

24 NOVEMBER, 2024

Reg. No. 05.41.2600.025.53.107.17-06

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Reflections on India-Bangladesh Relations

Development of Myanmar Civil War, Its Dynamics and Rohingya Repatriation

Will Mr & Mrs Moses Wear a Bandana Now?

Thy Neighbors

Regional Cooperation as a Factor of Security and Stability in Central and South Asia

Security Sector Review: Early and Comprehensive Steps are Indispensable

STRENGTHENING TIES

Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Highlights Economic, Military, and Cultural Cooperation

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Contributors

Lt. General M. Mahbubur Rahman (retd)
Major General AMSA Amin, ndc, psc, (retd)
Lt. General Mohd Aminul Karim (retd)
Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat (retd)
Lt Gen Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, rcds, ndc, afwc, psc, PhD, (retd)
Major General Alauddin Wadud (retd)
Major General M Ashab Uddin, ndc, psc (retd)
Major General Dr Md Nayeem Ashfaque Chowdhury (retd)
John Dalton
Air Vice Marshal MAHMUD HUSSAIN (retd)
Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury (retd)
Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq, BSP, ndu, psc, BN (retd)
MJ Akbar
Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen
Dr. Atiur Rahman
Rear Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam (retd)
Admiral RK Dhowan (retd)
Li Jiming
Brigadier General Md Mostafizur Rahman, ndc, hdmc, afwc, psc, PhD
Dr. Banshidhar Mishra
Maxim E. Dobrokhotov
Dharshan Weerasekera
Michael Foley
Dr. Jamaluddin Ahmed
Syed Badrul Ahsan
Dr Dave Dowland

Editor : **Rabb Majumder**

Published by **Sadwaan Publication** and Printed from B.S. Printing Press, 52/2, Toyenbee Circular Road (Mamun Mansion, Ground Floor), Wari, Dhaka-1203.

Office Address: House No: 05, Level: 02 (2-C), Road: 04, Banani DOHS, Dhaka-1206.

E-mail: rab_majumder@yahoo.com, rabb.h.majumder@gmail.com,
info@securityworldbd.com, Website: www.securityworldbd.com

THE SECURITY WORLD

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Security World 

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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Strengthening Ties: Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Highlights Economic, Military, and Cultural Cooperation

Rabb Majumder

is the Editor and Publisher of The Security World.



In an era of increasing global interconnectedness, the relationships between nations play a crucial role in fostering cooperation and mutual growth. This interview focuses on the diplomatic

ties between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, highlighting the efforts and initiatives aimed at strengthening these bonds. I had the privilege of interviewing Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan who has been instrumental in promoting collaboration between the two countries. Through this discussion, we explore the key areas of partnership, including economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and the ongoing commitment to enhancing bilateral relations. Join me as we delve into the insights and perspectives



Saudi Ambassador Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan

that underscore the significance of Saudi-Bangladesh relations. ►

► Saudi Arabia holds significant importance for Bangladesh in various aspects, including economic, social, and diplomatic relations. Here are some key points highlighting this relationship:

Remittances: A large number of Bangladeshi workers are employed in Saudi Arabia, making it one of the top destinations for Bangladeshi expatriates. The remittances sent back home are crucial for Bangladesh's economy, contributing significantly to foreign currency reserves and supporting local families.

Trade Relations: Saudi Arabia is an important trading partner for Bangladesh. The two countries engage in the exchange of various goods, including textiles, garments, and agricultural products, bolstering Bangladesh's trade balance.

Saudi Arabia has shown interest in investing in various sectors in Bangladesh, including infrastructure, energy, and agriculture. These investments can lead to job creation and economic growth in Bangladesh.

Saudi Arabia is home to the two holiest cities in



Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain and Saudi Ambassador Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan.

Islam, Mecca and Medina. Many Bangladeshi Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah, fostering cultural and religious ties between the nations. This connection enhances the understanding and relationship between the people of both countries.

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia maintain strong diplomatic relations, cooperating on various international platforms. This partnership is impor-►►

▶ tant for addressing regional and global issues, including security and economic development.

The Saudi government has provided development aid to Bangladesh, supporting infrastructure projects and humanitarian initiatives. This assistance is vital for Bangladesh's ongoing development efforts.

Saudi Arabia plays a critical role in Bangladesh's economy and socio-cultural landscape. The ongoing collaboration in various sectors continues to strengthen the ties between the two nations, contributing to mutual growth and stability. As both countries navigate global challenges, their partnership is likely to become even more significant in the future.

Bangladesh, the eighth most populous country in the world, has a population that is over 90 per cent Muslim, which gives its relationship with Saudi Arabia—the birthplace of Islam—special significance. Both nations share common social norms and cultural values rooted in their religious practices, as well as aligned perspectives on various regional and international issues, particularly those affecting the Muslim world. This shared foundation has fostered cooperation between the two countries in various regional and international platforms, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United Nations (UN), and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

A significant chapter in the history of Bangladesh-Saudi Arabia relations began when then-Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited Saudi Arabia in 1975. This landmark visit laid the foundation for a strong bilateral relationship, establishing pathways for trade, education, and cultural exchanges between the two nations.

Following this pivotal moment, General Ziaur

Rahman the then President of Bangladesh took the reins, further nurturing these ties. He signed several agreements that opened doors for bilateral and multilateral trade, enhancing cooperation in various sectors. One of the most impactful consequences of this partnership was the opportunity it created for Bangladeshi laborers to work in Saudi Arabia. These workers not only contributed to the development of the Saudi economy but also sent vital remittances back home, bolstering Bangladesh's economy.

Over the years, successive governments in Bangladesh have continued to value and strengthen these close ties. In 2021, both nations celebrated half a century of diplomatic relations, a testament to the enduring friendship and collaboration that has flourished since that first visit. As they look to the future, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia remain committed to thriving relations, fostering mutual growth and understanding in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Ambassador Essa Yusef Essa Alduhailan mentioned that in 2022, the Saudi-Bangla Business Council was established to foster business and development between the two Muslim nations. One year ago, a total of 140 business leaders visited various cities in Saudi Arabia. Bangladesh has allocated 300 acres of land in Mirershorie National Park for Saudi Arabia's use. The ACWA Power business conglomerate has invested in 750 megawatts and 1,000 megawatts of renewable energy projects. Additionally, the Red Sea Gate International Company has invested in the Patenga Bay terminals and the Matarbari project. However, potential investors may be deterred by the strict regulations imposed by the Bangladeshi government, which restrict the transfer of profits back to their headquarters. ▶▶

► According to the Ambassador, a team of 100 individuals have been working to assist with the pilgrimage, specifically focusing on the rituals. Bangladesh ranks as the second most significant country after Kuwait in this context. Bangladeshi citizens holding Schengen, UK, or USA visas can easily travel for Hajj with on arrival visa.

Hajj holds profound significance for Muslims around the world, including those in Bangladesh. As the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and home to the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia is revered as a sacred destination. For many Muslims, the opportunity to visit this holy land is a lifelong dream, symbolizing spiritual fulfillment and devotion.



Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Essa Youssef Essa Al Duhailan

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, making it a fundamental religious obligation for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to undertake the journey. This pilgrimage not only serves as an act of worship but also embodies the unity of the Muslim community, drawing millions from diverse backgrounds to participate in this

sacred ritual.

For many, the journey to Mecca is not just a pilgrimage; it is a testament to faith and resilience. Even those with limited financial means often seek assistance from family, friends, and the community to make their dream a reality. Historically, ►

► prior to the advent of air travel, the journey to Mecca could take six months or more by ship, a testament to the determination of those who sought to fulfill this vital religious duty.

Hajj offers profound spiritual benefits. It allows participants to seek forgiveness, reflect on their lives, and renew their commitment to their faith. The experience of standing in prayer at the Kaaba, performing the rituals of Tawaf, and participating in the symbolic acts of sacrifice and repentance profoundly impacts the lives of pilgrims. Many return home transformed, with a renewed sense of purpose and connection to their faith.

However, the journey is not without its challenges. Sadly, many have passed away before realizing their dream of performing Hajj. Yet, countless others have successfully completed this pilgrimage, marking a significant milestone in their spiritual journey.

Hajj is not only a religious obligation but also a powerful expression of faith, community, and devotion. It serves as a reminder of the shared beliefs that unite Muslims worldwide and the enduring aspiration to connect with their spiritual heritage in the holy land of Saudi Arabia.

The Ambassador stated that in 2023, approximately 150,000 visas were issued to Bangladeshis, and around 3.2 million Bangladeshis currently reside in Saudi Arabia. The remittances sent to Dhaka exceed \$5 billion, with nearly 5,200 visas being issued each day. Bangladeshi workers are making significant contributions to the development of Saudi Arabia, and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

The Saudi ambassador highlighted the significant contributions of Bangladeshi expatriates to the Kingdom's development, emphasizing their hard work and dedication. He noted that Saudi Arabia

recognizes and appreciates the vital role these individuals play in fostering economic growth and cultural exchange.

In addition to supporting its expatriate community, Saudi Arabia remains committed to aiding vulnerable populations, particularly the Rohingya refugees. The Saudi development fund has been instrumental in this effort, providing nearly \$6.5 billion in support and over \$100 million in grant assistance dedicated to infrastructure development in Bangladesh.

This robust financial support underscores the strong partnership between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, with both nations committed to collaboration and cooperation that align with their mutual interests. The ambassador reaffirmed that this relationship will continue to flourish, benefiting not only the two countries but also the communities in need.

Military relations between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have notably strengthened since the formation of the Islamic Military Alliance in December 2015, initiated by King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and under the leadership of Saudi Prime Minister and Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman. This alliance, which began with 34 member countries, has since expanded to 41. A key milestone in their military cooperation occurred with the joint military exercise "Gulf Shield-1" in March 2018, where 16 members of the Bangladesh Army participated alongside forces from 23 other nations, including major military powers. This exercise aimed to enhance military collaboration and was attended by former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, marking a significant commitment to defense ties.

Bangladesh has historically engaged in military ►►

► initiatives, having participated in the Gulf War in the early 1990s, and sees ample opportunities for further collaboration with Saudi Arabia. Areas for mutual cooperation extend beyond military exercises to include counterterrorism, economic diplomacy, and public health initiatives. Saudi Arabia has consistently supported Bangladesh in addressing the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya refugees who were displaced from Myanmar in 2017.

An MoU was signed to enhance military cooperation in 2019, and in 2022, a security deal was established to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime, which included provisions for training and exchange programs between security forces. Bangladesh's proactive stance against terrorism aligns with its membership in the Saudi-led Islamic Military Coalition (IMCTC). The Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh also outlined key initiatives to enhance trade and investment flows between the two nations, emphasizing the importance of increased visits and communication to explore business opportunities. He highlighted that Saudi companies are considering significant investments in the fertilizer and ammonia sectors, with plans to establish production facilities in Dhaka. Additionally, the Ambassador noted the upcoming opening of a sea lane between Jeddah and Chattogram, which will facilitate the transportation of goods and people, further strengthening economic ties. These efforts are aimed at deepening cooperation and fostering mutual growth, reinforcing the bonds of friendship between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh.

The Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh discussed the importance of cultural exchange in enhancing the relationship between Bangladesh and Saudi

Arabia. The Ambassador emphasized that both nations, united by their shared Islamic faith, view each other as brothers and sisters.

The Ambassador noted that a new agreement has been signed to facilitate various cultural initiatives, including arrangements for friendly football matches. "Sports, particularly football, can serve as a powerful medium for bringing our people together," he stated. "This initiative will not only promote healthy competition but also foster camaraderie between our nations."

Further highlighting the cultural exchange, the Ambassador mentioned plans to showcase a variety of mutual traditions, including music, cuisine, and unique beverages such as camel milk. "We are excited to share our culinary heritage with the people of Bangladesh, just as we look forward to experiencing the rich flavors of Bangladeshi cuisine," he added.

The Ambassador expressed optimism that these exchanges will lead to deeper connections and understanding among the communities. He noted that marriages between families from both countries have already begun to flourish, symbolizing the merging of cultures and traditions.

As Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia continue to strengthen their ties, the Ambassador affirmed that such initiatives are vital for building lasting friendships and cooperation, celebrating the rich heritage they share in their Islamic faith.

Ambassador Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan's dynamic, workaholic nature, combined with his approachable demeanor, has earned him the reputation of being a true friend of Bangladesh. Under his unwavering leadership, the Saudi Embassy has facilitated cooperation across various sectors, including trade, investment, and labor, further solidifying the partnership between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh. ■

Reflections on India-Bangladesh Relations

Pranay Verma

High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh.



Our relationship with Bangladesh is long-standing and unique. We are linked by a shared history, a shared geography, in addition to a common language and culture. We both seek, and value, a

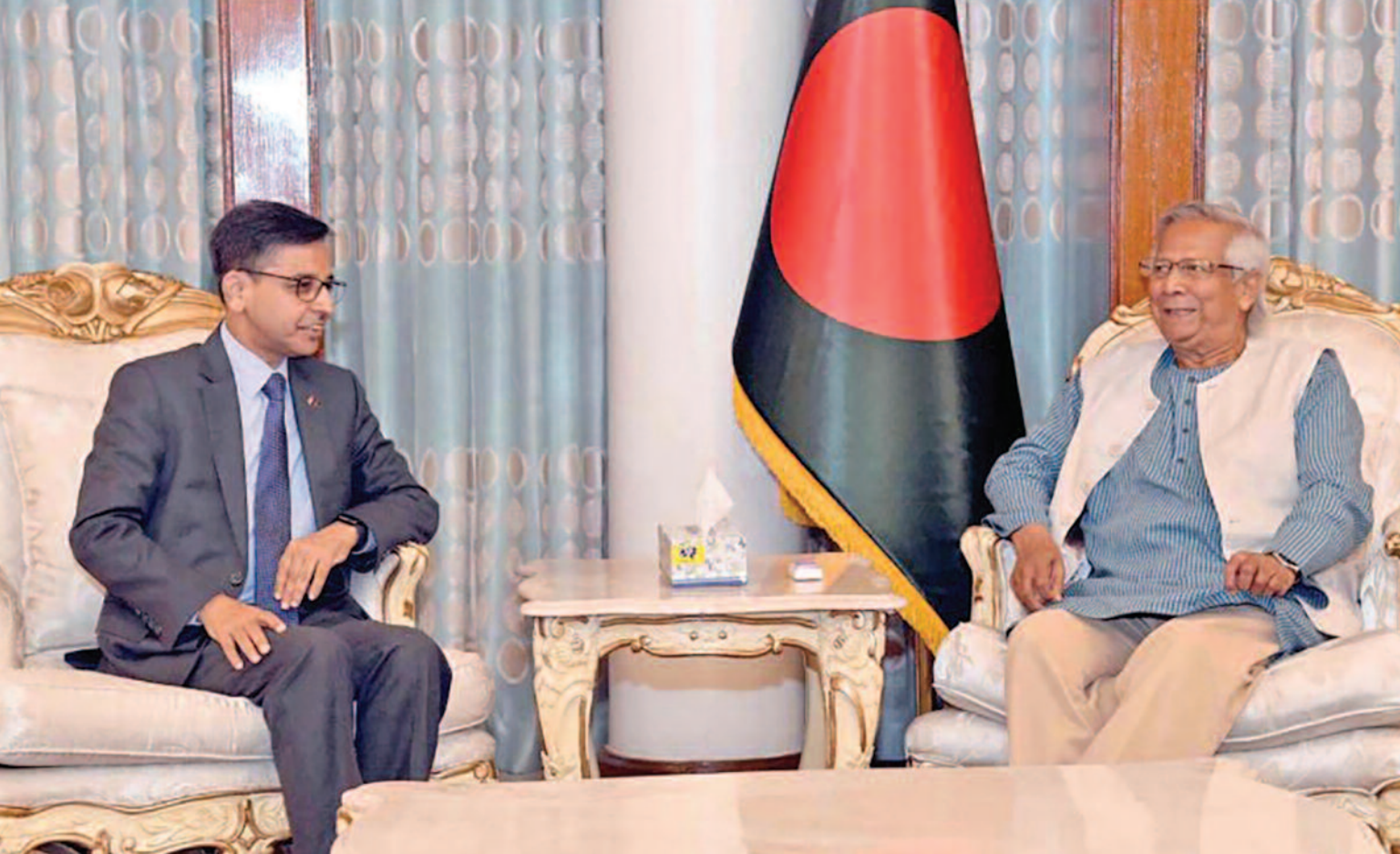
relationship based on mutual trust and understanding, and mutual respect. There is broad shared empathy between our people, much of which can be traced back to Bangladesh's Liberation War of 1971. Regardless of how it may be characterized, it is a people-centric relationship. People and public-opinion shape our relations more than we realize.

As a neighbour to whom we take a long-term view of our relations, our ties with Bangladesh derive strength from our belief that our peace, security, progress and prosperity are interlinked. And therefore, we strive to create common stakes in

our mutual prosperity through a robust framework of multifaceted cooperation. Both of us are important stakeholders in the peace, security and development of Bay of Bengal. We also share a common biosphere and ecological environment, which makes our collaboration vital to address shared challenges such as environmental sustainability and climate change.

Because of its geographical location, emerging capacities, and growing regional and global ambitions, Bangladesh is not just a pillar of our "Neighbourhood First" Policy, but sits at the intersection of most of India's key foreign policy visions – such as the "Act East Policy", the doctrine of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in Region), as well as our Indo-Pacific Vision.

We believe ours is a relationship of great consequence, not just for the two of us, but also for our region, given our growing capacities and aspirations to get more integrated by leveraging each other's strengths and complementarities. Bangladesh is uniquely poised to advance the integration agenda under the Bay of Bengal Initia-▶▶



Pranay Verma Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, holds a courtesy meeting with interim government chief adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the state guesthouse Jamuna in Dhaka recently. Photo: Focusbangla

► tive for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), being located at the geographical, political and economic centre of gravity of the region and also as the host of BIMSTEC's headquarters.

Many transformative changes that have taken place in our relations and which unlocked the growth potential of the region, are results of mutual sensitivity we have shown to each other's concerns and aspirations. Bangladesh's "zero-tolerance" to terrorism and its determination of not sheltering insurgencies targeting India, proved vital for our cooperation and prosperity. It will remain an important factor in the future development of our two countries, our region and our relationship.

One of our biggest achievements – the resolution of our maritime and land boundaries, has opened up whole host of avenues for our land and maritime connectivity as well as cooperation in blue economy. Our maritime boundary settlement, by referring the matter to the Permanent Court of

Arbitration and then following its ruling in letter and spirit, is a fine example of how the principle of democratic and rules based international order that we strongly believe in, has found reflection in our bilateral conduct.

A key manifestation of the transformation of our multifaceted partnership, that has directly benefitted the people of both our countries, is our growing trade and economic engagement, and our connectivity links.

Today, Bangladesh is our largest trade partner in South Asia and the fifth largest in the world. India under SAFTA has unilaterally given duty-free, quota-free access to all goods from Bangladesh for more than a decade now, which has enabled greater exports from Bangladesh to India.

We often hear concerns about trade deficit for Bangladesh, but it is important to appreciate that much of India's exports to Bangladesh either constitute critical inputs for a large part of Bangladesh's exports, or are supplies of essential commodities that help Bangladesh deal ►►

▶ with inflationary pressures.

Actually, a less appreciated fact is that India is now among the largest export markets for Bangladesh in the entire Asia, with Bangladeshi exports to India consistently hovering around 2-billion-dollar mark over the last few years. And we do want this number to grow.

We strongly believe that connectivity is a major enabler that help our societies, our businesses and our people to closely connect and benefit from each other. And we have made quite some progress.

With a contiguous geography and a long shared-history, in many ways, we are actually trying to reconnect our two countries. We have restored six of the seven pre-1965 railway links for both passengers and goods. A major part of our bilateral trade and people-to-people movement are channeled through thirty-six functioning Land Customs Stations, five of which have been upgraded to the level of Integrated Check Posts. Just earlier this month, we added new infrastructure at Petrapole Integrated Check Post that will significantly enhance cargo movement and passenger convenience.

Today, Bangladesh RMG exporters are using three large Indian airports – Kolkata, Delhi and Bengaluru – as highly cost-effective transshipment hubs for their exports to third countries, making Bangladeshi products much more competitive in western markets. Our deep-sea ports are ready to offer similar advantages to Bangladeshi exporters.

Our connectivity links are not limited to trade and transport. We are also building robust energy connectivity. Some of the examples are – a new cross-border diesel pipeline launched last year bringing high-speed diesel from an Indian refinery to Bangladesh; the cross-border power transmission lines uninterruptedly supplying nearly 1200 MW of power from Indian power grid to Bangladesh; and the first transmission of 40 MW of power from Nepal to Bangladesh

through the Indian grid just two days ago. All these are examples of how our energy connectivity and collaboration is augmenting our energy security and contributing to creation of a true regional economy.

In short, our approach to connectivity is a simple one – it is about transforming our geographical proximity into new economic opportunities, that benefit people of both our countries and also the entire region.

Our belief that people are the foundation of our relations was evident when COVID-19 struck us and when we opened our arms to help each other. It is also evident in our large visa operations in Bangladesh, where despite current limited operations, we continue to issue more visas to Bangladeshi citizens each day than any other diplomatic mission in Dhaka.

As custodians of our future relationship, youth are obviously an important stakeholder in our partnership. This is evident in nearly a thousand scholarships every year that India offers to Bangladeshi youths and young professionals, including from civil society and media, belonging to all regions and affiliations. Just two months ago, more than five hundred highly talented Bangladeshi students left for higher education in some of India's premier educational institutions on our ICCR scholarship. Our Bangladesh Youth Delegation, or the BYD programme as it is popularly known, is another robust platform for our youth outreach that today has a proud, nationwide alumni network.

To sum it all up, India will continue to seek a stable, positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh in which our people are the main stakeholders. We have and will continue to support a democratic, stable, peaceful and progressive Bangladesh.

We remain committed to working together with the government and people of Bangladesh to ful-▶▶

► fill the shared aspirations of our peoples for peace, security and development. And we strongly believe that our partnership must benefit the common people on both sides.

Both India and Bangladesh are today far more developed and capable than they were ever before. And we also depend on each other far more today than we ever used to, as our economies and development paths continue to intertwine. We must keep reinforcing our interdependencies.

As two aspirational societies with growing economic capabilities, there is so much we can offer to each other, and create new opportunities if we continue to engage closely, pragmatically and constructively with each other. A strong and prosperous Bangladesh, we believe, is vital for India just as a strong and prosperous India is for Bangladesh.

And, a final reflection. The fact that our trade and economic ties, our transport and energy connectivity, and our people-to-people engagements have sustained a positive momentum, despite the turbulent changes in Bangladesh, shows that our relations are truly multifaceted, and cannot be reduced to a single agenda or issue. There are irritants but they have not restricted the overall



forward movement in our relations. As two nations whose progress and prosperity are as interlinked as our geographies and historical roots, the reality of our interdependence and mutual benefit will keep reasserting itself over and over again, regardless of changes in the political wind.

We must shape the course and narrative of this very important relationship, with objectivity and with empathy.

[The article is based on High Commissioner Verma's recent address at the Bay of Bengal Conversation 2024 hosted by the Centre for Governance Studies in Dhaka.]

DEVELOPMENT OF MYANMAR CIVIL WAR, ITS DYNAMICS AND ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

Former Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Prime Minister's Office. mahfuzba2172@gmail.com



Current Dynamics of Myanmar Civil War:

The offensive operations of 'The Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BA) namely; Arakan Army (AA), Myanmar Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and

Ta'ang National Liberation Army in October 2023 presumably with the consent of China gave impetus to all Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) including Peoples Defense Army (Armed Wing of Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD led National Unity Government). The simultaneous attacks all over the country overwhelmed the Junta's capacity to cope especially in land battles. The moral component of TATMADAW (MN Armed Forces) took a serious toll i.e. huge defections, surrender-

ing to EAOs without much resistance. TATMADAW's reinforcement capability to threatened sectors was in short supply. Initiatives to recruit young people in the military did not produce much result.

