origin and reinforced by external factors, especially

those concerning India and China. This intrusiveness deepened internal political rifts, destabilized Bangladesh as a nation-state, and caused its sovereignty to suffer.

Historically, India was crucial in Bangladeshi politics - being the regional power and Bangladesh's neighbor. The perception of Indian support for the Awami League has led to resentment among some Bangladeshis due to fears that their country's sovereignty is being compromised. The Daily Star claimed that "India's support for Awami League has engendered the feeling among many Bangladeshis that India's overt and vocal support for Awami League is undermining their country's independence" (Hossain, 2023)). Similarly, The potential future implications of unfolding political developments asserted: "India's foreign policy of trying to influence Bangladesh is risking greater divisions and instability in that country"(International Crisis Group, 2022).

With increased economic engagement, China has also inserted political and strategic questions into the Bangladeshi dialogue. India has long been suspicious of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which New Delhi perceives as an effort by Beijing to take control over the region. India has reasons to be worried about China's expanding commercial and strategic footprint on Bangladeshi soil, which it considers a challenge to its regional hegemony (Varma, 2024). This strategic competition between India and China has turned South Asia into a "new Great Game" where smaller nations like Bangladesh are stuck (Mahbubani, 2018).

Such external intervention has heightened the polarization in the domestic political complex, further eroding Bangladesh's sovereignty and autonomy. Bangladesh faces pressure from extra-regional powers to suit its global strategic interests, which restricts policy alternatives and hampers the pursuit of independent foreign policy. "The increasing role of extra-regional players in Bangladesh has raised questions about the country's capacity to determine its future course and pursue national interests" (Ganguly, 2021, pp. 38–52).

In sum, the Bangladesh crisis lays bare that even smaller South Asian countries cannot rapidly escape the double-edged sword that is well-intentioned but often frivolous Geopolitics of the Era in bordering regions. The only way Bangladesh and its regional neighbors can find peace is for their rulers to stop misapprehending how countries should be run: none of those states have a monopoly over democracy nor the right to dictate who has what entitlements; proper democratic consolidation will occur once organizations like the EU or USA do away with the concept of intervention cloaked by democratic rhetoric, and instead protect the independence"—

minding your own business. At the same time, people work out how to take care of themselves.

Abuse of Reservation Policy: The political crisis in Bangladesh, which saw Prime Minister Hasina's shock resignation in August 2024, highlights the confluence of social, economic, and political factors that may contribute to instability within the country. Key among them is the opportunistic abuse of reservation policies meant for due redressal and progress of marginalized communities. Although they are central to the discourse of social justice and inclusion, the politicization of these policies, along with well-documented clientelism and nepotism, has stoked resentment and turned inequalities into a vector of the crisis.

For decades, Bangladesh's quota system, which sets aside a percentage of government jobs and educational opportunities for certain classes of people, including ethnic minorities as well as descendants of freedom fighters, has been a source of intense debate. Aimed at fostering social equality, it has been derided for mismanagement, graft, and entrenching casteism. The quota system has been increasingly used as a device for political patronage, with the ruling elites leveraging it towards rewarding supporters and strengthening their hold on power (Khan, 2022). Political interpretation distorts reservation policies. This, in turn, causes the public to lose trust in the system (Sen, 2005).

Additionally, the abuse of reservation policies has aggravated multiple groups who believe they have been denied their rights and benefits. However, many youths—especially from the majority Bengali Muslim community—feel this quota system is unfair and restricts their opportunities. The quota system is now a significant grievance among Bangladeshi youth who believe they suffer from a system biased toward specific constituencies (Rahman, 2024). Such resentment can spur social unrest and lead to political instability (Muller, 2011).

In addition, reservation policies have led many others to further disadvantageous positions on reservation-based access, and rather than merit, social networks dominate the entire process. This has created a sense of disillusionment among many Bangladeshis who believe that the system is stacked against them. The view of being deprived and disadvantaged could produce riots, which might seem to be an impression of social unrest or political instability (Lipset, 1960).

