

The Security World



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Dilemma of Empowering Rohingyas

Controversy Surrounding the Alleged Lease of St Martin's Island

Health Security: An Experience in COVID

Growing Geo-political Competition in Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities for Defence Diplomacy

The Pakistan Army in Pakistan's history

'Bangladesh's perspective on the evolving global-regional geo-politics and challenges of diplomacy'



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THE SECURITY WORLD

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ABOUT US

The Security World is being published with the primary purpose of promoting peace, security and international cooperation through analysis, policy dialogue and dissemination of information. We are also trying to focus on the contributions of our defense forces and law enforcement agencies in curbing terrorism and their role in the international arena to bring back peace and security. As there is no noteworthy publication to project these achievements, we believe the Security World will play a pivotal role in this regard.

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BNS Shadhinota and USS Oakland steam together during Bangladesh's International Fleet Review 2022.
Photo Credit: Bangladesh ISPR

BANGLADESH AN IMPORTANT REGIONAL PARTNER

Rabb Majumder

Peter D. Haas is an elegant and seasoned diplomat serving as the United States Ambassador to Bangladesh. Haas pursued a distinguished career in public service, marked by his deep commitment to fostering international relations and advancing global cooperation.

As Ambassador, Haas has prioritized fostering collaboration across various sectors, including trade, defense, and development. He has been working tirelessly to enhance economic ties, facilitate investments, and promote trade opportunities between the two nations. Additionally, Haas has focused on supporting Bangladesh's efforts in combating terrorism, addressing climate change, and promoting human rights.

With a deep appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh, Haas has also been work-



US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter D. Haas. ▶



► ing towards promoting cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections. He has actively engaged with local communities, civil society organizations, and academic institutions, fostering mutual understanding and cultural appreciation.

Throughout his career, Haas has been recognized for his exceptional leadership and diplomatic acumen. His dedication, integrity, and commitment to strengthening bilateral ties between the United States and Bangladesh have earned him respect both at home and abroad.

Ambassador Peter D. Haas continues to serve as a bridge between the United States and Bangladesh, fostering collaboration, and working towards a shared vision of peace, prosperity, and mutual progress.

In an interview with The Security World's Editor and Publisher Rabb Majumder the US Ambassador has discussed many issues including defence cooperation, bilateral relations and Indo-Pacific Strategy.

The excerpts of the interview as follows:

1: How would you characterize the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States as it stands right now?

Bangladesh is an important regional partner on climate, development, economic, humanitarian, and security priorities. Our two governments regularly discuss steps to promote security; protect human rights, the rule of law, and freedom of expression; and ways to continue to work closely together to advance a shared vision of a free and open, prosperous, inclusive, peaceful, and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

2. What do you consider to be the main driving forces behind the development of Bangladesh-U.S. relations in recent years?

The United States seeks a strong, multi-faceted relationship built on mutual respect for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights; inclusive economic growth and development; people-to-people ties; enhanced capacity to tackle the climate and pandemic crises; and a greater contribution to regional security.

The United States has five key areas of collaboration for its relationship with Bangladesh:

Number One: A more peaceful and stable Bangladesh, better able to provide for its own security, counter threats to U.S. interests, and serve as a growing security contributor in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

Number Two: Bangladesh is committed to democracy, transparency, pluralism, tolerance, good governance, and respect for human rights.

Number Three: Bangladesh is a socially and environmentally resilient country.

Number Four: Sustainable and broadly shared prosperity, and improved labor standards expand and diversify Bangladesh's economy and open it to greater regional and global trade and connectivity.

Number Five: Bangladesh meets international standards for humanitarian protection of the Rohingya refugees and continues to host them until a safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Burma is possible. ►►

► **3. How significant is Bangladesh to the United States as a partner in the Indo-Pacific region?**

Bangladesh is an important partner to the United States. It is the eighth most populous country in the world, with one of the world's fastest growing economies. It is part of the Indo-Pacific region and a partner of the United States as we pursue our mutual goals of security, sustainable prosperity, freedom, and democracy for our peoples.

4. What are some of the main defense and security-related areas where Bangladesh and the United States can collaborate?

For over 50 years, the United States and Bangladesh have enjoyed diplomatic relations and partnered on a wide range of defense and security issues, including: border security, maritime security, counterterrorism, peacekeeping, disaster relief, defense trade, and defense institution building.

One of the main areas of collaboration is protecting Bangladesh and the United States from terrorist threats. Bangladeshi and U.S. law enforcement and other agencies work closely together, sharing information and coordinating the protection of our citizens and those of any other countries that face a terrorist threat. For example, our Legal Attaché Office works closely with the Bangladesh law enforcement agencies coordinating investigative efforts and building capacity. The Legal Attaché Office recently facilitated a course on Terrorism Financing issues for Bangladeshi government officials.

5. What role does Bangladesh play in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy?

We are committed to working together to ensure

that the Indo-Pacific region remains free, open, peaceful, and secure, and the U.S. military regularly works with the Bangladeshi military to strengthen Bangladesh defense readiness and reinforce the partnership between our military forces. Bangladesh recently released its own Indo-Pacific Outlook, and we were encouraged that Bangladesh's vision largely overlaps with our own. We're eager to hear and see more from Bangladesh as it develops concrete policies and actions related to the outlook.

I'd like to give a concrete example of the important role Bangladesh plays in Indo-Pacific affairs. Recently, in June of this year, the Bangladesh Navy sailed the BNS Somudra Joy to Yangon to provide humanitarian aid to victims of Cyclone Mocha. Bangladesh provided similar assistance to the Maldives during some of the most difficult periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is truly emblematic of what Lieutenant General Waker, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, called the Spirit of the Indo-Pacific and exemplifies the kind of engagement prioritized in the Government of Bangladesh's new Indo-Pacific Outlook.

6. How do you envision Bangladesh and the United States' defense cooperation developing over the coming years?

Before going into the coming years, I would like to cover a bit of the history of defense cooperation. Bangladesh and the United States have worked together in several defense areas up to the present day. I think the early 1990s marked the first major step forward. You may recall that Bangladesh contributed forces to the UN coalition in Kuwait that defended that country's right to sovereignty during Operation Desert Shield ►►



The crew of Bangladesh Navy's Somudra Avijan Delivers Food and Medical Supplies to Maldives in 2020. Photo Credit: The Honorable Abdulla Shahid, President of Maldives via Twitter

► and Desert Storm. As U.S. Forces departed the Persian Gulf in April 1991, a terrible cyclone hit Bangladesh. In response, the United States, in partnership with the Bangladesh Armed Forces and multinational partners, launched Operation Sea Angel. Led by a Joint Task Force under United States Marine Corps Lieutenant General Stackpole, the Operation focused on providing humanitarian assistance across Bangladesh, including to its most remote areas.

I mention these examples as they were periods where our forces worked closely together in real-world situations. This people-to-people connection opened the doors for more cooperation in

the future.

In 1994, Bangladesh and the United States signed a “505” agreement which allowed the U.S. to begin providing security assistance on a grant basis to Bangladesh’s Armed Forces. This opened the door for funding under the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative and under Foreign Military Financing, and for Bangladesh to receive U.S. equipment that our military services were retiring. In the time since 1994, Bangladesh has received over 100 million dollars’ worth of grant aid. The Armed Forces of Bangladesh have capitalized on these programs to develop some of its most important capabilities and transform the Bangladesh ►►



Oregon Army National Guardsmen of 3-116 Cavalry unit, Charlie Company along with a Bangladesh Army counterparts carry a local role player on a litter during cordon and search operations training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT).

Photo Credit: U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Hannah Hawkins

- ▶ military into a global leader in peacekeeping, and a regional leader in disaster response.

The relationship continued to expand. We saw more and more Bangladeshi officers attending military schools in the United States, and they performed extremely well. The 505 agreement also allowed the U.S. to supply platforms to Bangladesh like C-130 aircraft, patrol boats for the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard, and the two frigates, the Somudra Joy and Somudra Avijan.

We highly respect our Armed Forces colleagues in Bangladesh and have been delighted to attend

your military's keystone events. Last year we were pleased to attend International Fleet Review. The U.S. had the Commander of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Paparo, and a Littoral Combat ship, the USS Oakland and its crew participate in that important event. We expect to continue to be active participants in these types of events. The U.S. participated in large peacekeeping exercises such as Shanti Doot in 2018, Shanti Ogroshena in 2021, and we will participate in the next iteration of Shanti Doot, the multinational exercise in 2025.

For the coming years, we already have plans in place to provide additional capabilities in the ▶▶

► form of unmanned aerial systems and patrol boats that will help Bangladesh's Armed Forces to monitor the maritime domain, secure Bangladesh's borders, and conduct peacekeeping missions.

In the future, I see the defense relationship developing in line with Bangladesh's modernization and readiness plans. We are aware of the objectives of Forces Goal 2030 and want to be good partners to Bangladesh as it develops its Armed Forces' capacity to defend the country and its sovereignty.

7. How can the United States help Bangladesh in its efforts to upgrade its defense capabilities and modernize its military?

The United States can help Bangladesh in its efforts to upgrade its defense capabilities by providing a holistic approach to modernization. My colleagues do not consider defense cooperation in terms of just weapons and equipment. Rather, they view it in terms building capabilities. They always consider the training, sustainment, organization, doctrine, and leadership that is required to complement defense articles. It has been very positive to see that the Bangladesh Armed Forces are now taking a similar approach to make sure the capabilities they build are the best they can be.

I think a few things that have truly set the U.S. military apart are *leadership, joint operations, cutting-edge technology, and the meaningful participation of women in the armed forces*; and these are areas where our countries can collaborate.

We plan to continue to support opportunities for Bangladesh's best officers to develop their leadership. Earlier this summer, I was proud to hand

over certificates of acceptance for three young military leaders who are now attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. At the higher level, we have Senior Bangladeshi Officers attending important schools such as Army War College and Naval War college. Admiral Md Nazmul Hassan, a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, was just selected to become Bangladesh's next Chief of Naval Staff.

Joint Operations have evolved in the U.S. military in the time since World War II. We have learned many hard lessons and adapted our forces to operate best as a team. This is an area where we can share what we have learned with the Bangladesh armed forces. It's great to see that Bangladesh is conducting professional education in a joint environment; I got to see this firsthand last year when I spoke at the Defense Services Command and Staff College. We can help advance joint operations even further with your forces through education and advising and stand ready as partner to do so.

Harnessing cutting-edge technology is another area that has allowed our forces to excel in challenging environments. Our defense systems are world class, this is mainly due to the technology that is inherent in everything from helmets to fighter planes. The U.S. is willing to make some of our best systems available to Bangladesh to enable you to meet your modernization goals. That said, we owe it to our country and service members to ensure those technologies are protected from potential adversaries. I will talk about this more later, but this is why the GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) is important for the U.S. to help Bangladesh upgrade its defense capabilities. ►►



Addressing the 2022 Defence Services Command and Staff College

Photo Credit: US Embassy in Bangladesh

► I also think it is important to discuss the role of the participation of women in the armed forces. Bangladesh has been a regional leader in advancing this concept. It was great to see Bangladesh hold the Chairmanship of the Chiefs of Defense Women, Peace, & Security Network. As partners we can continue to share the message that the meaningful participation of women makes your forces better, both more prepared and more capable to solve the major challenges we face. Bangladesh should continue to recruit, train, and promote women with the intent of placing them in positions of leadership.

8. What are some of the main issues affecting the defense cooperation between the United

States and Bangladesh, and how can they be resolved?

I appreciate that you asked about resolving issues as I believe that is the right approach and characterizes the relationship. This has been discussed many times before, but the GSOMIA is one of the issues standing in the way of deeper cooperation on the modernization. I mentioned it previously when I discussed technology.

We believe the establishment of a GSOMIA would greatly benefit both our countries. These agreements seem complex, but they are quite simple. The GSOMIA would set ground rules for exchanging and protecting each other's sensitive military information. It is important to understand that GSOMIA would not compel ►►

► Bangladesh or the United States to share any sensitive military information. Rather, if both countries find it beneficial to share military information, they will have a pre-established agreement on how to protect that information. Military information can include certain defense technologies that enable the operation of state-of-the-art defense articles. The current lack of a GSOMIA between our countries prevents Bangladesh from procuring the United States' more advanced defense systems including some aircraft and associated weapons.

9. What role may defense cooperation play in the overall development of Bangladesh's relationship with the United States over the next few years?

We view the defense relationship as an integral part of our relationship. We know that Defense Diplomacy is one of the pillars of Bangladesh's defense policy and we will take every opportunity to support this. Additionally, when we talk about people-to-people relationships, I believe the military-to-military ties can be amongst the strongest.

As an example, the State Partnership Program between the Bangladesh Armed Forces and the State of Oregon National Guard have resulted in numerous long term personal relationships. These relationships have been allowed to mature as those involved advance in rank. During the 2022 South Asia Regional Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange (DREE) hosted by Bangladesh Armed Forces Division, Brigadier General Mark Crosby from the U.S. Air Force, as a member of the State Partnership Program traveled to Bangladesh for his 15th official trip. Beginning in 2008, when he was a Lieutenant Colonel, he has traveled to Bangladesh nearly

every year. Meeting with friends and counterparts who have also progressed in rank, and grown in responsibility just as he has, provided for a holistic view of how we can work to solve our problems together. Upon news of General Crosby's retirement, members of the Bangladesh Armed Forces delivered gifts to the U.S. Embassy for shipment to him, as a thank you for his continued relationship with the people of Bangladesh.

10. What message would you like to deliver to the Bangladeshi people regarding the significance of the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States, particularly in regard to defense issues?

Bangladesh is an important partner of the United States. We have a dynamic, multidimensional bilateral relationship of which the defense relationship is foundational in keeping the Indo-Pacific region free, open, and secure.

We celebrated 50 years of bilateral relations in 2022 and look forward to deep engagement with Bangladesh over the next 50 years and beyond.

Our cooperation on the economy, development, security, climate change shows the range of our strong and multi-faceted partnership and future potential. We are eager to move our relationship with Bangladesh forward as fast as Bangladesh would like.

I would also tell people to be proud of their peacekeepers, armed forces and first responders, while at the same time, hold them accountable. They play an important role in global security and the defense of Bangladesh, and your futures are intertwined. ■

DILEMMA OF EMPOWERING ROHINGYAS

Lt. Gen. Md. Mahfuzur Rahman (Retd.)



It has been quite clear in various segments of Bangladeshi society that solution of Rohingya issue over time is becoming a distant dream. The attitude of the West, donors towards the host gradually grav-

itating towards blaming instead of appreciation. Bangladesh authority is implicated for shifting Rohingyas to Vasan Char, not only this but also being criticized for not allowing proper education, skill development, lack of human rights and employment opportunities. The donors are pressurizing Bangladesh to have a long term planning and budgeting for Rohingyas. There are loose comments about the option of absorbing Rohingyas in Bangladeshi society. Apart from these, recent China mediated repatriation initiative of 700-800 Rohingyas as part family (few members from a family) at different places inside Myanmar is an uncomfortable proposition.

On the contrary, this mediation includes about 300 Hindu Rohingyas (possibly left overs of the community in the camp and as a whole family

package). Meanwhile 40-60 thousands Rohingyas who fled to India during genocide are now coming back slowly (may be pushed back) to Bangladesh meaning India the regional heavy weight is also getting rid of the Rohingya. So finally it all boils down to Bangladesh. The other regional power who is trying to mediate recent repatriation initiative would favour Myanmar's interest. As a student of society studies I understand Myanmar's interest would get preference over Bangladesh because Myanmar is a strategic partner whereas Bangladesh is a development partner.

Meanwhile, due to pandemic, Ukraine crisis, impending food shortage and fuel politics the budget for Rohingyas would shrink and there are indications on the horizon. All these are making Bangladesh anxious and nervous from a feeling of 'left alone' despite her generous humanitarian approach towards Rohingyas during their critical days.

My understanding, Rohingyas are not returning anytime soon at least the way Bangladesh wants. Interestingly bargaining or negotiating from a position of weakness seldom brings desired result. Both Bangladesh and Rohingyas are bargaining from a position of disadvantage compared to Myanmar. So what are the alternatives?

To make my point, let me share a story, in 2018 UNGA in New York I was nominated to attend ►►

► a sideline event organized by International Labour Organization (ILO). It was on 'Indigenous Peoples' Right'. In a Jam-packed conference hall, we the small Bangladesh delegation could manage to sneak in. There were seven speakers of which six of them were officials of ILO and other departments of UN. The only speaker who was not UN official but representing the indigenous people of the world was a Chakma gentleman from Bangladesh (we may argue that many small ethnic groups including Chakma are historically not indigenous people but perception at times stronger than reality). The point I am trying to make here that scope of education, exposure and empowerment have made some of our small ethnic communities hear their voice in international forum.