The only option remained to TATMADAW was to resort to air attacks and the use of artillery fires from time to time on EAOs and their sympathizers. Under these circumstances, almost 60% of the territory is now under the control of EAOs. On 09 October, Kachin Independence Army captured Pinlebu a major city in Sagaing Region. In August Lashio, the capital of Shan State and Northeast Command lost to MNDAA. TNLA has continued its offensive in Northern Shan State and last month seized another strategic township Hsipaw. The overall situation reveals that EAOs are inching forward and converging on Central Command in Mandalay. This will seriously threaten the authority of TATMADAW and its legitimacy as the ruling establishment. AA»



This aerial photo shows smoke and fires from Thantlang, in Chin State, where buildings were destroyed by shelling from junta military troops, according to local media. (Photo: STR / AFP)

making major inroads against Junta in Rakhine State to capture Western Command. However, TATMADAW reportedly, taking the newly formed Rohingya militia along has been able to stop AA advance in and around Maungdaw (Rohingya stronghold and important strategic township in Rakhine). This has caused further unhappiness in AA on Rohingyas in Rakhine. Though TATMADAW is struggling with the moral component of fighting power, the conceptual and physical components remain far from capitulation. Junta still holds the centre, hub of administration, and government machinery, the military-industrial complex and production hub, seaports, and airports.

The Economic Dynamics:

In the last three years (after the coup in 2021) Myanmar's foreign trade though shrunk yet it has been around \$ 105 billion of which \$ 27 billion

is in border trade. There are 17 border trade stations with five neighboring countries; China-5, Thailand-7, India-2, Bangladesh-2, and Laos-1. The daily trade volume with China through border stations is \$ 10 million and with Thailand approximately \$ 14 million whereas with Bangladesh, it is \$ 35 thousand only. Out of these 17 border trade stations, 6 stations are under the control of EAOs, from which they have bagged \$ 10 billion in the last three years. There is a war economy flourishing whereby all parties involved are benefitted politically and economically from fighting rather than winning or losing. They are financed by outside support, from loot and pillage, from drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking all of which depend on violence to generate revenue to sustain violence. So, what we are observing is a predatory social condition. These illicit economic activities have been affecting China's Yunnan Province seriously. Thus China is interested in authorized business activities in ►►

▶ bordering areas. So, in the case of border trade Junta and EAOs have gone for profit sharing to maintain the status quo. This is a fragile arrangement susceptible to collapsing, potentially reviving the illicit economy. MNDAA, TNLA, and KIA get a benefit of \$ 10 million in business a day. Karen National Army also gets benefits of \$ 14 million a day whereas, AA in Bangladesh border only gets \$ 35 thousand. So the incentive through border trade is not incentivizing for relation-building with Bangladesh rather illicit business (during trafficking, arms smuggling etc.) are more lucrative for AA.

China Factor:

China would like to see a stable Myanmar or a balance of power between the Junta and EAOs so that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects can go on and China's interests are preserved in Myanmar. The other issue is border trade should be picked up through a profit-sharing system between the Junta and resistance forces. This effort is likely to reduce illicit business along the China-Myanmar border. China's Yunnan province and its citizens were affected by such illegal business. The Junta was not paying attention to this concern of China in the China-bordering region of Myanmar. As such 3BA was encouraged to launch operation 1027. Following that China brokered a peace initiative between the Junta and 3BA and a cease-fire was reached in the beginning of 2024. There were a few rounds of talks but no concrete agreement on border trade and no normalcy has been reached.

After the coup in 2021 in Myanmar, China sort of distanced away from the Junta and it surfaced clearly when China approved 3BA operations against Junta around Northern Shan State and Kachin State bordering China. However, the recent visit of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Naypyidaw on August 11, 2024, and inviting the

Junta Chief to Beijing looks like giving much-desired legitimacy to the regime by China. Furthermore, the source reveals that Chinese Premier Li Qiang is likely to give an audience to Min Aung Hlaing and two sides would discuss Myanmar's forthcoming election of 2025. This indicates there is a policy shift in Beijing regarding Myanmar. During Wang Yi's visit, the Junta requested China to withdraw supporting EAOs, and the regime assured protection of China's interest in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, China special envoy for Myanmar, Deng Xijun expressed his concern about the EAOs West connection especially with the National Unity Government (NUG) including its armed group. In his meeting with top leaders of Wa State Army (the most powerful Armed Group in the Northern part of Myanmar reins an autonomous government in Wa State), he claimed, "The Myanmar Military is the founder of Myanmar State and the most important political force in Myanmar's political structure. Whether it's NUG or NLD; they cannot replace the Myanmar Military's position in Myanmar's political arena". He added capture of Lashio by MNDAA has destabilized the situation in the north of Myanmar allowing an opportunity for the US-led West to interfere.

Meanwhile, China has punished MNDAA and TNLA by cutting off supplies and much-needed logistics. China also warned Wa State not to support these EAOs, with this signal Junta has stepped up bombing at Lashio.

The West Factor:

The Indo-Pacific, Quad, and AUKUS are part of China's containment strategy by the West. However, they have been greatly nullified by the BRI, Pakistan-China Economic Corridor, and Myanmar-China Economic Corridor. The Rohingya crisis, the coup of Myanmar in 2021 has given the ▶▶

US scope to be involved in Myanmar with the Burma Act that would isolate the Junta, impose sanctions, support pro-democratic force, and finally provide technical/non-lethal assistance to EAOs to dismiss Junta. Thereby curtailing China's influence in Myanmar. There is a Rohingya Act around the corner by the US that might be contesting China's influence in the Rohingya issue encompassing the Bay of Bengal. Very recently Mizoram Chief Minister's comment about having a Christian country in the tri-border region (India-Bangladesh-Myanmar) indicated the West-led missionaries' long-term plan to create a buffer state between China and Myanmar.

India Factor:

India despite being a democracy was supporting the Junta and collaborating primarily for three reasons; (a) Myanmar is a part of India's look East and Act East strategy. India has strategic projects like the Kaladan Multimodal Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway. (b) To fight India's insurgency Junta support was necessary to destroy insurgents' sanctuary inside Myanmar. (c) From the regional power outlook India did not want Myanmar to fall into the fold of China. So, even against the genocide and human catastrophe of Rohingya, India decided to stand by the side of Myanmar. However, the tide is turning against the Junta in Myanmar and a military defeat of TATMADAW is on the horizon. India recognized the existence of resistance groups and for the very first time has invited NUG, AA, KIA, and Chin National Forest to a seminar titled "Constitutionalism and Federation" in New Delhi on September 24, 2024.

ASEAN Factor:

ASEAN's initiative to deal with the Rohingya crisis was not very remarkable. Despite individual member states like Malaysia's pro-activeness could

not make any headway primarily considering it was of jurisdiction matter of ASEAN. However, after the coup in 2021, ASEAN states were vocal and wanted to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar that encompassed the Rohingya issue as well. It proposed a 'Five-Point Consensus for Peace' two years back but remains unimplemented due to the non-cooperation of the Junta. On October 9, 2024, at 'Summit' in Laos, Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra proposed an informal consultation' in December to find a solution for Myanmar. For the first time in three years, Myanmar sent a senior foreign ministry official to the talk. This is a positive sign considered by ASEAN.

Bangladesh Factor and My Take:

Bangladesh's foreign policy seems very conservative and does not allow complaining even if a wrong has been done to it. Its Gambia went to ICJ for Rohingyas, not Bangladesh. The ICJ hearing was from 10-12 December; 2019 at The Hague where Gambia a small country in West Africa (with a population of 2.7 million and per capita income of \$ 707) took Myanmar to ICJ, sadly during the same time frame (11-14 December; 2019) Bangladesh Army Chief was visiting Myanmar, possibly to exhibit that Bangladesh has no issue with Myanmar and Rohingya issue is Myanmar's internal issue. Even Bangladesh does not officially address the Rohingya people as Rohingya'. It is termed as FDMN (Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals). Because Myanmar does not want them to be called Rohingya. Does Bangladesh have an independent policy/strategy about Rohingya Repatriation? If there is any that has not been surfaced in the public domain. Dhaka always relied on regional powers; India and China and the international community. They have their agendas and national interests that may not tally with ours. The international community would express sympathy, provide humanitarian ▶▶

► assistance but risking geopolitical interest is altogether a different matter. We cannot blame them for their strategy on Rohingya Repatriation if we do not have one. Rohingya Repatriation was not a national priority in Bangladesh. It is not our 'Centre of Gravity'. Hasina Regime's number one priority (especially after the 2014 election) was to establish its legitimacy by employing Bangladesh missions abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and government machinery (in such an environment regime's interest is greater than country's interest). The Rohingya issue was not an existential threat to the regime. Dhaka did not negotiate with AA even after the coup of 2021 in Myanmar. AA Chief, Major General Twan Mrat Naing in 2022 in an interview with a Bangladeshi-born British journalist expressed his full sympathy for Rohingyas and was desirous to take back them in Rakhine as part and parcel of Myanmar in general and Rakhine in particular. In exchange, he expected sympathy for Rakhine people and humanitarian support from Bangladesh. Of course, Dhaka did not pay attention. Now, he terms Rohingyas as Bengali Muslims and repatriation is not on his agenda. Interestingly, now some of the Rakhine journalists are calling Rohingyas as Chitagonians. A dominant group in Rakhine polity would like to discuss all kinds of harmonious development agenda with Bangladesh except Rohingya Repatriation issue. Seems opportunities slipped away. The Junta is no more a legitimate government of Myanmar nor does it control the majority administration of Myanmar. Rohingyas after repatriation will go back to Rakhine and now Rakhine is mostly under the control of AA. In reality, AA runs judiciary, police, and civil administration in almost all of Rakhine except the military-occupied state capital and a few towns. However, Dhaka continues communication with Junta only. On the contrary, all the neighbors are now engaging with EAOs and their political parties besides the Junta. This is pragmatism. Very recently, the UN has warned about the upcoming

famine in Rakhine. Agriculture production has declined and combined with the near halt of trade two million out of three million people are at risk of starvation. 60% population is displaced and more than half a million are now entirely on aid. However, TATMADAW's 'Four Cut Strategy' in Rakhine (restriction on food, medicine, and intra, interstate movement) has turned this humanitarian issue into a crisis. The recent violence has taken a new turn in Rakhine. So long since the military has been accused of persecution of Rohingyas, now, AA has been accused of targeting them. This triggered a new wave of refugees fleeing into Bangladesh. TATMADAW persecution forced Rohingya exodus in bulk but they did not deny the allegation of expulsion. On the other hand, now AA causing atrocities against Rohingyas and expulsion is taking place in small groups but AA denying their involvement.

NUG's position now taking Rohingyas back with equality and dignity once the situation is stable and democratic force in power in Myanmar and absorbing them in their society. NUG also expressed its intention to bring perpetrators of Rohingya human rights violations and genocide to justice. However, Dhaka is not meaningfully engaging NUG as well. In a seminar in Dhaka last year, the Foreign Minister of NUG joined online and expressed her frustration of not being able to engage Dhaka. Possibly Interim Government with so much of things going around will overlook engagement with NUG thereby missing the opportunity again. Likely Rohingya Repatriation is not on their radar now, neither it's their priority, inevitably nor in the interest of Rakhine/AA. This only highlights the grim reality of Rohingya Repatriation.

We need to remember if the pains and sorrows of neighbors do not touch us, in their happiness and joy they are also not going to remember us and our concerns as well. ■



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RAJUK APPROVAL NO:
25.39.0000.092.33.237.21,
DATE: 31 March 2024,

Project Name: FGC (Fortuna Green City)
Address: Targach, Gazipur
Developer: Fortuna Green City Ltd.
Land Area: 28,730.3 sqm (7.15 acre)

Residential Tower: 6nos.
Tower - 1-5 (G+16) + 1 Basement
Tower - 6 (G+17) + 1 Basement
Total Apartment: 627 nos.
Simplex Type - A (1610 sft) - 381 nos.
Simplex Type - B (1660 sft) - 140 nos.
Premium Type - C (3260 sft) - 66 nos.
Premium Duplex Type - D (3320 sft) - 40 nos.
Car Parking - 710 nos.

Commercial Building:
Podium - (G+3) storied
Commercial space - 1,78,000 sft
Service Apartment - 14 storied
West Tower - 800 sft (288 nos.)
East Tower - 780 sft (204 nos.)
Car Parking - 3 Basement (580 nos.)

CONTACT NO: 01518384096, 01990798540, 01969983741
EMAIL: fortunagreencity@gmail.com,
fortunabangladesh2@gmail.com
WEBSITE: www.fortunagreencity.com

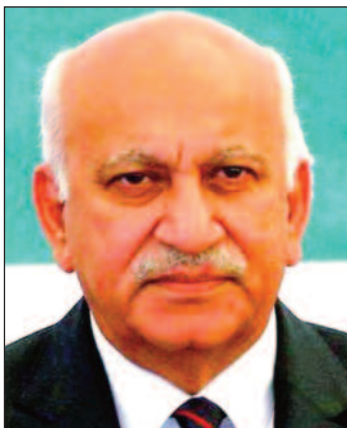


WILL MR & MRS MOSES WEAR A BANDANA NOW?

Kamala Harris was the candidate of the capital. She was a protégée of the elitist monarchs King Barack and Queen Michelle Obama, and their smug pseudo-strategists who thought that any nominee could slide past any question on policy with a non-sequitur

MJ Akbar

is the author of, among several titles, Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan. His latest book is Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns



Donald Trump became the 47th President of the United States of America because he lost the election in Washington DC by the astonishing vote margin of 92.4 per cent to 6.7 per cent. You read that right. Trump won because he lost in Washington DC by an incredible 85 per cent.

This statistic establishes beyond any doubt how far the capital of America has moved from America.

Kamala Harris was the candidate of the capital. She was a protégée of the elitist monarchs of Washington DC, King Barack and Queen

Michelle Obama, their smug pseudo strategists who thought that any nominee could slide past any question on policy with a non-sequitur during a campaign of just 107 days, claim that they had done nothing wrong whatsoever in the past four years, and trounce a Republican speaking the language of garbage.

Kamala Harris was being nothing less than sincere when she told America that there was no need to change policy on either inflation or immigration since she and her principals were rich enough to live above the economy, and immigrants in their electoral calculus added to the Democrat vote. This campaign was carried out by cohorts in some of America's most influential media.

Donald Trump is not penniless either. But his mind lived in America, not on Heaven Avenue. ►►

► This American election reminded me of Richard Nixon's alleged motto: 'If two wrongs don't make a right, try three.' Why? When we say we are watching American elections, we are wrong. We are watching Big American Media watching American elections. This prism gets distorted when some powerful newspapers and television channels, following an agenda of self-interest, set aside objectivity and manipulate reportage or interviews to suit their preferences. This exercise in power has become a peculiar phenomenon of the golden eggshell between Washington and New York.

Big American Media is now a 21st-century Moses. It talks to God, and then gives orders to followers on the route to its Promised Land, which is always on the horizon and never within reach. Its Ten Commandments are ten versions of a single commandment: Thou shalt obey because We know what is good for thee. Hellfire descends on those who dare question its lofty pronouncements. When Jeff Bezos, owner of the Washington Post, refused to endorse either candidate, he was eviscerated because he had transgressed the Moses Line. Bezos spoke the "hard truth" when he wrote in his paper that Americans do not trust the news media because it has become too partisan. Members of his editorial board resigned; some 250,000 readers cancelled their digital sub-



scriptions. They were the vanguard of the force which gave Kamala Harris 92.4 per cent of the vote. Bezos has been vindicated by the results.

Democracy works because voters keep their eyes open and remember pain. Free media is relevant only when it keeps its mind open. In this election, America's most important news channel CNN was so skewered against Trump that it refused to believe its own exit poll which showed that 72 per cent of voters had become angry and distraught after four years of inflation. Fox News had similar numbers in its exit poll; 70 per cent put the economy as their principal worry. CNN was so consumed by bias against Trump that it spent most of its coverage on results night praying that its exit poll would be proven wrong. The Almighty is too sensible to answer prayers of the mighty.

Unsurprisingly, foreign correspondents who trav-►►

elled outside the sticky bubble were more accurate. In October Edward Lucas, of The Times, London, spent a week in the eggshell with “foreign policy wonks”, all of whom believed Trump would be an apocalyptic disaster, and none of whom took up Lucas’ suggestion that they check with voters living in Pennsylvania, a crucial swing state just 90 minutes’ drive away. Whoever he spoke to was busy. Lucas went. He discovered, as he wrote in the October 21 edition of his paper, that the Kamala Harris headquarters was “worryingly short of volunteers”. The bustle was around the Trump stall selling baseball caps reading ‘Jesus Is My Saviour, Trump Is My President’. Independent voters, the only category he quoted, believed that Harris had been hopeless on their biggest concern, illegal immigration. They dismissed Harris as “a weak candidate with a weak record and weak messages, wildly overpromoted, boosted by a fawning liberal media and a sinister, duplicitous, left-wing Democratic political machine”.

Harris was never elected by her party, as is the American way. She was anointed by the Obamas and party hegemons like Nancy Pelosi on the assumption that anyone could defeat the dustbin candidate. Harris had impeccable credentials in their estimation; she was obedient and could be trusted to leave all decisions to grown-ups like the Obamas while she presided over the residual ceremonies. Now that voters have done what they do, Democrat patriarchs will blame America for the result, never themselves. Mrs and Mr Moses can do no wrong.



Alas, they will have to wear a bandana for the next four years to stop the stench of Republican “garbage” from affecting their delicate nostrils.

Trump went out dancing after his last speech of the 2024 campaign because he knew he had trotted around a largely hostile media to reach the White House. An electoral majority is the sum of many parts. His main base was the politically incorrect male, white and young American. They were the principal battering ram against the establishment, aided by supplementary groups who joined an impromptu alliance for disparate reasons. Independent voters, who constituted 31 per cent of the American vote this time, voted 54 per cent to 43 per cent for Trump according to early indications; the final figure could vary but I doubt by much. Latinos, once expected to serenade Harris to the White House, shifted in good numbers to Trump because

inflation did not exclude them from its whiplash. Harris lost at least 10 per cent of the black vote that had backed Joe Biden in 2024. Arab Americans in Michigan turned away from Harris despite



inflation did not exclude them from its whiplash. Harris lost at least 10 per cent of the black vote that had backed Joe Biden in 2024. Arab Americans in Michigan turned away from Harris despite

- ▶ Trump's strong support for Israel because they wanted to punish the Biden administration for duplicity in its decisions on Palestine and the Gaza Strip. They deliberately wasted their vote on a third candidate.

There were non-political indicators of the result. The price of Bitcoin rose by 3 per cent since Trump has promised to legitimise this outlier currency. Or you could have checked with the American gambling company Betfair, which was telling punters Trump would win. In London, British bets went heavily in favour of Trump. British gamblers, second only to the Chinese in their dedication to a flutter, were certain that Trump would win Pennsylvania, Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina, or five of the seven swing states, which means they were better informed than Big American Media. Any television channel could have foretold the result by 7AM Indian time, by the simple methodology of reporting leads. But some kept delaying reportage in the hope that an unexpected miracle would shift the emerging pattern. They refused to recognise Republican gains in the Senate elections, happening simultaneously, as part of the Trump effect. When the battle was lost and won, Trump, who got three million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton in 2016 and seven million less than Joe Biden in 2020, had over five million more votes than Kamala Harris. After all the preceding tension, this became an earthquake without tremors. The exemplary impartiality of one VIP in the



media stands out amidst the usual plethora of anecdotes that emerge from a tumultuous election campaign. In London Boris Johnson was hired by Channel 4 for commentary in the glorious company of Stormy Daniels. Johnson refused to promote either Donald Trump or Kamala Harris. Instead, with commendable dedication, he concentrated on promoting his latest book, until, according to a newspaper report, he was “fired” for talking about his book and holding it up for viewers to see the cover so they could rush out and buy a copy. As Moses might say: Amen. ■

THY NEIGHBORS

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

is a retired air force officer. He was Bangladesh High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam from November 2016 to September 2020. He was also Chairman, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). Currently, he is working as Distinguished Expert at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU).



Can states have a choice in selecting their neighbors? Everyone interested in international relations knows the answer. States cannot change their neighbors. Geographical existence sets the

limitations. What makes this phenomenon so abiding for state-to-state relation? It is the inevitability of geography that undergirds the territorial certainty of a state.

The breakup of greater India gave birth to two independent states, India and Pakistan. In greater India, different religious ethnicities lived together. The Hindus and the Muslims belonged to one state. When the Muslims wanted a separate homeland for themselves, the British as colonial masters, thought it better to divide Greater India into two. The Muslims believed that an independ-

ent state for themselves will guarantee a homeland free of “Hindu power”. Power is a symbol of conquest for one while it is an elegy of defeat for other. Thus, the greater India which was forged into a one unit political state by the Mughal Raj was cut into two independent states. India and Pakistan, which were once INDIA, became neighbors in 1947.

But neither India nor Pakistan could be happy with each other. India was, in fact, surrounded by two neighbors, namely the two parts of Pakistan called East Pakistan and West Pakistan after the two directions in which they straddled the geographical setting of the South Asian map. Map is a political projection that has always been an eyewitness to the trajectories of *World History*. There was a time when the world was composed of few states. When the United Nations was born, there were just about 50 states; now, there are nearly 200 sovereign states. The few number of states with fewer neighbors on the *World Map* has changed into large number of states with more neighbors. ▶▶



The Signing Ceremony of Surrender by Pakistan Army (Lt Gen Jagjit Singh Aurora and Lt Gen A.K. Niazi)

► The metamorphosis of international politics has seen the eclipse of many powerful states even in recent *World History*. Prussia is a case in point. It was a large and powerful nation under Frederick the Great (1740-1786). At the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), which redrew the map after Napoleon's defeat, Prussia annexed rich new territories. The Franco-German War of 1870 is often referred to as Franco-Prussian War. This was a War in which a coalition of German states led by Prussia defeated France, ending French hegemony in continental Europe and creating a unified Germany. Prussia had around her such strong neighbors as Austria, France and Russia. After the First World War, Prussia went extinct. It is, no longer, a political state. Its importance lies in the work of scholars in being a historical region comprised of parts of the modern-day nations of Germany, Poland, and Russia. Thus, once a powerful state has vanished from today's

World Map. Germans, who used to be so uneasy and fearful of Prussia, do not have her now as a neighbor. On the contrary, its neighbor has been replaced by a much powerful Russia whom it cannot change given the latter's geography with its political clout and military power. Only the breakup of Russia as a hypothetical phenomenon can give Germany a different neighbor or vice versa.

Greater India having been truncated, metamorphosed into two distinct political entities in the *World Map*. The change of political map brings with its geo-political variants. Centuries back, Kautilya, the great Indian political thinker, made a most profound statement, "Your neighbor's neighbor is your friend". What Kautilya had in mind about the neighbor was ambiguous. Did Kautilya advise rulers to take a neighbor as an enemy for granted? This seems rather ambivalent if one takes his assertion at face value. The reach ►►

▶ of great powers, in modern times, has become so extensive because of technology and military weapons that distance is, no longer, the measurement for determining a criterion for amity or enmity. But Kautilya made one thing clear that neighbors are to be taken seriously. In most cases, relationship between neighbors is dicey, and fraught with difficulties. In usual sense, the strategic behavior of ZERO-SUM Game works better when neighbors are pitted against each other. This concept takes on a precarious strategic sense when the neighbor happens to be a powerful state with an expansionist role. There is always an urgency to ensure that the neighbor must be factored as an intelligent actor capable of influencing the national interest of another neighboring state.

Bangladesh fought a liberation war for nine months against the then Pakistan military. It cost her 3 million in lives and much more in other forms of casualties. India supported East Bengalis (taking them as distinct from the Bengalis of West Bengal, India) to win independence from Pakistan. The birth of Bangladesh augured a new phase in the lives of the East Bengalis. They became independent, free and liberated. India's contribution in that War of Liberation was monumental, and can never be forgotten.

India's part in Bangladesh's liberation has been a typical one. Being a neighbor of Pakistan, India's involvement in a war that necessitated Pakistan's dismemberment was a courageous and fraught political decision. It was a Cold War period, and the United States was having an unfriendly relationship with the former Soviet Union. The U.S. made up a strategy to weaken the power of the U.S.S.R. This could be done if the U.S. became friends with China who was also ill-disposed to the U.S.S.R. The U.S. needed a mediator, and Pakistan was the most apt choice as she had built a powerful diplomatic relationship with China.