Bangladesh deserves to have appropriate reservation policies to redress historical injustices and ensure social inclusion; nonetheless, abuse and misutilization of these policies have substantially aggravated the

recent political crisis. Therefore, politicizing such policies and claims of large-scale corruption and nepotism proved a fertile ground for deepening feelings against those who have not benefitted from their implementation while enhancing inequalities. The quota system must be reformatted to ensure equity and transparency and serve as an incentive for disadvantaged people. This would address those problems and prevent further disruption.

Upholding Democratic Norms: The Bangladesh political crisis reminds us how desperately we need democratic norms and institutions to keep a democracy healthy and stable. Those norms include freedom of expression, assembly, the press, and free and fair elections. Political instability—dictatorship and the crisis of legitimacy that threatens good governance—emerges when this constellation weakens.

Free speech and protest are essential for people to share ideas, call elected representatives to account, and participate in the political system. Limited fundamental freedoms do not bring about a war of ideas or information, stifle dissent in hushed tones, and create an atmosphere where fear flourishes. The fourth pillar (moral force) explains that free and independent media are like a backbone to hold the powerful accountable, expose corruption, and inform the public of the truth. On the other hand, threats and intimidation of journalists have undermined media watchdog capacity.

Democracy depends on free and fair elections, which empower citizens to choose their public representatives and hold them accountable. Rigging elections by the incumbent party only shakes the people's faith in the system and raises doubts about its government.

That underlines the significant need for South Asian nations, separately and jointly, to reestablish their dedication to democracy. A decline in democracy's principles can lead to human rights abuses, authoritarianism, and chaos.

Promoting Inclusive Governance: While ensuring socioeconomic equality and facilitating inclusive governance is a noble vision to aspire to and a fundamental prerequisite for political unrest prevention and sustainable stability in Bangladesh and South Asia, it is unrealistic. Governments should prioritize programs and policies that ensure fairness in access to essential goods, economic opportunity, and political representation for all citizens regardless of socio-economic status, race, background, or religion. Not doing so can lay the groundwork for discontent, marginalization, and instability (Lipset, 1960).

Outsized vulnerability to political instability is mainly caused by socioeconomic imbalance, from a sense of injustice experienced by those with little to no

opportunity and the marginalization they will likely endure. In many cases, a considerable part of society's balance between excluded or disenfranchised people from growth and growing economies is hardly regarded as it creates an essential environment to grow operations. Although Bangladesh has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years, this increased prosperity has not been accompanied by a similar decline in inequality (World Bank, 2023). This can lead to dissatisfaction and, in turn, social or political instability.

Promoting a more inclusive form of governance must also address economic disparity — affording voters a seat at the political table. This, in turn, means establishing institutions and apparatuses that allow for a significant degree of participation by all groups in the decisions to be taken (Dahl, 1971). However, over the past few years in Bangladesh, political space has diminished with further crackdowns on freedom of speech and assembly and a decline in the quality of democratic institutions (Ahmed, 2023). The closing of democratic space can result in political exclusion and marginalization, which will further breed discontent and instability.

Additionally, guiding governance must also consider the discontented populations of ethnic minorities and religious minorities who are frequently discriminated against and excluded. Providing these groups with the same level of access to socio-economic services, economic livelihood, and political representation will be vital for building social cohesion and mitigating social unrest (Sen, 2006). Bangladesh has experienced more discrimination and violence in recent years, creating insecurity and alienation (Sharma, 2024). Excluding demographic groups can and does lead to social fragmentation and instability.

At the heart of long-term political solutions and stability is the issue of inclusive governance, a form of governance that is as much a question of social justice. Even so, governments should promote policies and initiatives that directly tackle social inequities, enable access to citizens' goods, services, and opportunities in life, and ensure the political inclusiveness of all society groups. However, whether it is Bangladesh or any other South Asian country, a more inclusive and just society can restore the democratic processes at one end and, most importantly, keep the peace intact for decades.