Rohingya issue is becoming a struggle for Bangladesh and Rohingyas should not be separated from this ordeal else the struggle might lose the emotion, tempo, impetus or strength. Rohingyas should be intellectually, politically and economically empowered to speak for themselves and assist them create position of advantage in international political, intellectual and human rights space. This approach likely to have 'Rohingya Permanency' anxiety among Bangladeshi strategic community.

In spite of that, Bangladesh may consider the reality and allow international level education, skill and leadership development for Rohingyas to develop their own narrative and tell their stories. A developed human resource is better for everyone. On the contrary, a trauma loaded young population without proper education, hope and dream is a ticking 'insecurity time bomb'.

As US has recognized Rohingya catastrophe as genocide this situation may be pursued to help migrate the marginal Rohingya families to settle

and educate abroad. This diaspora in two decades will turn into a major advocacy tool. However, Bangladesh has to keep this issue alive and on the table taking OIC, regional organizations, egalitarian world community and UN on board.

Bangladesh pursues the 'Zero Tolerance' policy on harbouring exotic and separatist elements of neighbours. Considering the culture of conflict prevalent over culture of cooperation in this part of the world this positive policy has immensely benefitted our neighbours (reciprocity seems to be in short supply). Nonetheless, it would be too much of an expectation of Myanmar that Bangladesh fighting 'Myanmar's Battle' on Bangladesh soil. They should find out political solutions of political issues they created instead of securitizing them and unnecessarily blaming neighbours (it is on record that Bangladesh offered joint and coordinated patrolling along the border. This is a gesture one of its kind in this neighbourhood while Myanmar is not very enthusiastic about this). It should also not be forgotten even 'strategic patience' has a shelf life.

Lt. Gen. Md. Mahfuzur Rahman, rcds, ndc, afwc, psc, PhD (Retd), Former Directing Staff at War Course, National Defence College.

Health Security: An Experience in COVID

Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat (Retd.)



Military training is often thought of as a test of physical calibre and mental drive. However, as a commissioned general duty pilot (GDP), my training in the military went far beyond the call of duty many times. It often wasn't just about operational tasks and managing military personnel on a regular basis, at times it was about handling unprecedented internal crises situations that required risking into uncharted territories for me and my staff. During my tenure as the Chief of Air Staff of Bangladesh Air Force, the COVID 19 pandemic came into the picture and alongside the whole country, Air Force faced a number of challenging situations when it came to containing the spread of the virus, ensuring regular operations and keeping

overall fatality rates near zero, not to mention taking care of the staff's mental health - all turned out to be a monumental crisis management experience for me.

On 8 March 2020, the first official covid case was detected in our country. On 26th we went for a limited lockdown when a mass movement of people created a fear of rapid contamination of the populace. Again on 5 April, with the announcement of garments opening, the workers came back en masse. The rate of infection seemed to be manageable. Considering the way people moved and came in contact with the virus, there had been a fast propagation of the virus resulting in antibody generation among around 70% of slum dwellers (ICDDR, 2020). Many had been asymptomatic and many in our country could not get a place for testing and yet the recovery rate was higher than the global average. Additionally there is a social stigma with COVID. Trauma in knowing that one is positive. There had been incidents of suicide from being COVID positive. Isolation was another fear. ▶▶



Bangladesh Air Force transported tons of humanitarian aid including a Military Medical Team to Maldives during COVID-19 pandemic. Photo: Net

► One of the major challenges during the onset of the pandemic, was the fear factor induced stress through anxiety and it propagated more among the affluent as they were exposed to more mass media being locked up at home. Many medicines came up from folklore and propaganda of social media who sincerely wanted to induce awareness by showing the dead bodies and the funerals. Officially the fatality rate had been 2 percent and below, and the contamination or propagation rate, R_0 had been more than one. There had hardly been any country not affected by the COVID 19. Hydro-chloroquine became a fast seller, and remdisivir. Even bleaching materials were preached to be effective. Ventilators and ICU facilities were sought after when breathing became difficult. Though 86 percent of the people put in the ventilator did not come back, it became a highly sought after medical equipment. While simple methods of breathing exercises and lying in a prone position to improve oxygen saturation could have been effective, they

were generally omitted or not considered.

Our Story in Bangladesh Air Force

Bangladesh Air Force was set to deploy for the first time to the Central African Republic on 28 March 2020 for the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission. On 11 March, 39 out of 125 personnel were tested positive. At that point of time no established protocol was in vogue to treat the personnel and catch the flight for the UN. Hospitalization was the norm for COVID 19 positive patients. It would take almost a month to get the positive patients back to their healthy selves. Replacement was also very cumbersome and some personnel were irreplaceable. Sitting with the BAF doctors it was decided to keep them isolated in the BAF Shaheen College Dhaka where they were treated under the following protocols:

- Morning Tulsi tea and pineapple with boiled eggs breakfast



- ▶ - Exercise under the sun
- Hot water vapor inhalation every two hours or so
- Hot water gargle
- Tab IVERMACTIN (Ivera) 12 mg or 18 mg if weight is more
- Tab Favipira, First day 3tabs twice. second day 2 tabs twice daily for five days
- Vitamin D
- Zinc

All except one tested negative on 22 Mar, and being again tested negative on 24th, departed on 26th for BANGUI by the national flag carrier. It may be mentioned that the age varied from mid twenties to fifties. A mixture of seniors and juniors. One pilot was replaced as he tested positive on the second test. The basic challenge here had been to motivate the men that COVID is not a death sentence. High Morale and being happy had been a prominent healer. Fight back with the built in immune system was the key.

Actions Taken

Inspired by our dynamic Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina BAF Medical Services Director {DMS} issued instructions with all the necessary precautions and health activities to be done in accordance with the national guidance. Simultaneously, BAF had been providing air evacuation medevac services and thus few crew were exposed. A new type of stretcher was developed indigenously and was appreciated. Our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) was appreciated by our friends from other countries also. And many requested for sharing the COVID mission SOP which we did. Few interesting phenomena occurred during the process of handling COVID. There was a sort of social denial and stigma for the disease. Many

considered it can happen only to the sinner. And others got so agitated as if he/she is about to die. Thus our approach had been to have sermons delivered by the Imams on Friday jummah prayers on disease and the way to tackle it. Unorthodox method of not telling the person that he is positive was also followed in the early days of the pandemic breakout. Interestingly those who did not know recovered faster and without many symptoms. Another matter that we observed was that families staying together recovered quite fast then being isolated. One officer was doing a course in Dhaka when his wife - a doctor in Bir Sreshtho Matiur Rahman Base contacted COVID. We gave him leave and sent him back to stay home and look after his wife and two children. They all were okay in seven days, and the children -without even fever. I kept wondering about the possible effects of mass anxiety/stress from fear of pandemic. The psychological aspect of isolation was totally ignored. But we kept the husband and wife in the same cabin once they both were positive.

Once the lock down started and flights closed, gradually the sitting of the pilots not flying and the airlines not having cash flow was about to starve the industry. In the month of May 2020, we started arranging non-scheduled special flights for our flag carrier and other national airlines. First one had been to the UK to send BAF crews, who would later on, fly back our C-130 J. The whole episode had been quite a challenge. Discussion with the foreign ministry, embassies and support providers often ended up into the dead night and the negotiations with the airlines demanded a lot of skill hitherto unknown to the Air Force. However, because of our experience in sending BAF aircraft on non-schedule flights abroad, we could do it. The only addition was the interfacing of the commercial part of it. So, we put in the good office of BAF Welfare Trust to be ►►

► the buffer zone and to do the work which BAF proper cannot - welfare business. In addition BAF also kept the lines of communication and transportation open by its own fleet. Those missions had also been full of extreme challenges - for example on landing at certain foreign land, no crew allowed to visit the toilet even. Keep putting on the PPE-we did it for the country. We with our meager resources carried the best quality PPE along with western certificates of quality even to distant UK, Korea, Malaysia. We were one of the first to go to Maldives in support of our expatriates and we had been in Lebanon after their blast to show our solidarity with the sufferers. While we carried the stranded and the needy Bangladeshis, we also transported some essentials and some seasonal fruits for the Bangladeshi workers in those countries. The look on their faces could tell how pleased our people abroad were to have those, not for the item, but for the feeling that they are not forgotten at home - their country Bangladesh.

My wife and myself were tested positive on 28 Mar 2021. Except for fever, we did not have many symptoms. Together, we had our holidays at our residence. On a routine checkup, CMH did not want to leave me. I asked that with oxygen saturation 96% and with breathing exercise increasing to 98% would you keep someone in hospital. They said that no, but we cannot take a risk on you. I said my house is only three minute away, I will come back if oxygen reduces. Continued with Ivermectin, Favipira and few other medicines as per BAF doctors' protocol and enjoyed being together at home for 14 days (After 35 years of being married). Tested negative on 11 Apr and again on 17 Apr. Departed for an official visit to Turkey on 18th by our own C-130J as all airlines were closed. We carried with us goodwill items and Covid medicines made in

Bangladesh to stand beside our brothers at the testing time of pandemic. On the return journey we could bring back 49 of our stranded Army personnel who had been on training in Turkey. Travel time was 17 hours including refueling halt at Al Ain of UAE. We did not feel any weakness during the long and arduous journey which is normal after immediate recovery of Covid. Thanks to BAF Doctors and above all Almighty Allah SWT mercy. Superb performance of our technicians and pilots had been unparalleled. These aircraft were supposed to be flown into Bangladesh from Cambridge.

Advice For Military Institutions

- Keep serving the nation as in normal crisis time.
- FOLLOW the national pandemic guidelines but also continue with primary duties.
- To keep the morale high, do give frequent sermons and be present among the men in uniform.
- Certain amount of physical exercise should be continued and good food habit should be maintained.
- The fear factor is to be neutralised through effective and positive briefings based on factual data.
- As far as possible families to be kept together in case of Covid positive.
- All personnel to be caring for the sick, a simple sharing of fruits can boost the morale sky high.
- Last but not the least precautions, like mask and washing to be ensured.

Air Chief Marshall Masihuzzaman Serniabat (Retired), former Chief of Air Staff of Bangladesh Air Force (2018-2021).

Growing Geo-political Competition in Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities for Defence Diplomacy

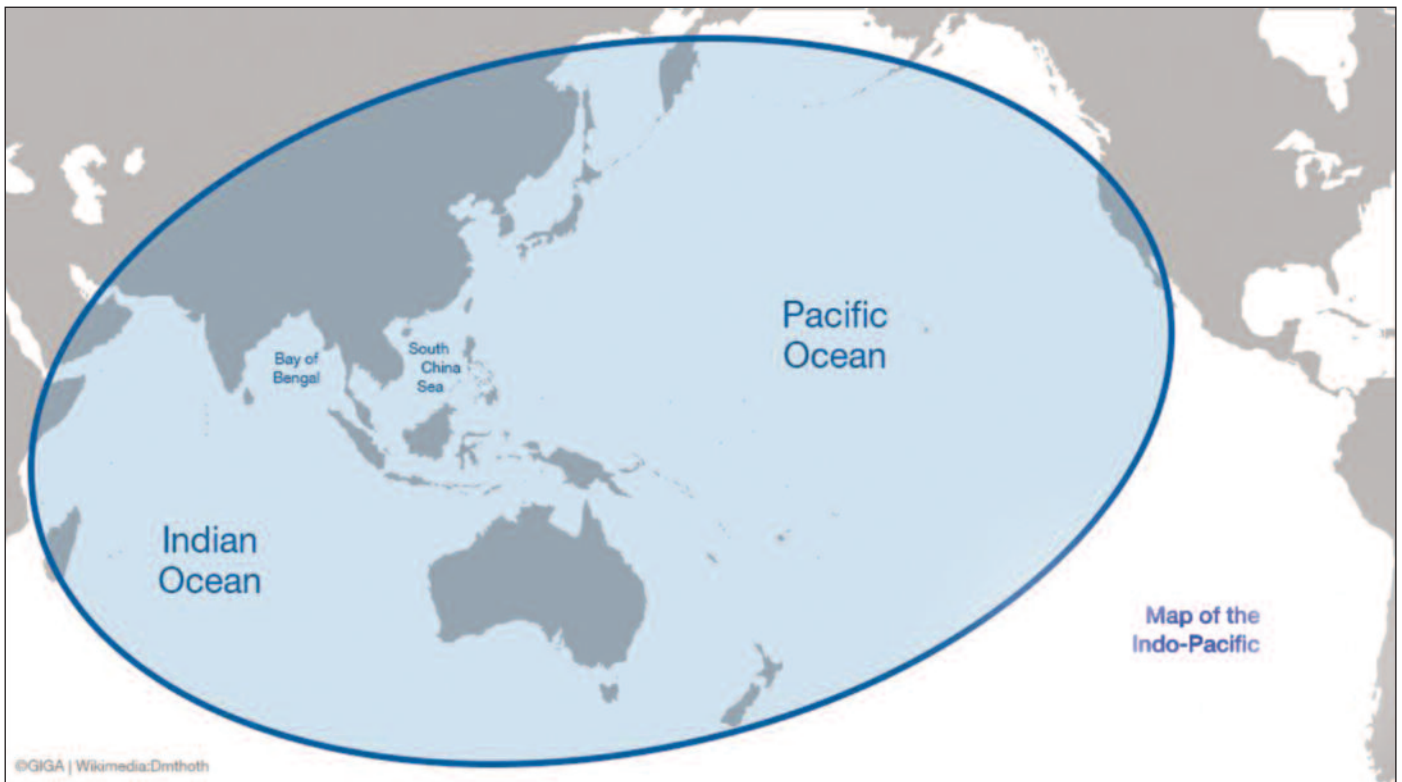
Air Vice Marshal MAHMUD HUSSAIN (Retd)



Let us consider the term “Indo-Pacific” from geo-strategic point of view. Sensibly, it should mean the geography straddling the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The term has a rich textual past, but since the late 2010s, the term “Indo-Pacific” has been increasingly used in geo-political discourse. Recently, it has also taken on a symbolic link with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad” – an informal grouping between Australia, India, Japan and the United States. Thus, the term Indo-Pacific has led to a change in our mental concept of Asia, and its geo-political value in strategic terms.

Recently, Indo-Pacific has occupied the strategic attention of major powers in their national security policy framework. The United States, Canada, France, European Union, ASEAN, Japan, Australia and India have all formulated individual strategic documents for the Indo-Pacific. An analysis of these documents reveal the intentions and interests of these countries. A summary of the major actors suggest that:

- The United States is the leader of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Against the backdrop of China’s rise in the South China Sea and its Belt-and-Road Initiative, the US aim is to reshape alliances and partnerships to maintain Western influence in Asia.
- Japan is clearly united with India and the United States because Japan feels insecure as an island nation, and is concerned about China’s rising economic and military capabil-▶▶



► ities in the Indo-Pacific.

- Australia actively welcomes the “Indo-Pacific” Strategy promoted by the United States. Australia wants to improve and strengthen its presence and scope of influence in Southeast Asia.
- The French “Indo-Pacific” Strategy is the most ambitious one. The most important goal is to defend France’s sovereignty interests in the Indo-Pacific. Paris feels that its national interests have been challenged by China’s growing military power and international behavior. France will upgrade its military operational capability in the region.
- While France, Germany and the Netherlands have strategy documents for the Indo-Pacific, the EU-wide recently written strategy is a major development. It says that European economic and security prosperity—and the EU’s vision of its role in a multipolar world—is strongly linked to the Indo-Pacific region. As such, EU moves away from an exclusive focus on trade and investment based partnership to potential engagement with Indo-Pacific countries in security matters.
- The most ambivalent group in the Indo-Pacific is ASEAN. Indonesia and Singapore support the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” concept. ASEAN is caught between China and the United States. On one hand, they are afraid of the regional order change brought about by the rise of China militarily, and on the other hand, they do not want to lose their share in economic development brought about by the rise of China economically as well as strategic guarantees provided by the presence of the United States in the region.
- India has always been a country with great national ambitions and is one of the most important advocates of the concept of “Indo-Pacific Strategy“. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has clearly spelt out India’s evolving approach towards Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in the form of five-fold “maritime panchamrit“. China’s interest in the western Pacific, and its increasing reliance on the Indian Ocean for trade, has begun to stimulate India. This intersection of maritime interests of a rising China and an emerging India on one hand, and the existant power of the US on the other, has begun to give “Indo-Pacific” ►



▶ a historical Mahanian character. This geo-political scenario with two Asian powers interceded by a non-Asian giant is euphemistically termed as “Asian Order”. However, it must be borne in mind that Indian and Pacific Oceans are also coveted by European Powers: Germany, the United Kingdom, France.