The U.S. did not support the idea of breaking up Pakistan. For the U.S., Pakistan was strategic balance to India's ambition of becoming a most powerful state in Asia in general as well as a leading power in South Asia. In those days, India's relation with the U.S. was lukewarm because of India's closeness with the U.S.S.R. So, to give confidence to Pakistan, her ally, the U.S. decided to send the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal. The carrier was part of the US Navy's Seventh Carrier Group. Its main mission was to combat the Indian Navy, and force India to negotiate a political settlement of Pakistan's crisis. But at that time, the Soviet Union was India's closest ally. The USSR quickly dispatched its naval cruisers, destroyers and nuclear submarines to block the progress of the US Seventh Fleet. The Soviet Union was able to put pressure on the U.S. from making an amphibious landing or hitting the targets deep inside the war zone. Despite Pakistan's success in setting up a bi-lateral relationship between China and the U.S., she completely failed in stopping the liberation war till Bangladesh achieved independence through victory on 16 December 1971. India and East Bengalis together won the *War of Bangladesh*. India helped with troops, supplies, weapons and munitions with an open and covert missions from the Indian army, navy and air force, and finally, the Bengali liberation fighters released Bangladesh from the subjection of Pakistan. The birth of Bangladesh placed a new-born country on the *World Map*. The country is now surrounded by two neighbors, India and Myanmar as opposed to five neighbors, India, Iran, Afghanistan, China and Myanmar when it was a part of the one Pakistan. Bangladesh War is a strange story of a neighbor helping its one time adversary to gain independence from its own once-upon-a-time national entity formed of a religious identity some twenty five years back. Thus, the birth of Bangladesh rendered the historicity of religion as a tool for nation-state system, fraught with too ▶▶

Bangladesh urges 'well-timed military diplomacy' amid Myanmar's provocations along border



Bangladesh Military values Military Diplomacy as a component of Traditional Diplomacy

many dangers. Distance and cultural difference stood in the way of religion used as a rhetoric for amity. The people who had once wanted to be part of one Muslim state fought for one more time for a separate homeland with a secular culture.

In gaining independence, Bangladesh also changed her perception of neighbors. India who was an arch enemy of Pakistan had now morphed into a friend as a neighbor of Bangladesh. On the other hand, Myanmar as a neighbor to Pakistan was non-existent surfaced as state to reckon with.

India and Myanmar, the two neighbors of Bangladesh were the second and sixth countries to recognize Bangladesh on 6 Dec 1971 and 13 January 1972 respectively. It endorsed that both the neighbors were willing to establish good relations with Bangladesh. Bangladesh's geo-strategic location makes her significant to India as she surrounds Bangladesh on three sides — East, West and North, while Myanmar in the South suggests a challenge for influence in the Bay of Bengal opening up to Indian Ocean for trade routes.

Bangladesh's Foreign Policy statement, "Friendship

to all and malice toward none", is geared toward maintaining harmony and peace with neighbors. It is benign and well-adapted in an environment of less sensitivity. But the power position of India, and the status of the Indian Ocean make it difficult for Bangladesh to be always reliant upon a benign policy imperative. On the other hand, China wants an access to Indian Ocean, thereby making India suspicious of China's relations with Bangladesh. Myanmar has survived all these years despite authoritarian rule with concurrent implications of the Western sanctions because China has proved to be her constant and consistent friend. Though Bangladesh wants a peaceful relation with Myanmar, the latter's internecine domestic politics of repression and abuses of human rights of ethnic minorities have made things difficult for Bangladesh. In 2017, when Myanmar military junta pushed around one million Rohingyas into Bangladesh, she unloaded huge burden on Bangladesh's economic resources and multi-dimensional national security issues.

There is a need for Bangladesh and Myanmar to get serious about dealing with the Myanmar's insurgency issues. Bangladesh has turned into a safe ►►

► haven for the Myanmar rebels. This has a long term strategic implications for the region. No matter how strongly Bangladesh pursues the case with Myanmar, there is a need for international engagement. It is understood that China would like to use Myanmar to its advantage for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This makes Myanmar military junta immune to external pressure.

Bangladesh and Myanmar have faced each other in 5 small scale conflicts, and every time it has been a moral and military victory for Bangladesh. There is also a structural difference between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a democracy while Myanmar is a military dictator. So, Bangladesh needs to be careful in engaging with Myanmar. But it must be stressed that keeping Myanmar at a distance will only aggravate the situation inside Bangladesh. It does not matter to Myanmar's military apparatus *TATMADAW* to unleash its atrocities upon its own citizens, and at the same time, instigate local populace to push into the border areas of Bangladesh, namely Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts. If it continues unabated, it is not unlikely that the recalcitrant rebels taking shelter inside will proliferate into deeper districts of Bangladesh, and can easily merge with local population. What is most depressing in this regard is the non-participatory role of the Indian government in coming forward to take the Rohingya crisis as a regional security threat. On the other hand, ASEAN as a regional forum has been most lackadaisical to the proposals of Bangladesh. It seems paraphrasing Kautilya's dictum that distant neighbors are friends sounds true as most support to Bangladesh in Rohingya issue has come from the west. Myanmar as a neighbor is very unpredictable for Bangladesh.

On 6 Oct 2018, Myanmar showed St. Martin's Island as part of her territory. This was also uploaded in two global websites. The Myanmar

Ambassador in Dhaka was summoned on 6 Oct 2018. Bangladesh Foreign Ministry handed over a strongly worded protest note to him. The Myanmar envoy admitted of the updated map as a mistake. In Sep 2020, the *TATMADAW* amassed troops in three different locations of Bangladesh border. At that time, Bangladesh was worried about Rohingyas, and suspected that these moves could be to attack Rohingyas inside Bangladesh. Immediately, Bangladesh deployed Border Guards Battalions (BGB) on Myanmar-Bangladesh border. BGB asked their counterparts to arrange a flag meeting but they received no response. In 2022, Myanmar Air Force violated Bangladesh's airspace multiple times. Myanmar recently made an incursion into Bangladesh's exclusive economic zone, but the Bangladesh Navy took almost seven days to send a patrol boat where the Myanmar Navy was firing shells at Bangladesh's Saint Martin's Island.

Myanmar is Bangladesh's neighbor. The question is whether she is a friendly neighbor or an unfriendly neighbor. Myanmar military has repeatedly violated Bangladesh's land, airspace and sea with complete impunity and lack of enforcement from Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Navy. Does it mean that Myanmar wants to engage in conflict with Bangladesh because that gives *TATMADAW* legitimacy to be in power.

Therefore, Bangladesh needs a long term strategy to deal with Myanmar. It must be based on CREDIBLE DETERRENCE. Here, army, navy and air force must develop joint task force with adequate defensive-offense capabilities. Since Myanmar is a military state, it will be wise to pursue military diplomacy along with traditional foreign policy requirements.

Bangladesh's most powerful neighbor is India. India is not only a regional power but it is also ►►

▶ competing to be a global power in the near future. So, India matters a lot for Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh's independence, her relationship with India has been uneven. Which political party is in power, that determines Indo-Bangla relation whether it will be conducive or not. This exercise has denied Bangladesh to have a sustainable stable relationship with her neighbor.



Freedom fighters are seen celebrating victory over the Pakistan arm on 16 December, 1971, the day Bangladesh emerged as independent, sovereign country. Photo: Net

India's location in itself is a serious concern for her national security. To her east, Bangladesh is a wedge disconnecting her center from the seven sister states. For long, India has troubled hard in maintaining peace in its northeastern provinces. She never felt comfortable with the reports of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) rebels being trained inside Bangladesh territory. So, the relationship with India during Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) rule was poised on mistrust, disrespect and inciting internal insurgency by the other. The situation improved when Awami League came to power, and harboring insurgents on both sides of the border was mutually disbanded. For long, it was believed that insurgency in Chittagong Hill Tracts was masterminded from the Indian side. With the signing of the CHT Peace Accord during Awami League in Dec 1997 ended decades-long fighting between Shanti Bahini and Bangladesh army. This is a strange phenomenon where domestic political parties decide on national interest at cross purpose with the

neighbors in respect of foreign relations. Does it mean that India has a preference in seeing a particular political party in power of Bangladesh to her strategic interest?

If it is so, India's foreign policy needs a complete rethinking with regard to Bangladesh and vice versa. Because foreign policy impinging upon national interests to be made reliant on specific parties coming to power cannot be sustainable, and is surely to beget perennial frustration among common people. There is no reason that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will not be able to work with any party other than the Awami League. This also explains her hyper-sensitive attitude to remain inflexible to work with any government rather than with only one, and her failure to understand the emotions and sentiments of the people of Bangladesh. It is a folly to put all the cards into one single basket. If BJP had realized the "QUIT INDIA" sentiment of the Bangladeshis that evolved last year, it should have noted that it was the result of BJP full heartedly supporting Awami League coming power through ▶▶

► rigged elections in 2018 and 2024. BJP's foreign policy compliments to Awami League did not go with India's avowed espousal of popular democracy and secularism. The Indian Home Minister Amit Shah's statement that immigrant Bangladeshis were like termites was disturbing and inimical to the friendly sentiments of Bangladesh.

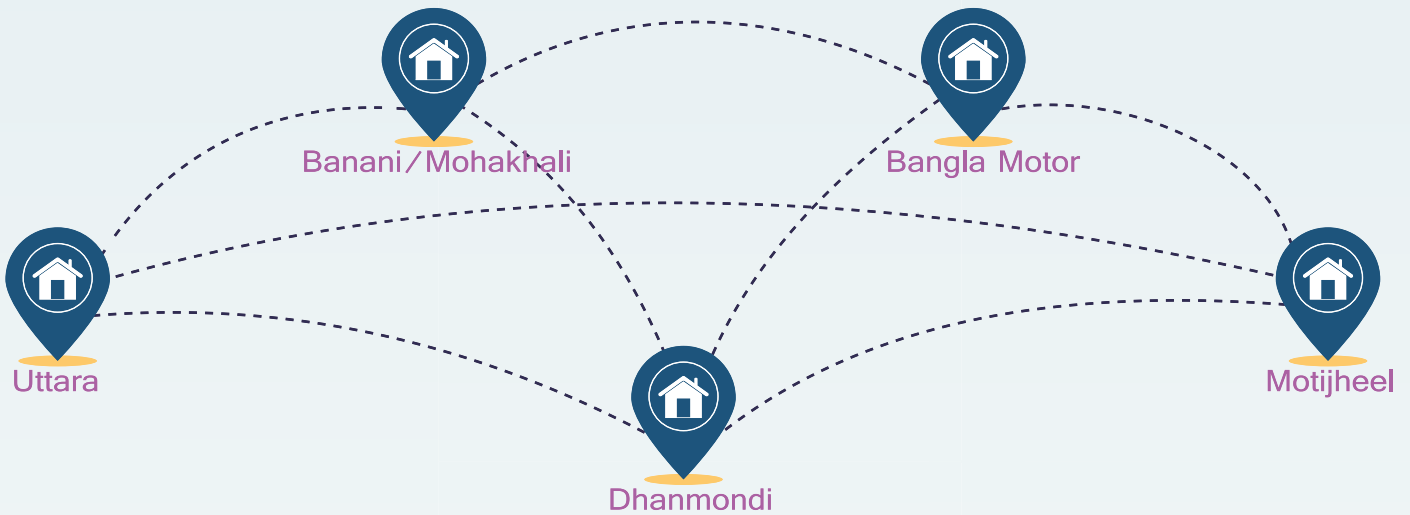
Subsequently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's over-concerned anxiety over the safety of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh when the interim caretaker government took power, is unnerving. His speculations of fear were not based on facts, rather emotive texts made up in the media. In times of crisis, media's natural instinct is to hype up the ante. If the lives of the minority are premised to be under threat, then it is the responsibility of the states in South Asia to work together, and make human security as the cornerstone of regional security. None of the South Asian states has been able to posit man and his dignity above other priorities.

The other external actor that plays irritant acts in South Asia's regional space is China. China is an outsider but has a strong influence on South Asian states other than India. This poses a serious challenge to India's eminence in the region. China not only has been able to develop a healthy trading relations with South Asia, it is also a big supplier of armaments and defense materials to India's next door neighbors, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. India's fear that in the event of a war, China will take the easiest route to cut India, thereby separating the center and the eastern states buffered in-between by Bangladesh. Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and the narrow corridor of CHUMBI VALLEY up north of Bangladesh are the two strategic flashpoints that may be exploited by China in the event of a serious conflict with India. So, Bangladesh is not free from a self-protecting military thrust into its territory, no matter how neu-

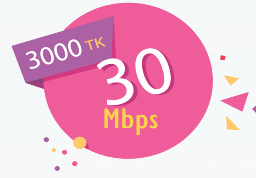
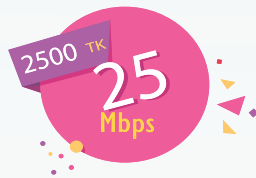
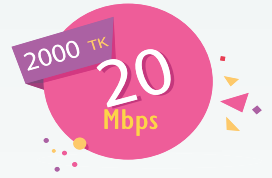
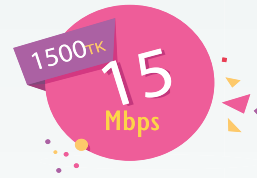
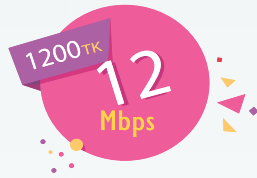
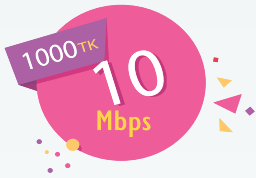
tral a stance she maintains about taking sides either with India or China. A strong deterrent posture by Bangladesh can only send a strong message of retaliation to an infiltrating army. All this makes India's position difficult and fragile. India happens to be the most versatile neighbor to Bangladesh not by choice but by fate.

For Bangladesh, India is extremely important, and so is the case with India. Any political unrest in Bangladesh will have its repercussions in India. It is clearly understood by the flight of large number of Awami League leaders after the July revolution. This makes India's choice of maintaining a friendly relation with Bangladesh very delicate and sensitive. On the other hand, inciting political commotion in any of the neighboring states of India can be plotted from inside Bangladesh. Mizoram, Tripura, West Bengal are states that stand on the brink of political turpitude of neighborly machinations.

As the world moves forward to an uncertain dilemma of AI-dominated scientific future, it is imperative for India to start contemplating a forward-looking foreign policy strategy. India's relation with Bangladesh needs to be based on mutual understanding of constituents from strategic to popular tactical level. It was time for India to renew taking initiatives in SAARC as a regional forum if she wants to reclaim her stature as a great benign power to compete China and the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific. India's foreign minister Jaishankar has written a book *Why Bharat Matters*. The book claims India's position as a great power with a rich ancient history. The point is OLD BHARAT is, no longer, modern India. The world knows and understands BHARAT more as INDIA aspiring to set up an example of taking a meaningful role as a great nation. For that India needs to start from her local turf that is South Asia. No country offers a better constructive challenge to India than Bangladesh given both countries empathic history sublimed by the birth of Bangladesh in 1971. ■



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Regional Cooperation as a Factor of Security and Stability in Central and South Asia

Brigadier General Md Mostafizur Rahman, ndc, hdmc, afwc, psc, PhD
is serving as the Chief of Doctrine Division in Headquarters Army Training and Doctrine Command



1.1 Introduction

In this restless situation of the world shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the Middle East crisis in Tandem, the economies of the world are stumbling,

and the people have uncertainties about the future. In this precarious situation, it is more necessary than at any time in the past to make regional cooperation. The author would try to focus more on South Asia and especially Bangladesh and developing cooperating relations between South and Central Asia, as it was presented at the International Scientific Conference on “Regional Cooperation in the Context of Security and Modern Development” at the Academy of the Armed Forces in the People’s Republic

of Uzbekistan. From the very beginning of the emergence of Bangladesh people had always promoted peace through regional cooperation. Samarkand and Bukhara have strong cultural linkage with the peoples of both the countries and Central Asia, part of it is still undiscovered though. In the rapidly changing world scenario, regional cooperation is becoming important for survival in unity.

1.2 World Scenario

The geopolitical scenario due to power politics is changing very rapidly. In three decades, the world witnessed the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, turning the world into a unipolar world led by the USA. China has slowly and steadily emerged into the strategic space and aspires to share power. India is also aspiring to rise as a regional power. Russia is trying to regain its lost valour, which it ceded with the disintegration of the USSR. Meaning that the world is moving towards ►►

► a multipolar world system. Maybe the onus of leading the world will not rest on any country or group of countries either. The kind of multi-polarity the world might get in a couple of decades could be a fluid multi-polarity, which would be extensively time sensitive. Group of countries besides the major powers like USA, China, India, Brazil, Australia, etc. ASEAN, Central Asia, and South Asia as groups may rise as the polarity of powers in the world. While the powerful nations fight Non-Traditional Threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the impacts of climate change that shook the world. Let alone the wars causing suffering to millions of people in different parts of the world. The rippled effects on the world economy ultimately cause every world citizen to suffer. In this competing globalized world, no nation can survive in isolation. Regional cooperation through forums and organizations gives platforms for the nations to talk and resolve mutually beneficial issues. Like Central Asia, South Asia too has experienced colonial rules over centuries transformed into independent nations. Interestingly, many of these countries had been together before demarcation. Since its inception, some countries have inherited disputes over geographical boundaries or other issues of conflicting national interests.



Map 1 Central and South Asia (State, 2012)

Regional cooperation mechanisms may play an effective role in reducing and defusing tensions through dialogues and negotiations.

1.3 National Security, Human Security, and Stability Correlation

National security is the capacity of a state to ensure the protection and defence of its territory. A general citizen understands security as encompasses the acronym Border, Autonomy, Develop-►

ment, Stability (BADs). These are aspects that no single republic can handle on its own and, as such, require multinational collaboration (Longley, 2021). A country needs to have its border secured, as an independent nation strives to have. The nation must preserve its political autonomy. To ensure the well-being (human security) of her citizenry, the country must have economic and infrastructural development. And then, to sustain the development, the internal stability to be maintained.

1.4 Bangladesh, History and Heritage

In South Asia, Bangladesh has a distinct geopolitical, cultural, and historical significance. It is in the east of India near the tip of the Bay of Bengal. This area was the part of Pala Empire. By the mid-8th century, it was the dominant force in northern India. The 12th-century Hindu Sena dynasty assumed control of the area after that. Trade between the Pala Empire and the Abbasid Caliphate spread Islam to the region. The Bengal Sultanate, which was established in the year 1352, grew to become one of the world's wealthiest trading states. Bengal Subah was the most prosperous

province of the Mughal Empire after its conquest in 1576. It became a major exporter and hub to produce cotton fabrics, silk, and ships. Its economy included 12 percent of the world's GDP, which was more than that of Western Europe, and its populace enjoyed superior living circumstances. After the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Bengal Presidency came into the hands of the British East India Company. Before the colonization by the British, Bangladesh was intimately linked with civilizational heritage and linkage of Central Asia. Which is manifested by even the food habits and cultures. (Anon., n.d.) Bangladesh is the 8th largest country in consideration of its population, which is the 42nd economy of the world and maintained 7 percent GDP growth till the breakout of the Russia-Ukraine War. It is the world's 2nd largest RMG exporting country and the highest troops' contributor in the UN Peacekeeping Mission. Bangladesh has earned a good name as a Disaster Resilient Country with no major loss of lives with even more severe natural calamities in recent times.

1.5 Major Issues Impacting the Security of the States in Central and South Asia

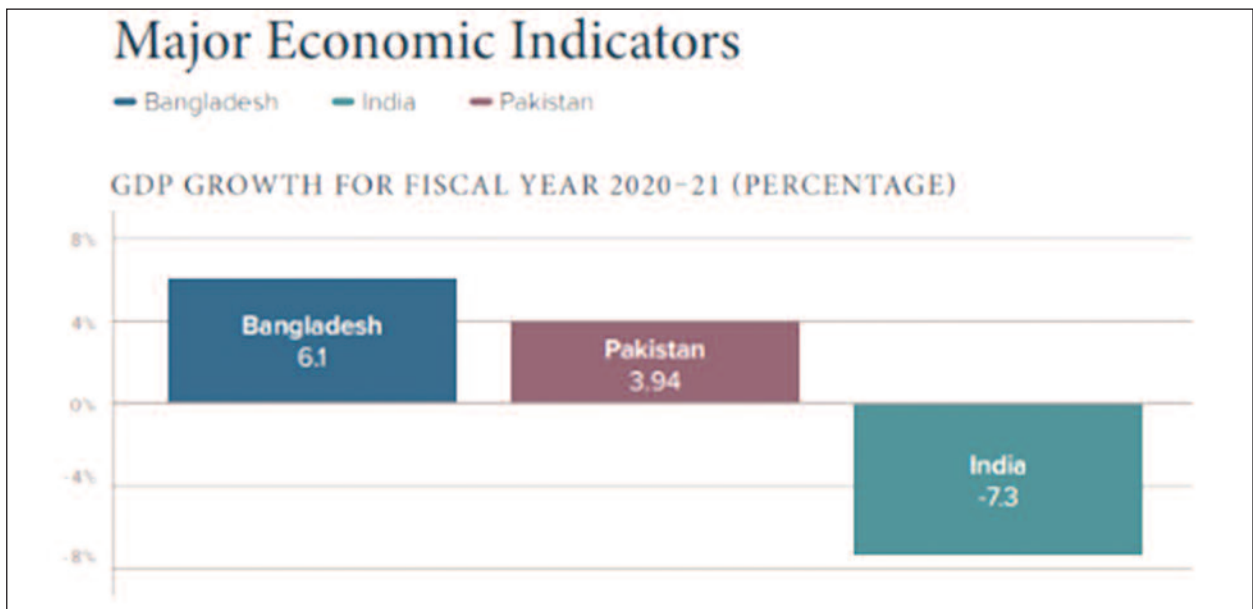


Figure 1 Major Economic Indicators 2020-2021



► 1.5.1 Covid-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic caused millions of people into poverty and significantly increased income and wealth inequality in the region. This state posed a serious challenge for leaders, especially since the growth of food and commodity prices compounded economic insecurities. The pandemic brought both the formal and informal economies in the region to severe situations. Lockdowns in different countries caused huge unemployment, pushing people below the poverty line. In this situation, countries responded with stimulus programs, which might have worked temporarily. However, the extent of the economic crisis suggested that it would take a long time to get back to normal and withstand the consequential dangers. Countries had initiated mass vaccination programs and regenerated their economies, but a subsequent wave of infections forced policymakers to place new restrictions. The reappearance of COVID-19 has put the region's emerging economic regaining at serious risk. (Younus, 2022)

1.5.2 The Russia-Ukraine War's

The Russia-Ukraine War, in tandem with the Covid crisis, was a strategic shock involving 1.7 trillion Dollars in GDP. Together, Russia and Ukraine account for a sizeable portion of the world's supplies of oil, gas, and other commodities. Hence, this war has had a negative influence on their supply chains around the world. Resultant sanction by the West had complemented the case with severe consequences. Beyond uncertainty, it disrupted the supply chain worldwide. It did not spare the friend or foe. It blocked the flow of food grains, essential goods, gasoline, auto parts, and machines, through the global market. As a result of this most trade conglomerates and millions of individuals experienced economic hardship. The South Asian economy has also been harmed by the war. Due to the region's net

importation, trade links have a direct impact on South Asia in the form of increased commodity prices. (Anon., n.d.)

1.5.3 Impact of Climate Change

While the global temperature is rising, after 2040 climate change will tremendously impact the World. This will be risking numerous natural and human systems. There are 127 key risks, identified and assessed as mid- and long-term evils impacting multiple times more severe than currently suffered. The extent and degree of climate change and its risks depend strongly on near-term mitigation and adaptation actions. Some of the projected adverse impacts, related losses, and damages that worsen with the rise of global warming are given as follows: (Hans-Otto Pörtner, n.d.)

- Loss and degradation of biodiversity and alteration of ecosystems.
- Possible risks in the availability of water and water-related health hazards.
- Climate change will gradually put pressure on food security production and nutrition.
- Climate change and its effects will significantly create severe health issues causing premature deaths.
- Larger parts of the Globe will be exposed to heat waves with increasing warming.
- The vulnerability of cities, populations, and key infrastructure to climate change will increase many folds.
- Supposedly global net economic losses will increase non-linearly.
- Climate refugees will cause regional agitation.

1.6 Importance of South Asia

As a link between the Mediterranean in the west and the Indian Ocean in the east, the South ►►

▶ Asian region is crucial from a strategic standpoint. Also, this area has developed into a key hub for marine trade, linking the nations that create natural resources with the states that consume them. Via this region, more than two-thirds of the world's oil and more than 80% of the oil used in China and Japan are transported. These waterways are used by almost 50% of all container shipping worldwide. South Asia is a large and complicated region with one-fifth of the world's population and a land size of more than five million square kilometers. The countries in South Asia are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Lately, Afghanistan has sometimes been considered South Asian. However, sometimes it is considered as part of Central Asia too. Myanmar is not a South Asian country; however, her physical borders with India and Bangladesh brought into South Asian regional matters.

