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My Bengal of gold, I love you
Forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune
as if it were a flute.
In spring, Oh mother mine, the fragrance from
Your mango-groves makes me wild with joy
Ah, what a thrill!
In Autumn, Oh mother mine,
In the full-blossomed paddy fields,
I have seen spread all over sweet smiles!
Ah, what a beauty, what shades, what an affection,
and what a tenderness!
What a quilt have you spread at the feet of
banyan trees and along the banks of rivers!
Oh mother mine, words from your lips are like
Nectar to my ears!
Ah, what a thrill!
If sadness, Oh mother mine, casts a gloom on your face,
my eyes are filled with tears!

Original in Bangla by Rabindranath Tagore
Translated by Professor Syed Ali Ahsan
Chief Patron

H.E. Mr. Akramul Qader
Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States of America and State Minister

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Back Row from Left

Mosammat Shahanara Monica, First Secretary, Mr. Nirupam Dev Nath, First Secretary, Mr. Muhammad Nazmul Hoque, Counsellor and Head of Chancery, Mr. MJH Jабед, Counsellor, Mr. M. Shafiqul Islam, Commercial Counsellor
Bangladesh at a glance

Official Name
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Capital
Dhaka

Currency
Taka (BDT)

Geography

Area
55,598 sq miles (1,47,570 Sq. Km)

Comparative
Slightly smaller than the state of Iowa or Wisconsin

Location
South Asia, On three sides: East, North & West - India, South-East: Myanmar, South: Bay of Bengal

Land Boundary
4,246 km

Bordering Countries
India: 4,053 km, Myanmar: 193 km

Climate
Tropical: mild Winter (October to March), Summer (March to June), Rainy Monsoon (June to October)

Temperature
High- 104 degrees (during summer) Fahrenheit, low 40 degrees (in winter)

Terrain
Mostly flat alluvial plain; hilly in the South-East

Standard Time
GMT +6 hours

People

Population size
142.319 million (2011, BBS)

Comparative
Bangladesh ranks 7th in terms of population size. Have more people than Russia.

Language
Bangla (5th most spoken language in the world, about 250 million people speak Bangla)

Main Religions
Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity

Male-Female Ratio
100: 100.3 (2011, BBS)

Population Density/sq.km
964 (2011, BBS)

Crude Birth Rate
Crude Birth Rate: 22.53 (Per 1000 Population in 2012)

Crude Death Rate
Crude Death Rate: 5.71 (Per 1000 Population in 2012)

Rate of Poverty (%)
31.5% (2011)

Governance

Governance
Parliamentary democracy

Legal system
Based on English common law

Suffrage
18 years of age: universal

Constitution
Written form

Head of Government
Prime Minister

Head of State
President

Education and Health

Primary education
Compulsory and universal

School enrolment (%)

Life expectancy at birth
68.21 years (male), 71.98 years (female) (2012)

Literacy rate (%)
55.9 (UNDP 2011)

Infant Mortality rate
50.73 (per 1000 Live Birth), (Below 1 year of age), 2010

Total Fertility rate per Women (15-49)
2.4 (2006)

Persons per Hospital Bed (including Dispensary)
1860 (2008)

Persons Per Registered Physician
2860 (2008)

Safe Drinking Water User (%)
97.6 (2006)

Sanitary Latrine User (%)
52.6 (2006)

Economy

Size of GDP
100.00 billion US $ (2010-11)

Share of GDP
Agriculture: 18.4%, Industry:28.6%, Services: 53% (2011)
Rate of GDP growth
6.7 % (2010-11)

Foreign Currency Reserve
US $ 10.98 Billion (November 2011)

Current account balance
US $ 952 million (2007-08)

Per capita GDP
US $ 664 (2010-2011)

Per capita National income
US $ 750 (2011)

Domestic savings
18.99 (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

National savings
28.75 (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

Total investment
24.96 (Public-4.77, Private-20.19) (as % of GDP, 2009-10)

Foreign Direct Investment
US $.913 Billion (2010)

Total number of Export Processing Zones (EPZ)
08

Total investments in EPZs
1935.86 million US $ (2011)

Export earnings
US $ 16 billion (2009-10)

Exports-commodities
Ready Made Garments (RMG), Leather, Frozen Fish, Sea Food, Pharmaceuticals, Cements, Jute and Jute Goods, etc.

Exports-partners
US 24.9%, Germany 12.8%, UK 9.8%, France 5% (2006)

Imports-partners
China 17.7%, India 12.5%, Kuwait 7.9%, Singapore 5.5%, Hong Kong 4.1% (2006)

Import payments
9.00 billion (oct-dec, 2011)

Agriculture-products

Industries
Garments, Spinning, Ship building, Textiles, Jute, Tea processing, Newsprint, Cement, Fertilizer, Light engineering, Sugar, Ceramic, Fish processing, IT solutions, Pharmaceuticals

Debt –external
$ 20.25 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Market size
Even a conservative estimate presents a growing middle class of 30 million people (15 to 20% of total pop.), which is bigger than the combined population of Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore.

Endowment
In addition to huge reserve of natural gas, Bangladesh has a pool of easily trainable human resources. Cost of operation, both in terms of tariffs and wages, is one of the lowest in the world.

Fiscal year
1 July – 30 June

Society
Structure
Liberal Democratic Society

Personality of people
Warm and hospitable

Seaport
Chittagong and Mongla

International Airports
Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet

Domestic Airports
Jossore, Cox’s Bazaar, Saidpur, Rajshahi and Barisal

Radio and Television
Transmission covers the entire country. Numerous private channels are in operation.