So, we see that Indo-Pacific is a most challenging geo-political reality where both continental and extra-continental actors are blended into each other. Why? The reason is China.

But China’s new approach to the World Order is to face the unified West and their Asian partners with systematic multilateralism. China’s new code is to make China leader against Western great-power interests in the Indo-Pacific. China’s “Global Security Initiative” is about opposing efforts to contain China’s military threat. China’s “Global Development Initiative” promotes China’s economic growth model, which can deal with even non-democratic countries without im-

posing conditions. China’s “Global Civilization” logic philosophizes that western universal human rights is a new form of colonialism.

It seems that China and the West with its Asian allies led by the United States are locked in a “security dilemma” in which it is rational that each side should strengthen its position. This fear of each other emanates from few flashpoints that have the potential to serious conflicts.

- Taiwan. Taiwan and America agree that a Chinese attack on Taiwan is not imminent. Of now, presumably China is apprehensive of US counter-attack. Taiwan is overhauling its defenses to prepare for Chinese invasion. Taiwan is a very delicate case. It is a democracy but isolated by a superpower China that denies its right to exist.
- North Korea. North Korea has conducted record number of weapons tests in 2022 and 2023. This year, it has tested underwater nuclear attack drone tests. These drones ▶▶

- ▶ are capable of cruising underwater for hours before detonation. North Korea needs to bolster its defenses because it claims that the US-South Korean drills with US nuclear-capable B-52 strategic bombers, are rehearsals for invasion.
- So, fear psychosis is complementary. US ally Taiwan fears Chinese invasion, and China's ally North Korea fears US invasion.
- South China Sea. Several countries have made territorial claims over South China Sea. Both China and Taiwan claim the entire South China Sea as their own within what is known as "nine-dash line". But this claim overlaps virtually with every other country in the region that includes Indonesia, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines and Singapore.
- AUKUS. AUKUS is another flashpoint because of the nature of its intentions. It is basically a pact of America, Australia and Britain. This has threatening extra-regional components of American, Australian and European ambitions in Asia. AUKUS is intended to support high-end warfighting and combined military operations in the region with nuclear-powered submarines. Its alleged enemy is China.
- Myanmar. Myanmar is another flashpoint. Myanmar factors into the larger canvas of Indo-Pacific by pitting China, India and Russia on one side against the

EU, AUKUS and America on the other. Myanmar is considered a fault-line of breeding insurgent-terrorists, and therefore, becomes a notorious route for exporting insecurities to its neighbors, particularly Bangladesh.

The geo-political landscape as explored so far can be summarized into some of the following essential geo-politics:

First, how China balances itself against the western powers and their allies led by the United States.

Second, how both China and the US are persuasive in prosecuting Indo-Pacific liberal order.

Third, how strong is ASEAN in keeping itself away from taking sides either with China and the US.

Fourth, how forceful is the logic that extra-regional military entente such as, AUKUS has the potential to flare into serious civilizational security dilemma.

Fifth, how prudent will China and India be in working together to make Indo-Pacific a zone free from western influence? ▶▶



► **Sixth**, how integrative is the approach of states and regional institutions in tackling life-threatening irritants, such as extremism, hyper-nationalism, insurgencies, irredentism etc.

Therefore, challenges and opportunities of the Indo-Pacific for Bangladesh tells us something like this:

- The geo-strategic location of Bangladesh is unique. It is the confluence of South Asia and South East Asia. Bangladesh crowns the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Bangladesh needs a modern armed force with a strong navy having substantial partnership programs with regional navies, particularly Indian Navy.
- Bangladesh happens to be a major source of migrant workers in South East Asia and the Middle East. Intelligence outfits can provide, supplement, acquire and analyze information about migration acting as intelligence to the embassies to ensure safe and secure migration to destinations.

- Bangladesh historically has troubled relations with Myanmar. The exodus of Rohingyas has turned into serious security issue for Bangladesh. Bangladesh armed force should engage frequently with the Myanmar military junta. The strategy is not to let Myanmar think that Bangladesh military is weak to respond to excesses by Myanmar military junta in using Bangladesh territory for expelling Rohingyas.

- The military diplomats in the embassies should constantly upgrade the Heads of the Mission on their geo-political assessment of the Asia-Pacific. Their briefing must include threat analysis and militarization of the Indo-Pacific space, alliance shifting etc., so that superior authority at the Headquarters can make proper adjustments with strategic thinking. In fact, Defence Wing in each embassy is a necessity if we see closely the nature in ►►





- ▶ which geo-political and geo-strategic significance of world politics has shifted toward Asia in recent times.
- In view of the changing perspective in the Indo-Pacific, military officials should participate more in strategic dialogues and defense consultations. Military officers should focus on studying latest literature on Artificial Intelligence, Cybernetics, Strategy etc., – subjects which deal with higher sciences in warfare.
- Defense Diplomacy must be made an integral component of our Foreign Office. This is a challenge. But this challenge can only turn into an opportunity if the diplomatic routes of both the Foreign Office and military diplomats are co-located.

The Indo-Pacific is becoming a focus of the coming World Order. It is the home of three rising

great powers— China, India and Japan. Europe has its eyes on its resources as a fresh tour de force to Europe's colonial days. Australia as a protégé of the West encircles it in a discreet ambivalence. ASEAN finds its great power envelopment as a constant vulnerability. Middle East is ruptured in the conundrum of uncertainty. Bangladesh as a small state has all on a sudden become a strategic player in the Indo-Pacific rivalry. Bangladesh's challenge lies in actively participating in the strategic game by adopting a policy of Defence Diplomacy.

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain is a retired air force officer. He served as High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam from November 2016 to September 2020. He served as the Chairman, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). Presently, he is working as the Distinguished Expert at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU).

Controversy Surrounding the Alleged Lease of St Martin's Island

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq (Retd)



Introduction

The news and social media have come alive with fervour as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh passionately voices her discontent towards the United States, resolutely affirm-

ing her unwavering commitment to safeguarding the nation's assets rather than seeking power through compromise. While the prime minister did not explicitly mention the leasing of St Martin's Island, the United States has asserted that [there have been no discussions](#) whatsoever about taking over the island from Bangladesh.

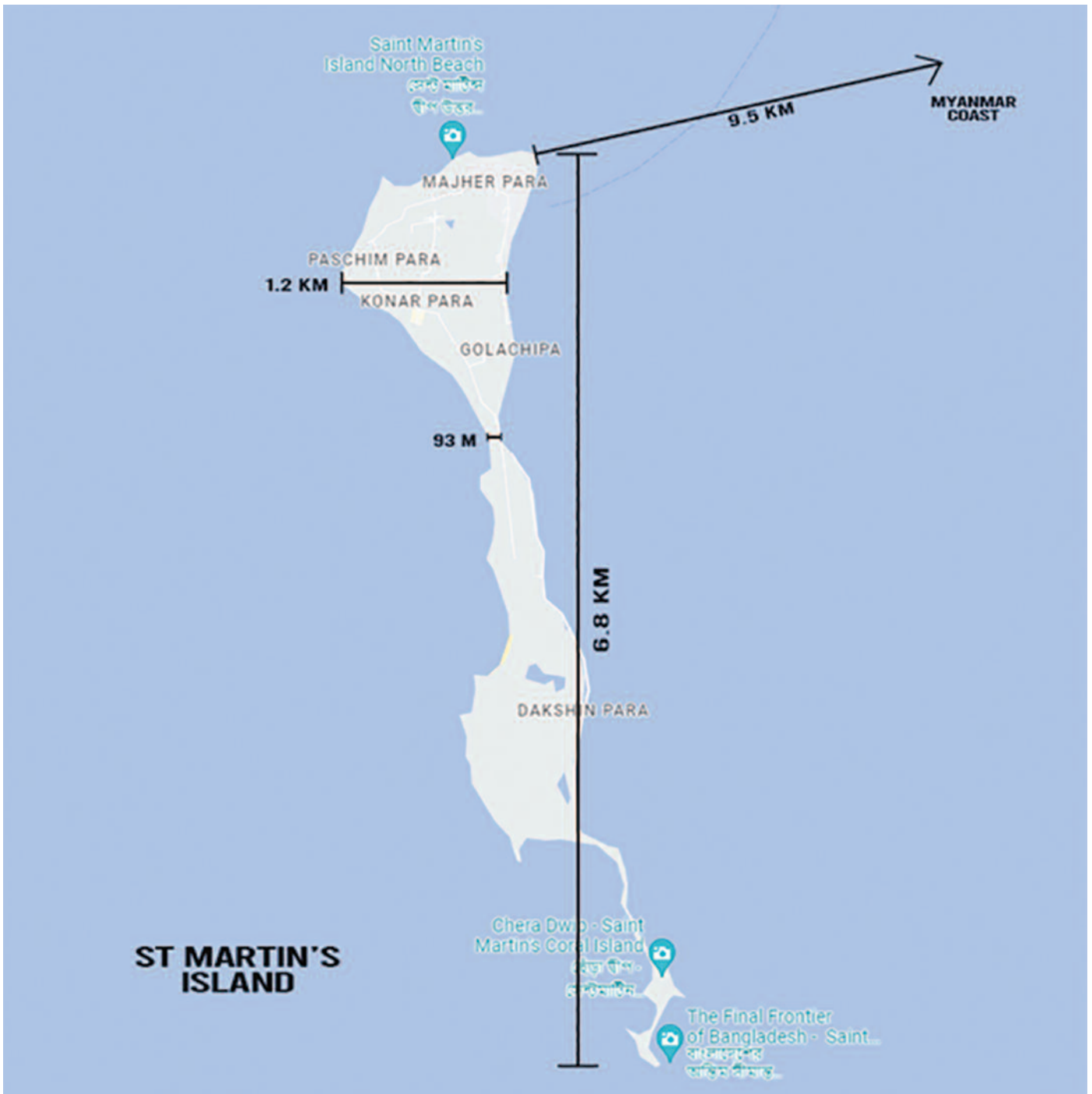
The relationship between the United States and Bangladesh, already characterized by unease, further intensified due to the conflicting statements made by both countries' top-level governments.

It raises numerous questions, even if the United States wanted to use the island, for what purpose?

The proximity of St Martin's Island to Matarbari Deepsea Port, which was under construction by Japan, a trusted Quad ally of the US, is notable. Japan intends to uplift the economy of India's Seven Sister States using this port. The geographical relationship between St Martin's Island, Matarbari Port and Seven Sister States having any correlation, is a matter to ponder about.

It is amply clear that the present objective of the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) is to counter China. The United States intends to do it with its allies and partners, and for that matter, the US would want Bangladesh to cooperate with the US to achieve the objectives of IPS in the Bay of Bengal region.

It is not unlikely that the United States is looking for a strategic location from where the US can assert its power projection. The discourse would be whether St Martin's Island could fulfil the inter-▶



ests of the United States. This paper will try to address those issues.

Background of St Martin's Island

[A British team of surveyors in 1900](#) included Saint Martin's Island as part of the British Raj in India and named it after a Christian priest Saint Martin. Situated in the north of the Bay of Bengal, close to Myanmar and Bangladesh, the island may offer a significant strategic advantage for the US to achieve the objectives of IPS. The island's length is about 7 km (North-South), and the

width varies from 100 meters to 1.2 km. On the northeast side of the island, the shallow coral reef portrays severe navigation restrictions through the St Martin's Channel.

The rough weather and the coral reef in the west of the island also do not offer suitable anchoring of ships, and for the same reason, the island is not also suitable for making piers to berth ships.

The island is the only coral reef in Bangladesh that attracts thousands of tourists, including foreigners. The leasing of the island would surely re-▶▶

- ▶ strict the tourists on the island. Within reach of budget, most average-income people love to spend some time on the island, and they would be highly disappointed if they could not visit.

The Relationship Between Bangladesh and the United States

Since the birth of Bangladesh, the relationship between the US and Bangladesh has never been smooth. Fast forward, the recent imposition of US-targeted sanctions against some police and senior army officers and the US visa policy to ensure free and fair elections in Bangladesh have surely annoyed government officials and politicians. However, these actions appear political rather than having any relation with the leasing of St Martin's Island.

The misnomer of leasing the island prevailed a long time back. Before and after the liberation of Bangladesh, mostly the military rulers [were blamed for leasing](#) out St Martin's Island to counter India. Later, their claims were found to be baseless and turned out to be politically motivated.

Regional Interests of the United States

The Bay of Bengal is a direct part of the Indo-Pacific region in which the United States undoubtedly will have lots of interests. To protect the Christian community in the Seven Sisters States of India, China's growing influence in Myanmar and around, China's effort to connect the Indian Ocean through Kyaukpyu Port of Myanmar, and finally, the "[shaky](#)" relationship of India as a Quad partner all suggest that the US would be looking for a strategic location to counter China's influences in the Bay of Bengal region.

World Vision is an international Christian humanitarian organisation aiming to address poverty and development worldwide. World Vision operates in all the states of Seven Sisters, and the Christian community is rising where

Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram possess 80 to 90 per cent Christian people. World Vision operates in many districts of Bangladesh as well. The past foreign policy of the US suggests that the US would protect World Vision's program and the Christian community through physical presence in any suitable area.

One of the time-tested allies of the US and a strong partner of Quad, Japan, was awarded to construct a Deepsea Port in Matarbari, Bangladesh, On the 20th March 2023, while visiting India, Japanese PM Fumio Kishida [said in the 41st Sapru House Lecture](#), "...we will promote the Bay of Bengal-Northeast India industrial value chain concept in cooperation with India and Bangladesh to foster the growth of the entire region". It strongly indicates that the US would have some interest in this region. Although India would be happy with the economic development of its hinterland states but would be highly disappointed with the US's interests in Christian communities in the Seven Sisters States, especially when Indian PM Modi supports the Hinduism agenda by RSS.

In the Indo-Pacific concepts, the US is clear about its intentions to counter China's growing hegemonic power, which challenged the prevailing US's supreme monopoly in this region. The US wishes to do it along with its allies and partners, which suggests that the US would want Bangladesh as a preferred partner in fulfilling the Indo-Pacific objectives. The coup d'état leader of Myanmar, General Min Aung Hlaing has proved that his country has already become a vassal country to China. China is constructing CMEC (China Myanmar Economic Corridor) and connecting China's southeast region to the Indian Ocean through the Kyaukpyu Port in Myanmar.

Although India is a Quad partner, India's shaky attitude as a Quad partner and support to Putin's war economy makes India appear not a trusted ▶▶

ally to the US. Compared to US allies and military bases in the Pacific region, the US has a smaller military presence in the Indian Ocean than the military base in Diego Garcia. Diego Garcia is too far for the US to exert military influence over China. The US did use Diego Garcia to bomb Iraq using air refuelling.

All the above arguments strongly suggest that the US would want a proximity presence in the Bay of Bengal through military bases or any other means of mutual agreement.

Does St Martin's Island Serve the Purpose of the US

For the sake of argument, let's consider the US needs its presence in the Bay of Bengal, and the use of St Martin's Island. If so, the only option for the US is to use the island for military purposes. Let's see how feasible the island is for the US to make military base facilities.

Logistic Support, Size and Landscape: The logistic support and communication to the island would only be through sea or air as there is no land connectivity. Logistic support can only be fulfilled with the aircraft, and that needs a well-built and protected airfield. With roughly only an 8 sqkm area, St Martin's Island offers significantly less space to facilitate all infrastructure of a US military base. A military airfield typically requires quite a huge land to accommodate runways, taxiways, protected aircraft sheds, a large area for the installation

of surveillance radar and other electronic equipment, barracks and other necessary infrastructure. The island's size may pose a significant challenge in finding adequate land for a military airfield. Even operating a C-130 requires a minimum of a kilometre runway unless the US wants to operate STOL (Short Take off and Landing) aircraft.

Missile Silos: If the US wants to use the island as a missile base, it also provides minimum protection as there is no natural mountainous terrain or hideout. Construction of underground silos would also not be easy on a low-lying sandy beach.

Location: The island is so close that even it is vulnerable to artillery shells from the coast, which typically ranges from 10 to 40 km. Even the island would be susceptible to short-range land-based missiles, especially hypersonic missiles. The distance between the island and Myanmar land is less than 10 km, which would pose a significant challenge for the US to have less reaction time to detect and destroy incoming threats. Even shoulder-launched missiles from Myanmar's mountainous terrain would create havoc for the US forces. On the contrary, the mountains provide Myan-



▶ mar with natural and easy makeshift protection.