1.7 Traditional and Nontraditional Security Challenges

Traditional and nontraditional security risks exist throughout South Asia, and they reinforce one another. The vulnerability of the area is increased by these problems. The root of the problem remains poverty and its affiliated issues like food insecurity and resource depletion with additional dimensions added due to climate change and its resultant impacts. Such as water scarcity, environmental degradation, and inadequate health facilities have impacts on millions of South Asians. These problems have not been given priority by their administrations. While making investments in human development, several nations continue to use antiquated security measures. Conflicts over natural resources, geographical difficulties, and ideological conflicts all pose serious threats to the area. It is a failure that these nations are unable to resolve disputes productively. Soft threats grew when South Asia's development

slowed down. The neighbors' ties have been strained ever since independence. The two nuclear powers have had conventional confrontations, military standoffs, and cross-border battles. Although they typically share a border, by and large, land and land borders have been settled in most of the area between most countries, post-colonial unresolved border demarcations have raised many issues of contention between some of the countries in the region.

1.8 FDMN or Rohingya Issue: Potential Cause for Regional Destabilization

The brutality and persecution of the Rohingya people may rank as the greatest injustice in the annals of human civilization. Qualitative information gleaned, through The Rohingya is a Muslim-majority ethnic community who have long been residing in Myanmar which is a predominately Buddhist country. The only way to defuse the tension and save Rohingyas from the scourge is a proactive role in mediating and increasing international pressure on the Burmese government to resolve the Rohingya problem. (Ahmed, 2022)

1.8.1 Who are these Rohingya People

The Muslim Rohingya have resided in Buddhist Myanmar for millennia. The total number of Rohingyas still in Myanmar is estimated to be around 600,000 as of November 2019. (BBC, 23 January 2020) Many Rohingyas have fled the country due to persecution and genocide by the Myanmar military and Buddhist nationalists²³. The UN estimates that over 168,000 Rohingyas have left Myanmar since 2012, (UNHCR, 2017) and more than 740,000 have sought refuge in Bangladesh since 2017. (BBC, 23 January 2020) The Rohingya are considered one of the most persecuted minorities in the world and have been denied citizenship and basic rights by the Myanmar government³. (en.wikipedia, n.d.) Rohingya or ▶▶

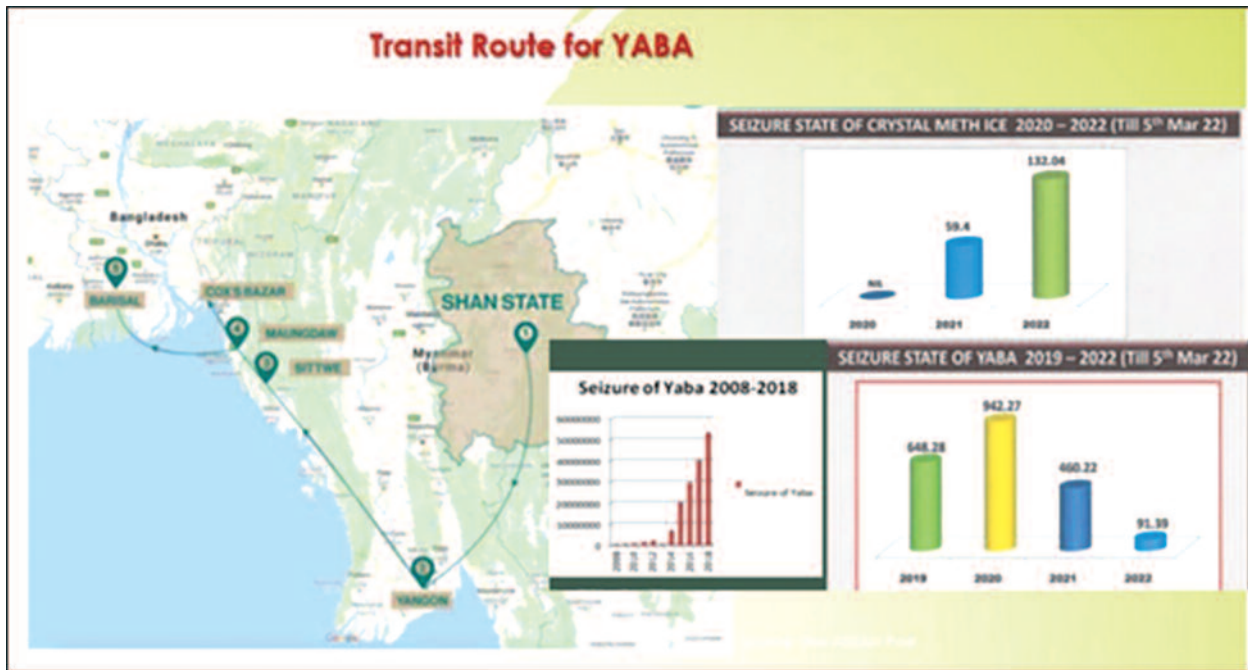


Figure 2 Transit Route for Yaba using Rohingya as carrier (Studies, 2022)

► Ruaiingga is a dialect exclusive to Myanmar. They're not one of Myanmar's 135 designated ethnic groups and have been denied nationality from the early 80s, making them stateless. According to historians and Rohingya organizations, Muslims have been in Myanmar since the 12th century. The Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) is a diplomatic and advocacy organization made up of Rohingya leaders, based in the United Kingdom. (Programs, 2018) It claims that the Rohingya people are the descendants of the ancient Arakan Kingdom, which was an independent coastal state in western Myanmar. (Programs, 2018) However, this claim is disputed by the Myanmar government and some historians, who argue that the Rohingya are recent migrants from Bangladesh and have no historical or cultural ties to Arakan. (Organisation, 2019) The ARNO also seeks the right of self-determination and full citizenship for the Rohingya people, who have been persecuted and discriminated by the Myanmar government for decades. (Programs, 2018) In the current decade, thousands of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar have

been raped, tortured, and slaughtered by Myanmar's Security Forces and their associates.

International and local nonprofit organizations consider this a crime against humanity. Many Rohingya crossed the bordering Naf River into Bangladesh to escape. (Staff, 2018) By 2018, 1.3 million Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar to escape persecution. One of the biggest migrations in recent history involved the Rohingya people. Only those who had established themselves in Myanmar before 1948 were granted citizenship, according to the 1982 Burmese citizenship law. Since then, the Rohingya people have been forcefully pushed into Bangladesh, returning to their so-called home country by the governing Buddhists in Myanmar. They also used the military and armed forces in discriminating actions and horrific treatment such as raping, forced disappearances, and genocide. The Rohingya-led National Democratic Party for Human Rights won four seats in the Burmese parliament at the 1990 general election. The four Rohingya MPs were Shamsul Anwarul Huq, Chit Lwin Ebrahim, Fazal Ahmed, and Nur Ahmed. (Anon., n.d.) ►

► 1.8.2 Transnational Security

The transnational security in the regions is fragile and susceptible as violations of human rights are associated with crime and violence, the severe rejection of basic human rights has forced the Rohingya to maintain a nexus with notorious gangs. The transnational security issue is a growing concern amid the crisis as a result of the aggravation of societal instabilities like terrorism, human trafficking, arms running, sex traps, drug trades, extremism etc.

1.8.3 Drug Smuggling, Trafficking and Sex Tourism

Drug smugglers utilize Rohingya to distribute drugs from Myanmar. Refugees are very vulnerable due to the lack of social and political life and poverty. As such they are subjected to deliberate target for smuggling drugs to make money. As per the study of the think tanks Myanmar is a hub for producing and marketing drugs. With the help of Burmese military and border guard forces, Myanmar drug dealers exports drugs to Bangladesh. And Myanmar's Rohingya population may be employed for drug smuggling. Human traffickers recruit adolescents and young Rohingya women to become sex workers or drug pushers. By the Human Rights Watching Staff, it is observed that the Myanmar army's eviction and persecution had separated many children from their families.

1.8.4 Terrorism and Militancy

Notorious outlaw groups commonly use the communities of Rohingya as a network for moving firearms. The youthful groups' involvement and ties to militant groups are driven by their obscured future, national identity crisis, and lack of access to fundamental rights. There have already been reports of gang activity in the Rohingya camp. If this is accurate, the peace and regional

security of the countries in this region will soon face a significant challenge.

18.5 Resolving Rohingya Crisis: Way Forward

Since Bangladesh had accepted FDMN access on the grounds of humanity, Rohingya have flooded the southeastern part of the country. Bangladesh cannot provide a permanent home for the growing number of FDMN since it has already a huge population in the limited geographical territory. UN organizations, NGOs, and INGOs provide Rohingyas with basic requirements. Long-term, Bangladesh may not be able to support the Rohingya. Bangladesh accepts a substantial number of Rohingya people and shows human consideration. Otherwise, FDMN would have been victims of one of the world's horrendous holocausts. Of late, due to the other major events in the world such as the Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Palestine war, and the impacts of COVID-19, international attention and efforts have been diverted toward those. The flow of donations and aid for these FDMNs from different organizations and nations has drastically reduced. Bangladesh is experiencing difficulties in managing the issue of FDMN. Return of the FMDN to Myanmar is the only way to resolve the problem. Myanmar's government remains dead slow and indifferent to the repeated urges of Bangladesh. Until the Myanmar Government changes its approach and makes legal commitments and a positive outlook on its attitude towards the FDMN, it will not feel assured of its security to go back to Myanmar.

1.9 Afghanistan Taliban Takeover: Regional Risks and Repercussions

The Taliban retook Kabul and Afghanistan 20 years after the U.S. and its allies evicted them. Taliban's sudden return to power shocked many Afghans and outsiders. This created a situation for sparked future problems. Debates erupted re-►►

regarding the facts; whether the Taliban which has moderated from what it was in the 1990s could govern and if Afghanistan could be a responsible international member under their rule. They were initially moderate. They declared a general amnesty, committed to forming an inclusive administration, and vowed to protect Afghan rights and liberties. Afghanistan's economy is in tatters, and it is assumed that the regime has terrorist safe havens. Recent events have suggested that the Taliban's Islamic Emirate may destabilize Afghanistan as it consolidates power in the long run. A year after the Taliban's return, Afghanistan's future seems bleak as it has not yet obtained international recognition though it is maintaining limited informal diplomatic interactions with a few neighbouring states. The group's leadership is still ineffective though it is manifesting temporary success in some aspects of the economy and daily business. Recent developments show that the Taliban's Islamic Emirate would destabilize Afghanistan and the region. Taliban Cabinet and top officials lack administrative experience. The Taliban's prime minister insists they never promised food. The government restricts inhabitants' rights and liberties, especially women and girls, causing dissatisfaction. The Taliban's failure to rule will ultimately escalate causing a humanitarian catastrophe, popular discontent, violent opposition, and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Their power will destabilize Afghanistan and cause regional turmoil. (Radfar, 2022)

1.9.1 Regional Impacts

The existing Afghan government under the Taliban has not yet been recognized by the world community, not even its neighbors. Seeking involvement and recognition from the region and beyond, the Taliban have claimed that Afghanistan under their authority will be a responsible international member, won't harbor terrorist groups, and won't enable groups to use

Afghan soil against other countries. But Afghanistan could not assure the international community to deny the Afghan land to become a sanctuary for terrorists and a menace to neighboring countries under their leadership. According to the 30th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, terrorist organizations operate training camps in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Their soldiers and fighters are in Taliban fighting formations and they are leading them. If the Taliban hosts al-Qaeda officials, whose presence could cost them recognition and survival. It would be unlikely to cut ties with or move against other terrorist groups. Terrorist groups have joined terrorist organizations, virtually without any ideology just based on protection and business. Foreign fighters have built connections with the Taliban, including marriages. They're loyal to the Taliban leader and popular among fighters. Taliban also target ISKP. The gang can attack Tajikistan and Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. ISKP is small but might expand if the Taliban alienates the populace. Possibility of expanding and establishing nexus further towards the south through India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh too.

1.9.2 Future Destabilization

The Taliban are willing to risk for Islamist groups and former allies, so they're unlikely to strike against them. Cooperating with the Taliban has long-term repercussions. Pakistan, China, and India have contacted the Taliban to reduce extremist concerns. Taliban may agree soon for recognition. To prevent Afghanistan from fomenting problems in the area, the international community, regional governments, the US, EU, and UN agencies may work together.

1.10 Regional Cooperation Architecture

1.10.1 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) ▶▶

► SAARC was founded in 1983. The objectives of SAARC were to promote social and cultural development, foster economic progress, and enhance the standard of living for South Asians through economic cooperation and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The main objectives of the SAARC as a regional association of states still need to be fulfilled. SAARC has had little influence compared to the European, ASEAN, and the African Union. Though the eight South Asian nations have close physical, historical, cultural, social, and economic ties, regional cooperation has lagged due to ongoing hostility, conflict, and disagreements among member states over every proposal, no matter how sound. Although the SAARC charter forbids bilateral and contentious topics, bilateral problems are given priority. In the present context, SAARC is the least effective. It even failed to make any headway for a top-level meeting in recent years. However, a few successes/achievements have been made regarding cultivation, education, and Medicare. There were some activities in Economy Trade (SAFTA in 2006), SAARC Development Fund, Integrated Programme of Action (2012), counterterrorism, SAARC satellite, education, sports, etc. However, there are still significant obstacles to overcome to turn this forum into an effective mechanism to work as a regional forum.

1.10.2 Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectorial Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

BIMSTEC is a multinational regional organization designed to accelerate shared growth and collaboration amongst littoral and neighboring countries in the Bay of Bengal Region. It includes seven members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand created BIST-EC in June 1997 with the Bangkok Declaration. Myanmar joined in 1997, changing

the acronym to BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation), and Nepal and Bhutan joined in 2004. Smith Nakandala, BIMSTEC's first Secretary General, said, "We're not reinventing the wheel; we're rediscovering the Bay of Bengal's common legacy." Unlike other regional groups, BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization looking at seven sectors: science, technology, and innovation; trade and investment; environment and climate change; agriculture and food security; security; people-to-people contacts; and connectivity.

1.10.3 Challenges and Setbacks for BIMSTEC

According to foreign policy specialists, BIMSTEC's progress is inefficient and "inactive." Inconsistent policymaking and operational meetings were mentioned. BIMSTEC's secretariat needs more financial and human resources for operations. BIMSTEC members need to improve trans-border trade and connectivity. BIMSTEC countries have struggled to develop a common, profitable coastal cargo ecology and frequently detain fishermen who cross borders. In recent years, Bangladesh-Myanmar ties over the Rohingya FDMN crisis, the India-Nepal border dispute, and the political scenario in Myanmar when the military regime took power in February highlighted BIMSTEC's growth.

1.11 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Tens of the Southeast Asian Nations; Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam constitute the ASEAN. It aims to foster economic and security cooperation among its members. A total of 665 million people live in the ASEAN countries. It constitutes a combined GDP of 3.2 trillion Dollars. The group has been a key factor in the fiscal integration of Asia. The Organization negotiated the world's largest free trade agreement ►►

► and concluded six free trade agreements with other regional economies. To block the spread of communism, ASEAN was established in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The members signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia the same year. The treaty emphasizes mutual respect and noninvolvement in other countries' affairs. The charter laid a roadmap for a community comprising three branches: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political-Security Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. ASEAN brings together nations that have notable differences. According to 2020 World Bank data, Singapore has the highest GDP per capita in the group at about \$60,000. Myanmar has the lowest at about \$1,400. For instance, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center report, Indonesia and Singapore are among the most religiously diverse nations in the world, while Cambodia, which has most Buddhists, and Vietnam, which has a majority of Muslims, are relatively homogeneous. Archipelagos and continental land masses with low plains and mountainous terrain make up the geography of ASEAN. According to the research and advocacy organization Freedom House, Timor-Leste is still the only entirely free democracy in Southeast Asia today. ASEAN has resulted in political benefits to the region. Tensions among neighbors had a historical legacy and here, ASEAN has served as an opportunity for dialogue. It helps defuse disputes and barring escalation between countries and to ensure relative regional stability. (Zhang, 2020)

1.12 Regional Security Structure in Central Asia

1.12.1 Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO)

Countries of Central Asia such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, formed the Central Asian Cooperation Organization in 2002 and Russia joined in 2004. Georgia, Turkey,

and Ukraine joined as observers. The CACO was created to further progress and diversify political dialogue; develop the forms and mechanisms of regional economic integration; deepen mutual understanding on joint security issues; elaborate mutual efforts in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region; develop cooperation in political, trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural and humanitarian spheres. In July 2003, Kazakhstan's president asked the International Financial Institutions (IFI) to help CACO formulate measures to handle significant regional concerns. Concerning trade, member states recently proposed a "step by stage" strategy to create a single market in the region and an FTA within 15 years. Russia's recent accession (May 28, 2004) is expected to shift CACO's center of gravity. CACO focuses on improving regional safety and stability to strengthen the region's economy.

1.12.2 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The SCO has steadily grown since its founding in 2001. The SCO has eight full members and covers over three-fifths of the Eurasian continent. The organization accounts for nearly half of the world's population and a quarter of the global gross domestic product (GDP). It has played a key role in promoting stability in Central Asia. The SCO has helped its member states achieve border stability and security over the past 20 years. It is done by signing the Treaty of Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation of the SCO member states, anti-terrorism cooperation, and a shared goal of economic development. However, the SCO now plays a more significant and symbolic role globally. As President Xi noted in his speech, "We will create strong momentum and new dynamism for ensuring durable peace and common prosperity of the Eurasian continent and the entire world by promoting the development and expansion of the SCO and giving full play to its positive impact." ►►

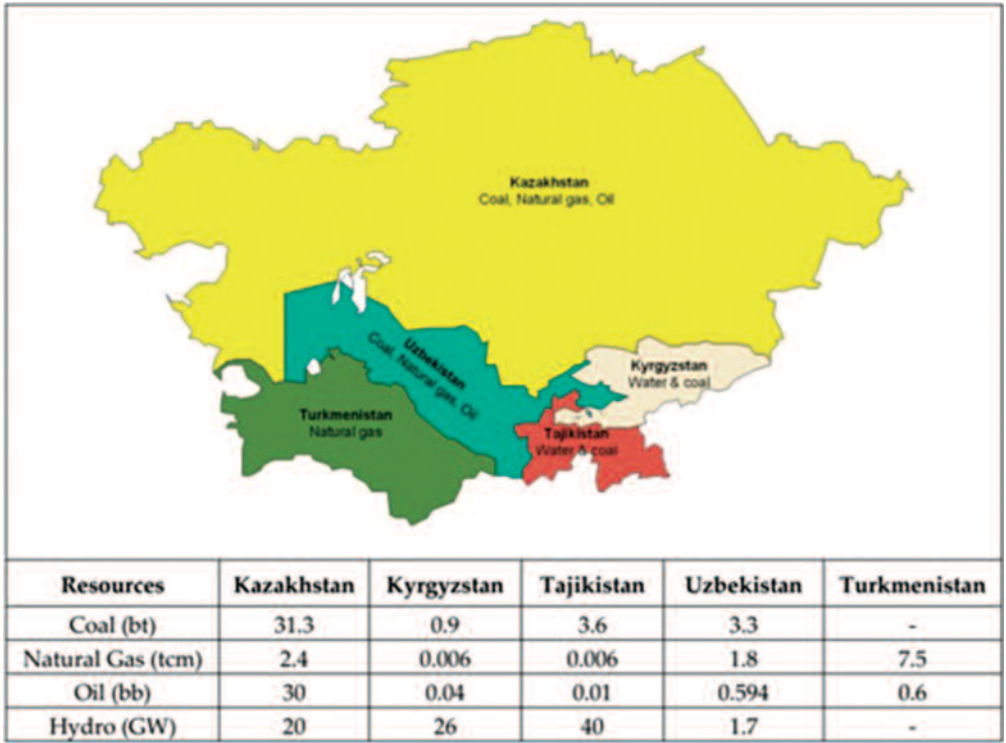


Figure 2 Transit Route for Yaba using Rohingya as carrier (Studies, 2022)

the Region and by external consumers such as Russia, China, Europe, and India. (Alkuwaiti, 2020) Besides its unique geographical and climatic circumstances, Central Asia holds abundant and diverse energy resources, such as natural gas, oil, raw coal, and. It has also the potential for plentiful untapped renewable energy resources, such as hydro, solar, wind, and

biomass energy indicating the available natural energy resources by country. (Energy Situation in Central Asia, n.d.)

► The SCO is both relevant, and its commitments are not cliché. In today's tumultuous international environment, the SCO serves as the region's anchor and a model of international relations for nations looking to navigate the unrest. It demonstrates a system in which various political ideologies and systems do not obstruct international cooperation. The demonstrated pragmatism and practical approach to world affairs are reminiscent of a past global order and a future that the world should strive to create. It's interesting to note that the India, China, and Pakistan trio is successful in this framework while failing in the South Asian region's exclusive regional framework.

1.13 Areas of Cooperation between Central and South Asia

1.13.1 Energy Security

Central Asia contains rich energy resources of petroleum. Central Asian energy is required inside

1.13.2 Energy Security and Cooperation

Bangladesh is developing rapidly, and growing industrialization requires energy. The Central Asian regions have got it in abundance which may be shared by cooperation.

1.13.3 Education Exchange Programmes

Central Asia Countries are good choices for education which was a popular choice during the Soviet's time. Bangladesh also has good opportunities for education at a comparatively cheaper expense. Universities and other educational institutions may have exchange programs.

1.13.4 Pharmaceuticals Joint Venture

Bangladesh is emerging in the pharmaceutical ►►

► sector for which energy is an important need. Collaboration may take in this sector. 1.13.5 Trade and Commerce and Agriculture exchange. The regions are dependent on agriculture. Bangladesh scientists have proved to be very innovative and effective in producing different variants of important crops. This is also true for Central Asia like for cotton.

1.13.6 Good quality cotton from Central Asia may enhance the Garments Industry of Bangladesh.

1.13.7 Bangladesh may invest in Readymade Garment (RMG) in Central Asia. Taking the opportunity of sufficient energy, the RMG may be expanded to Central Asia.

1.13.8 South Asian Countries; Bangladesh may export water to Central Asia. Central Asia is comparatively a dry region. Moreover, some countries like Uzbekistan are double landlocked and few are landlocked. Bangladesh may export processed water for drinking and other purposes.

1.13.9 Cultural Exchange Program between the countries will enhance the bonding. To establish the friendship and cultural linkage, cultural exchanges may be planned which will facilitate people-to-people contact.

1.13.10 Voice for Rohingya Repatriation to Myanmar with Sustainable Security and Human Rights for Regional Stability. Bangladesh should encourage the population of Central Asia to actively raise their voice for the Rohingya people and their safe repatriation to Myanmar.

1.14 Miscellaneous Points to Ponder for Mutual Benefits

- Countries agree to openness and inclusiveness and support the essence of the corporation. This is how only by sharing, caring, and collaboration they are to create a powerful synergy for connectivity.
- Not playing geopolitical games in the name of connectivity and is willing to follow the principles of extensive friendly discourse, joint involvement, and complementary benefits to create a bright future and development.
- Hardware and software development in promoting infrastructure connectivity should remain the cornerstone for cooperation.
- All states should pursue 'hard connectivity' and 'soft connectivity' in parallel, and build an all-dimensional, multifaceted, and sustainable connectivity network.
- Respecting each other's sensitivity.

1.15 Conclusions

To conclude it reiterates the need for regional and extra-regional cooperation to survive the wild card scenario in the World. We strongly believe that Animosity pays nothing and friendship costs nothing, but a smile brings in a host of opportunities. The new era of friendship in the context of newly emerged Bangladesh and the Uzbekistan Government will role forward. Bangladesh now look forward and seek new association and regional cooperation for human security which are mainly based on 'Three Zeros'. Regional cooperation will matter most than any time in the past. Cooperation between South and Central Asia in undoubtedly make it more fruitful and accomplishing. ■

Security Sector Review: Early and Comprehensive Steps are Indispensable

Major General (Retd) Dr Md Nayeem Ashfaque Chowdhury

is the Chief Executive Officer, Prime Bank Foundation.



