

How can the Interim Government revise the foreign policy of Bangladesh? Specially with the great powers US, China, Japan, and India.

In terms of geographical location and geopolitical position, Bangladesh became the primary goal of the great powers over these 54 years, which makes it crucial to maintain a fair and safe foreign policy with these great powers, the US, China, Japan, and India. India and China are rivals to each other, and the US and China are rivals to each other. As a result, India, China, and the US are encircled by rivalry, and Bangladesh became their primary goal for geographical location. The previous government of Bangladesh, 'Sheikh Hasina,' was mostly India-centric, which was enforcing Bangladesh as a rival of other great powers. After the fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime, it's now crucial for the interim government, 'Dr. Muhammad Yunus,' to revise the foreign policy with the US, China, Japan, and India for a fair bilateral relation. By using secondary references, this study attempts to discover some key areas where the interim government needs to revise its foreign policy.

Introduction:

Bangladesh is very small country compares to her neighbors. Bangladesh and India share a 4,096-kilometre-long (2,545 mi) international border, the fifth-longest land border in the world.^[01] The other border 271-kilometre-long (168 mi) shared with Myanmar.^[02] So, Bangladesh needs to maintain a good neighborly relationship with India. But her diplomatic endeavors within and beyond South Asia were affected by the term 'India Factor',^[03] which can be broadly categorized into two types: 'pro-India' and 'anti-India'.^[Chakma, 2012] India is surrounded by her enemy Pakistan, her rival China, and China's friend Myanmar. "India must be a land power to deter China and Pakistan and a sea power to control of the Indian Ocean. India does not have the option of developing connectivity with a strategic hinterland of neighboring states, hence the necessity for the "Act East" policy, a logical way for India to build relations with countries that can help her keep China away from the Indian Ocean."^[04] China is in a difficult geopolitical position. Most of her trade depends on the sea, which is dominated by the allies of US, and the Bay of Bengal. To reduce her vulnerability to blockade, China initiate "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)". Until the complete implementation of BRI, China needs to maintain a good relationship with the states on her borders for sea trades. On the other hand, the rise of China relative to the United States means that relations of all states with China are perforce of interest to the United States.^[04] In sum, India, China, US, and Bangladesh all face potential encirclement. Bangladesh is not a security threat for any of the great powers, she can get benefits from all of them. Which now crucial to revise the foreign policy to maintain the principle "Friendship to all, malice to none."

Bangladesh foreign policy towards India:

Bangladesh encircled by India, and rivers are flow from India, also she need to import many items from India, for these reasons, she must be maintained a friendly relationship with India. As well as she also accounts the foreign relations of India. "For the Bangladesh Awami League, India represented a key partner for strong political support to counter the United States before the general election. In return, India secured its interests by obtaining authorization from Bangladesh to use ports for cargo transit and transshipment to India's northeastern states."^[05] Sheikh Hasina also agreed to a long-term power purchase agreement with the Adani Group.^[06] These agreements become a subject of compromising national interest. The interim government should reconsider these agreements for national security. Secondly, interim government needs

to reach a fair water-sharing agreement on Teesta River, which remained unsolved over 14 years of Sheikh Hasina's regime. In this case the interim government should consider pursuing international avenues to resolve water sharing issues.^[06] Previous government, Sheikh Hasina, engaged in the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), which makes a negative impact on Bangladesh from China. So, the interim government should also work here to keep the support on various development project organized by China. For importing essential goods like rice and onion, Bangladesh mostly reliant on the Indian market which can be reason of manipulation, so the interim government should find some alternative source to import rice and onion in a fair price.

Bangladesh foreign policy towards China:

“To become a middle-income country, Bangladesh badly needs inclusive economic development, and evidently China, a 100 mile away neighbor, has a keen interest to accelerate Bangladesh's development, of course not without her self-interests.”^[07] China is the biggest trade partner of Bangladesh. Previous government, Sheikh Hasina agreed with some mega project and BRI with China, which effectively provide significant support to her government through large-scale infrastructure and development projects.^[06] But this became a concern about “debt-trap”, which may not entirely apply to Bangladesh, but government needs to consider carefully. By various development project China increasingly trying to influence in the Bay of Bengal which can be a security threat for other great powers specially India. “After Sheikh Hasina's state visit to India, Bangladesh's engagement in the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and the reconsideration of Chinese-supported projects such as the Teesta River Restoration and Management Project and Mongla Port modernization also led China to thoughtfully reassess its foreign policy towards Bangladesh.”^[05] Teesta River Restoration project is important for Bangladesh, but problem is, China always try to follow win-win strategy. Most of the rivers of Bangladesh flows from India, and Indians some river flows from China, as a result Bangladesh can counter India with the help China for fair water-sharing issue. China involved in economic development on Bangladesh as well as security and defense development, which poses significant challenges for Bangladesh, particularly in its relations with India, the US, and Western countries. The \$1.2 billion China-built six-slot submarine base in Cox's Bazar has already sent unsettling signals to Bangladesh's closest neighbors and Western development partners.^[06] So the interim government should reconsider these developments project specially for defense and security which enforcing Bangladesh as a rival of West. Also, the interim government needs to ensure in all the deals with Chinese that there is actually a win for Bangladesh, not two wins for China.

Bangladesh foreign policy towards US:

The US, which is the number one superpower, is the single biggest export market, and a major source of remittance for Bangladesh.^[08] The US is a significant market for Bangladeshi garments and one of the top sources of remittances. It also supports NGOs, defense forces, and UN peacekeeping efforts.^[06] Bangladesh Army is one of the biggest sources of soldier for UN peacekeeping missions. The current interim government needs to ensure the GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) facility and maintain the export markets in the US and European Country. Also need to increase the student exchange with US. Furthermore, the interim government needs to ensure more US involvement in the defense forces than China.

Bangladesh foreign policy towards Japan:

Japan is the biggest export market of sea food for Bangladesh. Japan is a one of the richest and industrially developed countries of the world, and a significant source of development aid to Bangladesh. Additionally, Bangladesh is a major source of raw materials for Japan, and important market for Japanese

manufactured goods.^[09] Bangladesh has a large sea area “Bey of Bengal” but don’t have enough technology to extract resources from there. The current interim government should initiate some development project with Japan regarding the extraction of resources from sea. Additionally, government needs to ensure a good trade price for these resources, which can help in further development of Bangladesh. Furthermore, Japanese National Police Agency seems to be a best police institution in South Asia. The interim government of Bangladesh can reform the police institution by the help of JNPA.

Conclusion:

In the case of foreign relations, Bangladesh must be “the only girl in the village,” attractive to everyone but committed to none.^[04] So the key target of the interim government should be resolving the water-sharing issue for a peace mind of Bangladeshi peoples. Secondly, the government needs to implement a strict policy with the US and UK regarding money transfer, so that no political leader can transfer huge amounts of money illegally. Additionally, government needs to reduce the involvement of China in development project, because China follows two-win strategy. If the interim government agrees with some development project, then strict monitoring should be there, so that the necessary development project is implemented first. Furthermore, the government needs to involve with the US more frequently for expanding export markets and increasing student exchange to build up more human resources. As Japan is the richest and industrially developed country, the interim government should deal about some development project regarding the sea resources extraction. In short, the interim government should maintain a fair bilateral relationship with all the great powers in account of “friendship to all, malice to none.”

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