Telephone per 100 people
(BBS: 2010)
Land phone- 2.07
Cell phone- 63.74

Internet
Broadband, easily available, connected to submarine cable

Popular sports
Football, Cricket, Hockey, Kabadi, Swimming, Chess

Tourist attraction
World’s longest unbroken (120 km), sea- beach of Cox’s Bazar, colorful tribal life of hill tracts, centuries old historical sites. (some are pilgrimage of Buddhists, Hindus etc.) at Dhaka, Paharpur, Mainamati, Mohastangar; Sundarbans—the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger and largest mangrove forest in the world (a world heritage site), beautiful tea gardens, river life etc.
Leadership

Father of the Nation
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
March 26 is our great Independence and National Day. On the eve of the day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

The historic Independence Day is a glorious day in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions of people. On this solemn day, I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the War of Liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty for the salvation of those departed souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country’s independence at the early hours on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the people from all walks of life participated in the War of Liberation and achieved victory through armed struggle. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders, valiant freedom-fighters and organizers who rendered their dedicated efforts and enthusiastic support that accelerated the achievement of our victory. I also remember with deep respect the contributions of late Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haque, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani who inspired our people at various stages for attaining country’s self-sovereignty. The contributions of those valiant sons of the soil would be ever written in the history of our independence.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government is rendering untiring efforts in materializing the objectives of independence. With the span of time, we have achieved some significant progress in the fields of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, ICT, SME, youth and sports, women and children, women empowerment etc. at national level. At the same time we have also attained notable advancement in corporate sector including the areas of readymade garments, pharmaceutical, ceramic and ship-building industry. The Government is also very sincere to establish Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country. Our achievement at international arena is also praiseworthy. Yet, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence and building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. I believe concerted efforts from all strata irrespective of party affiliation are imperative in this regard.

The people of our country are democracy-loving. Without making institutionalization of democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respect to others’ opinion are the pre-conditions for flourishing democracy. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to maintain patience, forbearance at all levels and to be respectful to others opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our Jatiya Sangsad as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, everybody irrespective of party affiliation would play responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our common people by playing their due role.

The present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has declared ‘Vision 2021’ with a view to attaining ‘Golden Bangla’ dreamt by Bangabandhu. I believe, people from all strata of life would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh by materializing the ‘Vision’ in the Golden Jubilee of independence in 2021.

On this Independence Day, I urge all, living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of War of Liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement of the country.

May the Almighty be with us.
Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
MESSAGE

I convey my heartiest greetings to my countrymen as well as to all expatriate Bangalis on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day of Bangladesh.

The 26th March is a glorious day in our national life. On this great day, I pay my deep homage to the 3 million martyrs and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation in 1971.

I recall with deep gratitude the greatest Bangali of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence.

I also pay my humble tributes to four national leaders and the valiant freedom fighters who had fought against the Pakistani occupation forces to free our beloved motherland. I extend my sympathies to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture and subjugation during the war.

I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26th March, 1971 after the occupation forces launched sudden attack on innocent and unarmed Bangalis on the black night of the 25th March, 1971. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and EPR wireless. At each and every district and subdivision, Awami League leaders and workers publicized the declaration widely through mikes. The international media also had circulated Bangabandhu's proclamation of independence. Under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16th December, 1971 after a 9-month bloody war.

The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our people's greatest achievement. To ensure that this achievement remains meaningful, the spirit of our great liberation war should be reached to every nook and corner of the country. Cherishing the true history of the liberation war close to our hearts, we would have to go ahead in achieving the objectives of the Charter of Change by building a Bangladesh, free from corruption, mal-governance, terrorism, hunger and poverty.

The present Awami League government has been implementing huge development programmes in all sectors, including agriculture, education, health, law and order, information technology, energy and power and communications. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary forces are trying to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country at a time when our government had executed the verdict of Bangabandhu's assassination case, and is holding the trial of the war criminals.

On this auspicious day of our independence, I urge the countrymen to remain united to foil the ill designed plots of the anti-democratic and anti-liberation forces against the government and the people.

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty-hunger and illiteracy-free modern Digital Bangladesh by the Golden Jubilee year of our independence through implementing ‘Vision 2021’. I hope that all citizens of our country would engage themselves with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication to build Bangladesh as a prosperous and prestigious country in the comity of nations.

I am confident that Insha-Allah, with our united efforts, we would surely achieve our golden Bangladesh as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Today, Bangladesh celebrates its 42nd anniversary of her glorious Independence Day. As we celebrate the Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to my compatriots living at home and abroad. On this memorable day, I recall with profound respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country’s independence at the early hours on March 26, 1971. I also pay my deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the war of liberation in 1971 and the hundreds of thousands of women who were raped by the occupation Pakistani Armed forces, the auxiliary forces and their local collaborators.

It all began with the assertion of a national identity in the face of systematic denial, discrimination and deprivation of that identity rooted in a millennia-old heritage of language, culture and customs. It evolved through the shaping of political demands for inclusion and equal access to opportunities, against marginalisation of the Bangalee people and their cultural essence. It crystallized into the 6-point demand, a detailed manifesto for autonomy and devolution. The landslide victory for the Awami League in the first ever general elections in 1970 and the refusal to hand over power by the Pakistani authorities led to the non-co-operation movement culminating in the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu when the genocide began. We achieved our long-cherished independence through nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions of people.

Cherishing the true history of the liberation war, the present government has made giant strides to achieve the objectives of Charter of Change which will lead to Bangabandhu’s `Sonar Bangla’ - the Golden Bengal. We can visualize a middle-income, digital knowledge based Bangladesh in 2021. We have demonstrated our intent and ability to forge partnerships with our immediate neighbours and far beyond. We are deeply involved in the process of multilateralism, through global and regional commitments in line with the policy of “Friendship to all and malice towards none” enunciated by Bangabandhu.

The present government remains pledge-bound to bring the perpetrators of atrocities committed during the war of liberation in 1971 to justice. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary forces are trying to destabilize the country and derail the democratic and development process. They are out to portray a negative image of the country outside Bangladesh. I urge the international community to add their voice to the overwhelming popular demand emanating from the people of Bangladesh and join in their condemnation of those found guilty of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

On this very special day, I take the opportunity to thank all our officials and staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieve our foreign policy objectives. I also congratulate the Bangladesh Diaspora who have been contributing to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as of their host countries.