By this time the secular student-led July Revolution is recognised as the second independence of Bangladesh after 1971. Sudden ouster of tyrants came as a big relief to the nation on

one hand, but left behind a power vacuum in every sector of administration, and society. Security sector is no exception. A stable security sector is a prerequisite to normalcy in all other sectors, let aside reform or development. A thorough evaluation of the entire spectrum of the security sector is indispensable to achieve stability.

The security situation in Bangladesh is now precarious, as Bangladesh Police, the main actor of ensuring internal security, has largely been inactive since August 5, 2024. Although the police re-

sumed operations on August 15, they have done so hesitantly and without confidence, relying on the protection of the Bangladesh Army.

Spectrum of security sector

The broad spectrum of the Security Sector encompasses Management and Oversight Bodies, Professional Security Providers, and Justice and Rule of Law Actors.

Management and Oversight Bodies include elements such as the executive branch, national security council, legislative bodies, and ministries of defence, home, planning, and foreign affairs, as well as financial management units like audit and planning departments.

Professional Security Providers consist of the armed forces, police, paramilitary forces, intelligence agencies, customs and immigration services, fire brigade, civil defence, and BNCC. ▶



Bangladesh Army is performing security duties. Photo: Net

► Justice and Rule of Law Actors include the judiciary, law ministry, prisons, criminal investigation and prosecution services, human rights commissions, ombudsmen, and customary and traditional justice systems.

Given the vast scope of the security sector, I am concentrating on the Armed Forces and briefly addressing the two key intelligence organisations, NSI and DGFI.

There are a number of strong points of the current interim government. Firstly, since the Liberation War of 1971, the country has not experienced such national unity as seen today. Over 95% of the population is united under the leadership of the current Interim Government led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

Secondly, Generation Z, which had previously shown little interest in national politics and af-

fairs, is now actively engaged in nation-building and guiding the country toward a better future. This unprecedented shift in attitude should be leveraged fully.

We have observed a persistent brain drain of talented youth from Bangladesh to developed countries due to frustration, lack of opportunities, and unfavourable conditions in educational institutions and the job market, as well as widespread politicisation, corruption, nepotism, lawlessness, and inequalities.

Thirdly, the mid and lower ranks of the Bangladesh Armed Forces are discontent with the previous regime's misrule, corruption, and misconduct. They are unified and committed to fostering positive change, having been well-informed about national issues through social media.

Finally, the global community, including major ►►

► international non-state actors like the UN, EU, and OIC, generally supports the current government, with the exceptions of India and possibly Russia. China has adopted a cautious approach and may be waiting for an opportune moment to engage with the new government.

Way Forward

Immediate Actions to Address Security Crisis

1. Purge Corrupt High-Ranking Officers:

- **Removal and Investigation:** Immediately remove (may up to be retirement) all high-ranking military officers known for corruption or alleged involvement in misdeeds during the previous regime. Prevent them from leaving the country and initiate investigations based on evidence and stakeholder input. Freeze their accounts and take them into custody if allegations are initially substantiated. Identify and prosecute their accomplices.
- **Gradual Replacement:** Systematically replace the entire cohort of officers, prioritising those with extreme loyalty to the previous regime.
- **Empower Junior Officers:** Appoint capable junior officers as acting heads of formations/institutions/entities rather than retaining corrupt seniors in leadership positions.

2. Overhaul Intelligence Organisations:

- **Replace Compromised Personnel:** Replace officers at all levels of intelligence organisations, as their selection was based on loyalty to the Awami League rather than merit.

3. Prosecute Corrupt Retired Officers:

- **Arrest and Judicial Proceedings:** Apprehend known corrupt retired officers like Major General Tariq Ahmed Siddiqui (Retired) and

General Aziz (Retired). Initiate prompt judicial proceedings and restrict their travel. Identify and prosecute their accomplices.

- **Extradite Fugitives:** Bring back corrupt officers who have fled the country. Initiate legal proceedings even in their absence to send a clear message that no one is above the law.

4. Review Promotions and Dismissals:

- **Investigate Politicised Promotions:** Establish a Board of Officers to review all promotions from Lieutenant Colonel (and equivalent) to Lieutenant General (and equivalent) since 2018. Identify officers responsible for promoting unsuitable candidates. Find out if there were any promotions which took place by-passing the normal procedure.
- **Reassess Unjust Dismissals:** Form a Board of Officers to review all dismissals and forced retirements under the previous regime since 2009 to address potential injustices.

5. Address Past Atrocities:

- **Reopen BDR Killing Inquiry:** Revive the investigation into the BDR killings and bring all perpetrators to justice.

6. Combat Corruption and Mismanagement:

- **Thorough Investigation:** Launch a comprehensive investigation into corruption, nepotism, illegal vendor selection, and misappropriation in procurement, construction, projects, and supply chains throughout the Armed Forces, particularly since June 2018.

7. Confront anti-Bangladesh False Narratives:

- **Comprehensive Measures:** Comprehensive measures need to be undertaken against the propaganda being spread by India's Hindutva regime by government machineries, research centres, involving academics, journalists, think ►►

▶ tanks, etc. Utilise potentials of Gen Z to the fullest. Carry out effective and efficient diplomacy to counter all anti-Bangladesh narratives.

8. Address the Power Vacuum

- **Employ able, and competent retired military personnel:** There are many patriot, able, and competent retired military personnel who can be employed following a structured policy in different capacities as per their qualification to fill up the power vacuum.

Mid to Long-Term Actions to Strengthen Security and Military

1. Redefine Intelligence Agencies' Roles:

- **Review and Clarify Mandates:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the vision, mission, objectives, tasks, jurisdiction, and employment of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and the National Security Intelligence (NSI). This will provide a clear framework for officers to resist illegal orders from superiors or the government.

2. Preserve Historical Narratives:

- **Document Liberation War and Military History:** Compile and preserve accurate accounts of the Liberation War and the history of the Bangladesh Armed Forces to foster a sense of national identity and pride.

3. Reform Military Policies:

- **Merit-Based System:** Review and revise all relevant policies, ensuring that recruitment, promotion, and posting are strictly based on merit.

4. Review International Agreements:

- **Scrutinise Past Deals:** Review all agreements and Memorandums of Understanding

(MOUs) signed between the Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, DGFI, NSI, and other armies/intelligence organisations during the previous regime, especially those with India. Review Line of Credit from India.

5. Restore Professionalism:

- **Revive Traditions and Focus on Core Roles:** Reinstatement of good traditions and practices within the military, emphasising professionalism and adherence to classical roles. Recall all officers from the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and limit military involvement in civilian projects to exceptional circumstances.

6. Reform Veterans' Organisations:

- **Revitalise RAOWA:** Review and reform the Retired Armed Forces Officers' Welfare Association (RAOWA) to ensure it serves the interests of patriotic veterans and is not influenced by political factions.

7. Improve Welfare for Retired Soldiers:

- **Authorise Rations:** Provide retired soldiers with ration benefits, similar to those received by retired police personnel, to improve their quality of life.
- **Enhance Healthcare Access:** Address the inadequate healthcare services available to retired soldiers by exploring ways to expand capacity and improve access to health care at Combined Military Hospitals (CMHs) or other remote places.

All these actions are essential for building a professional, accountable, and well-supported military that serves the nation's interests and upholds its values.

By implementing these measures, Bangladesh can strengthen its security apparatus and ensure a stable future. ■

Research on Aviation Safety

SAFETY IS A MINDSET

Air Commodore Munim Khan Majlish, BUP, BPP, psc

Air Commodore Munim Khan Majlish, BPP, psc has a long illustated career as an Air Traf c Controller to rightly contribute in aviation safety. He had served in all the major international airports of Bangladesh and worked in the regulator's capacity to formulate and standardise policies regarding airspace management. He had unique opportunities to work in multinational aviation environment in Turkey, India and Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). He is a category 'A' Air Traf c Controller with surveillance and precision approach radar rating. He has obtained MBA from the University of Dhaka, MDS from National University and MSc from General Sir Jhon Kutalawala Defence University, Sri Lanka.



PART-I

'Complacency or a false sense of security should not be allowed to develop as a result of long periods without an accident or serious incident. An organization with a good safety record is not necessarily a safe organization.'

-International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO Doc 9422, 1984)

The revolutionary invention of the Wright Flyer (sometimes referred to as the Kitty Hawk Flyer)-the first manned aircraft by Wilbur and Orville Right in 1903 has the concept of utilizing airspace by humankind. Along with the exploitation of third dimension-the airspace, aviators rightly became aware of safety issues in aviation. Soon after the invention of aircraft, the world witnessed the

first fatal incident in 17 September 1908 when Wright Model A aircraft crashed at Fort Myer, Virginia, USA, injuring its co-inventor and pilot, Orville Wright and killing the passenger Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge (Aviation Accidents and Incidents, 2014). The concern for aviation safety gets priority for its survival in the days to come. The aviation is an evolving science. The people involved in aviation are ever exposed to hazardous conditions due to its unique characteristics. The concept of airspace management is to minimise reason or condition that may lead to unsafe situation (ICAO Document 9858, 2003). We often find people reluctant to follow a positive safety culture and invite unnecessary danger. Aviation accidents or incidents are occurring not because of wrongly formulated procedures or malfunctioning of equipment, or inadequate training, rather it is happening mainly due to not practicing of positive safety culture. An attempt has been made in this research to find out the reasons behind aviation hazards and verify that practicing ►►

► of positive safety culture enhance safety level of airspace management.

Background of the Study The safety has always been the most important aspect in all aviation activities. Safety is the state in which the risk of injury to persons or of properties is reduced to, and maintained at or below an acceptable level through a continuing process of hazard identification and risk management (ICAO Doc 9859, 2006). The overall safety objective in aviation is to ensure that a safe, secure and efficient air navigation system is available at all levels of operations. We must acknowledge that ‘perfect safety environment’ in aviation is an unachievable aspiration. The failures, omissions and errors may still occur in spite of the best endeavours to avoid them. It is not possible to completely eliminate the likelihood of harm or damage; but it is obviously possible to control the processes, or events,

or reasons which could lead to hazardous situation. Such perception and endeavour in aviation environment is termed as the positive safety culture. Airspace management community is formed by people, technology and procedures (ICAO Document 9858, 2003). We cannot deny any one aspect of this unique triangle. All the participants in aviation have to perform and contribute for achieving aviation safety. Therefore, an integrated approach by all three components of airspace management community is desirable for achieving the desirable level of safety.

It is the responsibility of the State (s) concerned to determine the acceptable level of safety. The state(s) is to implement the safety management system and safety programme for achieving such desired safety level. International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) formulates the Universal Safety Oversight Programme, which is to be ob-►

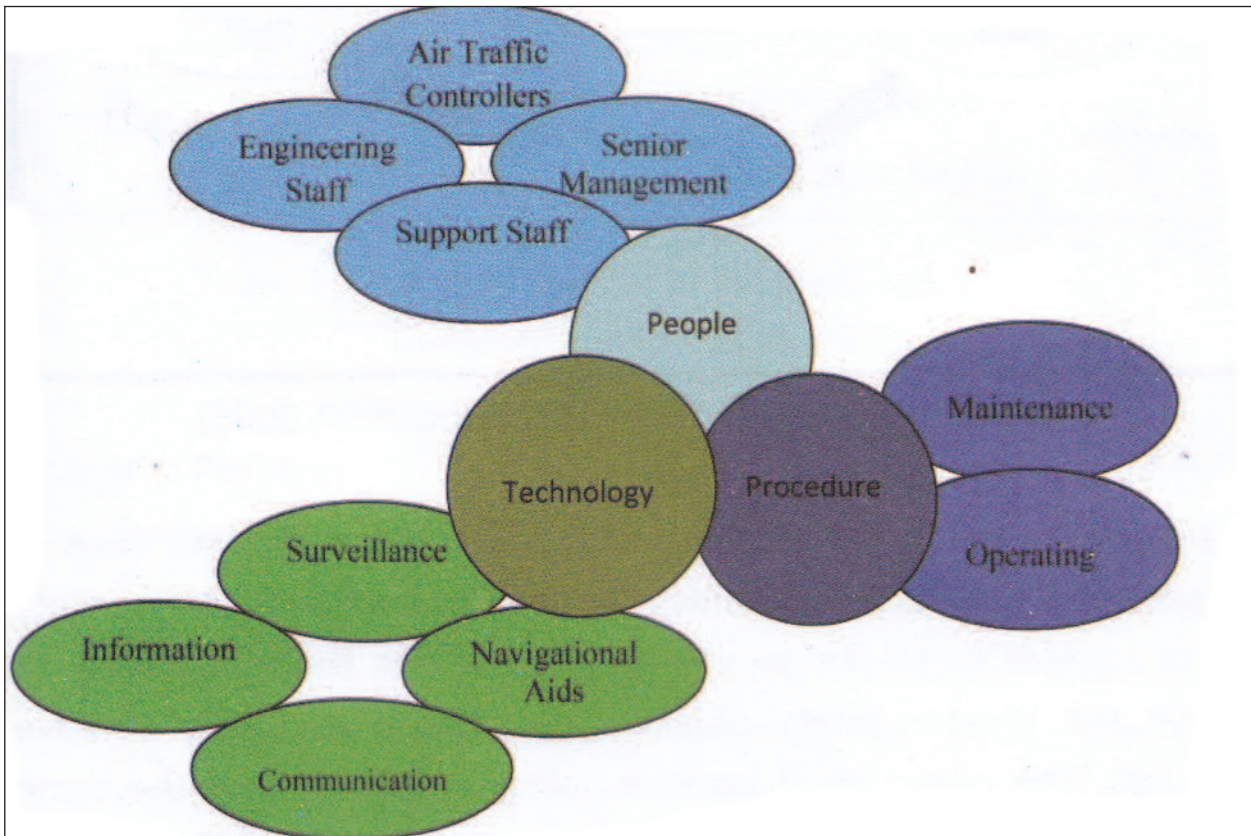


Figure 1: Composition of Airspace Management Community (ICAO Doc 9859, 2006)

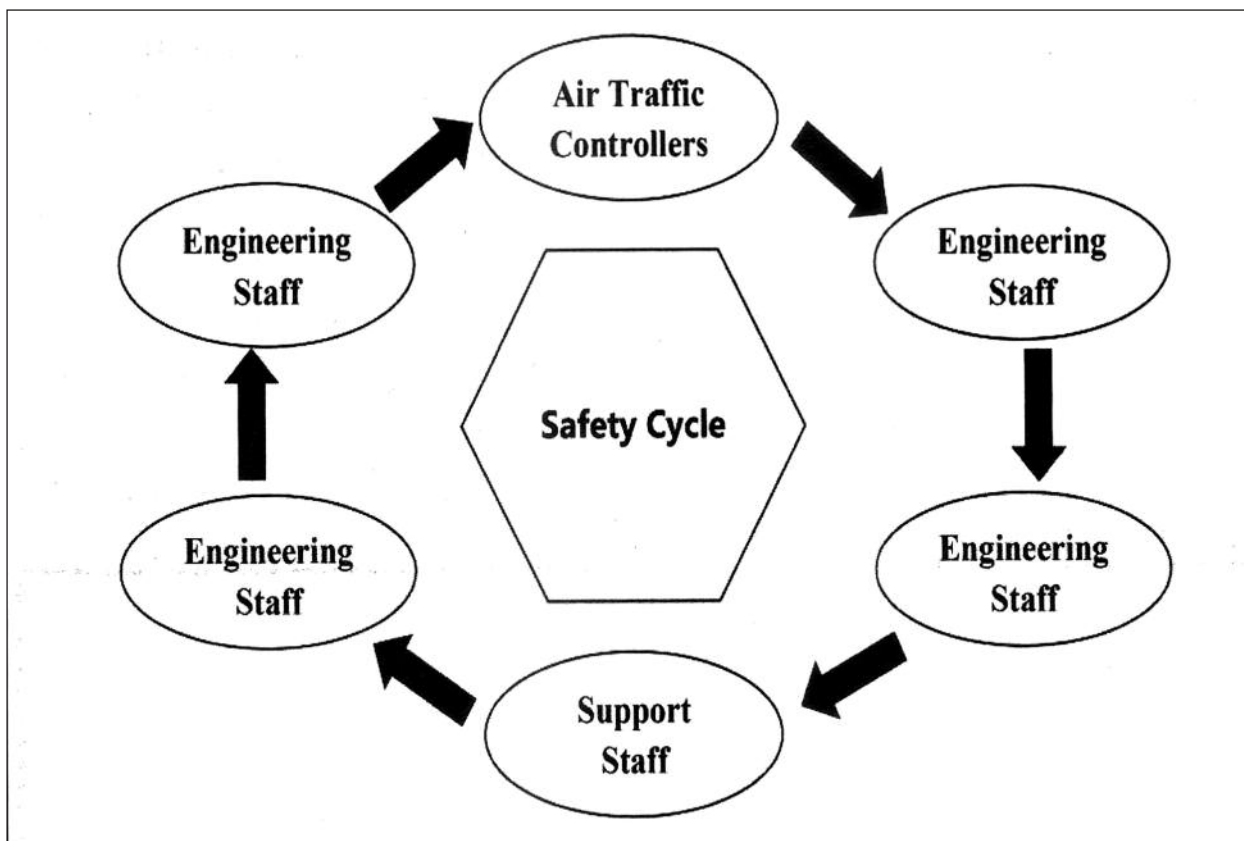


Figure 2: ICAO Safety Cycle (ICAO Doc 9859, 2006)

► served by different contracting states.

If we want to achieve a safer environment in aviation, we need to promote and establish a positive safety culture. A positive safety culture intends to create an environment where the intention is to achieve the greater safety objectives, rather than taking punitive measures. The objective of positive safety culture is that the same hazardous incident/accident never happens in aviation for the same reason again in future.

Research Problem The desired level of safety in aviation is achieved by integrated contribution of the main three elements of aviation community: people, technology and procedures. The main reason for safety hazard may be due to absence of implementing an appropriate safety programme. Aviation incidence or accidents may occur for not appropriately complying with the procedures and instructions by the users. The existing system may not be

adequate for achieving the desired level of safety in a particular organization, or within a particular airspace. Aviation safety hazard situation may also prevail because of not practicing positive safety culture by personnel involved in aviation. An endeavour has been made in this paper to find out that it is not for inappropriate system or procedures or technology; but it is mainly because of not practicing of positive safety culture by personnel involved in aviation at different levels, the desired level of safety of airspace management is not achieved.

Objective of the Study The main and specific objectives of the study are as follows:

a. Main Objective. The main objective of this study is to find out that non-practicing of positive safety culture by the organisation, as well as by individual involved in aviation restrain achieving the safety level of airspace management. ►

SAFETY CULTURE: CHARACTERISTICS	POOR	BUREAUCRATIC	POSITIVE
Hazard Information	Suppressed	Ignored	Actively Sought
Safety Messengers	Discouraged or Punished	Tolerated	Trained and Encouraged
Responsibility for Safety	Avoided	Fragmented	Shared
Dissemination of Safety Information	Discouraged	Allowed But Discouraged	Rewarded
Failures Lead	Cover Ups	Local Fixes	Inquired and Systemic reform
New Ideas	Crushed	New Problems (Not Opportunity)	Welcomed

Table 1. Characteristics of Different Safety Cultures (ICAO Document 9858, 2003)

b. Specific Objectives. The specific objectives are:

- i. To examine the existing aviation safety environment in Bangladesh.
- ii. To find out the specific reasons for aviation accidents and incident.
- iii. To determine the availability of appropriate safety policies and procedures in aviation.
- iv. To identify the safety reporting system in aviation in Bangladesh.
- v. To discover the culture of safety management, training and decision making procedure in aviation.
- vi. To suggest a pragmatic safety management programme in aviation. Significance of the Study The airspace is continuously becoming complex by incorporating various types of aircraft and modern sensors. Human is an important factor in aviation that includes senior management, pilots, air traffic controllers, maintenance personnel etc. Human approach to address the safety issues differs with the change of aviation environment. As a result, the significance of implementing positive safety culture is paramount in achieving the

desired level of safety in aviation. The research deduction will help the senior management, the aviators, the operational personnel, the maintenance people and the policy makers formulate appropriate safety programme for their respective organisation, as well for the airspace to minimise aviation hazards, and to achieve the desired level of safety.

Hypothesis

After deriving information from collected data during initial studies, it was evident that there were many factors contributing to the safety level in aviation. It is found that most of the aviation incidents and accidents generally occur due to human factors, material failures and procedural mistakes. But all these factors mainly depend on organizational approach and culture to deal with safety aspects. In this context this research seeks to establish that *"appropriate approach by organisation to ensure safety management, existing safety management system within the organisation and positive safety culture prevailing in the aviation organisation enable to achieve the desired level of safely in aviation."* ■

Understanding the Current India-Bangladesh Relations from Realist Viewpoint

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

Former Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Prime Minister's Office. mahfuzba2172@gmail.com



Theoretical Dimension:

As a student of 'Structural Realism', my understanding, it is the structure of international system, the architecture of international system that largely explains how the states behave

in this arrangement. In other words, international system is anarchic; there is no higher authority above the states that can meaningfully help if they are in trouble. In this kind of situation states pursue power because in that circumstance others are not capable of hurting. In such an international structure if a state is small and weak others are likely to take advantage. As such there is an inherent security competition and our region is no exception. India as a growing economic and regional power will try to dominate Asia and for good realist reason will try to become a hegemon in the region to protect her interest

in Asia as well as in Indian Ocean Region. But she has a peer competitor China that makes competition more challenging and problematic.

India's Outlook as Regional Power:

While identifying India's outlook as regional power it is very pertinent to understand her 'Strategic Culture' to fathom her behavior in regional security spectrum. **India's Strategic Culture** stipulates India's security boundary extends beyond its political boundary. In her foreign and security policies there are imperatives of India's centrality in South Asia. Besides, Kautilya's Arthashastra hugely influence strategic culture (Four Upayas/Approaches; Sama/Alliances, Dana/Gifts, Bheda/Divide and Rule and Danda/Use of force). Her strategic culture is also influenced by two front dilemmas (Pakistan and China). The culture has realist dimension where Indira Doctrine seems has correlations.

'Indira Doctrine' was developed during the tenure of ex-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1980-1984) that was in line with Indian Strategic Culture and has similarity with realism. The doctrine ►►

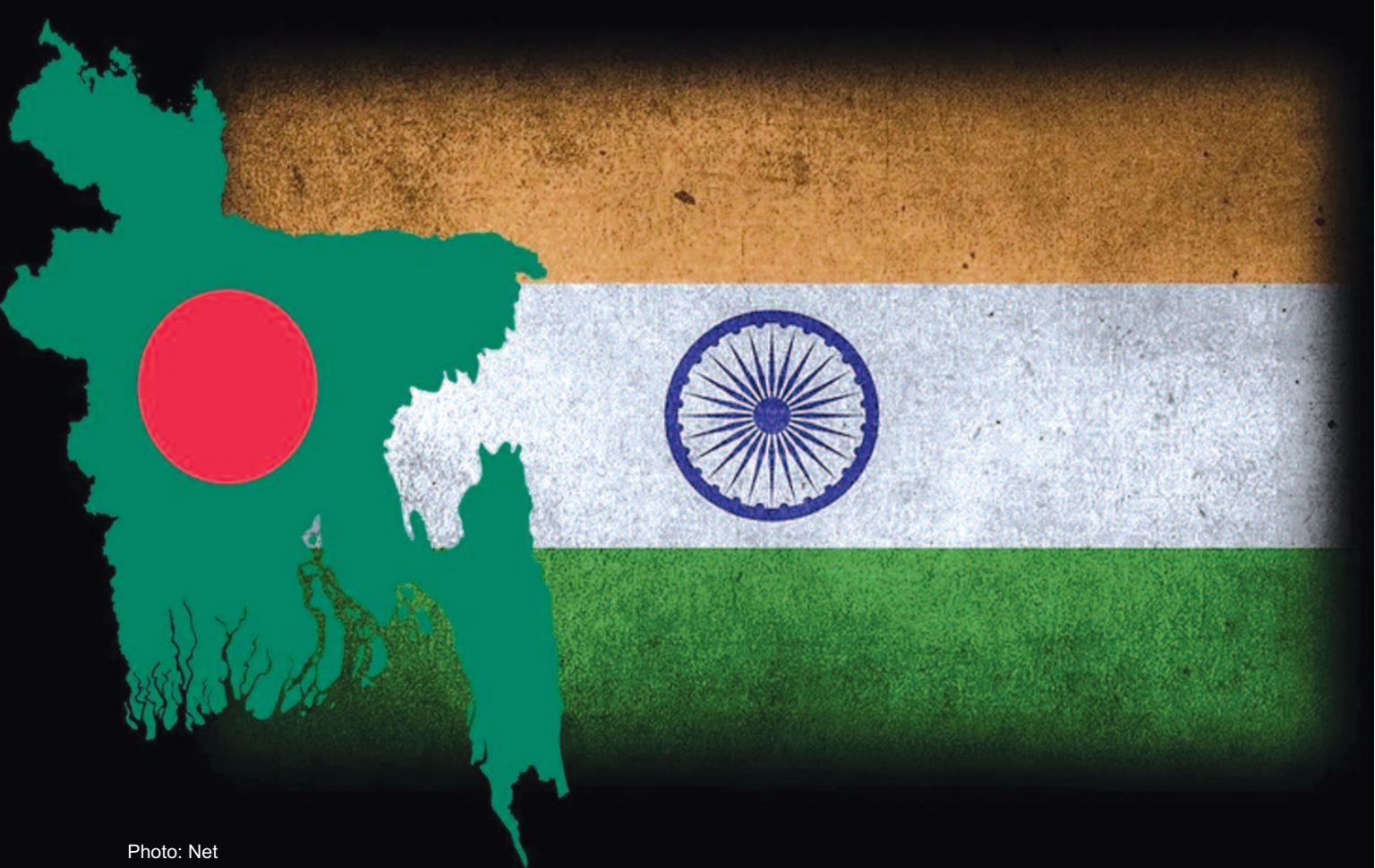


Photo: Net

► lays down that India has a role as regional power to have geopolitical influence in South Asia; also her security interest requires a role in South Asian security gamut. India's strategic culture, doctrines and realist viewpoints have shaped her outlook as a regional power. However, her ambition as leading power in Indian Ocean Region being challenged by China. Even her Kautilla approaches have turned into a fiasco in the region. Her huge involvement in Afghanistan as strategic rear base against Pakistan has backfired after Taliban takeover.