Coping with Ethnic and Faith Conflicts: Despite being endowed with tremendous ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, South Asian countries battle tensions and conflict. Not paying appropriate attention can transform such tensions into chaos and instability,

risking social cohesion and democratic consolidation (already troubled). Unity and Inclusive Governance in Ethnic Conflict Equal rights for all citizens, regardless of ethnic group or religion, are essential to political stability and inclusive regional governance.

Communal violence and systemic discrimination against religious minorities — particularly Hindus — long in Bangladesh demonstrate the perils of overlooking ethnic and sectarian cleavages. Among many reasons, the perception that the Hasina government was unaccountable and partisanship of a majority Bengali Muslim population-oriented state instead of a secular state that protects minority rights has been one of the drives behind this recent political turmoil.

India, too, experiences both political and personal religious polarization/violence, even if it enjoys the twofold pleasures of equality and secularism in its constitution. Critics allege that Buddhists of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government are marginalizing religious minorities, be it Muslims or any other community, and fueling inter-communal violence via its Hindu nationalist agenda.

While less vulnerable to ethnic and religious segregation than South Asia, Nepal is not a monolithic population. The Madhesi community has fought for decades against the discrimination and exclusion imposed by the hillside communities who wield political power over the plains dwellers, holding countless protests to call for greater autonomy. Therefore, South Asian states must do the opposite of this by boasting inter-communal harmony and universal rights for all citizens. It involves reforms at the institutional and legislative levels and a concerted effort to stimulate community conversations and awareness.

Inclusive governance and managing ethnic and religious tensions are critical for South Asia to maintain social cohesion and political stability. Isolated violent-minded people are born only where they do not get an opportunity to live with individual dignity, otherwise coexistence of different religions with various kinds could be the religion itself in South Asia where peace & stability can be granted if local governments do promote inter-communal harmony & shall preserve right of citizenship for all people or citizens thereby this region at some point will be more equitable society instead of one identity challenged by the other; every person shall have his/her very own rights replacing vilification/cursing from one side whereas stigma/vitiation actually from another similar attempted being there no its own right felt upon latter whom all must stand together collectively resided permanently entire widely distributed land almost same way so that he/she would realize secure status about

existing as equal citizen towards others with precisely no left/right necessity ought to search just everywhere because everything must available free & fruitful joyfully while sharing started and substance alike already belonged to expand generations succeeded upwards.

Justice in Reservation: Reservation policies intended to correct historical injustices and increase social equity are fraught with controversy, which seemed especially pertinent given the ongoing political turmoil in Bangladesh. Though these policies are aimed directly at lifting marginalized communities, they do periodically run into a discussion about fairness, meritocracy, everything that comes along with it, and even unintended impacts.

The quota system, which allocates specific percentages of government positions and educational opportunities to targeted groups in Bangladesh, has been a polarizing topic. While purposefully created to allow the representation of marginalized communities, the process has been rife with allegations of corruption, nepotism, and political manipulation (Ahmed, 2023). The politicization mentioned above can delegitimize reservation policies and citizens (Sen, 2005). In addition, quotas can create resentment against those omitted when they unthinkingly do not make individual meriters (Rahman, 2024).

The difficulty is reconciling historical injustices with the desire to have everyone on the same level playing field (Lipset, 1960). One possible compromise is to use a less rigid and more focused method that targets the neediest populations, pairing quotas with scholarships and support programs (Muller, 2011). These efforts focus on providing equal opportunity equality, not justifying group-based advantages.

However, reservation rules must also find a middle path to be equitable. We must remedy this history with justice and grace through affirmative action—it must be implemented fairly, strategically, and transparently. A more focused and nuanced approach might ensure these policies serve the disadvantaged and move us closer to a just society.