Finally, I urge all to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of war of liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement of the country.

Joy Bangla,
Joy Bangabandhu

(Dr. Dipu Moni, MP)
From the Desk of the Ambassador

The Vibrant Bangladesh in your hand is the 6th edition of this Embassy’s independence day publication. I express my thanks to the contributors and patrons who have joined our endeavour this occasion. We decided to release it online last year when our website was redesigned. The response from the Bangladesh diaspora, not just the one based in North America, rather scattered across the world is truly encouraging. Expansion of its readership is one of our key outreach initiatives. This also, hopefully, addresses some of the unmet queries on business, governance and public policy issues that we receive from various corners throughout the year but cannot always help due to dearth of updated information.

We collect write-ups from resource persons who collectively make a bridge across generations as keen followers of Bangladesh’s development. The articles appear in broad subject clusters. The contributors represent diverse professions and subject interests— from personal reminiscences to fresh ideas on Bangladesh’s foreign relations. I hope, they offer the readers a fair outlook on a wide range of issues pertinent to contemporary Bangladesh.

Last year Bangladesh had its first ever partnership dialogue and security dialogue with the USA. We discussed outstanding issues of common interest in the most candid fashion. We expect that we will be able to build on the progress made in the inaugural round. Both sides are presently contemplating how constructively to insert a business component from the next dialogue. Our goal is to convert the most valuable business and development ideas into concrete actions. Hopefully the timely solution to the most pressing issues would greatly contribute to the process of furthering partnership.

I sincerely thank President Barack Obama for his forward looking and visionary message sent to our Honourable President on the occasion of the independence day which is also reflective of the historic friendly ties that Bangladesh enjoys with the USA.

We hope that the officials and private sector representatives from both Bangladesh and the USA as well as Bangladesh diaspora in the USA would draw useful insights from this publication. I thank the writers for their hard work.

While we celebrate our most auspicious moment of the year, I feel to leave a note on how altogether a fresh set of developments occur in a very short timeframe! My nation is currently passing through one of its most exciting times since our liberation. The spontaneous gathering of youths in Shahbagh seeking, inter alia, a long overdue justice to war criminals is one vivid example of why this year’s March 26th stands out as very distinctive from all in the past.

I express my gratitude to our brave countrymen who have summoned the spirit of 1971, once again.

Akramul Qader
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was unequivocal about the foreign policy Bangladesh would pursue under his leadership. He defined it in simple terms. The new country would base its ties with the world outside its frontiers on the principle of friendship for all and malice towards none. It was this axiomatic thought, with its roots in the politics of the Civil War-era American President Abraham Lincoln, which Bangladesh adopted as core policy in the early years of its independent nationhood. In the years in which Bangabandhu was in office, till his assassination in August 1975, a sense of dynamism coupled with a huge dose of idealism was what constituted Bengali diplomacy soon after liberation in December 1971.

The foreign policy adopted by Bangabandhu’s administration necessarily took into account the support, in moral as well as material terms, provided by those nations which clearly looked upon the genocide committed by the Pakistan occupation army in the country with dismay and derision. In early April 1971, Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny left hardly anything to the imagination when he wrote to Pakistani junta leader Yahya Khan that the crisis in Bangladesh, which at that point in time was yet being referred to as East Pakistan in the outside world, called for a political settlement. Yahya Khan, of course, spurned the suggestion and indeed looked upon the Soviet advice as interference in Pakistan’s internal affairs. Islamabad’s negative feedback was thus instrumental in a hardening of Moscow’s stance toward Pakistan and the subsequent role it played in the creation of Bangladesh. The new government of Dhaka, conscious of the decisive Soviet role at the United Nations Security Council, where Moscow vetoed all resolutions that looked about to prevent the fall of Pakistan in Bangladesh, certainly understood the need for close ties with the Soviet Union.

It was against such a background of Soviet support to the Bangladesh cause in 1971 that Bangabandhu paid an official visit to Moscow in March 1972. This was one occasion where the Bengali political leadership, for the very first time, came in touch with the leaders of the communist state, a move which led to a strengthening of economic as well as educational ties. A constructive result of such close Dhaka-Moscow links was the facilitating of higher academic programmes for Bengali students.
at Soviet universities, a reality that was to add enormously to the promotion of excellence in education. And, of course, Soviet assistance in clearing Chittagong port of the remnants of the 1971 war and helping to rebuild it were hugely to the advantage of a country which had had its economy battered and its infrastructure absolutely destroyed by the conflict.

Equally important in the Bangladesh foreign policy scheme of things were relations with India. The generosity of spirit with which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her government came to the support of Bangladesh’s people in 1971... were naturally acknowledged with gratitude by the people and government of Bangladesh.

The generosity of spirit with which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her government came to the support of Bangladesh’s people in 1971... were naturally acknowledged with gratitude by the people and government of Bangladesh.
official visit to Dhaka in March 1971. And then came a defining moment in relations between the two neighbours when Bangladesh and India initialled a 25-year treaty of friendship that would have the two countries coming to mutual support and friendship in the event of hostilities imposed by other nations on either of them. The times between 1972 and 1974 can justifiably be regarded as a bright era in Bangladesh’s diplomacy. Bangabandhu’s government earned, in these critical two years, the rare honour of seeing most nations in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas accord it diplomatic recognition.

