History will Teach us Nothing

The comments made by Hasina and Khaleda have made it clear that both the leaders want to see some role of army in "protecting democracy". Their remarks have also fuelled public speculation over a probable role of the army in tackling the current political unrest. Will the army play a role like the way it did in 2007? The way the political situation is developing, diminishing the prospect of any amicable solution before the upcoming parliamentary polls, it may soon reach a dead end. If it happens, where will it lead us?



Fear and intimidation keep the streets during hartals.

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Professor Nurul Islam, a leading development economist and former teacher of the Dhaka University, in his article titled "Reflections on Democracy and Development in Bangladesh," explains why the possibility of army takeover is very slim.

Prof Nurul Islam, who is the founding director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, writes, "It is frequently suggested that risks of political intervention by the army in Bangladesh have declined due to several factors: (1) there has been a significant change in the international climate, in the aftermath of the Cold War, against the political role of the army and in favour of political freedom and democracy; (2) for a heavily aid-dependent country like Bangladesh, the likelihood of an adverse external reaction to any military takeover serves as a restraining factor; (3) years of experience have convinced the army that to solve the development problems of Bangladesh is a very heavy responsibility that is difficult to fulfil; (4) it is far better to enjoy all the comfort and financial privileges far above the civilian level without any responsibility of running the country; and (5) the participation in the recent UN peace keeping missions has given it an additional resource and a measure of prestige and status at home and abroad."

Prof Islam's analysis proved right in January 2007 when the army did not take over amid a grave political turmoil, rather they installed a caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed. General Moyeen U Ahmed, who was army chief during the crisis, has also echoed Prof Islam's views. General Moyeen in his book titled: "In dream for peace: Reminisces of Age" has described the army's thoughts during the critical times on the eve of the