

Spotlights

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Bangladesh

Hasina's AL profited from regional rivalries and local alliances. Bangladesh emerged as a one party state, where radical forces are likely to have a big say.

Sheikh Hasina's election strategy worked on December 30, 2018. Setting aside its secular credentials, her Awami League (AL) had joined hands with the Hefazat-e-Islam, winning 288 out of 300 seats. AL alone bagged 230 seats, that were more than enough to form Government. Opposition parties got only 7 seats.



The AL narrative of war crimes and demonization of opposition also paid off. However, the ground reality for people at large, especially youth, is that the desire for vengeance is less important than rampant unemployment. IN Bangladesh, five out of ten graduates are unemployed.

Regional configurations also helped AL consolidate its domestic power base. China supported AL for its development projects under the BRI, and offered US\$24 billion loans. This was noted by India, which also supported AL for extending its "Look East" policy. Dhaka under AL, thus, managed to balance Sino-Indian rivalries.

Iran

Iran lauds Ties with Pakistan at Important Conference in India

Iranian FM Javad Zarif, speaking to Indian media on January 9, 2019, stated that Iran and Pakistan had differences over the Taliban in the 1990s but now their interests converge. Zarif said that Pakistan was pursuing a genuine anti-terrorist and anti-extremist national security policy. Iran was fully willing to help it, as this was in line with Iran's interest to counter terror and extremism.

Zarif spoke on the sidelines of the yearly Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi, which is India's most prominent international platform for geopolitical discussions. Zarif also held that while the Taliban should not be given complete dominance in Afghanistan, they must be part of a post-war arrangement.



Afghanistan: More Hiccups with Recent Recipes for Peace

The Afghan Taliban pulled out of the two-day talks with the US, scheduled to start in Qatar on January 9, citing as reason the inclusion of Afghan officials. The Taliban consider the Kabul government as illegitimate being propped up by a foreign occupation force. The Taliban have consistently rejected requests by several regional states to agree to talk to Kabul officials.



Pakistani and Iranian officials are trying to convince the Taliban to meet the Kabul officials alongside the US delegates. The news of the Taliban withdrawal from the scheduled talks came just as Pakistani FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi was meeting in Islamabad a special envoy from Kabul.

India Still Secular?

In line with BJP psyche, Lok Sabha has passed a bill that excludes Muslims while granting citizenship to certain religious minorities arriving in India in the future. While the bill awaits ratification, it has a huge impact on the April-May 2019 general elections in India.

BJP wants to project the **false image** that unlike India's Muslim neighbors, Pakistan and Bangladesh, it accepts all minorities.

International Conference, "Regional Fake News & Facts," April 2019
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