That Bangladesh was committed to pursuing a secular democratic structure was a powerful factor in persuading other nations of the need to give the new nation its rightful place in the councils of the world. It was a policy which led to the Bangladesh cause in the times after liberation being looked upon with a huge degree of support and empathy. It can be argued, therefore, that Bengali secular democracy, having been acknowledged by the world as Bangladesh’s defining diplomatic principle, led to a swift opening of doors everywhere. The country made its entry into various global organisations, particularly those linked to the United Nations. Again, though Bangladesh had little political reason to be part of the Commonwealth, it nevertheless made it known that it was ready and willing to play its full part in the organization. Dhaka’s membership of the organization certainly riled Pakistan, which immediately took itself out of the Commonwealth (only to go back to it a few decades later).

Bangladesh’s efforts to obtain a place in the United Nations were decisively blocked through an exercise of the veto by China for two continuous years. Both in 1972 and 1973, the Chinese leadership refused to have Dhaka take its place in the world body, clearly out of an unwillingness to let Pakistan down. The Chinese action surely dismayed Bangabandhu. Yet he was unwilling to go critical or condemnatory, of Beijing’s position on Bangladesh. It was political pragmatism which came into play, for Bangabandhu, together with Foreign Minister Kamal Hossain, was under little doubt that until Bangladesh and Pakistan reached a deal on the issues that put up roadblocks to a normalization of ties between Dhaka and Islamabad, Beijing would go on playing the veto card and so keep Pakistan in good humour. Such an assessment entailed, of course, a powerful requirement for a change of perceptions where links with Pakistan were concerned. The change came in February 1974, when Bangladesh’s entry into the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) threw up a new dimension to its diplomacy. Indeed, the OIC summit, held in the Pakistani city of Lahore, was instrumental in burnishing Bangladesh’s image on the global scene.

And that was for two reasons. The first related to Pakistan, which had been in a state of denial regarding Bangladesh’s emergence as an independent state but which now was forced to accord official recognition to the new country if it wished to make a success of the Islamic summit. Bangladesh’s secularism notwithstanding, the country was home to a majority Muslim population, which reality could not be ignored. The second was Bangladesh’s diplomatic opening out, at virtually one go, to the Islamic world. The perception at the time was that through joining the OIC, Bangladesh had filled a major gap in its diplomacy and was therefore now equipped to forge ahead with exploring trade and other possibilities with the Islamic world.

Bangladesh’s foreign policy regarding the United States, in the initial stages, was informed by a couple of positions. First, Bangabandhu and his government were grateful to the American
people for their unqualified support to the Bangladesh cause in 1971. Second, it was critical of the Nixon-Kissinger tilt toward Pakistan during the war, a position which clearly militated against the Bengali war of liberation. It was not easily forgotten that where American politicians like Senator Edward Kennedy were loudly rooting for Bangladesh in 1971, the Nixon administration consistently explored the chances of a negotiated settlement between the Yahya Khan regime and the Bengali political leadership even when the opportunity for such a settlement did not exist after 25 March 1971. The lengths to which the US administration was prepared to go toward promoting a settlement within the Pakistani federal structure was soon revealed through reports of Khondokar Moshtaque, the Mujibnagar government’s foreign minister, being ready to make a departure from the position of the government and lend his support to the American plan during his projected trip to New York. The conspiracy, for so it was, was neutralized through the government preventing Moshtaque from traveling to New York. His place was taken up by Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, the self-exiled vice chancellor of Dhaka University then serving as a special envoy of the Mujibnagar government.

The Bangabandhu government’s diplomatic successes were surely capped by Washington’s recognition of Bangladesh in April 1972. Though ties between the two countries were somewhat soured by the American position regarding Bangladesh’s trade deals with Cuba, the government in Dhaka was careful not to let slip the opportunity of building on its new-found links with Washington. Bangladesh made a significant move through making contact with the World Bank, a step that demonstrated the government’s determination to pursue an independent foreign policy through an exercise of pragmatism in its dealings with foreign nations in an era yet constricted by the Cold War. In much the same manner, Bangabandhu and his government were convinced that nothing short of non-alignment would enable the global community to steer away from the hard choices it would have to make between leaning toward the Soviet bloc and aligning itself with American policy. Bangabandhu was keenly aware of the damage done to Pakistan through its membership of such anti-communist blocs as SEATO and CENTO; and because he was, it
was his observation that the path traversed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ahmed Sukarno and Josip Broz Tito in the 1950s was one his country needed to take if its goal was to carve a distinctive niche for itself in the world.

Forty two years after 1971, the principles on which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shaped Bangladesh’s foreign policy are in absolute need of reassertion. The Father of the Nation believed, out of conviction and moral belief, that Bangladesh could be the Switzerland of the East. Given the trauma the Bengali nation has faced in the years since his assassination, the relevance of that belief rises out of the mists of time.

On a personal note, this writer came across former British prime minister Edward Heath at a reception in London sixteen years ago. On being informed by the writer that he was from Bangladesh, Heath stopped for a while; there was a twinkle in his eyes and a smile on his lips. “Ah”, said he, “Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s country.” And that said volumes about the era of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

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I am not a linguist but I couldn’t help noticing a few spectacular things about Bangla language. Let’s take a simple sentence: ‘I love you’. In Bangla, we say, ‘Ami tomake bhalobashi’. This sentence has three words and from elementary mathematics we know that the three words can be arranged in factorial 3 ways, which is 3x2x1=6. The possible permutations are: Ami Tomake Bhalobashi, Ami Bhalobashi Tomake, Tomake Ami Bhalobashi, Tomake Bhalobashi Ami, Bhalobashi Ami Tomake, Bhalobashi Tomake Ami.

I found it very exciting that every single permutation is acceptable in Bangla, one combination is probably more acceptable than the other (if you find a particular combination a bit unusual just read it like a poem!) but none are wrong. I cannot compare it with other languages from a linguist’s point of view, but I do know that English is not so flexible. The other five combinations except from ‘I love you’ (I you love, Love I you, You I love, You Love I) are not acceptable in English language. I have a hunch every Bengali male tried to write a poem in his lifetime in Bangla. This is because; our language is exceedingly forgiving and unbelievably flexible making it a perfect language for writing poem. (This poses the next obvious question -- why only Bengali males, but I am going to discuss the language aspect and I do not want to get into a gender issue here!)