The smaller countries in the region which once were friendly to India have distant away except Bhutan (however, Bhutan's foreign minister visits to China in 2023 and her position about China on 'Doklum Issue' is a concern for India). After Mr Muizzu's (Maldives) recent departure from India's influence, there was 'Maldives Syndrome' prevailing in India's strategic community about Bangladesh. Finally, the July-August 24 Revolution of Bangladesh came as an embarrassment and uneasiness to Indian elites in the polity. Because, Bangladesh is not like any other neighbor,

it has immense strategic significance. China's claim on Arunachal and standoff at Doklum (China-India-Bhutan tri-border junction) in 2017 which is only few kilometers from Siliguri Corridor (Chicken Neck).

Meanwhile, China's proposal of Tista Project in Bangladesh near Chicken Neck is a factor. The potential transit through Bangladesh to North Eastern States of India now seems distant reality. Meanwhile, Manipur is still burning there. In addition, recent comments by Chief Minister of Mizoram Mr Lalduhoma, in the US about conviction of a Christian Stare in the tri-border area (India-Bangladesh-Myanmar) is a bolt from the blue. All of these have created stress and a security nervousness to India. Importantly, Maldives slipping away and Bangladesh distasting away are not the same thing.

'Intelligence Failure' to predict fall of Hasina Regime by intelligence community of India has not only awkward them but also questioned their policies to domestic audience as to how the general sentiment of Bangladeshis turned so hostile despite so much of investment in Bangladesh. Al-►

though, it should be remembered that regional power has ego, hubris and attitude. We are observing unfolding of its ramifications.

Ramifications:

To tame smaller countries regional and big powers would generally create condition of Instability, Security Anxiety and Democratic Defect.

(1). Instability; the kind we are experiencing in the country in the form of various protests and lawlessness mainly for few reasons; for long 15 years' people could not ventilate their grievances now those are surfacing. There is a power and administration vacuum and order has broken down down. Various institutions, tools of government were customized based on clientist politics. Now the regime has gone but clients are there in various stratas of administration making them dysfunctional/ less functional. Above all India as regional power has been frustrated and out of desperation would induce instability in the form of unrest in RMG sector. The interim government would be portrayed as radical and Islamist sponsor and minority card will be played significantly. There would be price hike as Bangladesh is dependent on India for considerable agricultural products. Indian media's relentless efforts will continue to portray Interim Government as puppet of the West and Hasina Regime change is like a 'Maidan Coup' of Ukraine in 2014. Painting to their home audience that Bangladesh as an unfriendly and ungrateful neighbor. But the worst that can happen if a wedge can be driven between/among the law enforcing agencies and security forces by creating chaos or a condition of a near civil war.

(2). Security Anxiety; already exists in our South East in CHT and due to Rohingya Crisis. Besides, we might see border tension rising. As a regional power causing a degree of uncertainty/anxiety by arm twisting in these issues are not difficult for India. Irrespective of center or states nod, intelligence organization's inertia would likely to create condition unfavorable to Bangladesh. We are already experiencing those in CHT. It is likely to be a natural response to compensate their failure to

predict ouster of Hasina Regime.

(3). Democratic Deficit; being the largest democracy why did India sponsor undemocratic practices in Bangladesh? Would Indian democracy allow similar sort of election in West Bengal or any Indian States as it happened in 2014, 2018 and 2024 in Bangladesh? It is from regional power outlook where smaller countries with democratic deficits are easier to control and manipulate. The same reason US sponsors undemocratic government in the Middle East and elsewhere.

How Should Bangladesh Navigate?

Bangladesh should be mindful, practical, pragmatic and maintain normalcy in relationship and engage India to address her embarrassment, anxiety and nervousness.

Misinformation/disinformation especially in Indian media to be addressed with truth and correct information sharing.

The interim government should actively reform administration and weed out bad elements creating bottle necks in the reformation.

There should be an active dialogue on CHT issue. It should be address as a national political issue not a security issues of 24 Infantry Division of Chittagong. The grievances of CHT people should be discussed and debated at national platforms.

Rohingyas to be trained and transformed into human capital, there is a necessity of creating hope and dream in them. Besides, forming a 'Rohingya Commission' to dedicatedly deal with the issue could produce grater dividend to address Rohingya issue.

The interim government should pick up merits and place people based on relevancy, meritocracy, efficiency and commitments in various institutions.

Finally, armed forces should be developed as a credible deterrence force with latent violence having punitive power and deference dominance capacity so that we are 'left alone' by others in the region to pursue our dreams. ■



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The imponderables around the new Trump presidency

Syed Badrul Ahsan

is a political and diplomatic analyst currently based in London.



Donald Trump's return to power in Washington has had the entire world scrambling to adopt the measures necessary to deal with him in his second term in office as President of the United States. Frankly, millions of people around the world had hoped, indeed expected, that Kamala Harris would defeat him and become the first woman to be America's leader. That has not happened. And hence there is a flurry of activities on a global scale on how to confront the ramifications of a new Trump presidency.

From the perspective of Europe, Trump represents danger for Nato once again. When in early 2021, President Joe Biden confidently informed European leaders that America was back ~ he was

pointedly alluding to the antipathy to Europe by the preceding Trump administration ~ he was asked by his interlocutors, 'For how long?' It was a fear working in them, the apprehension that the man Biden had bested at the 2020 election could well return to office given the stubborn manner in which he had refused to concede the election to Biden.

That European fear has turned out to be true. So what does Europe expect from this second Trump presidency? For one thing, Nato will be under renewed American pressure, especially owing to Washington's demand, under Trump, that its member-states contribute more in terms of financial contributions toward ensuring their collective security. For another, there is the worse idea of Trump and his new team demonstrating a degree of apathy toward Nato that in essence will be a statement of no confidence in the organisation. Will the new men in Washington then move toward a dismantling of Nato because Trump will ▶▶

► have other thoughts to work on in foreign affairs?

The question is best left floating in the air, for now. But what cannot be ignored is the position the incoming President will adopt on the Ukraine question. Given his pronounced friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, coupled with his scepticism about the war Kyiv and Moscow have been waging for more than two years, there is every reason for Ukrainian leader Volodymir Zelensky to be worried. Some weeks before the US election, Zelensky met Trump on a visit to America. Whether Trump was impressed by him or whether the Ukrainian was able to come away with assurances that Trump as President would defend Kyiv's cause is not known. So on the Ukraine issue it will be a big unknown for the



Donald Trump is returning to the White House after an emphatic US presidential election victory. Photo: AP

West. The uncertainty can only add to the growing worries in Brussels.

Trump's victory at the November 5 election has also shocked the new Labour government in Britain. Only days before the election, the Trump campaign accused the Labour Party of interfering

in the American election through some of its people openly soliciting support for Kamala Harris in the US. London has of course denied it, but the bitterness generated by that exchange between Keir Starmer's team and Trump's people will be there for at least quite a while. In fact, the resolve on the part of the British government to resist Trump's plans to impose tariffs on all goods coming into the US from abroad, including Britain, will pit London and Washington on a trade-related collision course. Besides, with the renewed fear that the Trump administration will backpedal into a repudiation of climate control measures, some-►



Vice President Kamala Harris delivers a concession speech for the 2024 presidential election on the campus of Howard University in Washington, November 6, 2024. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

► thing it did in its earlier spell in power, Ed Miliband, Britain's Energy Secretary, has made it clear that London rather than Washington will now play the leading role in global climate control measures.

One can now expect, unless a miracle happens, for a pretty contentious relationship, at least initially, between Keir Starmer and Donald Trump. The picture is not pretty elsewhere either. The Trump administration will likely renew a trade war with China, since for years the President-elect has railed against what he called a Chinese takeover of American businesses. Temperamentally, Trump has never been known to be accommodative to people who do not agree with him. As for President Xi Jinping, it is China's widening global role, both politically and economically, that he has been promoting over the past few years. Xi will be in power for a long time, which is as good as saying that he will sit out the next four years of Trump and wait for a new President to take charge in Washington in January 2029. Trump cannot ignore such a possibility, which is why it will be in his best interest to engage with the Chinese diplomatically.

One of the fears associated with the new Trump outfit in Washington relates to the Middle East, specifically on the Palestine question. A fairly large number of American Muslims voted for Trump this time, for they were aggrieved by the inability or unwillingness of the Biden-Harris administration to influence Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu into calling an end to the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. They certainly had a point, but their support for Trump quite ignored the fact that the incoming US leader has consistently enjoyed warm relations with Netanyahu. That being so, will Trump be in a position to compel Netanyahu into calling

a halt to the atrocities carried out by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in occupied Palestine and Lebanon? Observers will remain sceptical on this question. It was on Trump's watch that the US embassy in Israel was moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Add to that the animosity which Trump has regularly demonstrated against Iran. He tore up, in his earlier term, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the deal on nuclear arrangement reached with Iran by the US, UK, France, Russia, China and Germany (P5+1) in the Obama era. In 2020, he ordered the killing of the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

How will the new Trump presidency deal with Russia? Trump has promised to bring about an end to wars, presumably meaning everywhere. Will he insist that Ukraine settle for a peace deal with Russia by agreeing to have segments of its territory pass into Russian hands? And will Kyiv and with it Nato agree to such a deal? What policy will the new President adopt toward South Asia? And will he be playing a role in the current stand-off between India and Canada? Does he really mean to throw out illegal immigrants from the US? And how does he plan on doing it without arousing grave worries everywhere?

All these questions, and others, are there. The problem with Trump has always been his unpredictability and abrasiveness. And therefore all the imponderables about his new stint in power will be there. The world will be focused on the individuals he chooses to be part of his administration and the authority they will be able to exercise without interference from their President.

Trump's 2017-2021 administration was a byword for chaos practised as policy by the President. Whether Trump will do a better job this time or renew the old chaos is the big question before the global community. ■



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MEMOIR

MY DAYS IN CONRAD'S LANDS**Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)**

is a retired air force officer. He was Bangladesh High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam from November 2016 to September 2020. He was also Chairman, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). Currently, he is working as Distinguished Expert at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU).



I had the opportunity of living for some time in Conrad's fictional places, namely Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) and Malaysia's eastern province Sarawak's adjoining country

in Borneo Island, *Brunei Darussalam*. In Congo, I worked as a peace keeper and in Brunei, as a diplomat. Though Brunei hid in Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* as a surreptitious land, it was, in fact, the centre of British influence in Malay Archipelago.

I found it strange that neither in Congo nor in Brunei, there was one, even a most learned man, had read *The Heart of Darkness* or *Lord Jim*. Joseph Conrad was an unfamiliar name despite their academic background in literature. Such obsolescence of a great writer from places whose stories had subliminally meditative force in his imagina-

tion is moored in deliberate fading from national histories.

Conrad was of Polish origin and learned English not till he was in his early twenties. He became a British citizen at the age of thirty which speaks something of his character as a man. But more significant than his being a writer was the fact that he was a sailor by choice. Seamanship and writing he learned with the dedication and labors of a passionate fanatic. He created a style in English fiction, inimitable and fascinating, that blended with his ardent weakness for both. His non-English sensibility in prose makes him appealing to readers who are baffled by the turbulent forces of nature and tragic setting of human fatality.

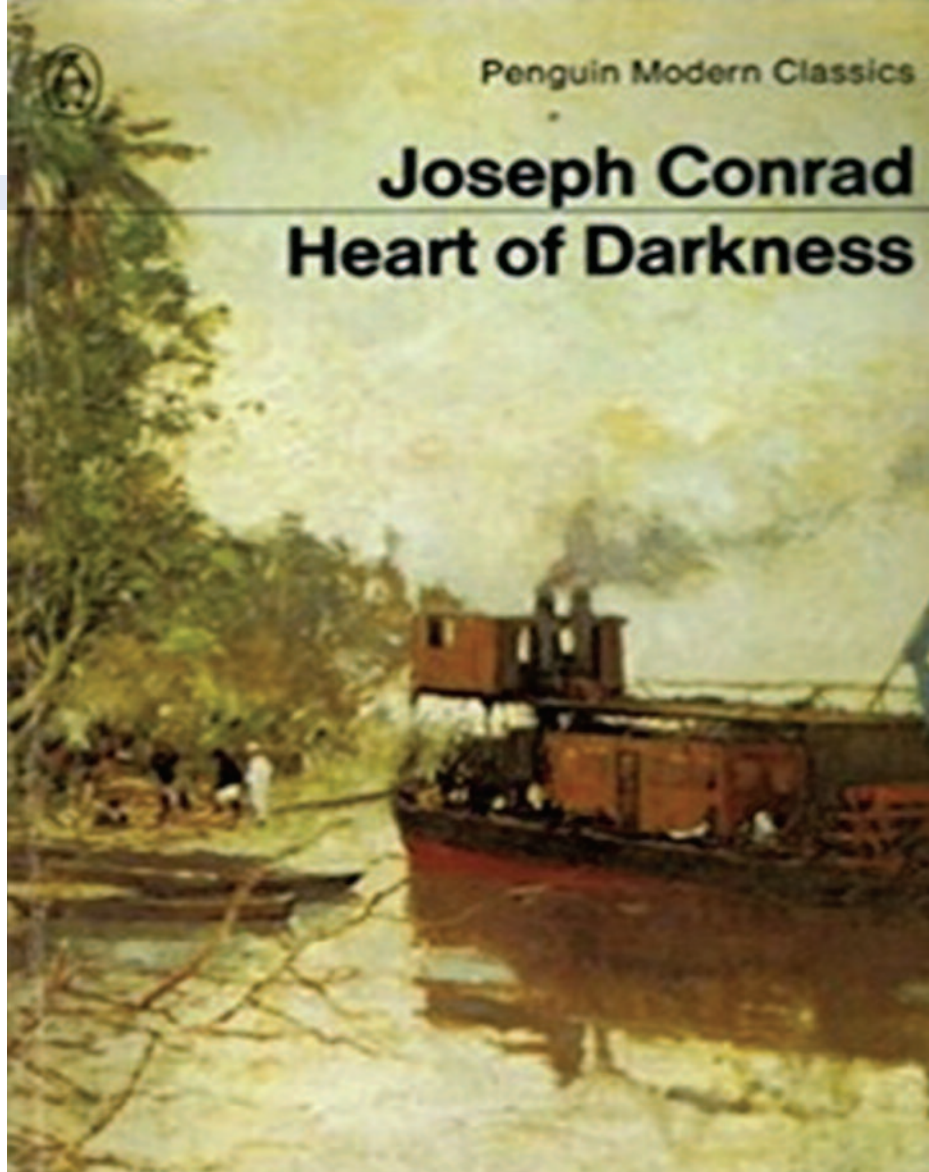
Conrad's Congo was an intensely dark area where the light of civilization was yet to ingress. Its darkness was gruesome hiding behind the mask of an ineluctable ignorance which exuded a magnetic spell of supernatural tension. The shadowy frontiers of night were much more sensitive and agile ►►

▶ than the prudence of daylight innocence whose sweat was wasted in the diamond pits of Congolese mud biding its ownership to European heraldry. The treasures of Africa in the post-colonial era has belonged to Europe by the right of conquistadors. The European obligation has conferred upon itself the possession of a vast trove whose morals are encoded in the speech-acts of evangelical persuasion. Europe's role as Master has never been lost on its historical slave; Africa has always been at the merciful disposition of a strange French or an English or a Belgian claiming his being to be a part of African sovereignty.

Congo always gave me a feeling of Conradian prose. Joseph Conrad had the uncanny ability to transform prose into instant impression of a living nature. His words, sentences, impressions, imagery and symbols penetrated into the deep unforgiving forests of a barbaric world where only a European dared to enter. This passionate appeal to human senses made Conrad more at home with non-European setting than with that of his own continent. There was a sort of abnegation and disavowal of what he experienced and observed without having to be a renegade. The idea of being at one with what appears to be distant and mutant makes man a spiritual being. Conrad's Africa is unique in the sense of having suffered inexorably without having to complain or even rectify its sins.

Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness

Conrad's Congo was more than a hundred years older than when I visited Congo. Bangladesh peacekeeping contingent was the first UN peacekeepers in Bunia located at the extreme eastern corner of a vast country 16 times the size of Bangladesh. Bunia was the capital of Ituri



province. Congo's natural beauty must have eluded Conrad because he never mentioned about the bewitching charm of Congolese mountains whose rising slopes often sheltered behind the green tapestry of tall trees blushing against the endless ocean of clear, blue sky. I often wondered how it was possible for an innocuous subliminal nature to be doused by the flames of hatred and murder. Congolese are divided into tribes, and they are destined to be borne into a life of ineluctable tragedy.

I still feel that those who claim Conrad to be a racist are misjudging him. What I saw just two decades back was a refined and smooth version of civilized behavior compared to Conrad's eyewitness at the turn of the 19th century, when he stalked the hinterland of Congo by river. Often as peacekeepers we had to trade peace between rival groups, and what I found most intriguing was the ▶▶

► intenseness with which they hated each other bordering upon the rational insistence of an irrational phenomenon. Being the first air force commander of the Bangladesh unit, I flew extensively over its territory, often terrified at what I saw beneath. Miles after miles, we failed to see the light on earth covered with compressed and impenetrable range of interminable forests. There was no place for emergency landing. Flying in Congo was akin to taking ride through *Hades*. One could convincingly argue Congo to be the end point of history in geographical sense whose pages were flustered with searing death. Murdering someone was an ordinary way of life the sacrificial altar of which was dedicated to animalistic pleasure. I had seen with my own eyes hacking, lynching, chopping and dismembering of human bodies with an archaic coolness and pleasure that only a barbaric ecstasy can partake of. Transfiguring a civilized man into a state of agony writhing over the meaning of existence would take one back into the folds of the origins of morality. Conrad's sense of morality was too acute and sharp to be defeated by the vagaries of nature. The placidity of Africa's natural beauty was complemented by its darker side of anthropomorphic insanity.

Conrad saw Africa as an insane continent. I had the same feeling when I visited Congo. The blackness of African hue was inexorably intertwined with the blackness of its character. Marlowe and Kurtz were exceptions amidst the proliferation of a radiating absurdity. The European mission to civilize Africa was nipped in the bud because of the in-built weakness within the structure of international society. During my peacekeeping job, I realized that Europe made its biggest mistake by trying to Europeanize Africa. Conrad's immacutely dressed Europeans were only able to engender loathing amongst naked Congolese who saw clothes as an outfit to cover up chicanery and deceit. Africans are as notorious and ruthless as they are truthful.

The Heart of Darkness is fresh in my mind not as a

story but as a fact superimposed upon an imagery of life and a particular people. I could only think of Conrad as racist if he had not seen vices in Europeans. That was not to be. He was a peregrinator. For him, the choice between civilized and un-civilized was a sham, and so leaves his stories with embittered sadness something of which I felt upon return from Congo.

My second overseas assignment was even more refreshing of my literary retrospection. Brunei Darussalam with the surname suggesting "the abode of peace" presents a sharp contrast to Congo, not spiritually but sensually. While Congo exuded a dark green patch of transparent beauty, Brunei glowed with the crystalline brightness of luminous sunshine. Brunei lacked the big lakes or flowing rivers of Congo but Conrad was always witty enough to get on the water. Brunei River was the perfect ally of Congo River, and both shared their companionship with Marlowe. But the story of *Lord Jim* was even more complicated. The hero of the story Jim, was called *Tuan*, the native version of the English word "Lord". Conrad had this inclination of elevating an Englishman to the pedestal of a superman. To him, English was the race upon whom was rested the duties of ruling the uncivilized. Jim was the replica of James Brookes, the White Rajah of Borneo who founded the British rule in Malayan peninsula. His fascination for the then crown prince, and later his assassination through a local plot in which some English were involved, was based upon the life of James Brookes and his times in Borneo. The only exception is that the real James Brookes returned home and died in England, while the make-believe Jim handed himself over to the Sultan for having failed to protect the life of his son, the crown prince. Conrad could, in no way, let an Englishman fall below the moral standards of a gentleman.

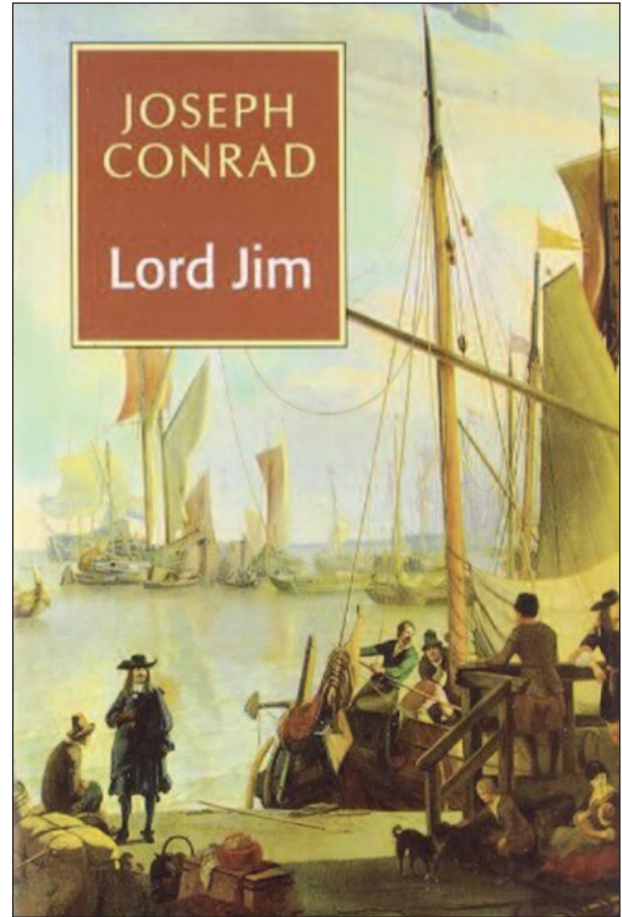
Joseph Conrad: Lord Jim

I was given an impression that in Borneo, the cus- ►►

► tom of head-hunting was still practiced in the deep of forests where indigenous people lived. The vast tract of jungles truncated by small openings where habitation has grown into kind of civilized dwellings makes one wonder at the trading prospects of Borneo at the time of Conrad's passage into Malay Archipelago. Conrad's depiction of Borneo's scenic beauty matches with my own experience of the land's exquisite sceneries. Conrad might have considered Borneo equally deserving of a "civilizing" treatment. My own assessment was not without such reservation. More than one and a half centuries of travel through time, it seemed, has not made much of difference in the social moorings of a people despite the changes in geo-politics in the post-colonial world.

