



# THE SPOTLIGHT

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NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOBAL CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

### CONTENTS

#### ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA: EXTREMIST RESURGENCE UNDER BANGLADESH’S INTERIM GOVERNMENT

P. Zahsan (Nick Name)

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*The risk is even greater because of the large number of missing guns, ammunition, and escaped high-risk prisoners from the 2024 unrest. Together, these factors—political protection for extremists, weaker security forces, and the spread of radical ideas—could push Bangladesh toward a situation similar to Afghanistan’s under religious rule. If urgent action is not taken now, future governments will have to deal with extremists firmly entrenched in politics, society, and even parts of the security forces, making the problem far more difficult to solve.*

P3

#### CONTESTING LIBERATION: WHY THE 2024 MOVEMENT IS NOT A CONTINUATION OF 1971

Prof. Dr. A K Lam & Prof. Dr. R Ris (Nick Names)

*In Bangladesh, the legacy of the 1971 Liberation War remains the moral and ideological foundation of political legitimacy—a sacred chapter in the nation’s history that continues to shape its identity and aspirations. It is against this deeply emotional backdrop that the architects and supporters of the 2024 movement against the government of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have deliberately framed their struggle as a continuation of that foundational spirit—a second wave of resistance in the long fight for democracy. Yet, upon closer examination, this comparison proves not only historically shallow but fundamentally misleading. While the language of liberation and revolution is powerfully evoked, the 2024 movement lacks the philosophical depth, legal grounding, and unifying national purpose that defined the struggle of 1971. This analysis rigorously contrasts the two movements through historical, legal, and ideological lenses, demonstrating that they are distinct phenomena—separated by their essential aims, their adherence to constitutional versus revolutionary legitimacy, and their vision for the nation. Where the Liberation War sought to create a state, the 2024 movement seeks to unseat a government. Where 1971 united a people against colonial subjugation, the current mobilization reflects deep—but domestic—political divisions. To conflate the two is not just an oversimplification: it risks diminishing the singular sanctity of the Liberation War while obscuring the true nature of today’s political contestation as a struggle for power within the framework of the state that 1971 made possible.*

P11

MORE CONTENTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President’s Message Page 2 Editor’s Note Page 2 Media Watch Page 15 The Back Page Page 17

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

২৫ ভাদ্র ১৪৩২

10 September 2025

The Great Liberation War is our national pride — it is beyond comparison.

The Liberation War of 1971 was a struggle for the very existence of our nation, built on the blood of millions of martyrs, the sacrifices of our mothers and sisters, and the united resistance of the people. Today, certain groups are trying to equate contemporary student movements with this historic victory for their own political gain — this is nothing but an attempt to undermine the sanctity of our Liberation War.

Let us be clear: no student movement in 2024 or at any other time can ever be equal to the Great Liberation War.

We have also witnessed that whenever anti-liberation forces come to power by violating the country's independence and sovereignty, extremism has risen, militancy has flourished, attacks on minorities have increased, and democratic institutions have weakened.

We want a peaceful, secular, and democratic Bangladesh — where the spirit of the Liberation War is upheld, and there is no room for religious extremism, communalism, or terrorism.

The spirit of the Liberation War is our guiding light.

Democracy, peace, and progress must shape the future.

*Prof Dr Md Habibe Millat*

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*President, Global Center for Democratic Governance*

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

The Ugly Face of Mob Violence and Fraud Prosecution by the Yunus Regime

On 28 July 2025, “Mancha 71” organized a discussion program at the Dhaka Reporters Unit Auditorium. The topic of the discussion was “Our Great War of Independence and the Constitution of Bangladesh”. As soon as the program started, a group of mob terrorists entered the auditorium, abused the guests and speakers, attacked them and physically assaulted some of them. The group that stormed the auditorium called itself “July Joddah” or the July Warriors. On getting the news, the Police came and, without saying anything to these mob terrorists, arrested 16 people from among those who had appeared to discuss the Great War of Liberation and the 1972 Constitution. Among the 16 were Dhaka University law professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman Karzon, journalist Manjurul Alam Panna, and veteran freedom fighter and former minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui. The next day, they were produced in court, and a case was filed against them under the Anti-Terrorism Act. They were accused of planning terrorism by attending this event. Later on 7<sup>th</sup> September, Abu Alam Shahid Khan, a former retired secretary, was also arrested and jailed in connection with the same incident. What a cruel joke. Those who committed terrorism were not criminals; the criminals were the innocent journalists, teachers and freedom fighters who came to talk and listen about the country, the country's constitution and the glorious liberation war. This is clearly a sign of neo-fascism. This is a disgusting culture of mob violence and deceit.

We strongly condemn this incident and demand the immediate release of these jailed, fearless intellectuals and freedom fighters who were on the path of truth and justice.

*Mohammad Abdur Rashid M. Eng., PhD, SMIEE*

*Editor*

২৫ ভাদ্র ১৪৩২. 10 September 2025

# ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA: EXTREMIST RESURGENCE UNDER BANGLADESH’S INTERIM GOVERNMENT

P. Zahsan (Nick Name)

## Executive Summary

*Bangladesh’s progress in fighting terrorism over the last two decades is now in serious danger under the interim government led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus. While government leaders claim there is “no terrorism” in the country, this view is contradicted by credible intelligence reports, police records, and warnings from foreign diplomats. The government’s actions—such as releasing convicted extremists, not opposing bail for dangerous individuals, and weakening key counterterrorism agencies—have created an environment where extremist groups can grow again.*

*In recent months, militants have joined mainstream Islamist political parties, rebuilt links with foreign terrorist networks, reopened training camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and started recruiting young people to fight abroad in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time, the ability to fight terrorism has weakened because of poor coordination between agencies, the removal of skilled officers, and legal action taken against past security operations.*

*The risk is even greater because of the large number of missing guns, ammunition, and escaped high-risk prisoners from the 2024 unrest. Together, these factors—political protection for extremists, weaker security forces, and the spread of radical ideas—could push Bangladesh toward a situation similar to Afghanistan’s under religious rule. If urgent action is not taken now, future governments will have to deal with extremists firmly entrenched in politics, society, and even parts of the security forces, making the problem far more difficult to solve.*

## 1. Methodology and Sources Caveat

This report uses open sources, media reports, expert interviews, and limited confidential inputs. Information was cross-checked where possible, but some details could not be fully verified due to restricted reporting environments. Findings reflect the situation at the time of writing and may change as new information emerges. The inclusion of unverified elements is intended to highlight emerging risks rather than present definitive conclusions. Readers are advised to interpret the findings with awareness of these limitations.

## 2. Introduction

Bangladesh’s fight against terrorism has been long and difficult, with moments of progress followed by dangerous setbacks. In the early 2000s, during the BNP–Jamaat government, groups like Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operated freely, often with political protection. This weakened law enforcement and allowed extremist networks to grow unchecked.