Now let me take a similar example from a science textbook (Physics by Robert Resnick and David Halliday -- the one I read in my undergraduate years at Dhaka University). Let me randomly pick a sentence: ‘We can show that there are two kinds of charge by rubbing a glass rod with silk and hanging it from a long thread as in fig. 26-1’. I am sure that the meaning of the sentence is obvious to almost everyone, even to a non-science individual. The sentence is constructed in such a way that we get
the information in correct order. First it says (1) there are two types of charges, then (2) one can do the experiment to figure that out and (3) with the help of an illustration, the description of the experiment has been made more clear.

Now I would like to give you the same information in Bangla, and let me make an effort to put together an acceptable translation of the sentence in English. If I wish to restrict it to one sentence, the best possible translation could be: ‘Ekta kacher dandake silk diye ghoshe 26-1 chhobite dekhano upaye ekta lomba shuta diye jhuliye rekhe amra dekhate pari je charge du rokomer’. I am sure, there could be some more options, but really doubt whether it is possible to have a much improved version. The sentence is okay in my opinion, but the sequence of information is a little messed up - it appears to be really difficult to put the information in right order.

If I wish to do it right and keep the sentence simple then I have to break it into three separate sentences: (1) *Amra dekhate pari je charge du rokomer*. (2) *Ekta kacher dandake silk diye ghoshe ekta lomba shuta diye jhuliye rekhe sheta dekhano jai*. (3) *26-1 nombor chhobite sheta dekhano hoyechhe*. Now the language is simple and lucid-but I had to sacrifice volume, the text is significantly bigger.

I was not aware of this challenge of translation before. Every now and then I read science text books written in Bangla, and always felt uncomfortable looking at the language-it has never been simple, never direct-I found the language always a bit convoluted. I thought the science writers didn’t have a good grasp of the language. A couple of years ago I started writing Physics book in Bangla for secondary school students and right away understood the challenges of writing science book in Bangla. One reason for such difficulties could be that we don’t have a rich history of writing science books in Bangla. In other words, we did not invest a lot to make the language ready for explaining science in a concise way. As a result, every time we try to explain science in Bangla, the language of the book becomes a bit complicated and convoluted. I do not think we have any simple solution for this problem. The one and only solution is difficult and time consuming. We have to keep writing science books using Bangla and very slowly our language will become science-ready.

We have a very different problem in science writing altogether. In the field of science and technology we are not at the contributing end, we are always at the receiving end. So the terminology used in science and technology are not in Bangla. It is important that we learn science (or for that matter anything important) in our mother tongue - but that does not warrant that the terms that science use globally are also translated in Bangla. A physics student will use the term charge all his life, then why does he have to call it *bibhob* when he is studying it in school? Why does the student call a resistor *rodh* when he has to forget this word and relearn resistor for his college and university education? What is the rationale behind all this?
I believe that we should expose our students to the real scientific and technical terms and not to complicate and artificial Bengali sounding words. If in the process we can incorporate a few thousand new real scientific and technological words in our language-I think we make our language a few thousand words richer. It doesn’t restrict us in any way-if a brilliant scientist discovers something new and gives it a Bangla name. It will become a scientific word. Since the language of instruction of science in higher education institutes in the country is in English, we should make it an effort to teach our school students the globally accepted scientific terms in English. There is no point, I understand, trying to have Bangla words for globally accepted scientific terms.

I have another observation about science and Bangla—that is the Bangla numerals. You cannot do science without crunching numbers and we always do it using English numerals. Everyone needs to use calculators and the numbers are in English numerals. Since we use both Bangla and English interchangeably in our documents for various reasons -- we tend to use Bangla and English numbers as well. I can give examples where I faced very serious problems where I could not figure out if the number is 40 in Bangla or 80 in English, or 27 in Bangla or 29 in English.

After a couple of frustrating encounters I have started following a convention, in all my writings of science or mathematics -- even in Bangla text I use English numerals. I do not think I am showing disrespect to my mother tongue - I do it because I do not have any other choice. It is not practical to do it in any other way anymore. I think this problem should be addressed by our academicians, linguists and intellectuals as soon as possible. I have noticed everyone else has started doing it, so why don’t we make it official for the students?

I emphasise that the best way we can learn basic science (or anything important for that matter) is in our mother tongue. We are very lucky that we have such a powerful language. We need to however use it for science more often so that it can also become science-ready. But we need to have a realistic approach as to how we can make this inroad easier, particularly we need to focus on the options for switching to English at higher level of education. If a student has a very good understanding of science and mathematics, if he knows all the terms in English, if he is comfortable with the English numerals -- and if he really learns English for 12 years as we do, it will be much easier for him to switch the medium of instruction to English at the university level.

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1971 was a harsh and strenuous year in the age-old constitutional struggle between America’s President and the United States Senate over the direction of the country’s foreign policy. Rancorous debate about the U.S. role in Vietnam was in full swing, reaching crescendo levels of legislation that would eventually force President Richard Nixon’s successor, President Gerald Ford, to withdraw the American military from all of Indochina. Amendments also called for bringing home U.S. troops from Germany and other NATO countries. Deep policy differences between Administration officials and Senators arose concerning alliances with authoritarian rulers in Latin America and the Middle East who readily abused rules of law and human rights in order to stay in power without the consent of the governed. This fierce political struggle over dichotomous views became further exacerbated when a new external crisis appeared, this time in Pakistan, an American cold war ally ruled by a military junta.

In the dead of the night of March 25th, the Pakistan Army turned its full lethal powers on hundreds of thousands of its own innocent citizens in East Pakistan, starting in the capital city of Dhaka and swinging out to the farthest towns and villages. Genocide had been unleashed. In the days and months ahead, tragedy and upheaval and a Third Indo-Pakistani War would engulf South Asia.