Brunei being a part of the Borneo archipelago still possesses her incredible beauty blessed by the nature. The placidity of the land is suffused in a state of calmness, peace and tranquility of domestic life. Brunei rejoices in a state of monarchy given to the provision of welfare of its citizens. Politics is barred in Brunei. The only redemption for her people lies in a hope and trust of piety to the monarch sanctified by the principle of necessity. In that regard, Brunei seems to be the true descendant of British tradition. The monarch and the crown prince are the epitome of Bruneian history. Without monarchical tradition, Bruneian social and political history ceases to exist. In that sense, Brunei would continue to preserve the milieu that provides her an exceptional place of societal culture in modern setting.

Conrad is a great mysterious figure. He has been criticized for being too English but none can deny the power of his description of human condition through the intelligence of unifying the dark beauty of nature superimposing its force upon human character. If human behavior follows natural laws of submission, then man and his environment become entwined in mysterious relationship. The departure of the British from



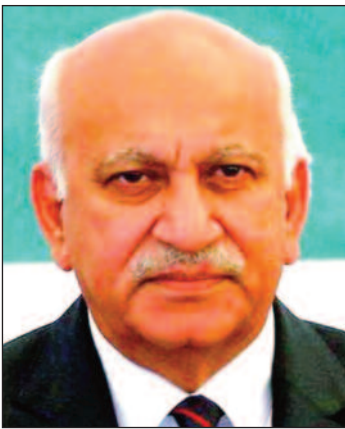
Borneo has left its indelible imprint of colonial majesty. There are buildings, architectural grandeur and the remembrance of British soldiers that glorify Conrad's passion for the continuation of English civilization. This contact between the colonial master and his subjects was what Conrad might have cherished most earnestly in his mission as a writer. There is no doubt that in the struggle to find a place for himself as a writer of English literature, Conrad's best place for residence was in *the East*. To him, *the East* is a theme to be taken to the conscience of *the West*. Being non-English, he did this job much more competently than any native-born English writer. This can only come from a person whose love and affection for *the East* and her people was immaculate, genuine and unadulterated. His two most extraordinary novels — *Lord Jim* and *The Heart of Darkness* — are a witness to that. ■

Death, We Know Where Is Thy Sting

Nietzsche went too far. God, being omnipotent, had the last laugh

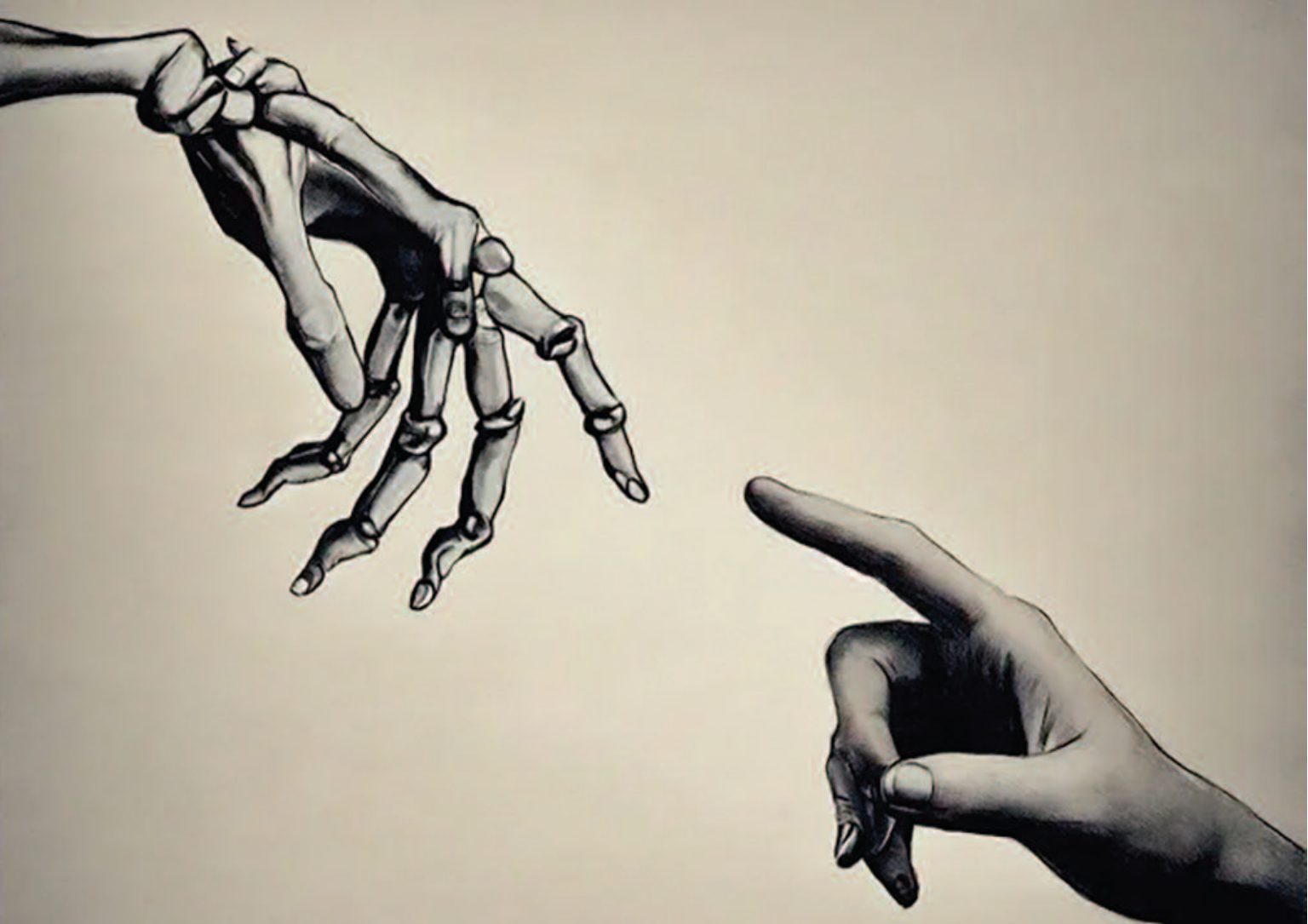
MJ Akbar

is the author of, among several titles, Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan. His latest book is Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns



Age is a whisper that has turned into a scream. That moment when you begin to suspect survival, cross from assumption to vulnerability, when you stare at nothing, you age. This crossover moment can happen any time. An Olympic champion of 2012 told that cancer has shortened his calendar is suddenly as old as an octogenarian. They share a blank perspective. How often does a hostage in Gaza die? How many lives has a Palestinian child lost when buried in the rubble of a bomb with a message: revenge comes in multiples? War is cruelty; it has no other philosophy though it might seek a few justifications, including elastic logic. A few billionaires want to buy the freedom of hostages. No one has told them cash is not the

currency of war. There is no price which can pay for a corpse under rubble either. God did not create man for peace. Peace is merely the interval between wars; books on peace do not sell, while the ones on war become movies. Those fortunate enough to survive during these intervals, those who succumb to decay instead of a bullet, may have merely borrowed time from the next generation. If time cannot be equal, why should we expect equality in the many minced aspects of existence? The mind, always tempted by the rational against evidence of the unthinkable, has made the heart synonymous with humanism to elevate humanity with some much-required positive spin. The illusion works because we would be further lost without illusions. We need God, although history is witness to the dispiriting reality that divinity has often been a useful excuse for mass murder. It might even alleviate the conscience assuming there is such a thing in our waking hours. What we know for certain is that conscience wakes up at night and does disturbing ►►



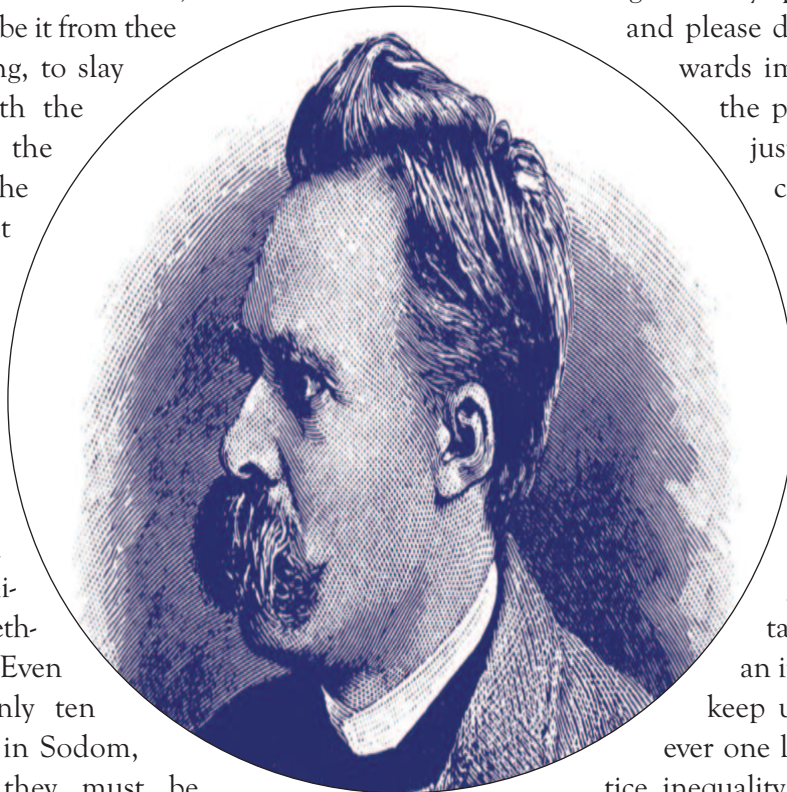
► things to sleep. Man needs God for philosophical as well as functional reasons on a wide scale: from death as government policy to buying new clothes on festivals in the name of the Almighty. In the decades of uncertainty we call life, God is necessary either as belief or as invention. God is a commoner's practical necessity; idealism is the privilege of saints or the rich. God obeys man's commands. That is the eleventh commandment. Make that the only commandment.

The Ten Commandments bequeathed by Moses from the mountain are a bit mundane. The first four—worship only me, etc—are evidence of a very nervous deity indeed: Does God exist only because man worships God? Five commandments are from a very basic penal code. And if you need God's command to honour your parents you must be pretty low on the sensitivity list. When you don't have a good father, create one, said Friedrich Nietzsche, the sometimes misunderstood but always controversial 19th-century Ger-

man scholar; but this was good advice, whichever way you examine it. Nietzsche also declared that God was dead, but there he got it wrong if indeed he was a philosopher and not a journalist. Journalists sometimes like a headline for effect rather than as a précis of the accompanying text. Nietzsche went too far. God, being omnipotent, had the second and last laugh. Nietzsche was paralysed at the age of 44 with vascular dementia and died of multiple strokes. That's what you get for laughing at God.

The German argued that there is no objective truth, everything is perspective until he discovered that death has only one perspective. By then it was too late to revise his books. There are contemporary algorithms of the perpetual search for meaning: jump from the plateau where nothing happens to the valley of the shadow of life to the base of the next hill and up to the summit where you are warmly embraced by the shadow of death. Amen. I checked the meaning of Amen since one ►►

► learnt long ago that it is dangerous to place pride between you and a dictionary. So be it. Said at the end of a prayer. The patriarch prophet Abraham, a self-professed friend of God, asked the good Lord a sensible question when the Almighty was about to use His might to destroy Sodom, a city famous for its sins: see Genesis, the first chapter of the Bible. The pious call Abraham's message a prayer, but it was an admonition, not a supplication: "Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Why punish the innocent with the guilty with a napalm bomb which cannot discriminate on moral or ethical distinctions? Even if there were only ten righteous people in Sodom, said Abraham, they must be spared the death penalty. Good argument, but no luck in heaven's court of justice. God employed sulphur and fire, the napalm of the millennium before the birth of Christ, and Sodom along with Gomorrah entered a virulent niche in history's long memory. Logic is not a top priority for God. Example is. All examples must be terrifying to become exemplary. The human race learnt all it needed to from such divine justice. Is death justice? We live, largely but not wholly, in an age where life imprisonment has replaced the electric chair or a noose or an axe. If death is justice, then we are all guilty of something for death comes to saint and sinner, martyr and murderer. Guilty of



what? Guilty of being alive. Death is written into our genes the moment we are born. Religion is the only answer we have for why. We do not know why we are born and why we die; we merely celebrate or mourn when, ignoring why. We wander through what of existence, unsure of elemental purpose, with just about sufficient common sense to know that if we do not swim together we shall sink together. My apologies, dear God,

and please do not be harsh towards impertinence, but if the principle of Sodom justice were applied consistently there would be no one left to pray to You. The Creator cannot exist without the Creation. That is not so difficult to understand. I suspect the allegory of the Old Testament was a one-off; an instance of doom to keep us alert. But wherever one looks there is injustice, inequality, infirmity, iniquity,

indolence, and our only sustainable response is indifference. If we care too much, or even if we care a little, the burden on conscience becomes unbearable. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven: but till the summons comes to slither into Thy presence, could you kindly make me numb to the world that You created? Feelings do not help. We want to be delivered from evil, but how is that possible when You forgot to exclude evil from the human mix of diction and contradiction? There is only one consolation prize in this life. We can always blame God. ■



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Media Literacy and Democracy

Production and dissemination of disinformation increasing exponentially

Deepening political polarization, a threat to democracy

Relevant legal and institutional framework as well as international cooperation needed

SONG Kyungjin

Country Representative Korea, The Asia Foundation.



This year, major elections are taking place in 84 countries. Next week, the world's attention will be focused on the U.S. presidential election. As the years go by and elections are held, fake news is emerging as a

global concern. More specifically, it is referred to as 'disinformation.' The term 'fake news' commonly encompasses both *misinformation*, which refers to incorrect information or reporting, and *disinformation*. Misinformation involves the distortion of information due to the opinions of the producer or transmitter and falls within the branch of freedom of expression. It is distinguished from disinformation, which is spread purposefully.

Disinformation is produced and disseminated with the intent to harm individuals, social groups, organizations, or countries. It surges around major political, social, and economic events. The advancements in digital technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI), have made the patterns and

methods of disinformation more cunning and diverse, increasing the frequency and intensity of its exposure. In politically polarized societies, disinformation appears extensively and deepens political division and fragmentation. In the 21st century, where digitalization has blurred out borders, disinformation impacts the information ecosystems of various countries. Ultimately, it poses a great threat to democracy. This same concern was raised during a dialogue with American youth leaders at Chonnam National University where I recently participated as a resource person.

Many countries have begun to treat disinformation as a national security issue. In 2017, the U.S. Congress enacted the "Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act" to respond at a national level. Korea's political community has not ignored the importance of this issue, either. For example, the 20th National Assembly submitted 43 related bills. Ironically however, it was the very divided politics that pushed disinformation out of its priorities in the 20th National Assembly.

This is the reason why digital literacy (the ability to understand digital technologies and content) and media literacy (the ability to understand and utilize media messages) are emerging as major policy issues. Often, there is a good correlation be▶▶



▶ tween literacy and digital literacy. However, Korea seems an exception. In the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Korea has consistently recorded high scores, yet its digital literacy stands at a mere 25.6%, well below the OECD average of 47.4%, placing it among the lowest of the OECD members.

Since 2017, the Open Society Foundation-Sofia has been publishing a media literacy index. The evaluation categories include two press freedom indices, OECD PISA scores, higher education enrollment rates, trust in people, and E-participation. Until 2021, the index focused solely on Europe, but starting in 2022, it has included major non-European countries. According to the 2023 media literacy index for 47 countries, Finland ranked first with a score of 74 out of 100, while Korea, the United States, and Japan ranked 16th, 17th, and 22nd, respectively.

Despite having the fastest internet speeds and high levels of digitalization, these occur due to the lack or shortage of digital/media literacy education. It has naturally led to a growing awareness of the importance of such education. With this, strengthening critical thinking skills is the key for distinguishing disinformation from others. Since nearly everyone obtains information

through digital technology, education and training should be directed not only at formal curricula but also at all users, including government, businesses, and educators.

Countries with robust institutional systems, including relevant laws and policies tend to have higher digital and media literacy indices. It should be elevated quickly to a national discourse, prompting the National Assembly to enact related laws and government ministries to formulate appropriate policies. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the Ministry of Science and ICT have already introduced related policies. That said, enhancing coordination and collaboration among ministries, as well as urgent public-private partnerships with tech, platform, and media companies, is more crucial than ever.

Disinformation is both a national security issue and a global problem requiring global solutions via international policy coordination and cooperation. Leaders must discuss responses to disinformation and media literacy in major multilateral forums such as the G20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the United Nations, producing deliverables. This is crucial for democracy. ■

BRIEF NEWS

Russia Asks Israel to Avoid Air Strikes Near Syrian Base



Russia has asked Israel to avoid launching aerial strikes as part of its war against Lebanon's Hezbollah near one of Moscow's bases in Syria, a top official said on 13 November.

Syrian state media in mid-October claimed that Israel had struck the port city of Latakia, a stronghold of President Bashar al-Assad, who is supported by Russia and in turn backs Hezbollah.

Latakia, and in particular its airport, is close to the town of Hmeimim that hosts a Russian air base.

"Israel actually carried out an air strike in the immediate vicinity of Hmeimim," Alexander Lavrentiev, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy in the Near East, told the RIA Novosti press agency.

"Our military has of course notified Israeli authorities that such acts that put Russian military lives in danger over there are unacceptable," he added.

"That is why we hope that this incident in October will not be repeated."

Israel has carried out intensive bombing of Syria but rarely targets Latakia, to the northwest of Damascus.

Israel accuses Hezbollah of trans-

porting weapons through Syria.

The two warring parties have been in open conflict since September after Israel's year-long Gaza war with Hamas — a Hezbollah ally — escalated to a new front.

Lavrentiev said that Russia's air base was not being used to supply Hezbollah with weapons.

Israel stepped up strikes on Syria at the same time as targeting Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of air strikes on Syrian government forces and groups supported by its arch-foe Iran, notably Hezbollah troops that have been deployed to assist Assad's regime.

Israel rarely comments on its strikes but has said it will not allow Iran to extend its presence to Syria.

Iran Says Building 'Defensive' Tunnel in Tehran

Iran is building what it calls its first "defensive" tunnel within the capital's metro network, state media reported without elaborating on what the defense measures are.

"For the first time in the country, a tunnel with defensive functionalities is being built in Tehran," Jafar Tashakori, who heads the city council transport commission, was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency.

"This tunnel follows the path between 'The Defenders of Health' and 'Imam Khomeini Hospital' metro stations, and provides the possibility of direct tunnel access to this medical centre," he added.

Tashakori did not give more details on the tunnel's defensive capabilities.

However, the word "defence" can mean several things in Farsi, with doctors and nurses called "health defenders" and police "security defenders."

Tuesday's announcement comes against the backdrop of heightened tensions between Iran and its sworn enemy Israel, which launched air strikes on military targets in the Islamic Republic on October 26.

This came in response to Tehran's October 1 attack on Israel, which was itself retaliation for the killing of Iran-backed militant leaders and a Revolutionary Guards general.

Iranian officials said the October 26 attack killed four soldiers and resulted in "limited damage" to radar systems.

Media reports said that a civilian was also killed.

Iran has vowed to retaliate for last month's attack, despite warnings from the United States and Israel not to do so.

Ukraine Claims Crimea Attack That Killed Russian Military Official: Kyiv Source

Ukraine orchestrated an attack on the annexed Crimean peninsula that killed a high-ranking Russian military official, a source in Ukraine's security services told AFP on 13 November.

The killing, which was confirmed by ▶▶



► Moscow, is the latest in a string of targeted attacks on Russian military officers and pro-Kremlin public figures in occupied Ukrainian territory and within Russia.

The source in the Security Service of Ukraine said the agency had orchestrated a car bomb attack in the city of Sevastopol that killed senior naval officer Valery Trankovsky, a first rank captain in Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

"As a result of the explosion, the Russian captain's legs were blown off and he died of blood loss," the source added in written comments.

It described Trankovsky as "war criminal" responsible for the launch of cruise missiles from the Black Sea at civilian targets in Ukraine.

The car exploded and caught fire in the city's eastern Gagarin district around 0700 GMT, the Russian-installed Sevastopol governor, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said.

"As a result of an improvised explosive device fixed to the bottom of the car exploding, a Russian armed forces serviceman was killed," Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement after the incident, without naming Trankovsky.

They said they had opened an investigation into "the fact of committing a terrorist attack."

A witness who spoke to Moskovsky Komsomolets tabloid said the driver was thrown by the impact on to the passenger seat and "everyone realised immediately that he had been blown up."

"The explosives had been placed on the side of the driver's seat," the unnamed woman said, adding that the car had been moving at the time of the blast.

Shrapnel from the explosion hit several other vehicles, but no one was

injured, the witness added.

In October, Ukraine claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack that killed an official at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

In April, a car bomb in Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine's eastern Lugansk region killed a Moscow-appointed government official.

Poland Opens Long-Awaited US Missile Base

Polish and American officials on Wednesday opened a US missile base in northern Poland originally intended to defend the West against threats from the Middle East, but now aimed at confronting Russia.

The Redzikowo base, 230 kilometers (143 miles) from the Russian border, has been operational since July but was officially inaugurated only on Wednesday.

"A US destroyer on Polish soil has become a fact," Polish Defense Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, describing it as "of historical importance for the security of Poland, the United States and NATO."

"Through the conflicts which are ongoing right now, the conflict in Ukraine or in the Middle East, we can see how important air defence and missile defence is," he added.

First announced in 2009, the project

was plagued by delays, and Russia has since emerged as the main security concern for the military alliance's eastern flank.

NATO chief Mark Rutte told reporters in Warsaw the base "significantly enhances our ability to defend against the growing threat of ballistic missiles from outside the Euro-Atlantic area."

Despite NATO stating that the Redzikowo facility and a similar system in Romania are purely defensive, Moscow has frequently labeled it a threat.

The new base "constitutes an advance of US military infrastructure in Europe towards our borders," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Wednesday.

The inauguration comes as Warsaw and its regional allies brace for the US presidency of Donald Trump, who in the past has voiced admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But US Ambassador Mark Brzezinski said at the ceremony he was "confident that this close partnership between our two nations will continue."

On Tuesday, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski welcomed the project in a post on social media as "proof of the geostrategic consistency of the United States."

'Ever More Aggressive' Enemies

The base is part of a broader NATO missile shield — dubbed "Aegis Ashore" — which includes a system of radars that could intercept short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

Admiral Stuart Munsch, commander of the US naval forces in Europe and Africa, said "building our defences now is vitally important."

"Global adversaries are becoming ever more aggressive, challenging the ►►



► international order,” he said at the ceremony.

“While the threat of ballistic missiles is concerning, the technology and the highly skilled operators of this Aegis Ashore site give us confidence in our defence.”

Polish general Mieczyslaw Bieniek, a former high-ranking NATO official, told the Polish news agency PAP there was potential to further develop the base’s capabilities.

“There is technological possibility for this system to also be equipped with missiles of a different type that could counter cruise missiles, which would further reinforce our security,” he said.

But defense expert Marek Swierczynski questioned “to what extent the base or the anti-missile system was adapted to the threat of Russia and Belarus.”

He said that the initial conception of the long-delayed project was to counter “threats mainly from Iran.”

“This base is in a way a relic, a remnant of a previous system of thinking about European security which is not very compatible with the threat represented by Russia for example,” he told AFP.

NATO chief Rutte called the base’s opening “an important milestone” but said the alliance would work towards “the full development of a NATO ballistic missile defence.”

“NATO must have the means to address threats from any direction... So we will work on this, step by step,” he told reporters after talks with Polish President Andrzej Duda in Warsaw late Wednesday.

More than 10,000 US troops are currently stationed in Poland, one of the staunchest supporters of neigh-

boring Ukraine, which has been struggling to fend off a Russian invasion since 2022.

France Assessing Indian Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher

The French Army is evaluating the Indian Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) for its requirements, a senior French Army officer said recently.

The development comes as Paris seeks to acquire a replacement for its unitary rocket launchers (LRU), a French version of the M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System.

“We are evaluating the Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher system because we need a system like that,” Asian News International quoted Brigadier General Stephane Richou as saying during his visit to India.

“We are evaluating the system among the other systems offered by the top countries offering such systems. India is among the top countries producing weapons.”

Replacement for LRU

Nine LRUs are being operated by the French, the first of which was bought over a decade ago.

The system is expected to exceed its service life in 2027.

As a replacement, Paris seeks to acquire a total of 10 new systems by 2030 and an additional 13 by 2035, according to Zone Militaire.

The preference is for a sovereign system. However, an off-the-shelf procurement of a foreign system has not been ruled out, the outlet added.