Weather: The weather remains very rough most of the time, especially in summer. It compels the ships to enter and anchor at St Martin's Island through St Martin's Channel (between St Martin's Island and Myanmar). The weather compels ships to anchor in St Martin's Channel which would also be highly vulnerable to the land-based missile. Operations of too many ships in a narrow channel would likely violate territorial water, inviting unwanted controversy even in peacetime.

Tourism and Environmental Impact: The construction of airfields and infrastructure on St Martin's Island will have significant environmental effects. It is the only coral reef with diverse marine life where Bangladeshi tourists can visit and taste tranquil life. The construction of a military base would hurt the sentiments of Bangladeshis and disrupt the delicate ecosystem, including wildlife habitats.

The above assessment suggests that the island does not fulfil the criteria or requirements that would make it a viable option or advantageous for the United States for military purposes.

Understanding United States' Policies

The US is usually seen to achieve its strategic objectives by taking the government's consent and, of course, using various ways and means of diplomacy. For example, the US officially invited Bangladesh to join US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Bangladesh disagreed. The US wants to sign two agreements with Bangladesh: the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which are officially declared proposals. In general, GSOMIA is the government-to-government deal that allows cooperation in defence purchase, information sharing, and

military-to-military cooperation; and ACSA allows the signed countries' forces to procure and pay for common types of supplies and services.

The [US has made](#) GSOMIA with over 76 countries and ACSA with over 100 countries, including India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh is considering the US proposal, and the US kept its diplomatic persuasion to get it done. The US would prefer to get those two agreements signed with Bangladesh rather than using the unsuitable island.

Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific concept suggests that the United States may want a presence in the Bay of Bengal region, but St Martin's Island might not offer the necessary advantages for US interests there. Without neutralizing all-around threats in depth, it would be reluctant to put its forces in a situation where they could be constantly vulnerable to threats from adversaries.

In the democratic system, things are relatively open, allowing everyone to become informed as events unfold. However, the controversy of St Martin's Island may take time to unearth or fade away, but it may resurface again as a trump card in the political arena. To err on the side of caution, the United States would prefer to actively pursue the signing of two agreements, GSOMIA and ACSA, with Bangladesh. These agreements would grant the US numerous advantages, particularly in achieving its Indo-Pacific objectives. However, if negotiated and managed properly, Bangladesh could also significantly benefit from these agreements.

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq, BSP, ndu, psc, BN (Retd), *Founding Member, Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD).*

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The Pakistan army in Pakistan's history

Syed Badrul Ahsan



There is once again turbulence in Pakistan.

The Pakistan army is once again on the warpath. The difference is that this time it is out to quell a political party and reassert its role in Pak-

istan's politics. It is not that the army has ever been out of the political landscape, but in the past few years it has tried to convey the false narrative that it has no link with the political establishment, that indeed it is keen to see a democratic system take over in Pakistan.

Now that former prime minister Imran Khan has openly challenged the soldiers, the better to have them take their hands off politics, the army — or as one may term it the empire — has struck back. It is not that the army is indulging in such action — of tearing Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to pieces in light of the violence resorted to by Khan's supporters when he was

arrested on 9 May — for the first time. More than a half century ago, the Pakistan army went ferociously into action against an electorally triumphant Awami League in what then was East Pakistan, today's Bangladesh, and pitilessly subjected as many as three million Bengalis to genocide.

In March 1971, the Pakistan army sought to punish Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through repudiating the results of the December 1970 election. The Bengali leader, who was poised to take charge as Pakistan's first elected prime minister, was instead placed under arrest, flown a thousand miles away from Dhaka to distant (West) Pakistan and put on trial before a military court. Mujib did not come back to his liberated Bangladesh until January 1972, a month after the Pakistan army had surrendered to a joint India-Bangladesh command in Dhaka.

One would have thought that the Pakistan army would, after the humiliation it went through in 1971, take a backseat in Islamabad and operate, finally, under the authority of elected civilian governments. That did not happen. Why it did not happen has much to do with the move by the gov-▶▶



Photo: Net

ernment of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who took over as president of a rump Pakistan following the emergence of Bangladesh in December 1971, to send the soldiers into action against nationalists in Balochistan in 1973. It was an operation conducted under General Tikka Khan, the same officer who had initiated the genocide in Bangladesh.

The Pakistan army thus found in the anti-Baloch operations an excellent opportunity to claw back to respectability. Bhutto adopted a policy of appeasing the soldiers, a policy which in the end resulted in his overthrow in July 1977 by his hand-picked chief of army staff Ziaul Haq. The army was thus back in the driver's seat, in all its arrogance. General Zia's seizure of power was the initiation of a new dark age in Pakistan's history in that under him the army went into a process of Islamisation of the military that was soon extended to the entire country. Zia banned political parties, had Bhutto hanged, repeatedly promised elections but then went on to keep power in his hands for eleven years till his death in a mysterious plane crash in August 1988. Under Zia, Pakistan regressed into a medieval era.

But Zia's death did not spell an end to the role of the army. His successor as army chief, General Aslam Baig, did not seize power but made sure that the soldiers kept pulling the strings from behind. Baig was unwilling to have Benazir Bhutto assume office as prime minister after the elections which took place following General Zia's death. In the end, Benazir Bhutto assumed office after agreeing to the military's condition that she would have no role in defence policy or, in simple terms, would not interfere in the affairs of the army.

The vise-like grip of the army on Pakistan's politics would not be loosened in the post-Zia period. Benazir would assume office twice and be sacked twice. Much the same was the fate of Nawaz Sharif. In October 1999, as he attempted to dismiss General Pervez Musharraf from the position of chief of staff, Musharraf, then returning to Pakistan after a meeting in Colombo, literally came down from the skies and sent the Sharif government packing. The deposed prime minister was first jailed and then sent off into exile in Saudi Arabia.

The history of the Pakistan army is, again, a whole lot more than a turfing out of civilian governments and seizing power. In the times of Pakistan's first ►

► military ruler General Ayub Khan (who later promoted himself to field marshal), democratic politics was put to an end through martial law decrees and systematic arrests of respected politicians. Under the Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO), decreed by the regime in 1959, an entire group of politicians was compelled to opt out of politics. Ayub promulgated his constitution in 1962 and had an electoral college of what the regime called 80,000 Basic Democrats empowered to elect the country's president and the national and provincial assemblies.

Ayub Khan capitulated in the face of the mass upsurge against him in March 1969. Ironically, though, he did not hand over power to the speaker of the national assembly as stipulated under the 1962 constitution. He simply handed over power to the army chief, General Yahya Khan. The Yahya Khan regime presided over the country's first general election before launching a genocide against Bengalis and eventually seeing the country break up through the emergence of Bangladesh.

Such is the disturbing history of the Pakistan army's meddling in politics. The soldiers have often brought civilian politicians into the limelight, raised them to prominence before dumping them when their utility appeared to be over. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Imran Khan are cases in point. Khan is now on a crusade to force the army back into the barracks and for civilian rule to become the norm. It is not likely that he will succeed. The army, under General Asim Munir, has in a fit of rage been dismantling his party, arresting senior leaders of the PTI and exercising pressure on other party officials to leave the PTI. Imran Khan is now a lonely figure. The army has cut him to size.

The saying goes, half in jest and half in seriousness, that while every country needs an army, the Pakistan army needs a country. Pakistan has been the plaything of its army, which in these seventy-five years have led the country to battlefield dis-



Imran Khan, former prime minister of Pakistan

asters through its adventurism. In 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999 (the last through the unprovoked incursion into Kargil), the Pakistan army went into aggressive mode against India and then retreated, licking its wounds. Besides, in the past four decades, the army has been busy going after Baloch nationalists. Thousands of Baloch have been killed and thousands more have disappeared as a result of the army's offensives.

Given such a sordid narrative, it is unlikely that the Pakistan army will acknowledge, if at all, the sovereign authority of elected governments in Pakistan. An example will suffice. Every action the military is taking against Imran Khan today is decided on at army headquarters. The civilian thirteen-party coalition government now in office, placed there of course with the sanction of the army, has little or no power.

The battle today is between Imran Khan and Asim Munir. There is no place in it for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Syed Badrul Ahsan is a senior journalist, historian and author of 'From Rebel to Founding Father: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman'.



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Dr. AK Abdul Momen



Bangladesh positions itself in the contemporary world as a harbinger of peace, prosperity and partnership. Under the visionary leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the nation is cruising through an unprecedented journey of high socio-economic growth, aimed at emerging as a developed nation by 2041. For this,

apart from the undertaking and ongoing implementations of robust national sectoral policies, persuasion of our forward looking, value-based as well as pragmatic foreign policy is of utmost importance. Bangladesh’s foreign policy follows the dictum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as “Friendship to all, malice to none”. Accordingly, our diplomacy is aimed at maintaining friendship to all nations and not to get into and geo-political rivalry. We have constitutional obligation to abide by the principles of the UN Charter on non-interference, territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations. ▶▶

► Diplomacy is often termed as the first line of defence. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Missions abroad are relentlessly pursuing our foreign policy goals of fostering peace, prosperity and cooperation with international community. However, the present geo-political scenario in the globe has created several major challenges for our diplomatic endeavours. The forceful reclamation of super power status by Russia, the rise of the new super power China and the United States' policy to maintain its global hegemony at any cost; all these have created a gravely dangerous situation. The global pandemic since 2020 has also aggravated the distrust and distance among nations and among people, and the Ukraine War has unveiled an unparalleled state of volatility.

The war in Ukraine has created extraordinary geo-political tension since the Second World War. Apart from the conflict itself that is causing immense sufferings, the global economic downturn resulting from it is causing severe difficulties. Unfortunately, there is no sign of any cessation of the war. This war has created a global crisis of energy, food and finance; causing a sharp hike of commodity prices all over the globe, and is creating serious obstacles in our post-pandemic economic recovery.

The war has also caused another major strategic inconvenience for us. At the global level, Bangladesh continues its much-hailed role as a strong proponent of peace and stability, including through the leading role in UN Peacekeeping operations by steering a consensus resolution in the United Nations on the "Culture of Peace". Bangladesh always advocates for the resolution of any international or internal armed conflict through dialogue, discussion and negotiations. But at multilateral level, we are witnessing unprecedented polarization since the beginning of Ukraine conflict. Many resolutions are being adopted in the UN with languages with unilateral condemnation of Russia, by using the "Tyranny

of Majority". Russia has also been expelled from some UN and international bodies, notably the UN Human Rights Council. Many developing countries like Bangladesh that pursue a non-aligned foreign policy are being pressed to take a side; very often through undue political pressure.

'Bangladesh's perspective on the evolving global-regional geo-politics and challenges of diplomacy'

Another major global big-power rivalry, especially for the last two decades at least, is the one between the United States and China. In fact, not only the US but also its European and other allies appear really threatened by the mammoth economic rise of China; and they collectively are trying to contain China with the questionable narrative that China dominance in the global affairs would pose serious challenge to the "rule based international order"! The territorial rivalries in the South China Sea and China's "One China Policy" concerning Taiwan have emerged as the flashpoint of global and regional rivalry with the country by not only the collective West but also regional rivals like Japan and India. For Bangladesh, having close relations with India, China, Japan, the United States and the countries in Europe, maintaining balance and neutrality has been becoming difficult day by day.

At the regional level, while we are facing some traditional geo-political challenges; the global political, economic and strategic polarizations have also caused new sets of difficulties. In South Asia, nations are traditionally facing several geopolitical challenges such as territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, ethnic and religious divisions, climate change and natural disasters, proxy conflicts and disputes on water resources, etc, marking the region by a complex web of regional power dynamics. The apex one among these is the long-standing stand-off between India and Pakistan over the territorial issue of Kashmir. Indeed, tensions between these two nuclear-armed neighbours are not only impacting regional security, ►►

- ▶ but also hindering any meaningful pursuit of regional cooperation under the auspices of the SAARC.

Additionally, the region is withstanding at least two other major geo-political threats. Firstly, the old rivalry between two Asian superpowers China and India is looming on our head for decades, as close neighbour of both. While the possibility of the break out of any large-scale conflict appears distant, Bangladesh has to remain worried for two particular reasons. First factor is the fact that the flashpoints of the Indo-Chinese border are in close proximity of us, and the second being the nuclear capability of both countries.

The other geo-political threat has much more direct bearing on us, and that is the Rohingya crisis and the related scenario in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. This is like a time bomb; and may cause havoc to regional peace and stability. From Bangladesh's point of view, the repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingya population is the only viable solution of this crisis, as the present stalemate is truly untenable for us due to socio-economic, security and political reasons. While we are trying hard to commence repatriation, the complex alignments at the international and regional levels and the situation inside the Myanmar is making things more complex.

Now, apart from these, the recent global geo-political scenario is contributing to the regional theatre. The most important among this, for our region, is probably China's ever-increasing contention with the collective West and especially with the United States. There exists strong perception among many people that the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) of the US, along with all its paraphernalia like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and security pacts like the QUAD, the AUCUS etc. are aimed at containing China's economic and strategic influences. For example, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework of the United States clearly aims at countering the Belt

and Road Initiative (BRI) of China.

Another area where global geo-political rivalries are affecting us is the effect of western sanctions on Russia. Bangladesh had to act decisively, in recent past, about shipments of equipment for our under-construction nuclear plant in Rooppur; and now payment of loan instalment to Russia has become a challenge. Our import of food grains and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine and the export of RMG products to Russia are at stake. Also, some important defence related purchases remain pending, hindering further uplift of our defence capabilities. A nation's security apparatus needs to be upgraded in conjunction with its economic progress, in order to preserve strategic independence.

Bangladesh firmly believes that addressing these geopolitical challenges requires sustained dialogue, diplomatic efforts, and regional cooperation. Building trust, fostering conflict resolution mechanisms, promoting economic integration, and enhancing people-to-people exchanges can contribute to a more stable and prosperous South Asia. To that end, Bangladesh is undertaking diplomatic efforts in various forms. The recently concluded Indian Ocean Conference in Dhaka is indeed a good example of this. We have also recently published our own Indo-Pacific Outlook, the objective of which is to further clarify Bangladesh's peace-centric and development-oriented aspirations for the Indo-Pacific region. We have indeed clarified that Bangladesh is working for inclusive socio-economic growth for all. This also well commensurate with our national aspirations related to the sustainable exploitation of the Blue Economy.

Another menace that is, like many other parts of the world, remains as a major threat for the peace and stability in our region is indeed terrorism and violent extremism; posing significant security concerns, hindering regional cooperation, and impacting the stability and development. ▶▶

► Bangladesh has a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and violent extremism. We work together with neighbours on this closely; and we have a successful and effective anti-terrorism campaign at national level. Bad news is, sadly, the institutions and Special Forces that achieved such great success are now under sanctions.

Despite these difficulties Bangladesh is facing due to global and regional geo-political and geo-economic volatility, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Government remains steadfast in its pursuit to take forward the socio-economic progress of the nation. We believe that developmental progress of a country can effectively and meaningfully ensure its safety and security and can reduce strategic vulnerability.

Bangladesh has proven historically that its people's resilience against external negative factors is very strong. As a recent example, despite many horrific predictions from many corners of the globe, Bangladesh has successfully managed the grave pandemic situation not only in terms of keeping the infection rate and death toll low, but also maintaining the highest rate of economic

progress in South Asia.

Today, we are the 37th largest economy in the world, with GDP per capita growing at rates over 5% since 2015 peaking at U\$ 2469 at present. We are on track in graduating from the LDC status by 2026. The country is dominating the global RMG market in the second position, earning more than 34 billion USD till March in FY 2022-23. In fact, from 2005-06 to 2021-22, we have recorded more than four times increase in our export earnings. Also, the foreign remittance earned amounts to 21.285 billion USD, while more than 98 thousand new overseas employments have been created.

Indeed, the Government's special importance on the pursuit of economic diplomacy is one of the reasons of this robust performance. In order to achieving Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream of Sonar Bangla by 2041, Hon'ble Prime Minister has outlined few roadmaps; and to help achieving those roadmaps, we have introduced two packages. One is Economic Diplomacy package and the other is Public Diplomacy package, and they reinforce each other. Bangladesh's ►►



► ceaseless pursuit for economic and public diplomacy is giving desired results. The economic Diplomacy package has five components and these are: (1) More foreign investment, (2) More trade and export diversity, (3) Gainful employment of human resources both at home and abroad, (4) Transfer of technology, and (5) Quality services to Bangladeshi Diaspora and to others. Our Public Diplomacy package is designed to reinforce our Economic Diplomacy by reaching out to foreign leaders and audience. Bangladesh has two great resources. One is its young but huge manpower, and second, plenty of waters, rivers and rivulets. If we can fully utilise these resources, Bangladesh is sure to achieve its dream of Sonar Bangla. In order to exploit them, we need to have more investment and trade to create employment opportunity, and we need technology transfer to optimally use our resources. Keeping in mind the challenges that we will face soon due to LDC graduation, we are taking measures like efforts to secure post-graduation preferential access such as GSP-plus, to strengthen backward linkage industries, to conclude preferential and free trade deals as well as Double Taxation and Investment Protection Agreements, to diversify our export basket by prioritising sectors such ceramic, ship breaking, agriculture, pharmaceutical industry, blue economy and ICT, to attract Foreign Direct Investment by establishing Special Economic Zones and High-Tech Parks, and to improve “ease of doing business”.