Ultimately, the Army of Pakistan murdered an estimated three million persons because they were Bengali, Muslims and Hindus, 10 million refugees poured into India, Nepal, and Burma exposed to the elements and, lacking nourishment, risking cholera and famine, many more million lives were ravaged, their existences turned upside down, their women and girls raped, their villages burned to the ground. Part two of the partition of the Subcontinent, the first in 1947 establishing India and Pakistan, took place, with the vivisection of Pakistan into another two parts, the new nation-state of Bangladesh coming into existence as 1972 began, a creature of Bengali nationalism, soaked in blood, in pain and economically devastated, but now safe and sovereign.

In this existential episode, the U.S. role was controversial and unclear to the American public that instinctively sympathized with the Bengalis of East Pakistan. A triangle of power centers formed in Washington to contest the issue: executive branch versus the legislative branch struggling for supremacy in policy, with public opinion on the side of Capitol Hill, and the press, particularly the news media, shaping impressions and perceptions. My role was as U.S. Senator Frank Church’s (D-ID) legislative assistant for foreign affairs. Before joining the Senator’s team, I had acquired a master’s
degree in South Asian history, plus lived in Southeast Asia and in India over a four-year period, including two years assisting Ambassador Chester Bowles at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, 1967-1969.

What local factors led to this large-scale human tragedy in South Asia? Why did the Nixon Administration take such a cold-blooded approach to unrestrained lethal behavior of West Pakistanis against their presumed brethren in the East? How did opposing political forces in Washington engage, indeed check and try to balance the executive branch of government in the struggle to alter the course of American policy?

Historical Background to the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle

Pakistan came into existence in 1947 based on the archaic nation-state theory of religion. According to this notion, India was Hindu and Pakistan was Islamic. Religion, however, could not and would not hold West and East Pakistan together in the face of larger linguistic, cultural, racial, even weather differences, plus more than 1,200 miles of northern India that divided the two halves geographically.

Economic disparity was another division between the two wings. In 1959-1960, per capita income was 32 percent higher in West Pakistan than in the East; in 1969-1970, the gap had reached a 61 percent difference. East Pakistan was always second best.

Punjabis speaking Urdu dominated the West; in the eastern sector, the spoken, written, musical, and artistic tradition of Bengal predominated. Neither a century under British rule nor 24 years of independence with Pakistan’s capital in Rawalpindi had bridged the country’s two non-contiguous, ethno-linguistic, political parts. Though it was called United Pakistan, in reality it was not, lacking an overarching national identity that would have helped to bind together its disparate nationalities.

The road to political liberation took hold over a decade, starting in 1952 with the language movement promoting Bengali, then the general election of 1954, and the literacy movement of 1962. Also that year, on Christmas Day, as told by eyewitness Sashanka S. Banerjee, an Indian diplomat at the Indian Consulate in Dhaka, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave the young attache a top secret letter addressed to Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. Sent to the Prime Minister that night by coded cable and forwarded in a diplomatic pouch the next day, the personal, explosive message emphasized the liberation struggle would mean breaking away from the “twin shackles of slavery of the mercilessly exploitative ethnic Punjabi Muslims of West Pakistan and the repressive military dictatorship of Rawalpindi,” thereby creating a sovereign independent homeland for the Bengali-speaking people of East Pakistan. The restless Mujib aimed as his timetable February 1, 1963, or March 1, 1963, as the latest, to set up a provisional government of Bangladesh in exile in London.

Mujib became impatient in not receiving a direct reply from
Nehru, so paid a secret visit across the Indian border without a passport to meet with the Chief Minister of Agartala, Sachin Singh. Upon hearing from Singh, Nehru sent back a message of apology, that it would be best to work through the Indian diplomatic mission in Dhaka, and that a decision had been taken to extend support to the Bengali leader. Returning home, the East Pakistan’s Provincial Intelligence Branch arrested Mujib. The police incarcerated him; the Agartala Conspiracy Case dragged on for five years. I followed this legal procedure from my position at the American Embassy in New Delhi, reading reporting cables from our Embassy in Rawalpindi, the consulates in Dhaka and Calcutta, and consulting with diplomats from other interested embassies.

Meanwhile, Mujibur Rahman launched a six-point campaign effort (“Chhoy Dofa”) in 1966, issuing a clarion call for “autonomy.” When the military junta released Sheikh Mujib from the Agartala Case on February 21, 1969, he became known as “Bangabandhu,” Friend of Bengal, the name still used 44 years later. Three weeks later, Ayub Khan, the country’s military dictator, resigned, handing over power to a fellow general, Yahya Khan, who in turn declared martial law.

Democracy forcefully spoke in the general election of December 7, 1970 and the outcome proved to be Pakistan’s last breathe of national unity. The election results were not accepted by the western sector and this led to unprecedented mortal violence and the breakup of Pakistan.

In the wake of a 1970 devastating cyclone and growing tension between West and East, virtually every voting Bengali cast his ballot for East Pakistan’s Awami (People’s) League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mujib had upgraded his six-point platform, this time calling for virtual independence of Bangladesh from the repressive regime over twelve hundred miles away: he won an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the Awami League garnering 167 seats, Zulfi Ali Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party claiming only 81 seats. By the rules of election law, Mujibur Rahman should have rightfully become Pakistan’s newly elected prime minister.

But neither Bhutto nor Yahya Khan could accept the idea of turning their entire country over to Bengalis, whose language neither of them spoke, and whose small, dark-skinned physiques neither of them believed worthy specimens of Pakistani stature. In many ways, West Pakistanis treated their eastern “colony” as arrogantly as British sahibs had ruled all of India. The election results were suppressed.

