



escalated from burning the Anglo-Kuki War Memorial to destroying homes and killings, displacing about 5,000 people within 48 hours.

Within two months, the number of displaced individuals soared to 60,000, the death toll reached 70, and over 1,700 buildings, including homes and religious structures, were reduced to ashes. Geopolitically, Manipur has strategic importance as it shares a border with Myanmar and serves as a gateway to Southeast Asia for India. Also, Manipur is crucial for India's act-east policy, which aims to develop cultural links, trade, tourism and connectivity with Southeast Asia. The trilateral highway project linking India, Myanmar, and Thailand starts from Moreh in Manipur and ends at Mae Sot in Thailand.

The fall of Sheikh Hasina through an unprecedented mass uprising on August 5, 2024, created some sorts of political vacuum in the social and institutional settings in Bangladesh. Indeed, the ouster of Hasina is a significant setback for India's security and regional policy. A reasonably understandable anti-Indian sentiment and feeling reached its climax for the incessant Indian support provided to the sustenance and survival of the autocratic Hasina regime.

Consequently, the diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and India reached their lowest ebbs after the interim government resumed state power. 'If you destabilise Bangladesh, it will spill over all around Bangladesh, including Myanmar and seven sisters in West Bengal everywhere,' Dr Yunus told NDTV. He further warns, 'It will be a volcanic eruption everywhere around us and in Myanmar... and it would be a bigger problem because a million Rohingyas are in here'.

The security situation in the hill tracts has become complicated since the 1997 peace accord. There are two opposing views about the deterioration of law and order there. A group of scholars such as professor Amena Mohsin singled out processes of militarisation, Bengalization and religious conversion at the hill tracts as aggravating factors for the deterioration. These experts talked in favour of empowering the indigenous population and subsequent withdrawal of the CHT military camps. On the other hand, the scholars belonging to the opposite camp, professor M Rashiduzzaman, for instance, argued for the importance of maintaining territorial integrity, geopolitical interests and strategic communication along the cross-border region.

In recent years, the traditional Sino-Indian rivalry has been accelerated by

at least two key developments. Firstly, China's announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 through which China began to encroach in India's traditional sphere of influence (South Asia); and secondly, the flare-up in mid-2020 along the Sino-Indian border regions, known as the LAC or the Line of Actual Control, which possibly has brought a fundamental shift in the Indian perception and strategy vis-à-vis China. Moreover, China has a historic claim over the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. China has released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh amid Beijing's stepped-up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state.

India has been rejecting China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning 'invented' names does not alter this reality. India, after the 1962 War with China, adopted the 'scorched earth' policy of keeping the border areas with China underdeveloped. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance government in 1999 first changed the policy of keeping the border areas of India along China underdeveloped. His cabinet approved thirteen new border projects to develop the Sino-Indian border areas. In 2006, the UPA government launched the Indo-China Border Roads Program to construct good quality roads in the forward areas of the Sino-Indian border for easy conduct of Indian troop movement. It proposed to construct the 1,850-kilometre-long Trans Arunachal National Highway along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River.

The main aim for constructing this highway was to move troops quickly in the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh from Assam. The current Modi government has increased the Border Roads Organisation budget to Rs 14,387 crores in 2023-2024 in comparison to the previous budget of Rs 3,782 crore for the year 2013-2014. In the years between 2014 and 2022, 6,806 kilometres of road construction have been completed in the Sino-India border areas in comparison to only 3,610 kilometres of road constructed between 2008 and 2014. This boost in the infrastructural development in the border areas with China has changed the geopolitics of the border areas with China. India's efforts to enhance connectivity with Southeast Asia under the Look/Act East Policy rest on five initiatives: the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Corridor, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Trilateral Highway

and its extension, the Ganga-Mekong Economic Corridor, and the Mekong-India Economic Corridor.

In December 2021, US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken laid out the US government's Indo-Pacific Strategy, America's vision for a free, open, connected, prosperous, resilient, and secure Indo-Pacific region in which all countries are empowered to adapt to the 21st century's challenges and seize its many opportunities. The Biden administration also established the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework to enhance economic cooperation among the Indo-Pacific states. As one of the small states of the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh has emerged as a vital factor in the geopolitics of the region.

China considers the IPS ill-motivated to weaken China's rise and sees the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework as a threat to its regional dominance. Chinese leaders are convinced that the United States won't willingly allow China to become the dominant power in Asia, much less deign to share global leadership with Beijing. Beijing has embarked on projects such as Xi's overlapping Global Security Initiative, Global Development Initiative, and Global Civilisation Initiative, all of which challenge the West's right to unilaterally define universal rules and seek to undermine the notion of universal values in areas such as human rights.

Given the current geopolitical atmosphere and realities, we may conclude that the CHT problems have many domestic and global dimensions. The end of the cold war has unleashed new forces in international politics. The 1997 peace accord has established a kind of Chakma hegemony in the hill tracts. As a result, smaller ethnic groups like the Kuki-Chin National Front challenged the peace treaty demanding the creation of an exclusive ethnic homeland, namely Kukiland. It is high time for Bangladesh to adopt a comprehensive and informed peace strategy to tackle the ethnic conflict and security problems in a systematic and enlightened manner.

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