We would like to make Bangladesh a manufacturing hub of the world. Being at the doorstep of the fourth industrial revolution, we have no option but to make right choices and take adequate preparation so that our youth can fully exploit the advantage of technologies. To that end, 83 thousand schools in the country have been provided with ICT devices and about 327 thousand teachers have been trained up in the use of ICT tools. We are establishing skills training institutions in each district.

Another major diplomatic effort that we have undertaken, especially at the regional level, is to get attention of other nations on Bangladesh’s emergence as a major economic hub, and thus enhancing our strategic importance through engaging opposing blocs more and more with us. This is being done with a focus on key sectors that capitalized on its strengths and resources. The RMG sector is indeed at the centre stage as a global leader, harnessing the nation’s abundant labour force and competitive advantage in manufacturing. The Government is also highly emphasizing on infrastructure development through undertaking massive investments in transport networks, facilitating efficient trade and connectivity within the country and with the rest of the world.

Bangladesh’s strategic geographic location at the crossroads of South Asia and Southeast Asia creates the potential to emerge as the gateway for regional connectivity and trade. We are actively participating in all regional forums including the SAARC, the BIMSTEC, the BBIN with the view to fostering economic cooperation and expanding market access. We are also patronizing digital platforms, e-commerce and start-up ecosystems; enabling entrepreneurs to reach customers both domestically and internationally. Bangladesh is also prioritizing human capital development.

Investments in education and skill-building programs, with the aim to empowering its workforce with the knowledge and expertise required. We are also emphasizing on inclusiveness, by introducing social safety nets, poverty alleviation programs, microfinance initiatives and access to financial services. Altogether, we continue to position ourselves as an economic powerhouse, with enhanced resilience, innovative spirit, and commitment to sustainable development.

Finally, at the global level including the multilateral arena, Bangladesh continues its proactive engagement at all levels. We firmly believe that, for emerging developing countries like Bangladesh, ►►

► this is of utmost importance to adhere to the spirit of multilateralism to overcome contemporary and emerging geo-political and developmental challenges. We are not only engaged actively in the United Nations system, but also in other global and regional multilateral domains like WTO, ILO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, OIC, Commonwealth, NAM, ASEM, ARF, SAARC and BIM-STEAC. We continue to engage actively in these forums with the view to promote and protect our national strategic and economic interests at the global stage. In this connection, one particular area that I would like to highlight is the South-South Cooperation. We are actively engaged in South-South cooperation and indeed have emerged as a major proponent of this in the UN, with the view to promote economic collaboration and to exchange technology and development experiences with other developing countries. In recent time, I have undertaken the initiative to create a forum of foreign and finance ministers of developing countries on South-South cooperation. We believe that if we can harness this properly and can meaningfully enhance South-South cooperation, our strategic and economic dependence on the developed world might gradually reduce. Another area in multilateral arena on which is giving high importance is the climate change, which is a global phenomenon that needs to be addressed through collective efforts and innovative solutions. Bangladesh, as one of the most vulnerable countries to the adverse impacts of Climate Change, has undertaken a vanguard role in raising and negotiating this issue in multilateral forums. We are a troika member of the Climate Vulnerable Forum; and have already set up Regional Global Adaptation Centre in Dhaka; and in order to save this planet earth we adopted Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan; a plan for vulnerability to resilience, resilience to prosperity.

An architect of independent Bangladesh and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman very well understood the importance of

strategic independence of our new-born country, and manoeuvred his foreign policy to forge a bipartisan position in matters related to international politics enabling Bangladesh to communicate, cooperate and trade with both the worlds. This position still continues under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Our proposition is clear that we want friendship with everyone, and are into any collective initiative of nations to forge socio-economic development. We may have lofty ideals and visions. But powerful country uses many sticks and tools to achieve their goals without military intervention, like issues of human rights, good governance, democracy, sanctions, and the like. During the election year, issues of participatory, free and fair election is a great tool to achieve many of its goals and contracts. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Government is determined to continue the upward trend of the socio-economic development of the country, and is ready to undertake any compromise or any confrontation at the global arena, for the interest of the country and the people.

At the backdrop of the existing global uncertainty marred with violence and geo-political rivalries, we would wish to give empathy, respect, tolerance and other positive human emotions a chance. Let us provide leadership to the world to create a mindset of tolerance and respect for others irrespective of religion, ethnicity and colour so that the spread of venom of hatred and intolerance and ignorance is over for a sustainable world of peace and stability. We all need to join hand with Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Government in our ceaseless endeavour to safeguard our national interests and values as well as to promote peace, prosperity and partnership among nations in the global arena, overcoming all geo-political and geo-economic challenges.

Dr. A K Abdul Momen is a Bangladeshi economist, diplomat, politician and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Fifty Years of Bangladesh-US Economic Cooperation

Dr. Atiur Rahman



Last year, I had the privilege of attending a three-day international program titled 'Bangladeshi Immigrant Day and Trade Fair 2022' in New York as a side event of UN General Assembly meetings by the heads of the governments. This non-governmental event was organized by the New York-based Mukta-hara Foundation and USA-Bangladesh Business Link in association with the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce. The event showcased the existing cultural and diplomatic relations to further facilitate USA-Bangladesh bilateral trade and business. The delegates from the USA and Bangladesh, comprising noted professionals and representatives from business conglomerates and investors, participated in both the fair and seminars, highlighting the theme of why foreign investors should invest in Bangladesh. The seminars focused on varied issues, including 'Investment opportunities in Bangladesh and promoting Bangladeshi products in the North

American market,' 'Bangladesh's digital revolution: IT outsourcing in Bangladesh, quality services at low cost,' 'Digital applications at massive scale-rise of Bangladesh,' 'The role of Non-Resident Bangladeshi intellectuals and professionals in the development of Bangladesh women empowerment' and 'Promoting formal remittances from the US to Bangladesh.' There were also several vibrant cultural events highlighting the contribution of ordinary people, media, and elected representatives from the USA in promoting Bangladesh's war of liberation in 1971. An exhibition of photographs of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was also organized to celebrate his birth centenary. Besides the President and many directors of the Bangladesh Federation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), the former Governor of the central bank of Bangladesh and several policymakers from Bangladesh participated in these interactive sessions. Also, the representative from New York's Mayor's office, the state senators, and prominent US citizens who participated in the 1971 campaign for the liberation of Bangladesh actively participated in these people-to-people conversations. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was also signed be-▶▶



Dr Atiur Rahman, Ex-Governor of BB, Syed Waseque Md Ali, MD of FSIBL, Md Jasim Uddin, President of FBCCI and Dr David Nalin, Co-founder of BICWDC 1971 seen at a programme in New York.

► tween the FBCCI and GNYCC (Greater New York Chamber of Commerce) to promote economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. It is hoped that these trade and remittance fairs will eventually become a permanent annual event to promote trade and business between the two countries.

While recalling the fifty years of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and the United States, it can safely be said that Bangladesh has emerged as an ‘important partner’ of the United States in the economic, climate, humanitarian, and security arenas. The recent document on Indo-Pacific Outlook by the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs carefully projects Bangladesh’s emerging engagement in this region at a time when the whole world is in the middle of geo-political tensions and restructuring. The growing economic and trade cooperation between the two countries and people has also been emphasized by the Bangladesh Premier in her message to the souvenir published by the organizers of the above trade fair in New York. She wrote, “The USA has been a steadfast partner of Bangladesh in our journey towards this extraordinary development. In the last 50 years, both countries have enjoyed

warm relations, development cooperation, climate change, counterterrorism, democracy, and human rights. Even during the pandemic, the USA extended support by providing many vaccines. I hope our partnership with the USA will be deepened to accomplish our shared goals in the decades to come.” Apart from government-to-government cooperation, the two people share the same aspirations of inclusive, democratic, and humane development as envisioned in their common history of anti-colonial struggles for independence. Recently, both nations have been fighting together in various global forums relentlessly against climate change challenges as a significant segment of their population has become victims of erratic climate events like hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. Also, the climate finance provided by USAID to various non-governmental and governmental organizations in Bangladesh has proven to be an extraordinary humanitarian gesture to the climate-affected people.

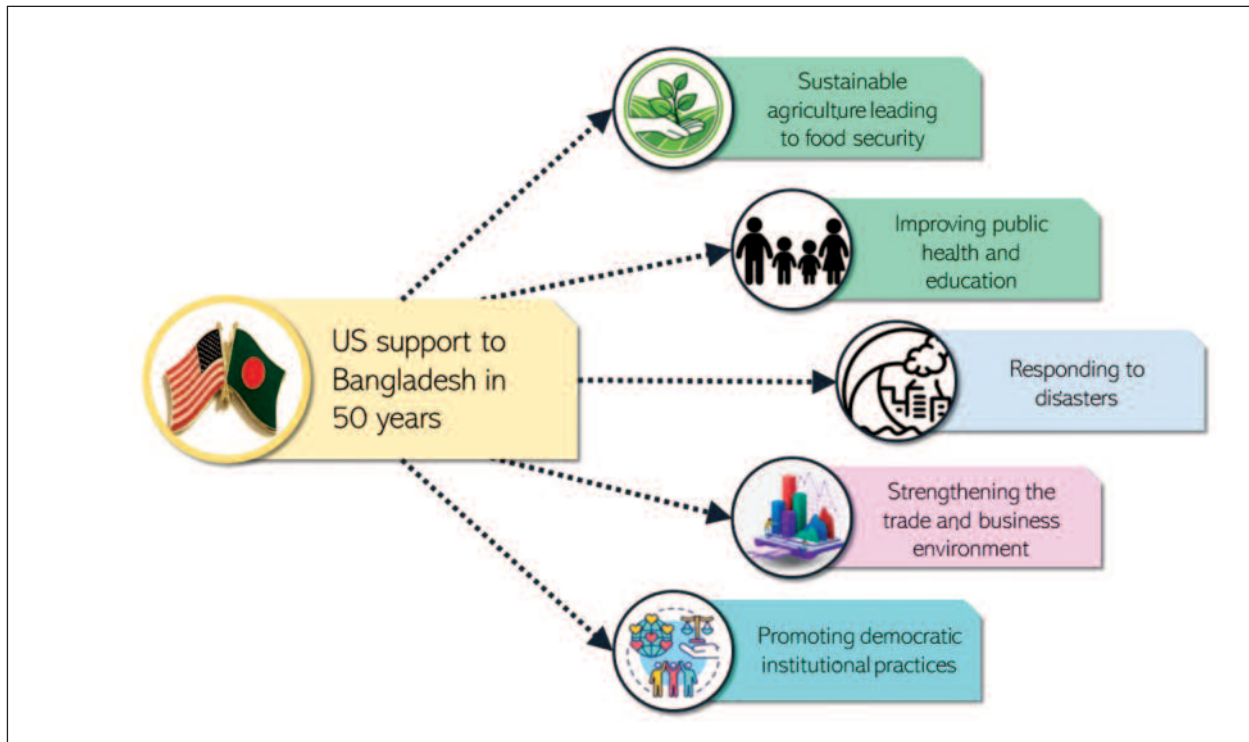
It may be noted here that this robust architecture of mutual relationship between the two nations originated in the tumultuous days of 1971 when the people and the leaders of the United States came forward to support the cause of ►►

► Bangladesh's independence despite opposition from the Nixon administration. Hence, the mutual relationship between the two nations is deeply embedded in the culture of freedom and democracy. We fondly remember the contributions of the late Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator Frank Church, and many other legislators across the board who came forward to enact the Foreign Aid Bill to stop economic assistance to Pakistan until they refrained from genocide in Bangladesh. The media also provided unprecedented support to the cause of Bangladesh by covering the grievances raised by the representatives of the wartime Government of Bangladesh, including Professor Rehman Sobhan. The US intelligentsia and members of various civic and cultural groups came out of their comfort zones. They aligned themselves with the students and other activists who condemned the genocide in occupied Bangladesh. We must pay our deepest respect to noted journalists like Sydney H Schanberg of the New York Times and Tony Clifton of Newsweek for popularizing the cause of Bangladesh not only in Congress but throughout the United States. Cultural icons like George Harrison and Ravi Shankar organized the Concert for Bangladesh at Madison Square in New York on August 01, 1971, to raise funds for supporting humanitarian aid for the refugees forced out of Bangladesh during the liberation war. That historic bond has been further cemented by the visit of Senator Edward Kennedy to the newly independent Bangladesh and subsequent support for its reconstruction by both the government and philanthropies of the United States.

There has been significant improvement in relations between the two nations during the last fifty years, paving the way for deeper cultural, economic, and strategic cooperation. The US educational institutions have been particularly attracting young talents from Bangladesh for quality higher education, many of whom are returning to Bangladesh and contributing significantly to

its development as young professionals and creative entrepreneurs. There has also been a considerable flow of immigrants to the United States, and they are now playing an important role as small and medium entrepreneurs, and many are engaged in private and public services. We must appreciate American society for welcoming the non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) amidst them and providing a space for their development. It may also be noted that the NRBs from the United States now regularly send a significant portion of remittances to Bangladesh, contributing hugely to its macroeconomic stability and strengthening the pace of economic growth. The USA is now the second largest source of remittances of foreign exchange for Bangladesh. This formal inflow of foreign remittance to Bangladesh has been critical in maintaining macroeconomic stability during the global economic crisis. It is also one of the top destinations for our apparel exports.

Besides seeking a robust, multi-faceted, and mutually respectful relationship, both countries have been engaging in deeper economic ties. Over the fifty years, the United States has invested over eight billion dollars in various projects to improve the lives of Bangladeshis. It has supported sustainable agriculture, increased food security, modernized small-scale farming, provided the necessary support for climate adaptation, and conserved biodiversity. In addition, the US support for strengthening the trade and business environment, improving public health and education, responding to disasters, and promoting democratic institutional practices deserve to be noted here. Its robust support for hosting about a million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who fled from neighboring Myanmar to avoid state-sponsored genocide must also be especially noted here. Recently, some of the members of the US Congress moved a resolution to condemn Pakistan for perpetrating genocide in 1971 against the freedom-loving people of Bangladesh. This gesture of the US lawmakers has raised hope that this genocide ►►

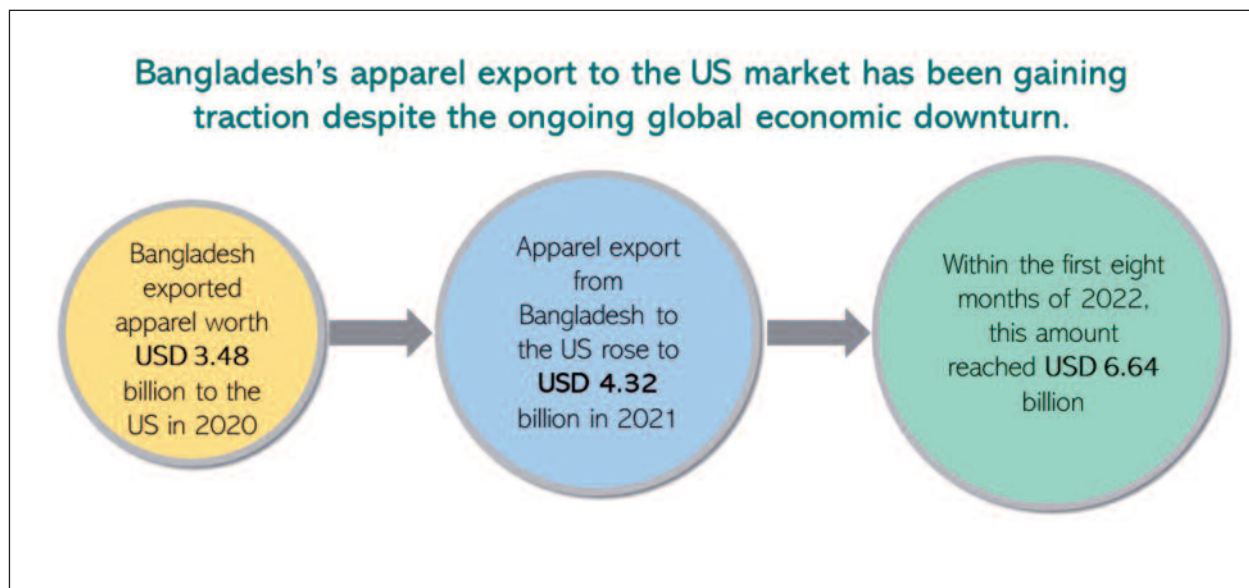


► will surely get global formal recognition in the coming days. As noted earlier, our Prime Minister has acknowledged the support provided by the United States in procuring COVID-19 vaccines through COVAX. It also provided more than 121 million USD worth of lifesaving COVID-19-related health equipment and other assistance to Bangladesh to cope with the pandemic.