Struggling Back Against Intervention: The 2024 political crisis in Bangladesh, therefore, mirrors the struggle for survival that each South Asian state is faced with to balance their need for regional cooperation and collective growth while preserving their national identity, sovereignty, and democratic ethos. However, enforcing national decision-making with good behavior within shared challenges and stable regional trends does not mean compromising or sacrificing any nation's capacity to act on its behalf based on democratic principles. Secondly, resistance to external

meddling in national affairs is essential to protect national sovereignty and foster real democracy.

South Asia has historically been beleaguered by great power politics, with outside powers competing to control these minor states for their strategic gains. Such interference may involve diplomatic pressure tactics, economic leverage, and covert support for political actors. Smaller South Asian states are often caught in the web of great power competition, making their polity susceptible to manipulation; their political sovereignty is jeopardized, and democratic institutions are threatened (Ganguly, 2021, pp. 38–52).

The Bangladesh crisis highlighted a risk of external interference. However, internal factors were the main drivers. Regional powers—especially India and China—inflamed tensions, which added to the difficulty of finding a solution. Concerns were raised about foreign interference in Bangladesh's political affairs, as many viewed India as supporting the Awami League. China was also coming to play an increasingly relevant economic role (Bhattacharya, 2024).

Outside meddling can take diligent steps to bring democracy and weaken public trustworthiness in institutions. The belief that foreign actors are meddling in elections or subverting the political process can alienate citizens from the governmental system and result in social agitation. Foreign meddling in elections can de-legitimate democracy and create instability and violence (Paris, 2002).

A multifaceted approach is necessary to withstand external interference. Different South Asian countries should avoid overreliance on one particular outside power, forming democracy, transparency, and accountability in the governance system and diversifying economic and diplomatic linkages. Who talked about an energized and robust civil society being necessary for defending democratic ideals against both internal and external attacks (Dahl, 1971)).

Regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) can play an essential role in engaging member states in dialogue and cooperation while developing norms and mechanisms to prevent the invocations of third-party interference. According to Muller (2011), collective security and shared democratic values promoted by regional organizations can limit external interference and protect regional stability (p. 320).

Non-interference from the outside world is critical to effectively maintaining national sovereignty, democratic norms, and regional stability in South Asia. Regional cooperation is essential but must never come at the cost of one country's right to forge its path and defend its democratic orientation. South Asian

countries must build a more resilient and independent regional order by strengthening democratic institutions, fostering transparency and accountability, and diversifying partnerships.

The Bangladesh Crisis and its Impacts

The Bangladesh political crisis has profound South Asian regional implications. It illustrates the vulnerability of democracy, its foundational institutions, and the comparative nature of regional political stability. This crisis has not only overshadowed Bangladesh's path to democracy but also alarmed neighboring countries suffering similar problems about possible spillover effects.

Regional Implications: The Bangladesh fiasco has shaken South Asia, and neighboring countries monitoring the situation will not be unaware of its fallout in their internal politics. This crisis has further exposed the fragility of democratic institutions in the region, and the fear is always that political instability will create a domino effect involving other countries. Even more dangerously, "the crisis in Bangladesh is not entirely a domestic matter; there are regional ramifications if undemocratic forces and circumstances take hold in any nation" (Ganguly, 2021, pp. 38-52).

India — one of the major powers in South Asia and Bangladesh's immediate neighbor — pays particular attention because of the crisis and its probable repercussions on India. The crisis has heightened concerns about another influx of refugees into India since political instability and economic fragility in Bangladesh could cause a migration surge. India is watching the Bangladesh crisis and fears a spillover of refugees; resources in border areas could become scarcer, fueling social tensions (The Hindu, 2024).

More generally, Bangladesh's crisis may give a shot in the arm to anti-democratic elements in India, who want to weaken secularism and nourish a Hindu nationalist movement. The crisis in Bangladesh could now be a lesson or cautionary tale for India, a reality check about the potential risks of majoritarianism and the decline of democratic norms (Mehta, 2023).