When the Awami League returned to power in 2009, it adopted a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism and put strong pressure on these groups. The 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack—carried out by ISIS-linked Neo-JMB and killing 22 people, including 17 foreigners—was a turning point. The government launched a nationwide crackdown, arrested or killed many militants, dismantled their networks, and improved overall security. From 2017 onward, terrorist attacks in Bangladesh became very rare.

However, after the AL was removed in August 2024, many of these gains were lost. The interim government not only denied the presence of militancy but also took steps that helped extremists regain strength—such as releasing convicted militants, weakening dedicated counterterrorism units, and reducing cooperation between security agencies.

This report compares the current situation with the BNP–Jamaat era from 2001 to 2006. It shows how denial by the government, direct political support for extremists, and weakened institutions are allowing militant groups to rebuild quietly. The findings underline the urgent need for a long-term, coordinated, and politically independent counterterrorism strategy to stop Bangladesh from sliding toward extremist control.

## 3. Historical Context

### 3.1 The BNP–Jamaat Era (2001–2006)

During the BNP–Jamaat coalition government, extremist groups such as HuJI-B and JMB grew stronger with both open and hidden political support. Law enforcement agencies were often pressured by political leaders not to take action, and senior BNP figures were reported to have intervened to secure the release of arrested militants. This permissive environment allowed extremists to build strong networks, recruit members, and run training camps without fear of being stopped. As a result, Bangladesh saw some of its worst terrorist attacks, including the grenade attack on an opposition rally led by Sheikh Hasina, the 2004 attack on former British High Commis-

Continued on Page 4

## ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA

sioner Anwar Choudhury by HuJI-B, countrywide coordinated bomb blasts, and suicide attacks targeting judges, courts, and police in 2005 carried out by JMB. From 2001 to 2005, numerous such incidents shook the country. These events also damaged Bangladesh's reputation abroad. U.S. diplomatic cables, later published by WikiLeaks, confirmed that banned militant groups enjoyed protection from top levels of government, further weakening Bangladesh's counterterrorism credibility.

### 3.2 AL's Counterterrorism Drive (2009–August 2024)

When the AL returned to power in 2009, it declared a “zero tolerance” policy against terrorism, passed new anti-terrorism laws and rules, and launched a long-term campaign to dismantle extremist networks built during the BNP–Jamaat period. A major turning point came on July 1, 2016, when ISIS-linked terrorists attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, killing 20 hostages—most of them foreigners. This tragedy led to the creation of specialized counterterrorism units such as the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and later the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU). The Rapid Action Battalion's (RAB) counterterrorism wing was strengthened, and intelligence capabilities were expanded in agencies like the Counter Terrorism Intelligence Bureau (CTIB) of the Director General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), the Special Branch's (SB) Counterterrorism Wing, and the National Security Intelligence's (NSI) Counterterrorism Unit. The government also established dedicated anti-terrorism tribunals to speed up the prosecution of terrorism-related cases. A nationwide crackdown followed, involving the police, RAB, and intelligence agencies. Over the next several years, many militants were killed in armed confrontations, hundreds were arrested, and extremist cells were dismantled. These measures forced radical groups into hiding and sharply reduced their ability to operate.

### 3.3 The Interim Government Shift (Post–August 2024)

When the AL was removed from power in August 2024, an interim government led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus took over and quickly moved away from the strict counterterrorism approach of the previous government. Despite clear evidence of ongoing extremist propaganda, recruitment, training, and foreign links, the interim leadership publicly claimed there was no terrorism in Bangladesh. They dismissed even those attacks claimed in publications by ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates—such as *Dabiq*, *Rumiyah*, *Al-Balagh*, and *Ansar Media*—insisting these were staged events under the AL government to score political points. Many convicted extremists were released on bail without opposition from state prosecutors. Specialized counterterrorism agencies lost their coordination and leadership as experienced officers were removed, and some were even arrested or forced to flee the country to avoid attacks by militants or harassment by government entities. Political space for extremist speech and activity widened, making the environment look alarmingly similar to the early 2000s under BNP–Jamaat rule. The interim government claimed that the absence of attacks in the past year proved there were no active terrorists. This argument ignored—or deliberately concealed—the fact that terrorist attacks are usually the final stage in a cycle that begins with radicalization, moves through extremism, recruitment, training, and preparation. These earlier stages are already underway, often in ways that are widely known and visible.

## 4. Key Emerging Threats

### 4.1 Mainstreaming of Extremists

Under the interim government, people and groups with a history of militant activity are being quietly accepted into mainstream Islamic political parties and networks. For example, the radical group Hefazat-e-Islam (HeI) openly promotes extremist ideas and has welcomed convicted terrorists like Mufti Jasim Uddin Rahmani and Maolana Abu Taher. Many members of the pro-Al-Qaeda (AQ) group Ansar-al-Islam (AAI), arrested multiple times since its creation in 2024, are now active again. Former Afghan war fighters who founded HuJI-B and were convicted are also being brought into political parties such as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), and HeI. This is similar to the 2008 attempt to rebrand the banned HuJI-B as the “Islamic Democratic Party” to gain political legitimacy. That effort failed due to strong domestic and international opposition. Today, the political climate is far more open to such integration, giving extremists more legitimacy and influence.

### 4.2 Links to Foreign Terror Groups

Bangladeshi extremist groups have long maintained foreign links, starting with HuJI-B, JMB, Neo-JMB, AAI, and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), which were connected to Al-Qaeda, AQIS, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and ISIS. Now, some groups are actively building stronger ties with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (IS-KP). These ties bring money, weapons, training, and ideological guidance from abroad, and create risks of joint operations that could destabilize Bangladesh as well as neighbouring India and Myanmar. The recent arrest of 36 Bangladeshi nationals in Malaysia for

[Continued on page 5](#)



## ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA

suspected links to ISIS and its networks in Bangladesh shows the seriousness of this threat. The longer these connections remain, the harder they will be to dismantle.

### 4.3 Militant Training in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

The CHT has once again become a hub for militant activity. Extremist groups have set up training camps in this sensitive area, often working with Rohingya armed groups along the Bangladesh–Myanmar border. In 2022–2023, security forces carried out major counterterrorism operations that dismantled the alliance between the Kuki Chin National Liberation Front (KNLF) and the pro-AQIS group Jamaat-ul-Ansar-Fil-Hindal-Sharqiya (JAFHS), arresting top leaders and seizing weapons. However, after August 2024, many of those arrested were released. The CHT's remote terrain offers cover and escape routes across the border, making it difficult for security forces to act. If these camps are allowed to stay, the area could become a long-term militant base, threatening regional stability.