The US market for Bangladesh’s export of apparel, leather products, pharmaceuticals, and processed agricultural products has been gaining stronger ground as the latter’s economic growth has been gaining pace, defying most challenges, including the pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine War. The US is the second largest destination of Bangladeshi apparel, following Europe. It has been reported that Bangladesh has exported 6.64 billion US dollars of apparel during the first eight months of 2022. This sector earned 4.32 billion USD in 2021. This was only 3.48 billion USD in 2020. In other words, the export of apparel to the US market has been gaining traction despite the ongoing global economic downturn. That means Bangladesh’s apparel increased

by 53.70% compared to that of 37.35% from global sources. China and Vietnam recorded 37% and 33% respectively. Simultaneously, the US companies are the largest foreign investors in Bangladesh, accounting for 4.3 billion USD of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in 2021. This was about 20% of the total stock of FDI in Bangladesh. These investments are concentrated in sectors like natural gas extraction, banking and insurance, and power generation. We also get support from US companies in the transportation and infrastructure sectors regarding receiving high-quality airplanes, locomotives, power generation turbines, renewable energy development, and dredging equipment.

The recently launched US-Bangladesh Business Council has been helping both countries in steering further deeper commercial ties between the economic stakeholders. In fact, the Bangladesh government has been pushing forward several proactive initiatives to enhance the production capacity and productivity of our export products, along with further diversification of these products through the improvement of related infra-►►



► structure, R&D initiatives, and smarter economic diplomacy. The US chambers and think tanks can help expedite this endeavor of Bangladesh. Many universities and research institutes now have a substantial number of NRB scientists and technology experts who are familiar with the ground realities of Bangladesh. Their technical inputs can indeed prove to be valuable in enhancing the manufacturing capacity of Bangladesh in alignment with the needs of the US market.

Besides the economic and commercial ties, the two countries are also on the same page in fostering strategic cooperation in building peace worldwide. It may be noted that Bangladesh is the largest contributor to peacekeeping operations and helping peacebuilding in the sectarian-strife parts of the world. Both countries work hand in hand with various global and regional organizations, including the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization, ASEAN Regional Forum, and many other UN-led multilateral organizations. Bangladesh's leadership in promoting climate-friendly development and financial inclusion is deeply respected by the United States.

Indeed, both countries have benefited from the dynamic partnership in promoting issues of multilateral interests. It is hoped they will continue

to work even more closely in the coming days as the post-pandemic and post-Ukraine-war world will be different. As already indicated by the rising inflation, energy and food prices, and increased protectionism, there is a need for deeper cooperation between the partnering countries to address these challenges. Both countries, therefore, need to be on their toes to fight for sanity and humanity in the changed context. And here, not only the state but also the non-state actors will have enough role to play in addressing the burning challenges thrown out by the Global Economic Crisis following the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and other geopolitical tensions in various parts of the world.

Finally, the people and the governments of both Bangladesh and the United States deserve profound appreciation for successfully completing fifty years of their robust diplomatic relations. I hope a much deeper mutual understanding and respect between the two nations will follow in the next fifty years, embracing aspirations for freedom and climate-resilient inclusive development for their people and environment.

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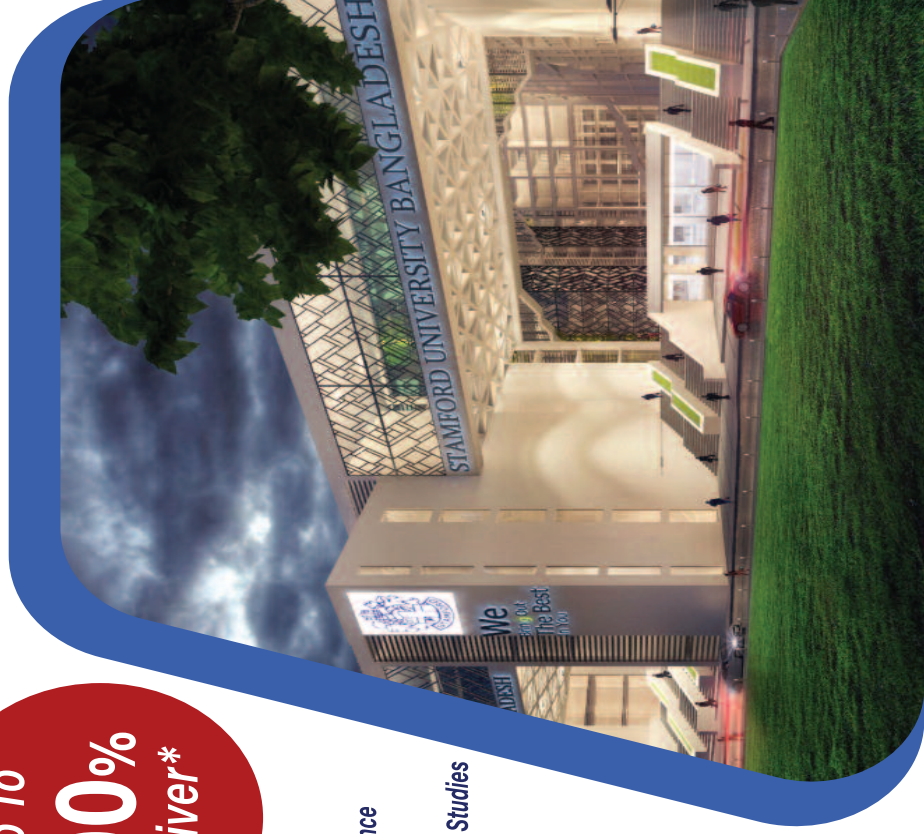
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Part-I

Transforming the Paper Money to Digital

Takings from and Makings of Central Bank Digital Currency

Dr. Jamaluddin Ahmed



This paper introduces the background and motivation for the CBDC. This includes the *form of money* throughout history, the roles of money as a *means of payment*, *store of value*, and commercial

bank money. Central bank money is a liability of the central bank, while *commercial bank* money is the *digital form* of money commonly used by the *public*. Since the 1940s and 50s, public money was in the form of cash. However, the *FinTech revolution* has given birth to payment services such as Google Pay, AliPay, Samsung Pay, bKash, M-Pesa, WeChat, and Transend, transforming and revolutionizing the payment industry. The term Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) refers to *granting universal, electronic, 24x7 national currency-*

denominated and interest-bearing access to its balance sheet or any *electronic, fiat liability* of a central bank that can be used to *settle payments* or as *store value*. Some view CBDC as *electronic narrow money* and, in some senses, already existing in the form of central bank reserves. In a *nutshell*, CBDC will provide *faster, more reliable, and cost-effective services* such as *security settlement* for capital markets, *cross-border payments*, *instant domestic payments*, *instant peer-to-peer* wallet transactions, *large value transactions* and settlements, *programmable money*, MSME lending, and *offline payments*. The CBDC could be useful in addressing the consequences of the decline in cash. CBDC covers *three paradigms* of money: *accounts-based retail CBDC* without DLT, *value-based retail CBDC* without DLT, and *retail CBDC* based on DLT and *wholesale CBDC* based on DLT. The *first* are being tested by the central bank of Sweden. The CBDC should also cover *three paradigms* of money, such as *value-based money*, *fiat money*, and *decentralized money*. When issuing CBDC, com-▶▶



► *mon public policy objectives allowing common principles to be agreed upon should be kept in mind. These objectives are identified as not impeding a central bank in carrying out its mandates, co-existing with cash and robust private money, enabling innovation and efficiency, and following three fundamental principles: do no harm, co-existence, and innovation efficiency. Examples of CBDC projects include CBDC technology considerations, the current landscape of digital currency, comparisons of CBDC with physical cash and alternate private digital money, currencies launched CBDC pilots, and research stages. The CBDC feasibility overview for developing and emerging economies and by regions, criteria enabling environment priorities, design priorities with demand infrastructure and supply availabilities, have been placed. We should bear in mind that the concept of CBDC has been conceived*

of considering the state to conduct monetary management running by a sovereign-state conducting through the economic nucleus named the central bank. In order to achieve the above objectives, this paper is structured into seven sections, which are listed with a short description presented in the following paragraphs.

The Economic Rationale and Concerns for Central Bank Digital Currency

This section presents an overview of the *economic justifications* for achieving the most efficient, fastest, and least costly way. It explains how CBDC *reduces* the transaction costs of the prevailing payment system and *enables financial inclusion* at a faster rate, *reducing tax evasion, money laundering, and illegal transactions.* CBDC creates the ►

► possibility for the central bank to *reduce* the risk of *transportation* and the cost of *carrying* cash, and aims to eliminate cash from the money supply to *reduce crime* by introducing widely available retail CBDC. The paper discusses the *efficiency* gains, *competition* from *private* money, cross-border *payment efficiency*, ensuring *financial stability*, increased *seigniorage revenue*, enhancing the *competitiveness* of the banking system, and *improving* financial inclusion. In addition, the paper identifies the key *feasibility* and *operational* challenges, *legal* considerations, issues of *money laundering*, combating *finance of terror* concerns, *privacy* concerns, and *cyber security*. It also explains concerns related to central bank *overstepping* its role, *unknown* factors, *effects* on monetary policy and *commercial* banks, effects on the *payment* system, and security.

CBDC for Transforming of Informal Economy into Formal

The *informal* economy is *pervasive* in most economies and has a *negative* impact on many aspects of a *country* and *society*. It *obscures* a country's real economic value and output. This section emphasizes the use of CBDC to help *reduce* the size of the *informal* economy. It *identifies* the *dark side* of cash, which *enables* the *informal* economy, and *explains* available measures to *reduce* it by introducing *digital payment policy measures*, *financial inclusion* measures, *tailored* financial products, broader *reach*, *financial literacy*, and *impact analysis* of digital payment measures. The section also presents the macroeconomic *consequences* and monetary policy implications of CBDC, as well as the SWOT analysis of CBDC. Attention is drawn to the *unprepared legal* aspects and private crypto-assets *competition* that require policy makers' attention.

Key Drivers, Economic Impact, and Risks of CBDC

This section explains the needs for CBDC, which

are driven by the *push for faster* payments, *rapid* digitization, and *better* mitigation of *clearing and settlement* risk. There is a demand for cross-border *value transfer* and *financial* inclusion. This section discusses the different *drivers* and the need for *trust*, *efficiency* in the financial system, *improved* financial access and *inclusion*, and *enhanced* monetary and fiscal policy support. It also covers global *benchmarking* and country projects related to CBDC. The key considerations for CBDC for different stakeholders have been elaborated, including the *technologies and access options*. The *choice* between retail and/or wholesale CBDC has been described, and different *approaches* to the issuance and circulation of CBDC have been presented and explained. The section also discusses CBDC use cases and their *impact* on different financial service players, including a *forward-looking* view. A 10-focus country profile with a sector legend is included in this section.

Technical Design Choices for CBDC

This section presents the *proposed* technology and *design* mechanism that would be required to achieve the expected *economic* benefits of *transforming* traditional *paper-based* central bank currency into CBDC. It details the participants' *transport layer*, whether it is *less* intermediated or *more* intermediated, the *roles* of financial *intermediaries*, who has access to the *payment system technology*, and at what level. The *transport* layer of a CBDC system determines whether a *third party* is needed to facilitate transfers between two parties, and if so, who the third party or parties are. The benefits and *drawbacks* of each design choice are described. Interoperability is discussed, specifically, the level of *technical* interoperability with *other* systems. Governance, *specifically*, permissioned vs. permissionless, is also discussed. Access *tiering*, by *user* accounts, *transition*, *counterparty*, or none, is highlighted. Identity *privacy*, whether *known* to the central bank, intermediary, or none, is discussed. ►►

► Remediation, on-ledger, and off-ledger are analyzed. Design choice benefits and drawbacks are described. Secure hardware, whether more hardware-based or more software-based, is brought to light. Transaction signature, whether no signature, single signature, or multi-signature signing, is highlighted. Transaction privacy, whether more observable transaction or layering, is documented. Offline transactions, transaction programmability, data model, account balance, ledger history, holding limit, and adjustment on the transaction are analyzed.

The Legal Issues to be addressed before implementing the CBDC

Since the creation of the sovereign state, central banks have been responsible for monetary management, including currency. As business and economic activity has grown, transaction volumes and costs, as well as the risk of doing business, have increased substantially. Economists, central bankers, banking experts, and the business community all agree that technology should be utilized to enhance the national payment system, including the introduction of a central bank digital currency, for faster, more secure, and less costly for financial inclusion, and to curb money laundering, tax evasion, illicit money transfers, and reduce the informal economy and black money creation.

Central Bank Digital Currency in Progress and Comparative Analysis

This paper addresses the required changes needed in the relevant clauses of laws, which need to be adjusted for CBDC, as they were originally crafted based on paper money. It identifies relevant sections that needed to be changed in line with the new situation for the customized implementation of CBDC. The section reviews the experiences of countries that have already started CBDC or are progressing at the project phase. Central banks moving towards digitalization need to rearrange their regulations to align with the technology-driven

system adjustment to avoid future confusion. This section draws attention to the reform of central bank law, monetary law, monetary unit reform, and legal tender status, which need to be allowed for CBDC. Private law privileges and general law protection should be accommodated in the system before the adoption of CBDC.

The structure of this section is as follows: first, it describes the design of the current survey and explains how it differs in focus and coverage from other surveys. Second, the section then proceeds to present the key results and attempts to enhance the findings by reviewing selected country case studies. Third, this section distills some crucial lessons for those countries on their journey in this field. Finally, it concludes by providing insights and considerations for the way forward.

The development of digital payment systems in the private sector, thanks to the technological revolution in the payment service industry, has led to more secure, trusted, cost-effective, and faster transaction processing. This has added significant economic value across the globe. Initially, many countries were reluctant to shift from traditional payment systems, especially developed countries that had promoted, sponsored, and developed traditional payment systems. However, Sweden in the EU and China, with its command economy, have been exceptions, as they have pursued a cashless society and introduced central bank digital currencies, leaving behind the old paradigm of paper currency and cash-based society. They have also leveraged the benefits of technological advancements in the payment service industry for better monetary management.

Innovative types of cryptocurrencies are being used in the private sector, each with specific benefits and limitations that are subject to control by the central bank, which acts as the sovereign authority. Political scientists refer to this control as sovereign state control, which is typically carried out through independent central banks in each country. This paper aims to define the core functions of central banks ►►

► in the introduction. With the ongoing *digitization* of the economy and the *rapid technological* advancements in the *payment* industry, the way *people make payments* is changing. There is a growing demand for e-money and a decreasing demand for cash. As a result, the system under which *currencies and money* are used is changing. From a system perspective, the *growth and decline* of payment methods are leading to a *competitive* environment. The same is true for currencies and money, where a *key paradigm* is the assumption that *good money*, especially money that *enjoys consumer trust*, will prevail over *weaker* forms of money.

History provides evidence that public money was strictly in cash up until the 1950s. Even for researchers, it was difficult, if not outright impossible, to imagine that within less than 60 years, the monetary system would work worldwide and that transactions to the other side of the world would be *frequent, necessary, and instant*. For consumers, the rise of manifold applications, such as Google, Alipay, bKash in Bangladesh, M-Pesa in Kenya, and many others, has brought benefits to the payment service industry through digitalization. This has led central bankers and policymakers worldwide to openly debate the implementation of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). The acceptance of CBDCs would imply that the *central bank* becomes a *financial intermediary* in the economy and becomes *involved in maturity* transformation.

Thus, a CBDC is simply the digital form of a country's fiat currency. This paper presents four proposals on CBDC, *three paradigms* of money, issuing a CBDC, *three fundamental principles*, updates on CBDC initiatives, examples of CBDC projects, public vs. private money, the *potential impact* of a fully *electronic* currency system, *design choices* for CBDC instrument design, *ledger design*, and *incentive* design. The paper also discusses the *current landscape* of CBDC and its *early state* of play, as well as the *inevitability* of CBDC. It *compares* CBDCs with *physical cash* and *alternative pri-*

private currencies, and documents countries where retail CBDC/digital currencies have *launched*, are being *piloted*, or are being researched. The paper also reports on the combined macroeconomic impact of CBDCs and *digital currencies* on LDCs, as well as the *unbanked* communities that are on the frontline for maintaining currency sovereignty. Finally, the paper considers global considerations for shadow banking and COVID-19.