The Bangladesh crisis has also caused fears about higher instability in more South Asian countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka, which are struggling with their own political and economic qualms. This could strengthen anti-democratic movements in these countries and weaken attempts to bolster democratic institutions and foster social cohesion. The crisis in Bangladesh should serve as a clarion call for Nepal since it reveals the precarious nature of democracy and hard-earned gains (Thapa, 2024).

Economic Implications: This political crisis in Bangladesh has a spillover effect not only politically but also economically for South Asia. This has vast implications as many South Asian countries trade with Bangladesh, and the crisis could spill into regional trade and investment. This crisis will create regional uncertainty and instability that would discourage the inflow of foreign investors and break the supply chains crucial for economic growth across the region. "The political crisis in Bangladesh may impact regional trade and investment as businesses might hesitate to invest in a country grappling with involution"(Ahmed, 2023).

In addition, it may cause a fall in remittances as many Bangladeshi workers work abroad, which provides significant livelihood support for the population and replenishes the foreign exchange reserve. Remittances from Bangladeshi workers overseas are an essential source of income for many families and a vital driver of the economy in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2023).

Security Implications: The renewed political crisis in Bangladesh raises alarm bells over lingering fears of growing terrorism and extremism in the region. Such instability may represent a fertile ground for extremists to recruit and launch attacks. It has been warned that extremists may use the crisis to further their interests (Chowdhury, 2024).

Such a crisis could also fuel a resurgence of religious extremism in Bangladesh with its spillover impact in immediate neighboring nations. The phenomenon of religious extremism in Bangladesh is a regional issue as it may lead to further radicalization and violence (Jaffrelot, 2016).

This crisis poses an existential challenge to Bangladesh and the wider South Asia region as fragile democratic institutions become susceptible to the spread of instability—a trend we have observed in established democracies or autocracies. Instead, South Asia needs to unite and engage with the deeper causes of the crisis and revitalize democracy activism in the region. The crisis is a wake-up call for the region; it has revealed that only through far greater regional cooperation and rebuilding their connective tissue, shared institutions, political capacity, and fidelity to democratic rules can these nations regroup and restore their freedom (Diamond, 2023, pp. 25-37).

Strengthening democratic institutions, pursuing inclusive governance, addressing socio-economic disparities, and countering external interference are essential mechanisms for developing a more stable South Asia where democracy thrives and the dividends of peace and progress are equitably shared with all citizens.

Results of the Study

This analysis concludes with a summary of six likely repercussions that will characterize the 2024 political crisis in Bangladesh. The fact that the crisis involved significant revocation of freedom of expression and assembly, repression against opponents, and electoral malpractice meant democratic norms and institutions dissolved. These shrinking spaces have also opened the door to a fragile political landscape and an increasing threat of democratic backsliding.

Second, widening socio-economic inequalities have increased disparity, which leads to disaffection with society and hatred against authority. With a cost-of-living crisis, unemployment at record heights, and inflation out of control, the lives of the poor and middle classes have worsened significantly, impinging on an unstable political climate.

Third, the crisis highlights the fragility of democracy and political peace/ stability in South Asia. Moreover, it also speaks of a fear that it will spread to surrounding countries facing the same crises.

Fourth, the crisis also tells South Asian states to restore their democratic ordinances and governance but without compromising the socio-economic inequalities that are kept insulated from extraterritorial powers intruding into domestic equations.

Finally, the crisis has underscored the importance of resolving historical ethnoreligious tensions and building cross-community solidarity while embedding equal citizenship for all citizens regardless of their ethnic and religious background.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study critically examines Bangladesh's political crisis in 2024 and concludes with a set of essential recommendations for facilitating democratic consolidation, stability, and inclusive regional governance.

Respect for Democratic Norms and Institutions

Upholding the Basic Freedoms: Preserving freedom of speech, assembly, and press is crucial to a sound democracy. Governments must avoid threats that would silence dissent or narrow these freedoms.