### 4.4 Rohingya Terrorist Networks in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh hosts over 1.2 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in 33 camps in Cox's Bazar and one camp on the remote island of Bhashan Char in Noakhali. Within these camps, two militant groups—the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)—are active again. Earlier, heavy security operations had forced them into deep forest areas and sharply limited their movements. Now, they have returned to the camps, where they are recruiting young Rohingya, training fighters, and collecting weapons and funds. Much of their funding reportedly comes from Pakistan's ISI and some NGOs based in Pakistan and Turkey.

### 4.5 Recruitment of Foreign Fighters

There are increasing reports of young Bangladeshis travelling to the Afghanistan–Pakistan border to fight alongside the TTP against Pakistani forces. This mirrors the Afghan jihad of the 1980s, when returning fighters formed militant groups in Bangladesh. Similarly, in recent years, Bangladeshis have gone to Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, while members of the Bangladeshi diaspora in countries like Canada, the USA, the UK, Australia, and Japan have played important roles in funding and supporting groups such as JMB, Neo-JMB, AAI, and HuT. This new wave of fighters risks creating another generation of battle-hardened extremists who could return as trainers, recruiters, and leaders for future militant operations.

### 4.6 Online Propaganda and Spread of Extremist Messages

Extremist groups in Bangladesh are increasingly using social media, messaging apps, and online platforms to spread radical ideas, recruit new members, and coordinate activities. Encrypted apps like Telegram, Threema, and Signal are being used alongside mainstream platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) to reach a wider audience. Pro-ISIS, pro-AQIS, and pro-TTP channels share videos, speeches, magazines, and infographics that glorify attacks, promote extremist ideology, and issue calls for action. Many of these messages are targeted at young people, using religious narratives, political grievances, and global Muslim solidarity themes to build support. Since August 2024, monitoring and takedown efforts by law enforcement have weakened due to reduced coordination and political will, giving extremists more space to operate online. If left unchecked, these online campaigns could significantly speed up the radicalization process, turning virtual followers into real-world operatives.

## 5. Institutional Weakening

### 5.1 Breakdown of Coordination

The strong cooperation that once existed between counterterrorism agencies—such as CTTC, ATU, CTIB, NSI, SB, Police Headquarters (PHQ), and Criminal Investigation Department (CID)—has been dismantled. Many skilled intelligence officers have been removed from these units and replaced with inexperienced staff. Human sources (HUMINT) that took years to build have been lost, breaking valuable channels of early warning. Since counterterrorism is no longer a government priority, the new officers are less motivated to gather intelligence or share information. Without a central system for intelligence sharing, each agency works on its own, leading to delays, duplication, and a greater risk of mistakes or leaks. In the past, joint task forces could detect and neutralize threats in days, but now potential plots can remain unnoticed for weeks or even months, giving extremists more time to prepare. This lack of coordination is not only a tactical failure but also a strategic gift to militant networks.

### 5.2 Targeting of Experienced Officers

Many veteran counterterrorism officers with advanced training have been dismissed, suspended,

[Continued on page 6](#)

## ECHOES OF THE BNP-JAMAAT ERA

or charged under false accusations. This includes personnel from PHQ, RAB, CTTC, and CTIB. Some are in prison, others are in hiding, and some have fled the country to avoid arrest and harassment. These officers had valuable knowledge and trusted networks built over decades, including direct links to informants and undercover operatives. Their removal has left major leadership gaps that the inexperienced replacements cannot fill quickly, creating weaknesses militants can take advantage of. The fear of suffering the same fate now discourages current officers from taking bold actions against high-value targets. As a result, militant groups can operate more openly, knowing the state's most capable officers are sidelined or silenced.

### 5.3 Legal and Political Pressure on Security Forces

Ongoing legal cases, including some at the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), along with domestic charges, have lowered morale among security personnel. The government's public denial of terrorism further complicates its work by creating confusion over whether to act against extremist activity at all. While holding people accountable is important, portraying legitimate past counterterrorism operations as crimes damages the confidence of front-line officers. This fear of legal action makes them hesitant to act decisively, which can encourage militants to test the limits of state response. Officers now weigh the personal risks of action against their duty to protect the public, and too often, inaction wins. In this environment, extremists are emboldened to plan, recruit, and train with less fear of state disruption.

### 5.4 Loss of Operational Capability

Many counterterrorism units have been reduced to little more than symbolic bodies. They lack resources, proper training for newly appointed staff, and clear guidance from top leaders. Without strong leadership or political support, these units now focus more on routine police work instead of specialized anti-terrorism missions. The absence of operational drills, scenario planning, and intelligence-led raids has further weakened readiness. Over time, this loss of capability reduces the state's ability to deter or respond to militant threats. If this trend continues, even a small coordinated attack could overwhelm current counterterrorism capacity, sending a dangerous signal to both domestic and foreign militant groups.

## 6. Security Risks from Looted Arms and Escaped Inmates

### 6.1 Missing Firearms and Ammunition

During the violent unrest of 2024, 1,419 firearms and over 263,000 rounds of ammunition were stolen from police stations and prisons. These weapons have still not been recovered and could easily end up in the hands of militants or dangerous criminals. If used in planned attacks, such firepower could cause large-scale casualties and overwhelm security forces. The weapons could also be sold or traded on the black market, spreading them across multiple extremist or criminal networks. This not only makes recovery harder but also increases the risk of cross-border trafficking. The longer these weapons stay in circulation, the more likely they will be used in organized attacks on security forces, political leaders, or public gatherings.

### 6.2 Mass Prison Escapes

During the same unrest, 2,200 prisoners escaped from custody. While many have been caught, about 700 are still missing—including 70 high-risk militants and notorious criminals. These fugitives are not ordinary offenders; many have experience in planning or carrying out violent operations. Once free, they can reconnect with extremist groups or criminal syndicates that value their skills and contacts. Some may even take leadership roles in planning new attacks, using their knowledge of law enforcement tactics to avoid capture. Their freedom keeps alive the possibility of renewed violence at short notice. Each day they remain at large increases the likelihood that they will regroup, rearm, and rebuild their operational networks.

### 6.3 Heightened Threat Potential

The mix of missing weapons and escaped militants is a dangerous combination. Together, they create perfect conditions for both small-scale and large-scale violent incidents. A single coordinated plan could lead to mass casualties or targeted assassinations. This situation also creates a psychological impact, making the public feel unsafe and damaging trust in state security. Criminal groups may become more confident, knowing the state has not recovered either the weapons or the high-risk fugitives. Without urgent action to track down both the arms and the escapees, national security could quickly deteriorate and destabilize entire regions. If left unchecked, this convergence of threats could embolden extremist elements to operate more openly and expand their influence.