This paper presents the economic rationale and concerns for CBDC, including ensuring legal tender availability, efficiency gains, competition from private money, improving cross-border payment efficiency, ensuring financial stability, combating illegal activities, enhancing competitiveness of the banking system, and improving financial inclusion. The paper also details the key *feasibility* and operational challenges, *legal* considerations, *anti-money laundering* and combating the *financing of terrorism* concerns, privacy concerns, *cyber security*, and the potential for central banks to *overlap* their roles. The paper also discusses the *unknown factors* and effects of CBDC on monetary policy, zero to lower bound, helicopter money, inflation, seigniorage, private cryptocurrencies, effects on commercial banks, funding of non-interest bearing CBDCs, interest-bearing CBDCs, and the possible changes for commercial banks, including raising deposit rates, higher lending rates, changes in bank lending, cost reduction, higher risk, bank runs, lender of last resort, deposit insurance, private *innovations*, financial *inclusion*, stronger and more *resilient* banks, and mintettes. The paper also examines the effect of CBDC on payment systems, including *immediate* settlement, *peer-to-peer* payment, *cross-border* payments, *cost reduction*, and *increased* volume of *migrant* remittances. Finally, the paper discusses the *business case* for CBDC in terms of cost reduction from correspondent banking systems, cross-border payment via mCBDC corridor networks, security in emerging economies, and technological leap. ►►

► CBDC has the potential to *transform the informal economy* into a formal one by *reducing its size*. Correlation analysis shows that cash enables the informal economy, but by providing measures such as *financial inclusion, tailored financial products, and broader reach*, CBDC can help reduce the size of the informal economy. Impact analysis of four digital payment measures has shown their impact on the informal economy, including Bangladesh's trade-related illicit financial outflows, which deepen the dollar shortage and persisting losses due to money laundering. The amount of *black money* in Bangladesh is estimated to be over BDT 10 trillion. Additionally, the cost of *cash handling* in the UK is another factor that suggests the economic rationale for establishing CBDC. The macroeconomic and monetary policy implications of CBDC, as well as its political and monetary impacts, have been analyzed along with a SWOT analysis. Macro aspects of CBDC have also been examined, including its *impact on cash, access to central bank money, retail payment services, access to government payments, financial inclusion, the retail payment market, monetary policy, control of monetary policy, financial intermediation stability, and financial integrity*.

CBDC is driven by *several key factors* such as the need for *faster payments, rapid digitization, and better mitigation for clearing and settlement risks*. Its benefits include *bringing central banks back to the currency creation and trust, increasing efficiency in the financial system, improving financial access, and enhancing monetary and fiscal policy*. The Asia Pacific region is *leading in the development and benchmarking of CBDCs*. Countries such as Singapore, Cambodia, China, Japan, India, Australia, Thailand, Brazil, Hong Kong, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, Russian Federation, and the United States are at different stages of CBDC implementation. The *key considerations for CBDC implementation* include *regulatory frameworks, technology choices, access options, issuance and circulation models, user cases, and the impact on fi-*

ancial services players. It is also important to consider *monetary implications for ecosystem players* and to take a forward-looking view. Focus country profiles with sector-level analysis are also important, considering *factors such as the size and drivers of the informal economy, the sector profile of the informal economy, measures against the informal economy, and the impact of digital payments*. However, CBDC also comes with risks and challenges that must be addressed, including *privacy concerns, cybersecurity risks, and the impact on financial intermediaries*.

The *technical design choices* for CBDC have been analyzed, with a focus on the design choices that are likely to matter to policymakers. The analysis makes a few starting assumptions, such as the system being mostly *permissionless* from a governance standpoint. However, the design choice introduces a larger number of technical complexities and practical limitations that strongly suggest a sense for a system that has at least one trusted entity, which is the central bank. A CBDC system could be managed by a set of trusted entities, a network of system participants, or a combination of both. The participants in the *transport layer* could be less intermediated or more intermediated, depending on the *economic rationale and policymaker decisions* at the *political level*. The *interoperability with other payment systems* could be *permissioned or permissionless*. Governance could be managed by a *set of trusted entities* or a *network of system participants, or a combination of the two*. The *access tiering* could be by user account, transaction amount, counterparty, or none, depending on policy choice.

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Cybercrime in Social Media in Bangladesh and Prevention of Harassment

Dr. Kudrat-E-Khuda Babu



Unprecedented and rapid expansion of ICT has meant it has become a common platform for prospective criminals intending to commit crimes in a non-traditional manner. These new-age crimes are popularly known as cybercrimes in the form of stalking, hacking, cyber obscenity, cyber theft, breach of confidentiality, etc. The rampant growth of IT has pushed the legislators of developing countries like Bangladesh into various challenges and difficulties in moulding new legal regimes to govern the virtual world from multiple types of cyber problems. Now cybercrime in social media is in a state of flux, which not only demands adequate tools to combat this but also requires terminological clarification of particular conduct as cybercrime or not. Every single person using the internet nowadays

uses social networking sites (SNSs). Social media has become a platform for every kind of communication. Nowadays often every internet user operates SNSs as their tools of communication and social media has become a common platform for often every type of internet communications. It has made our society more compact and our relations to each other more condensed. With the advent of information technology (IT), our life has become easier and also made crime easier too. IT obliterates the need for actual physical contact to commit the crime and this paves the way of maintaining anonymity by cybercriminals. The intrusion and proliferation of computer-based programs into often every sphere of our life have widened the opportunity for perpetrators to commit so many forms of committing crimes that had never been possible previously. This created some latest and highly modernised facilities and options for sinister to break the law which are technically known as cybercrime. Such crime has assumed a very wide implication where everything in our life from the microwave oven to the nuclear power plant is being run on computers. ▶▶



► This term being a multidimensional concept creates a myriad of iceberg situations as there is no coherent, consistent and concurrently formulated connotation. Bangladesh responded to cyber problems in early 2006 by putting in place the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006. To accelerate justice for cybercrime victims and to warn potential cybercriminals, the government has enacted the ‘Digital Security Act, 2018’. This act deals with the new horizon of cybercrimes such offences related to the illegal entrance in critical information infrastructure, transmitting any information which is defamatory in nature, tampering with computer source documents, digital or electronic fraud, etc. But to remove any type of legal hurdles, the present legal instruments need to be analyzed to test whether provisions are adequate to combat any

cybercrime or not and to recommend necessary changes as needed.

As the nature of the technology is progressive, it is hard to confine the term ‘cybercrime’ within the boundary of a concrete definition. Generally, cybercrime refers to all crimes using a computer or network system where such computer or network system is a tool or target of the crime. Normally, it denotes to the harmful actions or omissions done by the use of computers or computer networks. Cybercrimes are those crimes committed in a network environment or on internet. The emerging interests of people worldwide and easy accessibility of the internet leads to the coining of the term ‘social media’ which is yet to be defined constructively and exhaustively. Social media ‘is interactive Web 2.0 internet-based ►

► application that facilitates the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with those of other individuals and/or groups'. Moreover, social media is a recent form of computer technology which facilitates the dispensing of the thinking, views, opinions, and information in the society through the medium of virtual networking systems. SNSs permit people to build up their own profile under a sophisticated system and sort out the lists of their chosen one to share connections and views. Social media may contain a variety of activities based on a digital device as like photo sharing, writing, social gaming, social interaction, video transmitting with each other, commercial ads, reviews, etc. Even it is used nowadays as a strong tool of governance and motivating voters at the time of the election. But in personal life, social media is used to maintain personal communication with friends and family members, obtain career facilities, find people across the world of the same character and interests, and share their thoughts, feelings, and passions and those who involve themselves in these activities are called to be a part of virtual social network.

One of the devastating incidents that originated from Facebook activities in Bangladesh was 2012 Ramu (Cox's Bazar) Violence. In late September in 2012, the monasteries, shrines, and houses of Buddhist inhabitants were burnt to the ground following an image posted on Facebook wall that depicted the desecration of the Holy Quran. The image was posted on the Facebook wall of Uttam Kumar Barua, a local Buddhist, by an unknown or fake user using a pseudonym. Following the Facebook post, thousands of people brought out protest processions and eventually vandalized and put fire on the temples, shrine, monasteries and houses of the Buddhist claiming that Buddhist youth Uttam Kumar Barua 'insulted Islam' on social media. Later, it was found in the several

media and government reports that the Buddhist Uttam Kumar Barua was innocent and it was provoked by someone intentionally. The Ramu Violence clearly depicts how social media was used then to reach a vast number of people within a very short time. It was evident that nobody then raised any question about the authenticity of the Facebook post while a group took the advantage of social media. A year later, violence ensued following a fake Facebook post at a Hindu dominated neighborhood in Bonogram area of Pabna district in Bangladesh on November 3, 2013. Several mobs went on rampage and vandalised several idols and temples, and 25 houses of Hindu community following a Facebook post, reportedly posted by the minority boy Rajhib Saha on a 'Facebook page' that maligned Prophet Muhammad. Hindu community families had to flee the area to save them from the attack. However, it was reported later that the boy had no connection with the Facebook page or post. Rather, he was framed by someone intentionally misusing Facebook. In Comilla district, another attack was carried out on the Hindu community at Bakhsitarampur village under Homna upazila in 2014 following a rumour based on Facebook that left at least 28 houses of the community ransacked. Around 3,000 protesters went on rouge on the neighbourhood Hindu community after news that two Hindus posted defamatory comments on Facebook about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) disseminated online that happened to be fake. Social media had also been used to trigger violence in this incident.

People are more interested or somehow bound by the demand of the system to share their personal details, e.g., birthday, contact address, e-mail, hometown, relationship status on their social networking profiles. Nowadays, social media has been the best place for investors worldwide to advertise them, to gather information or to sell their ►►

► products but its number of features also poses a threat by attracting fraudsters for the crime. Phishing is also considered as technical fraud by social engineering where huge emails are sent to secure the trust of the targeted victim and asking him to do as directed rather rationally.

Instead of adequate measures are taken for security, the criminogenic aptitudes of potential cybercriminal has given way to new kinds of crimes like cyber fraud which includes selling and buying of stolen goods, non-delivery of products or services, payment fraud, online advertising frauds and the most familiar one is opening fake IDs on SNSs. The number of cybercrimes has mushroomed in Bangladesh in the last few years as the cases increased. A report recently published by Cyber Crime Awareness Foundation (CCAF), also revealed that around 73.71% of victims (both male and female) are aged between 18 and 30 years, 10.52% are below 18 while 12.77% be-

tween 30–45 years and 3% above 45 years of age. Online sexual extortion, Online threats and stalking on social media, Hacking of social media accounts, Spreading malware and viruses through social media, Fabricating news on social media, Posting videos of criminal activity, Bullying on social media, etc. are the common offences in Bangladesh committed through the social media.

Every invention has two aspects, both good and bad. People with a guilty mind use the technology to commit various crimes which are different from general crime as defined in the Penal Code, 1860. Thus, the Government of Bangladesh has already made several laws to regulate the activities of its subjects in cyberspace and to punish the criminals of the sector. However, as to the trial procedure, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, shall be followed in adjudicating the cases under the purview of the computer-related crime.



- ▶ Prevention is always the best solution than cure. A social media user must be careful and cautious while operating various social media sites by posting videos, audios, comments, references of other news or posts, and transmitting messages. Any type of negligence may make his/her social media life complicated with severe consequences in real life. A social media user and the state should keep in mind the following instructions for the prevention of social media harassment:
 - To avoid disclosing any personal information pertaining to oneself in SNSs.
 - To avoid sharing any photographs, videos, images using social media apps to strangers and even to friends as it may be misused over time.
 - To monitor and observe closely the SNSs visited, apps used, online social communities integrated and links attached by the children is important by the parents to protect them from online harassment.
 - Revising and restructuring existing legal frameworks befitting with the demands of the cyber world.
 - Using strong passwords or other security processes for different social media sites following the directions of the sites.
 - Different social awareness programs should be launched to make the young users cautious of the various threats in social media use and their speedy recovery systems.
 - As often every student both undergraduate and graduate level is now connected to the use of social media sites, a book chapter can be included in the ICT course on social media use discussing the threats and precautionary steps.
- Law enforcing agencies should be equipped with sophisticated technological instruments and be trained to cop up with the advancing rate of cybercrimes in social media.
- Government bodies like BTRC should be aware of the users having details and must have a coordinating mechanism with owners of the social networks to find out the criminals easily.

Human life was effortful before the wonderful invention of modern science. As the internet made our daily-activities easier, it also facilitated ways to do its related crimes for the criminals. Cybercriminals availing of unawareness and inefficiency of the human beings in using the internet do various crimes which compel the authority of the states to think of the ways to prevent them. A constructive solution is taken for children. The most recent optional protocol to the CRC, the OP3 on a communications procedure, allows minors to file a direct complaint to the UN, when their national legal system cannot guarantee remedy. Cybercrime causes huge damage in the world economy. In August of 2016, cyber security ventures predicted that cybercrime will cost the world \$6 trillion annually by 2021, up from \$3 trillion in 2015. So, it is our common duty to be more conscious while we use the internet, especially social media sites and other modern technology.

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Book Review

The Bay of Bengal: Geopolitics and the Quad

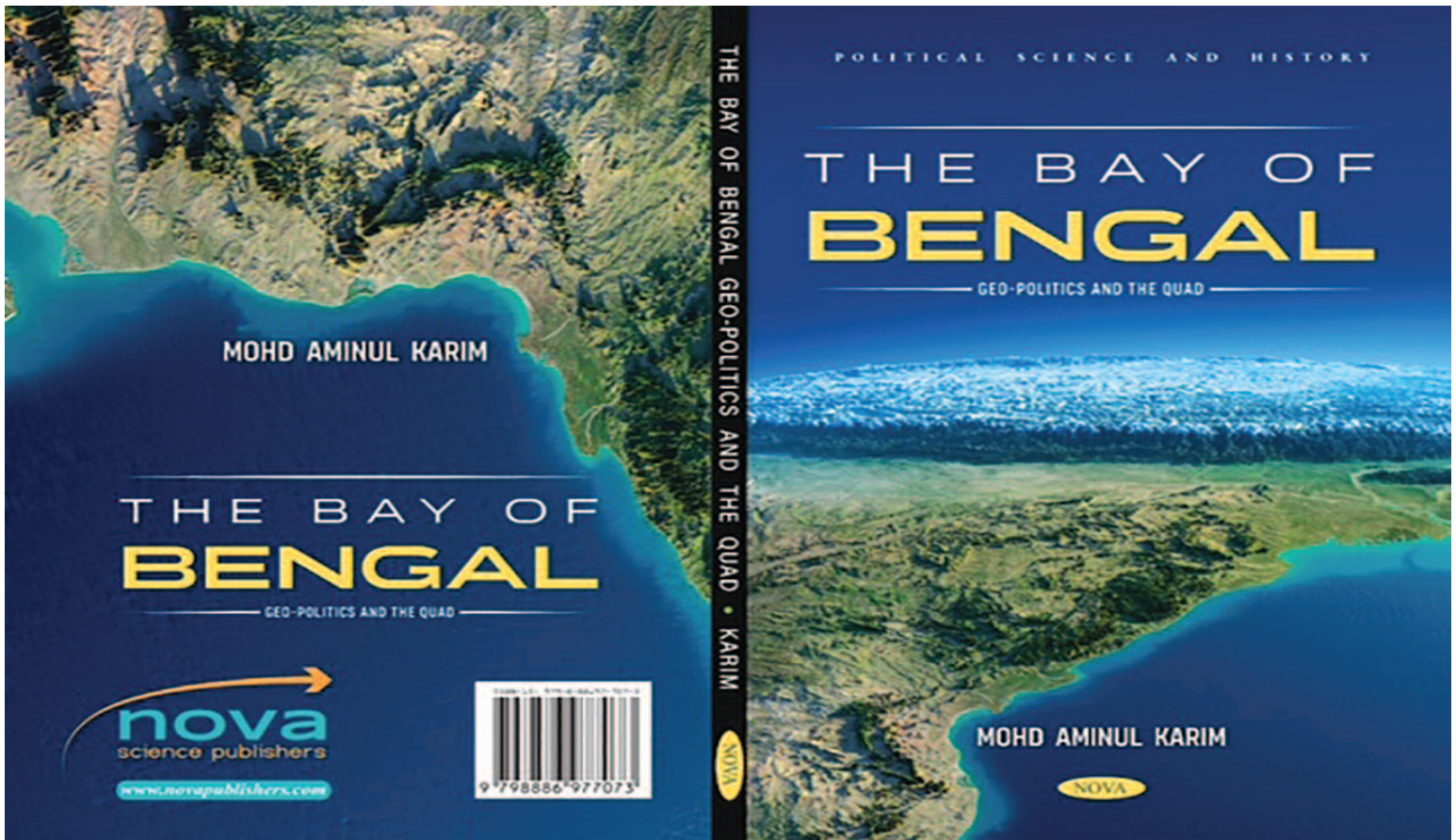
Dr. Indu Saxena



The book *The Bay of Bengal: Geopolitics and the Quad* is written by Lt. General (Prof.) Mohammd Aminul Karim and is published by Nova Science Publishers, New York in May 2023. It's a very timely and pertinent book focused on the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean Region, at the time when the rivalry between the United States and China has been increasing on Taiwan and in South China Sea, the one hand and on the other side it has been almost one and half year of the Russia-Ukraine war. The book is divided into twelve chapters and the title of the book itself delves into power dynamics and competition in the Indo-Pacific region, highlighting the significance of the Bay of Bengal from both geo-political and geo-economic perspectives.