A pair of French consortiums have responded to the initiative, led by



MBDA and Thales, whereas the American M142 HIMARS and the Israeli PULS are also being evaluated as potential purchases.

Meanwhile, the consideration of the Pinaka system symbolizes France’s growing military ties with India.

“This is much more than business partnership, and this is cooperation, and this is a common future together,” Brigadier General Richou said.

Pinaka MBRL

Developed as a replacement for the Soviet-origin Grad system in the 1980s-1990s, the Pinaka is one of the few success stories of Indian defense exports.

Ten Pinaka regiments have been operational with the Indian Army since 2000, fielding the basic Pinaka MK1 variant with a range of around 40 kilometers (25 miles).

An upgraded MK 2 is undergoing user trials, featuring an extended range of 75 kilometers (46 miles).

Meanwhile, the Indian government approved the development of two more Pinaka variants earlier this year with ranges of 120 kilometers (74 miles) and 300 kilometers (186 miles).

US Coast Guard Takes Delivery of 58th Sentinel Cutter From Bollinger

Bollinger Shipyards has handed over the 58th Sentinel-class fast response cutter (FRC) to the US Coast ►►

► Guard in Key West, Florida.

The delivery is part of a decade-long program to integrate 67 new vessels to replace the service's 1980s-era platforms in their defense, maritime law enforcement, search and rescue, environmental protection, and Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security roles.

The latest boat, the John Witherspoon (WPC-1158), is the first to be homeported in Kodiak, Alaska, under the effort.

"We are honored to deliver John Witherspoon to the US Coast Guard, continuing our proud tradition of providing high-quality, mission-ready vessels," Bollinger CEO and President Ben Bordelon stated.

"We're confident John Witherspoon will serve its crew well in their mission of defending our nation's national security interests over a vast and challenging area of responsibility."

USCGC John Witherspoon

The Witherspoon was named after the first African-American coast guard commander of a medium-class endurance cutter. He enlisted in 1963 and became a commissioned ensign in 1971.

He was granted a Meritorious Service Medal, two Commendation Medals, and a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award.

After his passing, Witherspoon became the inspiration for the coast guard's Captain John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award given to officers who demonstrate "honor, respect, and devotion to duty."

The Sentinel FRC

The Sentinel is a 47-meter (154-foot) cutter with a beam of 8 meters

(26 feet) that is designed to operate for up to five days straight.

It is powered by twin MTU engines with 5,800 horsepower each and a single bow thruster with 101 horsepower for a speed of more than 28 knots (52 kilometers/32 miles per hour).

The vessel can carry over 20 people and has space for one over-the-horizon small boat.

The Sentinel's weaponry incorporates crew-served shipboard machine guns or mounted heavy machine guns.

Bollinger shipped the 57th Sentinel to the US Coast Guard in June, a month after the company signed a contract option to construct two more vessels.

Waran Armored Vehicles to Support Polish Langusta Rocket Launchers

Poland has signed a contract to acquire "several dozen" locally-produced Waran 4x4 armored personnel carriers to support the military's WR-40 Langusta self-propelled rocket launchers.

Valued at 1.3 billion Polish zloty (\$317.9 million), the fleet will be used for ammunition supply and personnel transport tasks accompanying operations of three configurations of the weapon system.

Warsaw will also receive repair equipment, the ZZKO TOPAZ ground ar-



tillery automated fire control system, logistics services, a training package, and associated software, computer, and communication solutions.

Deliveries of the vehicles will run from 2027 to 2028.

The Waran MRAP

Made by Polish mobility developer Huta Stalowa Wola, the Waran is a vehicle measuring six meters (20 feet) and weighing about 13,000 kilograms (28,660 pounds).

The system employs a mine-resistant ambush-protected capability using its level 2 NATO-standard armor and V-shaped underchassis.

It is equipped with an Allison 4500SP automatic transmission and either a Tatra or Cummins engine for a top speed of 110 kilometers (68 miles) per hour and a range of 650 kilometers (404 miles).

The Waran can be fitted with an Obra-3 weapon radiation detector and a UKM-2000 machine gun, depending on mission requirements.

Updates on Ammo Factory, Combat Vehicle, and Korean Tank Projects

During the awarding ceremony, the Polish Ministry of Defense verified that a draft law to establish an ammunition manufacturing center in the country had been submitted to the government for review.

The agency also announced the purchase of additional Borsuk infantry fighting vehicles for the armed forces, funding for which will come from the fiscal year 2024 budget.

Meanwhile, the ministry said it is still negotiating with South Korea's Hyundai Rotem to begin domestic production of the company's K2 Black Panther main battle tanks, with discussions focusing on the initiative's localization and costs.



► Saab Confirms Gripen Supersonic Fighter Jet Offer to Colombia



Swedish defense contractor Saab has made an offer for the sale of its JAS 39 Gripen light supersonic aircraft to Colombia.

The potential contract of an undisclosed number of Gripens with Bogotá was first revealed unofficially by Swedish public news agency Sveriges Radio, according to Reuters.

In a recent interview, Saab CEO Michael Johansson confirmed this, saying that the Stockholm-based company committed to a “full-fledged” proposal to the Latin American country.

“I think we have a good offer, but it’s of course not ever without competition,” Johansson stated.

Brazilian Gripen Expansion, Potential Peruvian Deal

The remark came after the Swedish government’s signing of a defense agreement with Colombia’s neighboring country Brazil last weekend to increase the latter’s Gripen fleet by 25 percent.

The long-standing fighter jet program with Sweden and Brazil was initiated in 2014, with about 36 ordered for the South American nation.

To date, the Scandinavian country is in the process of completing eight more deliveries for Brasília. Saab opened a facility in Brazil in 2023 to

support the fighter jet’s production.

This same hub will be used to manufacture 15 aircraft under Brazil’s latest Gripen expansion effort.

Saab and São Paulo industry partner Embraer plan to make the site a primary Gripen factory for another potential deal with Peru and future orders from other Latin American customers.

“It makes sense to work from this hub in Brazil if we have the opportunity to also convince Colombia and Peru about selecting the Gripen,” Johansson said in the Reuters update.

“But Peru is also a very interesting market since they have publicly said that they have created a budget to start this acquisition. So of course we are in that competition as well.”

Saab’s JAS 39 Gripen

The Gripen aircraft has an overall length of 16 meters (52 feet) and a wingspan of 9 meters (30 feet).

The platform can carry up to 7,200 kilograms (15,873 pounds) of payload and travel at 2,100 kilometers (1,305 miles) per hour.

It is powered by a General Electric F414 afterburning turbofan engine and is armed with air-to-air, air-to-ground, and anti-ship missiles.

Florida Company Wins US Army Contract for New TNT Production Facility in Kentucky

The US Army has awarded Florida-based Repkon a \$435-million contract to develop and commission a TNT factory in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky.

TNT is used for ammunition and explosives in the military, including the commonly used 155-millimeter ar-



tillery shells.

Senator Mitch McConnell made the announcement, noting that the center will be America’s first local TNT source since the 1980s.

“I’m proud that the National Security Supplemental I championed in the Senate will bring home \$435 million in federal funding to establish this TNT capability right here in Kentucky, helping retool the defense industrial base our military relies on,” McConnell remarked.

“Through this partnership with the Army and Repkon USA, our state is proving once again that we have the infrastructure, workforce, and logistics edge to take on projects critical to our national defense.”

US Congressman Brett Guthrie, also present at the awarding ceremony, highlighted that the initiative will bring a “positive economic impact” to the region’s community by supporting over 50 jobs.

‘Major Step Forward’

The army said that the upcoming TNT production hub will reduce warfighters’ reliance on overseas supply, accelerate timelines for replenishing the service’s overall inventory, and improve readiness for future conflicts.

The deal to build the Kentucky factory was funded by the army’s Joint Program Executive Office Armaments & Ammunition (JPEO A&A) and the Contracting Command – Rock Island.



► “This is a major step forward in rebuilding our industrial base and ensuring we have the critical capabilities to support our warfighters,” US Army Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Assistant Secretary Douglas Bush explained.

“Reshoring TNT production gives us the ability to control and secure our supply chain for this vital component, especially in an era of increasing global challenges.”

JPEO A&A Officer Maj. Gen. John Reim added that the facility will enhance the US defense industrial base while providing strategic significance to existing and future cooperations with allies.

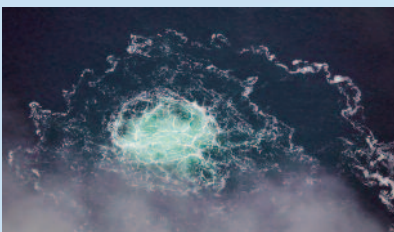
“This new state-of-the-art facility is essential to the JPEO A&A’s mission to develop, procure and field safe, reliable and lethal munitions to our joint warfighters and international partners,” Reim said.

Thales Partners Febus Optics for Undersea Infrastructure Surveillance

Thales has signed a co-development agreement with Febus Optics for a new class of critical undersea infrastructure (CUI) monitoring solutions.

The French firms will utilize their collective expertise to develop rapidly deployable solutions for the fast-expanding CUI protection market.

CUI protection has particularly gained significance following the sabotage of the Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 undersea natural



gas pipelines in September 2022.

“Monitoring and securing critical undersea infrastructure is now a key priority, and in the current geopolitical climate it is becoming increasingly important to overcome the technological challenges of CUI protection to address this growing market,” Thales explained in a press release.

“Undersea infrastructure such as communication cables, power lines and pipelines typically spans long distances, and monitoring these installations under extreme environmental conditions is a particularly complex undertaking calling for innovative solutions capable of guaranteeing their integrity and security.”

Undersea Surveillance Technology

Under the agreement, Thales will leverage Febus Optics’ Distributed Acoustic Sensing (DAS) technology to propose an integrated solution that adds new functionality to its BlueGuard surveillance system.

BlueGuard involves round-the-clock monitoring of sensitive coastal sites and coastlines for emerging threats such as unmanned underwater vehicles.

Febus Optics’ DAS technology is deployed on optical fiber sensing cable. It detects acoustic signals generated on or around the installation being monitored through the principle of light backscattering — reflection of waves, particles, or signals back to the direction of their source.

It seamlessly monitors “the entire length of the infrastructure and ensures early detection and precise geolocation of any anomalies,” Thales said.

Thales will utilize its expertise in sonar array design and acoustic signal analysis for the proposed solution.

Airbus A321MPA Clinches France’s Maritime Patrol Aircraft Competition



The French Ministry of Armed Forces has reportedly selected the Airbus A321MPA (maritime patrol aircraft) as the winner of the French Navy’s future maritime patrol aircraft (Patmar) program.

The aircraft won out over a variant of the Dassault Falcon 10X business jet in the competition, according to La Tribune.

Both manufacturers have been informed of the decision. However, no formal announcement has yet been made, the French publication added.

Future Maritime Patrol Aircraft Program

The French defense procurement agency awarded Airbus Defense and Space and Dassault Aviation study contracts in 2023 for the Patmar program.

The program aims to replace the fleet of 22 Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft by 2035, when the Dassault aircraft would exceed 40 years of service life.

The aircraft entered service in the 1980s, though it is based on the airframe of the Atlantique, which was produced in the 1960s.

Eighteen of the aircraft are being modernized, with an AESA-equipped Searchmaster radar replacing the original Iguane, a new Wescam MX-20D optronic ball, and new consoles and systems. ►►

► Initially, both France and Germany intended to jointly replace their maritime patrol aircraft with the Maritime Airborne Warfare System.

However, in 2021 the Franco-German program collapsed after Berlin decided to buy five Boeing P-8 Poseidons as an urgent replacement for its P-3C Orion fleet due to problems with reliability.

Three more P-8s were ordered later in 2022.

Airbus A321MPA

Airbus unveiled the A321MPA concept at the Euronaval 2024 defense exhibition in Paris last week.

It is based on the A321XLR (Extra Long Range) commercial passenger jet, which offers an endurance of 11 hours and significant payload capacity, enabling the installation of an array of mission-specific equipment.

The aircraft reportedly has a long ammunition bay underneath the fuselage and will carry all its ammunition internally.

Thales will provide the sensor suite for the aircraft, which will be fitted with a tail-mounted magnetic anomaly detector.

Having secured the potentially lucrative contract, Airbus hopes to make a dent in the global maritime patrol aircraft market, which has been dominated by the P-8A Poseidon in recent years.

Euroatlas Unveils Autonomous Underwater Vehicle 'Greyspark'

German defense and engineering firm Euroatlas has presented its new autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV), Greyspark, designed for undersea reconnaissance and surveillance operations.



The company unveiled the cutting-edge technology in Paris during the Euronaval 2024 exhibition.

“The new AUV can be used for various tasks including critical underwater infrastructure (CUI) protection, patrolling, and mine warfare,” reported Janes, quoting Eugen Ciemyjewski, managing director of Euroatlas.

Features

The Greyspark cruises at a speed of 10 knots (11 miles/18 kilometers per hour) and has an operational range of 1,000 nautical miles (1,150 miles/1,852 kilometers), enabling it to undertake extensive underwater missions.

It can reach depths of up to 650 meters (2,132 feet) and is equipped with a precision navigation system that ensures stable coverage and accuracy throughout its submerged range.

The AUV can be deployed from both harbors and larger vessels, according to Janes.

The Greyspark is capable of independent operations or coordination with swarms of up to six AUV units for mine detection operations and identification of adversary ships.

Euroatlas also provides a full-service infrastructure to support its AUVs, offering end-to-end solutions for its transport, deployment, refueling, maintenance, and operation.

This ensures that the Greyspark performs efficiently and adapts to international regulations and requirements for both maritime civil and defense operations.

India Donates Two Fast Interceptor Craft to Mozambique

India has donated two Fast Interceptor Craft to the Mozambique Navy to enhance the capabilities of “friendly foreign nations” in the Indian Ocean region.

The delivery was transported from the Indian coast to support Maputo in countering maritime terrorism, piracy, and the ongoing insurgency in Cabo Delgado province.

Indian High Commissioner Robert Shetkintong stated, “our growing development partnership as also our cooperation in the defense sector underscored India’s commitment to be security partner for Mozambique.”



Features

The Fast Interceptor Craft are water-jet-propelled vessels capable of reaching a speed of 45 knots (51 miles/83 kilometers per hour).

The boats can accommodate a crew of five and are equipped with machine guns and bullet-resistant cabins.

The vessels support search and rescue missions, special forces operations, and intercepting and boarding of high-speed ships.

To bolster the African country’s maritime security efforts, India donated two large Interceptor vessels to the Government of Mozambique in 2019, in addition to two other Fast Interceptor Craft delivered in 2022.

► Long-Lasting Relations

In recent years, New Delhi has organized several initiatives providing humanitarian assistance to Maputo, participated in bilateral and trilateral exercises, and supported the Mozambique Armed Forces with harbor and sea training.

These actions align with the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) program promoted by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

SAGAR is a comprehensive plan that includes maritime engagement and cooperation with other nations, through which India aims to safeguard its interests and enhance regional security in the Indian Ocean.

Yemen's Houthis Attacked US Warships With Drones, Missiles: Pentagon

Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted two US destroyers with drones and missiles as they transited the Bab al-Mandab Strait, but the warships defeated the attacks, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

The Houthis began striking ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in November 2023, part of the region-wide fallout from Israel's devastating war in Gaza, which militant groups in multiple countries have cited as justification for attacks.

The US warships "were attacked by



at least eight one-way attack uncrewed aerial systems, five anti-ship ballistic missiles and three anti-ship cruise missiles, which were successfully engaged and defeated," Pentagon spokesman Major General Pat Ryder told journalists.

"The vessels were not damaged, no personnel were hurt," Ryder said of the Monday attacks.

A claim from the Houthis that they also attacked the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier is not accurate, he said.

"Based on the information I have, it was not attacked, contrary to some of the allegations... by the Houthis," Ryder said, declining to specify the carrier's location.

The Yemeni rebels say their attacks — a significant international security challenge that threatens a major shipping lane — are in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Anger over Israel's ongoing military campaign in the small coastal territory, which began after an unprecedented Hamas attack on October 7, has stoked violence involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

The United States and other countries have deployed military vessels to help shield shipping from the Houthi strikes, but attacks directly targeting American warships are relatively rare.

Washington's forces have also carried out frequent air strikes on the Houthis in a bid to degrade their ability to target shipping and have sought to seize weapons before they reach the rebels, but their attacks have persisted.

Ryder said Tuesday that US forces carried out multiple air strikes over the weekend against Houthi

weapons storage facilities.

"These facilities housed a variety of advanced conventional weapons used by the Iran-backed Houthis to target US and international military and civilian vessels navigating international waters," he said, noting that both US Air Force and Navy assets were involved.

US forces also targeted Iran-backed groups in Syria on Monday in response to drone and rocket attacks on American troops in that country the previous day.

The attacks did not result in any American casualties, according to Ryder, who said he did not have information to provide on whether the subsequent US strikes killed or wounded militants.

Ukraine Tests Domestic Drones to Replace Chinese Mavics

Ukrainian drone manufacturers have conducted flight tests of their proposed Chinese Mavic drone replacement for the armed forces.

Eight domestic drone developers at various stages of readiness presented solutions resembling DJI Mavic unmanned aerial vehicles at a demonstration organized by the Ministry of Strategic Industries.

Six teams completed flight missions that involved a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) flight at an altitude above 250 meters (820 feet) and a target search.

The solutions' quality, features, characteristics, and production capabilities were assessed by the General Staff, the Unmanned Systems Forces Command, the Logistics Forces Command, government procurers, and military units.



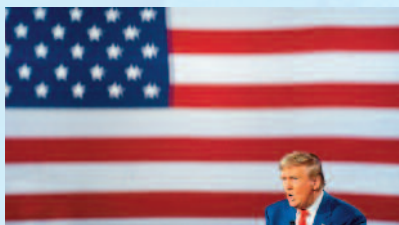
► The ones that best match the Ukrainian armed forces' needs will be procured.

"I thank the Ukrainian teams of manufacturers who were able to create such a product in Ukraine. Inexpensive, functional, easy to manage. And most importantly, it is created inside the country, which, firstly, makes us more independent from foreign supplies, and secondly, it leaves money in the country," Minister of Strategic Industries Herman Smetanin wrote in a Telegram post.

Mass Drone Production

Last year, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared the country's plans to produce a million drones by 2024 to gain an advantage in its ongoing war with Russia. This resulted in a massive rise in domestic drone production.

Trump Confirms Plan to Use Military for Mass Deportation



President-elect Donald Trump confirmed Monday that he plans to declare a national emergency on border security and use the US military to carry out a mass deportation of undocumented migrants.

Immigration was a top issue in the election campaign, and Trump has promised to deport millions and stabilize the border with Mexico after

record numbers of migrants crossed illegally during President Joe Biden's administration.

On his social media platform Truth Social, Trump amplified a recent post by a conservative activist that said the president-elect was "prepared to declare a national emergency and will use military assets to reverse the Biden invasion through a mass deportation program."

Alongside the repost, Trump commented, "True!"

Trump sealed a remarkable comeback to the presidency in his November 5 defeat of Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris.

He has been announcing a cabinet featuring immigration hardliners, naming former Immigration and Customs Enforcement acting chief Tom Homan as his "border czar."

Homan appeared at the Republican National Convention in July, telling supporters: "I got a message to the millions of illegal immigrants that Joe Biden's released in our country: You better start packing now."

Authorities estimate that some 11 million people are living in the United States illegally. Trump's deportation plan is expected directly to impact around 20 million families.

While the US government has struggled for years to manage its southern border with Mexico, Trump has super-charged concerns by claiming an "invasion" is underway by migrants he says will rape and murder Americans.

During his campaign, Trump repeatedly railed against undocumented immigrants, employing incendiary rhetoric about foreigners who "poi-

son the blood" of the United States and misleading his audiences about immigration statistics and policy.

Trump has not elaborated on his immigration crackdown in any detail, but during his election campaign repeatedly vowed to invoke the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to speed up deportations.

Critics say the law is outdated and point to its most recent use during World War II to hold Japanese-Americans in internment camps without due process.

The number of US border patrol encounters with migrants crossing from Mexico illegally is now about the same as in 2020, the last year of Trump's first term, after peaking at a record 250,000 for the month of December 2023.

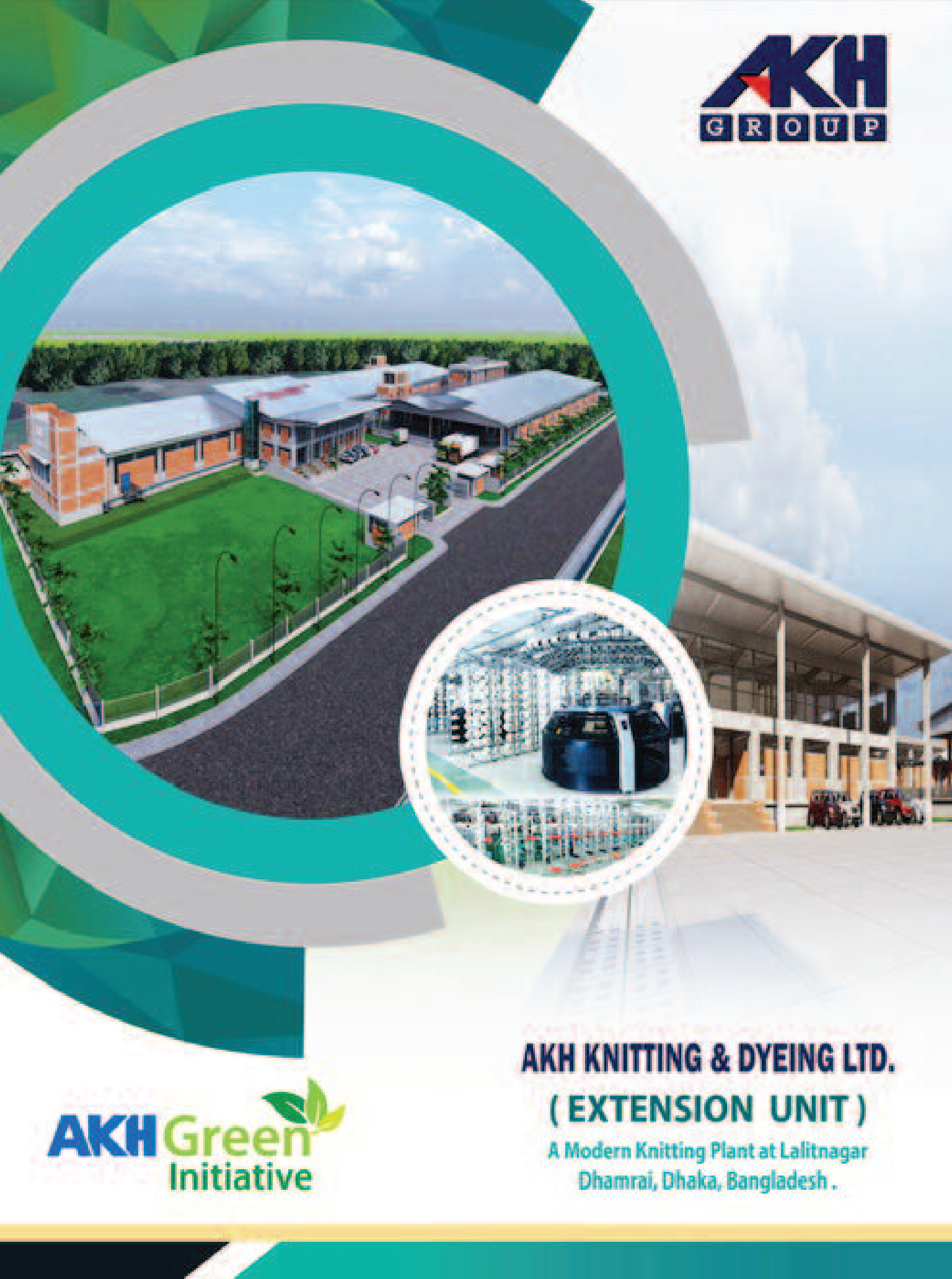
Ukraine to Receive Sixth IRIS-T Air Defense System From Germany This Year

Germany will deliver the sixth planned IRIS-T air defense system to Ukraine by the end of this year, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week.

Also discussed was next year's supply of air defense systems to Ukraine from Germany.

"During the conversation, the leaders focused on other efforts needed to ensure the best possible defense and political support for Ukraine; they also coordinated joint steps for the near future," a press release from the President of Ukraine office stated.

"In particular, they agreed that the Ramstein format should be maintained." ■



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