## 7. Strategic Implications

*Continued on Page 7*

## ECHOES OF THE BNP-JAMAAT ERA

### 7.1 Domestic Impact

Allowing extremists to gain legitimacy is a serious threat to Bangladesh's secular traditions. If these groups grow stronger, they can influence laws, policies, and institutions to reflect their radical beliefs. This will push moderate voices out of politics and make it harder to have open and balanced discussions in the country. Over time, the national conversation could become more aggressive and intolerant toward diversity. Such changes would not only divide society but could also create more tension between different religious and cultural groups. If this trend continues, the very character of the Bangladeshi state could change from being inclusive and pluralistic to being dominated by one narrow ideology. This transformation would also make it much harder to reverse extremist influence once it becomes embedded in state structures.

### 7.2 Regional Consequences

If Bangladesh starts moving toward a theocratic style of governance, the effects will not stop at its borders. Extremist networks in the region will feel encouraged, and counterterrorism cooperation between South Asian countries could break down. This could lead to more cross-border militant activity, with fighters, weapons, and propaganda moving freely across countries. Neighboring nations like India and Myanmar may face new waves of infiltration and radical influence. Such instability could trigger border tensions, mistrust, and even military build-ups. The resulting insecurity would harm trade, people-to-people ties, and the overall stability of South Asia. In the worst case, the region could see a cycle of retaliatory actions and escalating conflict.

### 7.3 International Concerns

Many Western countries are already worried that Bangladesh is becoming a safe place for extremist activities. If this continues, it could damage Bangladesh's global reputation and make other nations hesitant to engage economically or politically. Foreign investors may pull back, fearing instability, while governments might issue stricter travel warnings. These moves could slow down tourism, foreign aid, and economic growth. The country might also face more pressure in international forums, losing influence in trade and security negotiations. Over time, this could isolate Bangladesh on the world stage and weaken its ability to shape its own future in global affairs. This isolation could also make the country more dependent on a narrow set of allies, limiting its strategic options.

## 8. Threat Forecast and Scenarios

### 8.1 Best-Case Scenario

With quick and well-planned action, the government corrects earlier mistakes, brings back experienced counterterrorism officers, and restores cooperation between security agencies. This helps stop extremist groups from growing stronger, disrupts their recruitment efforts, and weakens their networks before they can fully recover. Attacks may still happen, but they remain rare, small in scale, and are quickly stopped. International partners begin to trust Bangladesh's counterterrorism efforts again, which leads to better security cooperation and more economic opportunities. This scenario would also rebuild public confidence in state institutions and reduce fear among communities.

### 8.2 Most Likely Scenario

If no strong policy changes are made, extremist groups will continue to slowly grow inside political, social, and state systems. They will spread their ideology, recruit members, and build links with foreign groups without triggering major violence in the short term. From time to time, they may carry out small but symbolic attacks to show they are still active, while focusing mainly on strengthening their long-term position. Over the years, extremist ideas could become part of normal political discussion, making it much harder for any government to remove them without paying a high political price. This slow but steady rise could quietly change the country's political culture before many even realize it.

### 8.3 Worst-Case Scenario

Militant groups fully join mainstream politics and gain legal recognition while keeping their secret operational networks. Under political protection, they expand training, recruitment, and cooperation with foreign extremist organizations, leading to a major increase in violence. The instability could spread across borders, especially into India and Myanmar, forcing those countries to increase their military presence along the border. A large, deadly attack on civilians, foreign nationals, or critical infrastructure could occur, forcing the government to respond in panic rather than with careful planning. In this scenario, both national security and Bangladesh's global reputation could suffer

[Continued on Page 8](#)

## ECHOES OF THE BNP-JAMAAT ERA

lasting damage.

### 9. Policy and Strategic Recommendations

#### 9.1 Tactical Actions

##### 9.1.1 Reinstate Experienced Counterterrorism Officers

Experienced officers from CTTC, ATU, DGFI, NSI, and SB should be reinstated and allowed to operate without political pressure. Years of expertise, deep knowledge of militant networks, and trusted contacts inside and outside the country are held by these officers. Advanced international training has been received by many, which can be used to restore strong intelligence-sharing with global partners. Their return would signal that expertise is valued again, boosting morale across the security sector. Past intelligence collected by these officers would be preserved and used to guide current operations. Operational readiness would be strengthened immediately, and public confidence in the country's counterterrorism capacity would be restored.

##### 9.1.2 Rebuild Inter-Agency Coordination

The joint counterterrorism coordination system dismantled under the interim government should be reactivated, with secure channels for sharing intelligence to prevent leaks. A central command cell should be created to coordinate real-time operations across all agencies. Through this, wasted effort would be reduced, precision improved, and security gaps closed. Faster and more united responses to emerging threats would be enabled. Resources could be pooled for high-risk operations, increasing efficiency. Accountability would also be improved, as no agency would be able to withhold critical intelligence without oversight.

##### 9.1.3 Recover Looted Arms and Recapture High-Risk Fugitives

Targeted operations should be launched by specialized teams to recover the 1,419 missing firearms, over 263,000 rounds of ammunition, and capture the 70 high-risk fugitives still at large. If these assets remain in circulation, militants and criminals would retain the means to carry out serious attacks. A sustained recovery plan would disrupt attack plots before they develop. Control over law and order would be visibly reasserted by the state. Public safety would improve as each weapon is recovered and each fugitive is caught. Valuable intelligence about wider militant networks would also be gained from captured fugitives.

##### 9.1.4 Suspend Bail for Convicted Militants

Bail approvals for individuals convicted of terrorism or linked to banned groups should be temporarily suspended until full security reviews are completed. The suspension should be applied legally and transparently to prevent allegations of political targeting. By keeping these individuals in custody, the risk of their reconnecting with militant networks or recruiting new members would be reduced. Opportunities for planning attacks while free would be eliminated. Public confidence would be strengthened as it becomes clear that national security is prioritized over political considerations. Time would also be gained for dismantling their wider support systems.

#### 9.2 Operational Initiatives

##### 9.2.1 Legal and Judicial Reforms

Anti-terrorism laws should be amended so that political pressure cannot affect militant prosecutions. Witness protection programs should be strengthened to ensure safety for those testifying in terrorism cases. Special terrorism courts should be established to process dangerous cases quickly but fairly. This would prevent extremists from escaping justice through loopholes or political interference. Judges and prosecutors would be enabled to perform their duties without fear or bias. Public trust in the justice system would grow, making it harder for militants to operate openly.

##### 9.2.2 Counter-Narrative and De-Radicalization Programs

Community-based programs should be expanded to reach young people before extremist influence takes hold. Respected religious leaders, teachers, community elders, and survivors of terrorism should be

[Continued on Page 9](#)



## ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA

engaged to counter extremist propaganda. These programs should be delivered in schools, mosques, and online platforms where radical messages often spread unchecked. Alternative viewpoints would be offered, weakening the appeal of extremist ideologies. Skills, education, and opportunities would be provided to make militancy less attractive. Partnerships with NGOs, media, and social media platforms could further amplify positive narratives and reduce extremist influence over time.