The author Professor Karim, who is a retired Lieutenant General of Bangladesh Army and an academician, has an enriching experience on the geo-politics of the Indo-Pacific region. The Author is tempted to write on this topic since "the Bay of Bengal is connected to the South China Sea (SCS) through the constricted and sensitive choke points of the Malacca Strait."

The importance of the Bay of Bengal in the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a widely discussed topic due to its strategic significance and an emerging Indo-Pacific realm led by the United States. This area is a vital link between South and Southeast Asia and plays a significant role in the ongoing competition among global powers. The re-emergence of formal and informal alliances like Quad and AUKUS make the region pivotal for the coming years. The book fascinatingly comprehends the major issues like trade, economy, transportation, blue economy, climate, refugees, power struggle, and groupings in the Indian Ocean Region. ▶▶



► In the first two chapters, the author describes the background and the introduction of the Bay of Bengal and the surrounding region. Interestingly, the author has used the theoretical concept and approaches of the International Relations discipline with the application of regional threats and opportunities. That covers the balance of power, offensive and defensive realism, security dilemma, and deterrence. Furthermore, the author explicitly made the cases of balancing, hedging, and band-wagoning by the middle powers like India and Japan; Myanmar adopting band-wagoning in the U.S.-China rivalry in the Bay of Bengal theatre. Also, Sri Lanka can be seen balancing with China and India. (Page 10-18). Providing the instances from Alfred Mahan's sea strategy, the author argues that China and India are modernizing and expanding their navies, even the smaller navies like Bangladesh and Myanmar are also following the 'sea-power strategy' (Page 21-22).

The book provides a remarkable explanation of the maritime territories in the Indo-Pacific region. It delves into the geopolitical aspects of the In-

dian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Additionally, it highlights the immense potential of littoral states such as India, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. (Page 33). The author cautions that the Malacca Strait, which consists of 572 islands and is home to one of the busiest Sea Lines of Communication, is a restricted passage and a sensitive area. If not managed responsibly by major powers such as the U.S., China, India, Japan, and Australia, it could become a potential flashpoint for conflict. Along with this, India is boosting its infrastructure at the strategically significant Andaman Nicobar Island to deter its archrival China which has developed its intelligence facility at closet Coco Island of Myanmar since the rivalry between the two Asian giants intensified after the Galwan face-off in 2020 and that prompted India to be an active member of the Quad grouping.

The author critically examines the grouping of the Bay of Bengal region like BIMSTEC and SAARC and highlights the domestic politics and inter-state rivalry hampers the progress of these full of scope organizations in the region. It also describes the ►►



► human rights issue of Rohingya refugee in the strategically important Bangladesh and the geopolitics play of Myanmar, China, and the role of the United Nations in the “genocide” of Rohingya’s an ethnic and Muslim minority in Myanmar.

The book clearly explains the geopolitics and geoeconomics of China and India’s influence on Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar in Chapter 7. Professor Karim argues that these countries are interconnected and interdependent through trade and investment and cannot be separated. Chapter 11 of the book contains reflections and scenario development that are unique and easily understandable for readers. It depicts a futuristic environment of geopolitics and geoeconomics in the Bay of Bengal region, envisioning a “unified community” like the EU and ASEAN that would bring unlimited opportunities and benefits to regional countries.

In his concluding statements, Professor Karim expresses his disappointment that the Bay of Bengal region is plagued by intense geopolitical rivalry and cutthroat competition, which can be brutal. Furthermore, smaller countries in the region con-

stantly face a security dilemma.

Reading a book with up-to-date information not only provides new knowledge but also gives the reader the opportunity to make connections between the politics, history, geography, and economics of the region. I find Professor Karim’s work to be quite thought-provoking, and it has even inspired me to reread the book. The figures and maps included in the work make it even more impressive and easier to understand.

I believe that the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), a regional organization consisting of countries bordering the Indian Ocean, should be recalibrated to promote the region’s development. This is particularly important given the intense rivalry between the U.S. and China. It is worth noting that China established its own China-Indian Ocean Region Forum in 2022.

Reviewer Biography: Dr. Indu Saxena is a senior expert and fellow at the Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers. She writes on U.S. India Relations, South Asia, and Indo-Pacific Security.



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BRIEF NEWS



US 'Deeply Concerned' as Myanmar Junta Extends Emergency

The United States is “deeply concerned” by the decision from Myanmar’s ruling junta to extend the country’s state of emergency for six months, a State Department spokesman said on Monday (31 July.)

The extension, announced earlier in the day, spelled a delay for elections the military had pledged to hold in August as it battles anti-coup fighters across the country.

“The United States is deeply concerned by the Burma military regime’s extension of the state of emergency, which comes as the regime plunges the country deeper into violence and instability,” said spokesman Matthew Miller, using an alternate name for the country.

The Southeast Asian country has been ravaged by deadly violence since a coup deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s government more than two years ago, unleashing a bloody crackdown on dissent that has sparked fighting across swathes of the nation while tanking the economy.

“Since overthrowing a democratically elected government two and a half years ago, the military regime has carried out hundreds of

airstrikes, burned down tens of thousands of homes, and displaced more than 1.6 million people,” Miller said.

“The regime’s widespread brutality and disregard for the democratic aspirations of the people of Burma continue to prolong the crisis,” he added.

“The United States will continue to work with our partners and allies to apply political and economic tools to hold the regime accountable.”

Last month, Washington imposed sanctions on Myanmar’s Defense Ministry and two “regime-controlled” banks, the state-owned Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank.

China Replaces Nuclear Arsenal Rocket Force Leadership

China announced on 31st July a new leadership for its Rocket Force, the army unit that oversees its nuclear arsenal, as media reported a corruption probe involving its former chief.

The navy’s former deputy commander Wang Houbin was named as the new commander of the force in a brief article by state media Xinhua reporting his promotion to the rank of general.

His predecessor, Li Yuchao, has not been seen in public for weeks and



the Xinhua article gave no explanation for his removal.

Citing military sources, the South China Morning Post newspaper reported last week that Li and his current and former deputies were being investigated by the Central Military Commission’s anti-corruption unit.

President Xi Jinping called last week for increasing oversight of the military and the construction of a “modern system for military governance” in remarks to top leaders.

The same day, the military department responsible for buying China’s weapons launched a crackdown on corrupt procurement practices dating back years.

Xinhua’s article on Monday (31st July) also referred to Xu Xisheng as the Rocket Force’s new political commissar. Xu had previously served with the Southern Theatre Command Air Force and was also promoted to general.

It did not mention when the two men had taken up their new roles.

The lack of detailed information about such changes is not unusual in China.

The government announced last week it was replacing Qin Gang as foreign minister after he had not been seen in public for a month.

Beijing has refused to give any explanation for the removal of Qin, once considered a confidant of Xi, leading to speculation he was under investigation or had otherwise fallen from grace.

The Lowy Institute’s Richard McGregor tweeted that the lack of information around Qin’s disappearance was ▶▶

► “a transparent example of the utter opacity of Chinese elite politics.”

The Rocket Force is a relatively new unit of the People’s Liberation Army.

Its creation was announced in January 2016 after a major reshuffle of China’s military structure.

It oversees China’s arsenal of strategic missiles, both conventional and nuclear, and can both deter and strike, according to the government.

A US intelligence report issued in March said the Rocket Force’s conventional missile capabilities “probably” pose a serious threat to US forces and bases in East Asia.

Russia Says Has Intensified Attacks on Ukraine



Moscow has intensified strikes on Ukrainian military infrastructure in response to attacks on Russian-controlled territory, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on 31st July (Monday).

“Against the background of the failure of the so-called ‘counteroffensive’, Kyiv... has focused on carrying out terrorist attacks on civilian infrastructure,” Shoigu said.

“The intensity of our strikes against Ukrainian military facilities.. has been considerably increased,” he added.

Russia said on 30 July it downed Ukrainian drones targeting Moscow and the Crimea peninsula it annexed in 2014, the latest in series of attacks on the capital, border regions, and annexed-Crimea.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later said “war is returning to the territory of Russia... this is an inevitable, natural and absolutely fair process.”

Shoigu said the army had taken “additional measures to increase protection against attacks from the air and the sea.”

The Kremlin said the recent drone attack on Moscow was “an act of desperation” by Ukraine due to setbacks on the battlefield.

Lebanon Clashes Kill Six in Palestinian Refugee Camp

At least six people were killed Sunday (30 July) in clashes in south Lebanon’s restive Ain al-Helweh Palestinian refugee camp, said Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas’s Fatah movement and a source at the camp.

The fighting between Fatah and Islamists in the camp, which erupted overnight and subsided by the evening, killed a Fatah military leader and four of his colleagues, the secularist movement said.

A Palestinian source inside the camp, speaking on condition of anonymity, said an “Islamist from the al-Shabab al-Muslim group” was also killed and six others including the group’s leader were wounded.

Lebanon’s official news

agency NNA gave a “provisional toll” of six dead and more than 30 wounded at Ain al-Helweh, the largest of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon located just southeast of the coastal city of Sidon.

NNA reported that stray bullets also damaged homes outside the camp.

Fatah in a statement confirmed the



death of commander Ashraf al-Armouchi and four of his “comrades” during a “heinous operation.”

The statement denounced an “abominable and cowardly crime” aimed at undermining the “security and stability” of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

A Lebanese soldier was also wounded, hit by shrapnel from “a mortar shell that fell in one of the military posts,” the army said on Twitter, which is being rebranded as X.

His condition was reported as stable.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati in a statement called the timing of the clashes “suspicious in the current regional and international context.”

Mikati criticized “repeated attempts to use Lebanon” as a battleground for the settling of outside scores “at the expense of Lebanon and the Lebanese.”

“We urge the Palestinian leadership to cooperate with the army to control the security situation and deliver to the Lebanese authorities those who compromise it,” his statement added.

‘Red Line’

A ceasefire was agreed from 6:00 pm (1500 GMT) during a meeting of Palestinian factions including Fatah, also attended by members of the Lebanese Amal and Hezbollah movements, a joint statement afterwards said. ■

Popular Life paid Taka 24,41,68,189 (Twenty Four Crore Forty One Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty Nine) by 7,468 checks to the insurance claimers



At a recent meeting held in the auditorium of the Diploma Engineers Institution (IDEB) in Dhaka, Popular Life Insurance Company Limited presented checks totaling taka 24,41,68,189 to 7,468 insurance customers' claims. Mohammad Joynal Bari, chairman of the Insurance Development and Controller Authority, served as the meeting's chief guest. Sheikh Kabir Hossain, chairman of the Bangladesh Insurance Association, attended the meeting virtually as a special guest. BM Yousuf Ali, CEO and Managing Director of the Popular Life Insurance Company Limited, presided over the event. Abdullah Haroon Pasha, additional secretary for the Ministry of Finance, Moinul Islam, member for (administration) Insurance Development and Controller Authority, Kamrul Hassan, member for (life) Md. Nazrul Islam, member for (non-life) and Dr. Naznin Kawser Chowdhury, Executive Director, (Joint Secretary) were among those present at the meeting. BM Shawkat Ali, additional managing director of the company, presided over the event. The meeting was also attended by Mohammad Anis Uddin Miah, former secretary and senior consultant of the company, Mohammad Sirajul Haider NDC, former additional secretary and senior consultant of the company, Roy Debdas, former chief Insurance controller (In Charge) and senior consultant of the company, Colonel retd Ahsan Aziz PSC, senior consultant of the company, Nandan Bhattacharje and Mostafa Helal Kabir, additional managing directors, Syed Motahar Hossain, senior DMD, Mohammad Nowsher Ali Nayeem, Mohammad Abu Taher, Feroz Iftekhar, Md Habibur Rahman, Md Bashirul Islam and Emad Uddin Ahmed Prince, DMD Mohammad Kamal Hossain Mohsin, Md Khalilur Rahman Dulal, Syed Sultan Mahmud, and CFO Ershad Ali Hiru and other high officials of the company attended the program.

Photo shows guests are handing over check to the Insurance customer's claim.

It may be mentioned that the company has paid a total of 5 thousand 239 crore 6 lakh 52 thousand to 38,52,903 insurance customers till to date.

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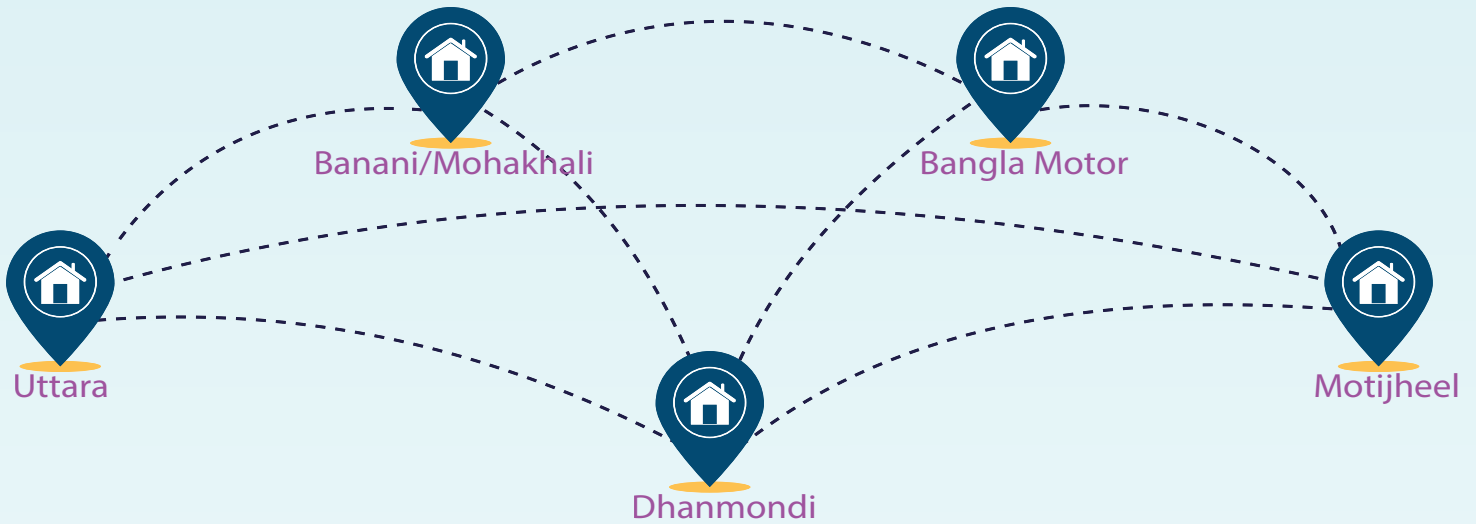


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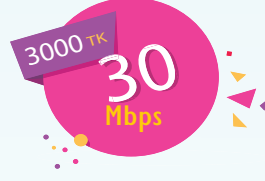
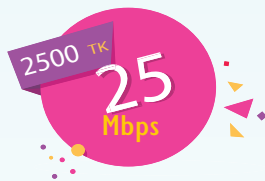
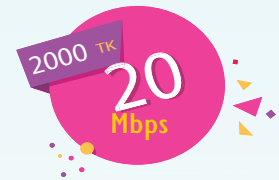
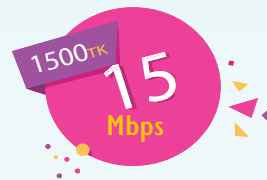
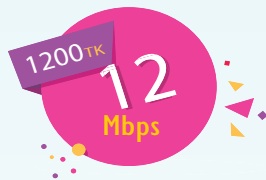
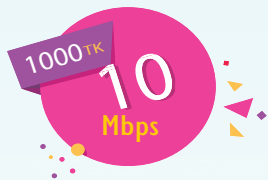


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