Ensuring Free and Fair Elections: The focal point of democratic governance is free and fair elections. They are essential to ensure electoral integrity and resistance to election manipulation and rigging, which sustains the legitimacy of elections and public confidence in democratic institutions. They are essential for preventing the manipulation or rigging of elections, preserving their integrity and legitimacy, and rebuilding citizens' trust in democracy.

Revitalizing the Rule of Law: A bold, if not bolder, commitment to the rule of law needs to be put very

much front and center as a counterpoint against arbitrary power by rulers that serves to protect and uphold human rights in all its reigns and forms. Democracy and accountability require checks in the form of independent judges and solid laws.

Promoting Meaningful Governance and Overcoming Socio-economic Inequality

Fostering Inclusive Economic Development: One important underlying reason for this stability and social cohesion is to prevent a concentration of resources and opportunities at the top end. In this context, policymakers should place political priority on phylogenetically causing socioeconomic differences by reducing poverty and fostering a socio-economically inclusive economy that benefits all citizens.

Encouraging Political Participation: Governance is based on an inclusive decision-making process and attention to the participation of all citizens. Governments also have to create institutions/mechanisms that would allow all sections of society to participate in the development process irrespective of caste or religion.

Addressing the Interests of Marginalized Groups: Inclusive governance means responding to marginalized groups—such as ethnic and religious minorities—that are often ignored. This means constructing universal systems that provide the essentials of life: health, economic opportunity, and political voice.

Fostering Inter-Communal Cohesion and Managing Ethno-Religious Disputes

Protection of Rights of Religious and ethnic minorities: Governments must ensure the rights of all Religious and ethnic minorities so They are safe and secure. Always take more measures to protect them from any violence or discrimination against them.

Fostering Community Conversation and Awareness: Promoting interaction between communities in this context also involves encouraging open conversation and building awareness of the space they each occupy. Governments must invest in cross-cultural training and work through historical grievances so that the trust gained from people enables cooperation.

Combating Extremism against Religion: Extremism towards religion is an international challenge to faith, stability, and the social life surrounding it unless governments want to go soft on extremism.

Formulation of Reasoned and Transparent Reservation Policies

Reservation Must Not Be Corrupt: Reservations must be transparent and accessible of corruption, favoritism, or bribery. If governments are to enable this, then this policy must benefit the communities it seeks to target.

Reservation Policy: Redressing historical wrongs is essential, but reservation policy must also consider merit to allow equal opportunities for all citizens. Absolute equality of opportunity can be achieved by combining quotas, scholarships, and support; this is elegant and objectionable.

Preventing Outside Meddling and Protecting Independence

Regional organizations, such as SAARC, could, for example, take initiatives for dialogue and specific mechanisms to create norms preventing extra-regional exploitation of sectarian lines and yet protecting common regional democratic values.

Self-reliance: South Asian countries should not depend on one external power to the exclusion of others by choice, with an enhanced degree of autonomy to be exercised over their respective interests.

Improving the Integrity and Accountability of Democratic Institutions: Being surrounded by democratic values that are resilient to external bad influences, creating transparency and justification for decisions can surmount those opposing forces.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has been on the brink of a multifaceted political crisis as 2024 approaches, an issue not limited to Bangladesh alone. Execution reflects how unstable political stability status quo is an ambiguous reality of democratic institutions. It highlights the urgent need for South Asian countries to shore up democratic practices, establish inclusive governance structures, mitigate socio-economic disparities through public provision, and advance inter-communal peace.

This crisis must teach the region that it needs to deal with the roots of political instability and create more resilient democratic institutions. South Asian countries need to celebrate societal differences with further superior organizational arrangements for an equity-established society where disparity is praised and dwelled by uniting shared values and commonality between individuals.

Bangladesh crisis teaches us that democracy is half a job. We always have to sacrifice our backs for the benefit of future generations and stand on guardrails because genes do not want to be extinct. South Asian countries must pool their efforts to render the region more democratic, peaceful, and prosperous.

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