### 9.2.3 Secure Border Regions and High-Risk Areas

Specialized counterterrorism units should be deployed to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and other high-risk border areas to close militant training camps. Links between local extremists and Rohingya militant groups should be dismantled. Socio-economic development programs should be launched to give vulnerable communities alternatives to militancy. Intelligence-led patrols should target smuggling routes, recruitment hubs, and propaganda channels. Coordination with neighboring countries should be enhanced to block cross-border militant activities. Over time, increased stability and prosperity in these areas would reduce the chances of them becoming militant safe havens.

## 9.3 Strategic Posture

### 9.3.1 Institutional Resilience Building

Permanent counterterrorism agencies should be created with legal protection from political interference, along with their own budgets, staffing, and decision-making authority. These mandates should be enshrined in law to ensure they cannot be weakened by changes in government. This would guarantee continuous counterterrorism work regardless of political shifts. Skilled officers could be trained and retained, preventing the loss of expertise. Quick, independent responses to threats would be enabled without political delay. International and public trust in Bangladesh's counterterrorism commitment would be strengthened.

### 9.3.2 International Cooperation and Intelligence Partnerships

Closer work should be undertaken with regional partners such as India, Myanmar, and BIMSTEC, and global partners such as the U.S., EU, and INTERPOL. Intelligence should be shared on militant movements, funding channels, and training activities to disrupt threats before they spread. Joint exercises and officer exchange programs should be conducted regularly to build trust and improve cooperation. Counterterrorism operations would become faster, more accurate, and more coordinated. Extremists would find it harder to hide or cross borders undetected. Over time, global support systems for militancy could be significantly weakened.

### 9.3.3 Safeguarding Counterterrorism from Political Shifts

Counterterrorism policy should be made part of a national security plan that remains in effect regardless of political leadership. Parliamentary committees with cross-party members should be created to oversee counterterrorism work and maintain continuity. This would prevent policy reversals or neglect due to political changes. Threat responses would remain consistent over time, reassuring both the public and international allies. Extremists would receive a clear message that political divisions will not weaken the fight against them. Such depoliticization would make Bangladesh's counterterrorism approach stronger and more stable in the long run.

## 10. Conclusion

Over the past year, militant groups in Bangladesh have focused less on launching immediate attacks and more on quietly rebuilding their strength. This “consolidation phase” allows them to expand their recruitment networks, strengthen logistics, and secure funding—often without attracting much attention from the authorities. The longer they are allowed to grow in this way, the harder it will be to disrupt them in the future. One of the most concerning trends is how closely the government's public statements now match the narratives used by extremist groups. By downplaying the threat of terrorism or echoing language that militants themselves use, state officials risk giving these groups a sense of legitimacy. This may reduce short-term violence, but it carries a much higher long-term risk—because it normalizes extremist ideas in politics and society. Over time, this can make extremist thinking seem like a reasonable part of public debate, further undermining secular and democratic values.

If no serious action is taken now, the next elected government will inherit a far more dangerous situation. Extremist networks could become deeply embedded in political parties, community organizations, and even parts of the security sector. Reversing that kind of influence will take years, cost significant resources, and require strong political will.

*Continued on Page 10*

## ECHOES OF THE BNP–JAMAAT ERA

To avoid this outcome, Bangladesh must act immediately. That means restoring experienced counterterrorism officers, rebuilding cooperation between agencies, shutting down militant training and recruitment, and countering extremist propaganda both online and offline. It also means passing laws and building institutions that protect counterterrorism policy from political changes. The window for effective action is closing. Every month of inaction strengthens extremist networks, making future solutions more difficult and more costly. A united, non-political, and long-term approach is essential if Bangladesh is to protect its security, stability, and inclusive identity.

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# CONTESTING LIBERATION: WHY THE 2024 MOVEMENT IS NOT A CONTINUATION OF 1971

Prof. Dr. A K Lam & Prof. Dr. R Ris (Nick Names)

## Introduction

In Bangladesh, the legacy of the 1971 Liberation War remains the moral and ideological foundation of political legitimacy—a sacred chapter in the nation's history that continues to shape its identity and aspirations. It is against this deeply emotional backdrop that the architects and supporters of the 2024 movement against the government of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have deliberately framed their struggle as a continuation of that foundational spirit—a second wave of resistance in the long fight for democracy. Yet, upon closer examination, this comparison proves not only historically shallow but fundamentally misleading. While the language of liberation and revolution is powerfully evoked, the 2024 movement lacks the philosophical depth, legal grounding, and unifying national purpose that defined the struggle of 1971. This analysis rigorously contrasts the two movements through historical, legal, and ideological lenses, demonstrating that they are distinct phenomena—separated by their essential aims, their adherence to constitutional versus revolutionary legitimacy, and their vision for the nation. Where the Liberation War sought to create a state, the 2024 movement seeks to unseat a government. Where 1971 united a people against colonial subjugation, the current mobilization reflects deep—but domestic—political divisions. To conflate the two is not just an oversimplification: it risks diminishing the singular sanctity of the Liberation War while obscuring the true nature of today's political contestation as a struggle for power within the framework of the state that 1971 made possible.

## The core principles of the Liberation War:

The 1971 liberation war has the following core principles, which have made it omnipresent, comprehensive and sacred to all Bengali people.

### *Philosophical Underpinnings: Identity, Secularism, and Self-Determination*

The Liberation War of Bangladesh was not merely a military or political conflict but a profound philosophical struggle centered on identity, autonomy, and the right to self-determination. At its core, the war represented the rejection of the Two-Nation Theory—the ideological foundation of Pakistan, which asserted that religious identity alone could define a nation. The people of East Bengal instead embraced a pluralistic, linguistic, and cultural nationalism, rooted in the Bengali language, secular traditions, and a shared history of cultural syncretism. This vision stood in direct opposition to the West Pakistani establishment's efforts to impose a homogenized Islamic identity, which systematically marginalized Bengali culture, language, and political representation. The philosophical ethos of the liberation movement was encapsulated in Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic speech on March 7, 1971, which called for emancipation from oppression and affirmed the Bengali people's right to shape their own destiny. Scholars like Amartya Sen have argued that the conflict exemplified the dangers of reducing complex human identities to singular, rigid categories—a theme explored in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. The war thus became a battle for the soul of a nation, striving to establish a society based on democracy, secularism, and social justice.