Pakistan’s new National Assembly by the rules of the system should have been convened in Dhaka that March. But on February 15th, Bhutto announced he would boycott the session and demanded that power be shared equally between the two leading parties representing the country’s two wings. Mujib rejected this anti-democratic power grab, saying “The demand of Bhutto sahib is totally illogical. Power is to be handed over to the majority party, the Awami League. The power now lies with the people of East Bengal.”

According to the astute South Asia historian Professor Stanley Wolpert, Yahya Khan began to waver, but Bhutto would not allow him to go along with the election results. Instead he offered to fly to Dhaka himself to cut a coalition deal with Mujib. Bhutto and Mujib were world’s apart in upbringing, wealth, and sense of status. Bhutto came from the landed class in Sind, whereas Mujib had earned his first rupees in Calcutta selling insurance. Bhutto had studied at the University of California-Berkeley and at Christ Church at Oxford, and was a Lincoln’s Inn barrister. His hero was Napoleon whose sword hung facing the gold-topped Louis XIV desk in his Karachi library. Mujib’s role model was Bengal’s one and only prime minister of Pakistan, H. S. Suhrawardy. It was intolerable to Bhutto to allow such a “low-born” person to become Pakistan’s premier. The so-called deal proved to be a non-starter, talks failing after three days of discussion in early March. On March 7th, Mujib addressed a mammoth public rally at the Race Course ground in Dhaka. He declared to the throngs, “The struggle this time
is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Joi Bangla (Victory to Bengal).”

Yahya Khan postponed the National Assembly session, a miscarriage of democracy, which prompted a storm of street protests throughout East Pakistan, in turn leading to a countrywide general strike on March 3, Mujib again demanding that the President immediately transfer power to his party.

A total breakdown of the system and the breakup of Jinnah’s state were now only a short distance away. On March 7th, Mujib addressed a mammoth public rally at the Race Course ground in Dhaka. He declared to the throngs, “The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for independence. Joi Bangla (Victory to Bengal).”

Yahya Khan and Mujibur Rahman issued competing directives, the Bengalis displaying wall-to-wall non-violent disobedience to Yahya and devotion to Mujib.

Pakistan’s President came to Dhaka on March 16th for talks regarding the transfer of power. The Prime Minister joined them a few days later. Closed-door talks among the three leaders lasted until March 24th. The talks utterly failed and Yahya Khan secretly departed Dhaka in the evening of the 25th, leaving his toughest general, Tikki Khan, to commence the Army’s crackdown (called Operation Searchlight) on Bengali citizens, attacking Dhaka University, the Pikhana Headquarters of the East Pakistan Rifles, the Police Headquarters at Rajabagh, burning much of Dhaka’s food markets and small shops, murdering anyone from rickshaw drivers to women and children. That night and through the next morning an estimated 100,000 or more were killed and countless properties were destroyed.

As Zulfi Bhutto disembarked his plane in Karachi the morning of March 26, reporters asked him what the results of his talks with Mujib had been. “By the grace of God, Pakistan has been saved,” Bhutto replied. Of course, the opposite was true. The famous Bengali Indian writer and political observer, Nirad Chaudhuri, wrote about the election and the failed negotiations afterward that this episode “demonstrated the truth of the saying that in democratic politics the satisfaction of a pride is infinitely more important than the satisfaction of an interest.”

Over the next nine months, the mass killings were orchestrated by a cabal of five generals: Yahya Khan, Tikka Khan, Gen. Pirzada, the chief of staff, Gen. Umar Khan, the security chief, and Gen. Akbar Khan, the intelligence chief. Bhutto aligned his party to the Army on March 27th. After the first week of military action, Tikki Khan looked at the depopulation of the cities and towns and the flight of the intelligentsia and felt assured that the Bengalis were not fighters. But he calculated the response of the Mukti Bahini (Bengali Liberation Army). At first, it was a rag-tag guerrilla outfit. By June, the Bahini turned into a fighting force and relied on sabotage. Ultimately, with help of the superior Indian Army, a violent liberation struggle destroyed
That same day, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was again arrested by Pakistani troops. A message he had written, however, was smuggled to the population at large, declaring the independence of Bangladesh. “Dear Brothers and Sisters,” began the communication, “You are citizens of a free country... West Pakistan’s military force is engaged in a genocide in Bangla Desh....Allah is with us. The world public opinion is with us. Joi Bangla!” Mujib was held imprisoned by Pakistani troops; Yahya pushed for a military trial and argued for his execution. In turn, the Sheikh became a martyr on behalf of his Bengali guerrilla and civilian rebels.

The Nixon-Kissinger Tilt toward Pakistan

The Nixon Administration supported Pakistan’s rulers, particularly its military leadership. In the global rivalry between the world’s super powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—the U.S. backed Pakistan and the Russians backed India.

Ever since Pakistan had signed onto the CENTO and SEATO treaties and had opened a military airfield in Peshawar for America’s B-52s with atomic bombs and U-2 spy planes that surveilled China and the Soviet Union, Pakistanis were Washington’s South Asian surrogates. U.S. military aid began pouring in.

The Bangladesh crisis became a highly personalized affair. Beginning in December 1953 when he visited both India and Pakistan for the first time, then Vice President Nixon came back enthusiastic about the martial, militantly pro-West Pakistanis. In a 1956 speech in Manila, Nixon declared “It is only natural that we should feel closer to those who stand with us as allies.” Hopping to Karachi, overflying India on his second trip, the Veep added at that stop that “a government accepting Communist aid runs the risk of having a rope tied around his neck.” An ex-Pakistan diplomat told me the story of Citizen Nixon at a reception at the Malaysian Mission to the U.N. in 1963, Nixon shook hands with the guests. When he said hello to the Pakistani second secretary in attendance, he said, “I am a friend of Pakistan.” Upon leaving the affair, he repeated his previous statement, adding, “And I will always stand by Pakistan.”

