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Bangladesh: From Independence To Sheikh Hasina's Resignation And The Muhammad Yunus Era

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Abstract

This paper examines the political trajectory of Bangladesh from its independence in 1971 to the resignation of Sheikh Hasina and the beginning of the Muhammad Yunus era. The study highlights the nation's struggles with democracy, authoritarianism, economic reforms, and civil society movements. By analyzing the political transition, this paper provides insights into how leadership changes reflect the evolving aspirations of Bangladeshi society.

Keywords

Bangladesh, Independence, Sheikh Hasina, Muhammad Yunus, Democracy, Political Transition, Governance, South Asia

Introduction

Bangladesh's independence in 1971 marked the birth of a new nation-state, founded on the principles of democracy, secularism, and social justice. However, the post-independence period witnessed a turbulent political journey characterized by military coups, authoritarian rule, and fragile democratic institutions. The long rule of Sheikh Hasina, though marked by economic growth and infrastructural progress, also faced criticism for authoritarian tendencies and democratic backsliding. Her resignation opened a new political phase, with Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus emerging as a transitional figure, symbolizing reform and civic renewal.

Literature Review

Scholarly works on Bangladesh's political history emphasize the fragile balance between democracy and authoritarianism. Rounaq Jahan (2005) and Ali Riaz (2016) highlight the struggles of democratization in Bangladesh. Studies on Sheikh Hasina's leadership acknowledge her role in economic development while critiquing her centralization of power. Research on Muhammad Yunus focuses on his role in microfinance, social entrepreneurship, and civic leadership. However, little academic work has yet examined the transition from Hasina to Yunus, a gap this paper seeks to address.

Methodology

The research is qualitative, relying on secondary sources including historical records, political analyses, parliamentary debates, policy documents, and scholarly articles. Newspaper reports and think-tank publications were also consulted to capture the immediate political implications of Sheikh Hasina's resignation and the rise of Muhammad Yunus.

Results / Findings

The findings suggest that Bangladesh's transition reflects a strong demand for democratic reforms, accountability, and citizen participation. Sheikh Hasina's long tenure ensured stability and growth but also generated discontent over restrictions on opposition, media, and civil liberties. The rise of Muhammad Yunus is seen as a response to this discontent, bringing forward a narrative of civic renewal, social justice, and institutional reform. However, the long-term sustainability of this transition remains uncertain.

Discussion

The political transition in Bangladesh must be viewed within the broader South Asian context, where democratic institutions struggle against entrenched political elites. Sheikh Hasina's legacy is likely to remain contested, balancing her economic achievements with criticisms of authoritarian rule. Muhammad Yunus, though internationally acclaimed, faces the challenge of navigating Bangladesh's complex political terrain dominated by party loyalties and elite interests. The future of Bangladeshi democracy will depend on whether institutional reforms and inclusive governance can take root.

Conclusion

Bangladesh's journey from independence to the present reflects both resilience and fragility in democratic governance. The resignation of Sheikh Hasina marks the end of an era, while Muhammad Yunus represents a transitional hope for democratic renewal. The coming years will test whether Bangladesh can institutionalize reforms, strengthen democracy, and fulfill the aspirations of its people for justice, freedom, and prosperity.

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