### *Legal Justifications: International Law, Self-Determination, and Accountability*

From a legal perspective, Bangladesh's struggle for independence was grounded in the fundamental principle of self-determination, a right enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law of 1966. The Pakistani state's refusal to honor the results of the 1970 general elections—in which the Awami League won a decisive majority—constituted a breach of democratic norms and provided legal and moral justification for secession. The subsequent military crackdown, launched through Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971, involved widespread atrocities that amounted to genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. These included the targeted killings of intellectuals, mass sexual violence, and the systematic destruction of villages and cultural institutions. International observers and jurists, such as those from the International Commission of Jurists, documented these violations, while diplomats like Archer Blood, the U.S. Consul General in Dhaka, explicitly condemned the actions of the Pakistani military in the famous Blood Telegram. The legal case for Bangladesh's independence was further strengthened by the sheer scale of human suffering, which invoked the responsibility of the global community to intervene in cases of grave humanitarian crises. Although Pakistan's actions were widely criticized, geopolitical considerations delayed full international recognition of Bangladesh until after its victory in December 1971.

Continued on page 12

## CONTESTING LIBERATION

### *Ground Realities: Suffering, Resistance, and Resilience*

On the ground, the war was marked by extraordinary human suffering, collective resistance, and unparalleled resilience. An estimated three million people were killed, and over ten million refugees fled to India to escape violence and persecution. The Pakistani military and its auxiliary militias (such as Razakars) engaged in systematic campaigns of violence, including the targeted elimination of intellectuals, farmers, students, and religious minorities. Women were subjected to mass sexual violence, with estimates suggesting between 200,000 and 400,000 rapes—a strategy intended to terrorize and destabilize the social fabric of Bengali society. Despite this, the people of Bangladesh mounted a fierce and organized resistance through the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces), which included both civilian guerrillas and military defectors. Their efforts were complemented by international solidarity, particularly from India, which provided logistical support, refuge, and eventually direct military assistance. The war also witnessed the emergence of a vibrant cultural resistance, with artists, poets, and musicians using their work to inspire and unite people. Scholars like Nayanika Mookherjee have highlighted the long-term psychosocial impact of the violence, particularly on survivors of sexual assault, who were later honored as Birangonas (war heroines) in an effort to reclaim their dignity and place in history. The conflict culminated in a decisive victory on December 16, 1971, when the Pakistani military surrendered in Dhaka, paving the way for the birth of an independent Bangladesh.

### *Scholarly Presentation of the Liberation War*

The legacy of the Liberation War continues to be analyzed and interpreted by scholars across disciplines: Amartya Sen emphasizes the conflict's significance in understanding identity-based violence and the necessity of pluralistic societies. Geoffrey Davis, an Australian physician, provided critical medical testimony and documentation of the atrocities, reinforcing claims of genocide and systematic sexual violence. Nayanika Mookherjee's anthropological work, *The Spectral Wound: Sexual Violence, Public Memories, and the Bangladesh War of 1971*, explores the enduring trauma of survivors and the complexities of memory and justice.

The war remains a foundational narrative for Bangladesh, symbolizing the triumph of justice over oppression, unity over division, and hope over despair. Its principles of democracy, secularism, and human dignity continue to resonate in the national consciousness, even as the country grapples with the ongoing challenges of preserving this hard-won legacy. Authors and scholars termed this war as the war of independence of the Bengali nation, political emancipation and economic freedom that started with the creation of the Pakistan state.

### **2024 Political Movement:**

The 2024 political movement against the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh marked one of the most intense waves of public dissent in recent history, rooted in deepening political, economic, and civic grievances. What began as a student-led quota reform movement quickly escalated into a nationwide uprising, fueled by government mismanagement and mishandling of the protests. The movement's momentum created space for multiple actors—both national and international—to leverage the unrest to challenge and destabilize the regime. Although the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) initially refrained from directly supporting the agitation, it sought to capitalize on the political crisis, while Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Shibir, played a commanding role in mobilizing students and ordinary citizens. At its core, the movement demanded the government's resignation, the installation of a neutral caretaker administration to guarantee free and fair elections, and immediate measures to address skyrocketing inflation, widespread unemployment, and entrenched corruption.

The protests were also an expression of growing frustration with what critics describe as authoritarian tendencies—ranging from the suppression of dissent and curbs on press freedom to the use of judicial and security apparatuses to sideline political opponents. The state's response was characterized by arrests, allegations of excessive force, and internet blackouts, which drew sharp criticism from international human rights organizations. Economically, surging prices of essential goods and energy shortages further eroded public trust, while politically, the lack of a level playing field deepened polarization across the nation. The 2024 movement, therefore, was more than a response to immediate grievances; it reflected broader anxieties about democratic backsliding, accountability, and the erosion of participatory politics. How this crisis is resolved will profoundly shape Bangladesh's trajectory—either paving the way for greater pluralism, inclusivity, and dialogue, or cementing a path toward further authoritarian consolidation.

### **The Claim: 2024 is a Continuation of 1971?**

Proponents of this view, primarily the opposition and its supporters, frame the 2024 movement through the same ideological lens as the 1971 Liberation War. Their argument rests on these key points: The Same Foundational Strug-

Continued on page 13



## CONTESTING LIBERATION

gle: They argue that both movements are fundamentally about the same principle: the fight for democracy, self-determination, and the people's right to choose their own government. They claim that the 1971 war was fought to escape the authoritarian rule of West Pakistan, and the 2024 movement is a struggle to escape an authoritarian system that has developed within Bangladesh itself. The Same Spirit of Resistance: They draw a parallel between the spirit of the Bengali people in 1971 who rose up against an oppressive military regime, and the spirit of the people in 2024 protesting against what they see as an oppressive, unelected government. The Same Adversarial Tactics: The opposition draws direct comparisons between the tactics of the Pakistani army in 1971 and the current government's actions, alleging the use of: State-Sponsored Violence: Citing alleged enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and police brutality; Suppression of Speech: Highlighting the control of media and censorship of dissent; Denial of Democratic Rights: Equating the Pakistani regime's refusal to hand over power after the 1970 election to the current government's conduct in the 2014 and 2018 elections, which major opposition parties boycotted or alleged were rigged. Ideological Betrayal: A core argument is that the current government, led by the party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (the leader of 1971), has betrayed the core principles of the Liberation War: secularism, democracy, and social justice. Therefore, the 2024 movement is framed as an effort to "reclaim the spirit of 1971. All these narratives have no philosophical or legal ground. Their supporter just resemble the past historical events of Bangladesh.

### The Counter-Argument: Critical Differences

The assertion that the 2024 anti-government movement in Bangladesh is a direct continuation of the 1971 Liberation

Feature	1971 Liberation War	2024 Anti-Government Movement
Nature & Goal	An armed struggle for independence and the creation of a sovereign state against a foreign occupying army.	A political movement within an existing sovereign state aiming for regime change and democratic reforms.
Adversary	The state of Pakistan and its military, a clearly defined foreign enemy.	The incumbent government of Bangladesh, a domestic political opponent.
Legal & Moral Basis	A fight for the right to self-determination, a fundamental principle of international law, in response to genocide and crimes against humanity.	A contest over electoral governance and political power within the constitutional framework of Bangladesh.
Unifying Identity	Unquestionably unified the Bengali populace (across most religions and classes) against a common foreign foe. Unity was absolute.	Deeply politically divisive. It is supported by one political bloc and opposed by another. There is no unified national consensus.
International Context	Fought during the Cold War; India provided direct military intervention and support; global opinion was largely sympathetic.	Occurs in a complex geopolitical context; international calls are primarily for dialogue and peaceful elections, not for supporting a secessionist movement.
Outcome Sought	Secession and the creation of a new nation (Bangladesh).	Reform of the existing nation (election integrity, democratic institutions, economic policy).

War is a powerful political narrative but lacks grounding in philosophical and legal reality. Philosophically, the 1971 war was an existential struggle for sovereignty and the creation of a new state, rooted in the rejection of the Two-Nation Theory and the assertion of a secular, linguistic Bengali identity against a foreign occupier (Pakistan). It was a unified national movement driven by the pursuit of self-determination and foundational principles like democracy and secularism, as reflected in the historic 1971 proclamation of independence. In contrast, the 2024 movement is an internal political contest within the established state of Bangladesh, focused on regime change, electoral fairness, and governance reforms. It operates within the domestic constitutional framework and does not seek secession or invoke a new national identity but rather demands the fulfillment of the existing state's democratic promises (Ahmed, 2023; BBC, 2024).

Continued on Page 14

## CONTESTING LIBERATION

Legally, the 1971 war was justified under international law through the right to self-determination, recognized by the United Nations Charter, and was precipitated by genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Pakistani military—a fact documented by international bodies like the International Commission of Jurists (1972) and witnesses such as Archer Blood (1971). The conflict resulted in the creation of a sovereign state. The 2024 movement, however, derives its legitimacy from domestic constitutional law, including the rights to assembly, expression, and electoral integrity under the Bangladesh Constitution. Its grievances—such as alleged electoral manipulation and suppression of dissent—are matters of internal governance and do not invoke international legal doctrines like secession or external self-determination (HRW, 2024; The Daily Star, 2024). Thus, there is no point in comparing with the 1971 liberation war.

While the 2024 movement rhetorically invokes the "spirit of 1971" to claim moral high ground and mobilize support, the two events are fundamentally distinct: one was a war of independence against a foreign power, and the other is a political movement of some sections of people for democratic accountability within a sovereign nation and to capture political power. After the removal of Sheikh Hasina, it has been proven that all the positions have been captured by the Jamat and BNP people without following any legal ground. It thus proved that they had the intention to capture political power and resources. The conflation of the two serves as a persuasive tool for opposition groups but overlooks the historical, philosophical, and legal chasm between them.

However, philosophically and legally, the two movements are categorically different. 1971 was an existential, anti-colonial war that created a state. 2024 is an internal, political struggle to determine who governs that state and how. Conflating the two, while rhetorically effective, overlooks their fundamentally distinct natures, goals, and places in the history and legal trajectory of Bangladesh. They argue that the two events are fundamentally different in nature, context, and objective.

### Conclusion: A Powerful Narrative vs. Historical Reality

The claim that the 2024 movement is a continuation of 1971 is less a historical truth than a calculated political narrative. It serves as a powerful framing device for the opposition, allowing them to cloak their struggle in the sacred symbolism of the Liberation War—the nation's most unifying founding myth. This rhetoric evokes a deep emotional resonance and conveys a sense of moral legitimacy. Yet, historically and legally, the two events remain fundamentally distinct. The 1971 Liberation War was an anti-colonial secessionist struggle against a foreign oppressor. By contrast, the 2024 movement is an internal political contest within a sovereign state, centered on questions of power, governance, and democratic accountability. This raises a central contradiction: how can a movement claim to embody the spirit of 1971 when it is led by forces that once opposed Bangladesh's very existence? The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)'s longstanding alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami—a party directly complicit in atrocities during 1971, with several of its leaders convicted of war crimes—is not a minor political footnote but a profound moral paradox. To equate this coalition-led agitation with the Liberation War is, in essence, to distort history.

For the generation that sacrificed everything for independence, today's unrest is not a continuation of their struggle but a betrayal of it. The very elements that once collaborated with occupying forces now seek to destabilize the sovereign state built through blood and sacrifice. As one freedom fighter defiantly remarked: "We fought against the Pakistani army and their Razakar collaborators. Now, the heirs of those Razakars torch the very nation we created. This is not politics—it is an assault on our independence itself." Far from being a forward march toward democracy, the movement risks reopening old wounds and reviving ideologies that the Mukti Bahini fought to eradicate. It underscores the enduring challenge of protecting the legacy of 1971 against those who would exploit it for power while undermining the sovereignty it delivered.

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# WORLD MEDIA WATCH

*Commentary by Manirul Islam*

## Pakistan-Bangladesh Air Force Deal: Implications for India

Global Strategic & Defence News, August 28, 2025 issue

Author: Trishnakhi Parashar

This GSDN article discusses Pakistan's recent deal to supply Bangladesh with Chinese-origin JF-17 Thunder fighter jets. The core implications for India, as presented in the article, are:

**Strategic Encirclement:** The deal is framed as part of China's broader "String of Pearls" strategy, where Pakistan acts as a proxy to help Beijing increase its strategic influence in South Asia, effectively surrounding India with military assets friendly to China.

**Strengthened China-Pakistan Axis:** The JF-17 is a symbol of China-Pakistan defence collaboration. By facilitating this deal, China is bolstering Pakistan's role as a regional arms exporter while simultaneously deepening its own strategic footprint in Bangladesh, a relationship India has traditionally valued.

**Deteriorating India-Bangladesh Ties:** The purchase is interpreted as a sign of Bangladesh potentially drifting away from India's sphere of influence and moving closer to the China-Pakistan axis, which could have significant geopolitical repercussions for New Delhi.

In essence, the article argues that this military deal is not merely a bilateral transaction but a strategic move with serious negative consequences for India's regional security environment.

<https://gsdn.live/pakistan-bangladesh-air-force-deal-implications-for-india/>

## Bangladesh: In Search for a New Civil-Military Equation

ORF Article on Bangladesh published on August 20, 2026

Authors: Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy, Madhurima Pramanik

This article analyzes the fragile state of Bangladesh's civil-military relations in 2025. Historically, the military has frequently intervened in politics due to weak democratic institutions and internal factionalism.

A 15-year period of stability under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ended with her ouster in 2024. She had maintained control through a "carrot and stick" approach, simultaneously appeasing the military with budgets and promotions while disempowering it to keep it out of politics.

Now, under a caretaker government, the military is being forced back into domestic policing amid worsening lawlessness and attacks on minorities. This has reignited internal divisions within the army and caused visible frustration among its leadership.

With elections scheduled for 2026, the future is uncertain. Weak civilian leadership, a political vacuum, and rising extremism risk drawing the military deeper into the country's everyday affairs, potentially reversing its decades-long journey toward becoming a professional institution.

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/bangladesh-in-search-for-a-new-civil-military-equation>



## Bangladesh is a south Asian time bomb

The Japan Time, September 03, 2025

The article argues that Bangladesh is a potential "time bomb" of instability following the ouster of longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The core thesis is that the caretaker government is failing to control a dangerous power vacuum, leading to three critical threats:

**Deepening Civil Unrest:** The state is losing its monopoly on force, with widespread student protests, political violence, and escalating attacks on religious minorities.

**Resurgent Extremism:** Hardline Islamist groups, previously suppressed by Hasina, are re-emerging and being emboldened by the state's weakness and some elements within the interim administration.

[Continued on page 16](#)

# WORLD MEDIA WATCH

**A Fractured Military:** The military, which engineered the transition, is now being pulled back into politics and is itself becoming divided along ideological lines (pro-India vs. pro-Pakistan/Islamist), risking its hard-won professionalism.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2025/09/03/world/bangladesh-is-a-waiting-time-bomb/>

## Civil-Military Relations and Democracy in Bangladesh

Author: Siegfried O. Wolf (Heidelberg)

This article critically examines the complex and often tumultuous relationship between civilian governments and the military in Bangladesh since its independence in 1971.

Key points it probably covers include:

**Historical Intervention:** The military's history of direct coups and indirect influence in politics stemming from weak democratic institutions and internal factionalism within the army itself.

**Era of Military Rule:** An analysis of the periods of direct military rule under figures like **Ziaur Rahman** (1975-1981) and **Hussain Muhammad Ershad** (1982-1990), who founded political parties (BNP and Jatiya Party, respectively) to legitimize their rule.

**The Caretaker Model:** The creation of the neutral Caretaker Government (CTG) system in the 1990s as a solution to ensure fair elections and keep the military from intervening. The article would note how this system eventually collapsed when it itself became politicized (e.g., the 2007-08 military-backed caretaker government).

**Sheikh Hasina's Strategy (2009-2024):** How the long-serving Prime Minister maintained power by creating a new "equilibrium" with the military. This is typically described as a **"carrot and stick" approach**: appeasing the military with large budgets, modern equipment, and commercial interests (the "carrot"), while simultaneously weakening it as a political force by prosecuting mutineers, abolishing the CTG system, and using other security forces for policing (the "stick").

**Current Instability:** The article likely concludes by discussing the fragile state of civil-military relations following recent political upheavals, warning that the military may be forced back into a political role due to a weakening civilian government, rising violence, and internal divisions within the army itself.

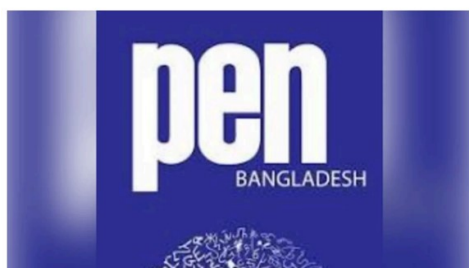
In essence, the central argument is likely that the threat of military involvement remains a constant and potent force in Bangladeshi politics, acting as a shadow behind every civilian government.

<https://d-nb.info/1220731668/34>

## PEN Bangladesh raises alarm over arrests of politicians, academics, and journalists

The Dhaka Tribune, August 31, 2025

Thursday, September 11, 2025  
**DhakaTribune**  
 Thursday, September 11, 2025  
**PEN Bangladesh raises alarm over arrests of politicians, academics, and journalists**  
 PEN Bangladesh urged authorities to free arrestees immediately unless verifiable evidence of criminal activity is presented



PEN Bangladesh. Photos: Collection

DT Tribune Desk

Publish: 31 Aug 2025, 12:22 AM | Update: 31 Aug 2025, 12:22 AM

PEN Bangladesh has voiced concern over the detention of 16 individuals, including former minister Latif Siddique, Dhaka University professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, and journalist Manjural Alam Panna, following their participation in a discussion organized by Moncho 71 on Thursday.

PEN Bangladesh has issued a statement condemning the recent arrests of veteran politicians, academics and journalists from a round table discussion meeting in Bangladesh.

The organization denounces the arrests as an attack on freedom of expression and a form of political harassment intended to silence dissent. It calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the detained individuals.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/390301/pen-bangladesh-denounces-arrests-of-politicians>

*The author is an Engineer, currently residing at Toronto, Canada*



## BACK PAGE শেষের পাতা

*Latiful Kabir*

### FROM HASHTAGS TO HIJACK: GEN Z PROTESTS IN NEPAL AND BANGLADESH REVEAL THE HIGH STAKES OF YOUTH ACTIVISM

In an era where change is broadcast live and justice is hashtagged, Generation Z has emerged as the beating heart of protest culture—from Dhaka to Kathmandu, from campus rallies to TikTok feeds. They are informed, impatient, and interconnected. But as two recent South Asian movements show, being loud isn't always enough. Being alert is essential.

#### Nepal 2025: A Generation Ignites

It started with a digital blackout.

In early August 2025, Nepal's government imposed a sweeping ban on 26 social media platforms—including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, and YouTube. Ostensibly to curb misinformation, the move was widely viewed as a pretext to suppress dissent and silence youth voices critical of the ruling elite.

What followed was historic: tens of thousands of Gen Z protesters, angry not just about the social media ban but about deep-rooted corruption, elite privilege, and political nepotism, flooded the streets of Kathmandu and beyond. Their signs were scathing: “No jobs, no justice, only ‘nepo’ ministers,” “You can't censor us,” and “We're done with dynasties.”

But as the protests intensified, so did the state's response. At least 19 were killed, hundreds were injured, and public buildings were set on fire. Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli was forced to resign, and a national commission was formed to investigate the violent crackdown.

#### Bangladesh 2024: The Manipulated Movement

One year earlier, across the border in Bangladesh, another youth-led movement made headlines. What began as a protest against the quota system—a long-standing issue in public service recruitment—quickly spiralled into something far more complex.

Young people, fueled by frustration and idealism, took to the streets in what many believed to be a genuine push for fairness and reform. But beneath the surface, something more sinister was brewing.

Political actors with hidden agendas infiltrated the movement, redirected its energy, and ultimately used it to unseat a democratically elected government. Religious sloganeering replaced rational discourse. External propaganda flooded social media. Many Gen Z activists, who began with sincere motives, found themselves unwitting pawns in a larger political chessboard.

The Pattern: Mobilize, Manipulate, Misdirect

Nepal and Bangladesh share striking parallels:

*Latiful Kabir is a Bangladeshi-Canadian professional engineer.*