Nixon preferred the military dictator, Yahya Khan, a short, fat, strutting, womanizing alcoholic who nonetheless and most importantly showed the President proper deference.

On the other hand, Nixon’s disdain for democratic India because of its refusal to support American policies in the Cold War and in the Vietnam War, and because he disliked its two most prominent prime ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, was a familiar and recurring state of mind in policy making quarters from the 1950s into the 1990s. In particular in 1971, President Nixon’s disdain for “The Lady” was an unclassified Washington secret.

Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs Joseph Sisco at a May staff meeting said that Indo-American relations could be “good” if only Mrs. Gandhi was not the Prime Minister. Flying on Air Force One in July 1971, a Republican Senator asked the President what he thought of the crisis in South Asia and (at the time) five and a half million refugees were crowded together on Indian territory, Nixon replied that he did not think much about it, it was only Indian propaganda that had created the tensions, which India would eventually pay for, that Indians were “irrational.” A month later, a source on the National Security Council told me that the President had warned at a meeting of top foreign policy agency heads that if war came to South Asia, India will have started it, that he would cut off all aid to India, and get on television announcing this and blaming the Indians for commencing hostilities. In August as war clouds were gathering, Secretary of State Rogers told Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Jha that “the Administration could not continue economic assistance to a nation that started a war.”
History demonstrated that Gandhi knew well the dynamics of the coming conflict. She understood the Bengali language, having studied music and other arts at Tagore’s rural Shantiniketan College, north of Calcutta. She spoke to Mujibur Rahman in his own tongue; they knew and liked each other, and had formed a quiet agreement based on her father’s 1962 promise in which India would be Bangladesh’s protector when a freedom struggle would break out in East Bengal. Zulfi Bhutto knew that she was close to the East Pakistan leader, yet he was blinded by his hate of the charismatic Bengali. Bhutto told Yahya that Mujib was “Indira’s puppet” before he flew to Dhaka in early March to try to persuade Mujib to accept his coalition plan.

The State Department and the National Security Council had ample descriptions of the Pakistani Army’s Dhaka massacre from official messages of firsthand horrors written by Archer Blood, the United States consul general in Dhaka covering all of East Pakistan, and his associates. Nixon, however, ignored all of Blood’s reports of genocidal activities by the Army, pleas for humanitarian aid, as well as urgings that the U.S. immediately stop its arms shipments to Pakistan.

True to his history and word, Nixon unabashedly sided with Pakistan. Besides personal predilections, he had a geopolitical reason, trying to normalize relations with Pakistan’s ally, the People’s Republic of China, to counter strategically the Soviet Union. While Bangladesh burned and its population fled in all directions, Kissinger flew to China via Pakistan as a prelude to Nixon’s flight to Beijing to announce recognition of the People’s Republic. As Kissinger told Nixon after returning from Beijing, “We don’t really have any choice. We can’t allow a friend of ours and China’s to get screwed in a conflict with a friend of Russia’s.” As a result, the American President refused to condemn Pakistan’s atrocities in East Pakistan or use his leverage with its ruler to stop the military’s genocidal violence, which was carried out with the help of U.S.-supplied tanks, other land army equipment, ammunition, and sophisticated aircraft, and commandeered equipment such as small trucks and jeeps from western non-governmental organizations such as CARE.

The process of action-reaction settled over South Asia. Pakistan reinforced its relationship with China, Bhutto signing the Sino-Pakistan Treaty of Friendship. Prime Minister Gandhi reacted, seeing the America-Pakistan-China bond as ominous; she envisioned a potential pincer strategy, aimed at India’s northern tier, including Kashmir, and the Gujurati and Maharastra region. Thus she launched her own search for international support, flying to Moscow that summer to appeal to the Kremlin for help and on August 9th she signed the 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, giving her the superpower cover she thought necessary as well as heavy military materials India would need before moving Indian Army troops into Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Gandhi also flew to Washington in early November to appeal to Nixon and Kissinger for help to feed and clothe the 10 million Bangladeshi refugees who by then ringed Calcutta, living in sewer pipes and the open air. Nixon told her to give Yahya more time to draft a new constitution for Pakistan. Rejected, she returned to New Delhi and gave Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, a Parsi, and his second in command Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora, a Sikh, the green light to move over the border from West Bengal to East Bengal to oust the Pakistan Army.

Bhutto went back to Chairman Mao and Chou En-lai to beg them for support, but they offered nothing. During the War, wanting to show strength to the USSR and buck up Pakistan, Nixon sent the nuclear-armed U.S. aircraft carrier Enterprise from the Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal,
ostensibly to “evacuate refugees.” The only result of this bullying gesture was to prod Gandhi to push India’s nuclear scientists, who had been working for about a decade to now work harder in order to build the country’s own atomic bombs, the first of which would be exploded under the Rajasthani desert three years later.

In short, the White House, much to the sheer anger and disappointment of the Senate, the House of Representatives, the media, and the American public, had adopted a futile posture of condemning the side that would obviously win the war and public opinion thought should win, cancelled aid to a country America’s leaders had argued needed help for an overwhelming humanitarian burden of 10 million refugees, and dispatched a carrier attack group to the waters of two massively populated countries: the newest independent country whose population would make it the eighth largest in the world and the largest democratic country in the world, presumably to threaten it, in support of a venal, bumbling, military dictatorship involved in suppressing the majority of its citizens.

The Pakistan Army unconditionally surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka on December 17 1971, leaving 93,000 prisoners of war in the hands of the Indo-Bangla forces. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, released from prison, flew to New Delhi and then to Dhaka, hailed by millions of jubilant Bengali as their first prime minister and “father-friend” (Bangabandhu) of the new nation of Bangladesh. The old Pakistan was dead.

The Opposition: The U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and the American Public

When the Pakistan tragedy commenced on March 25th, opposition to Nixon-Kissinger’s pro-Pakistan proclivities began forming slowly but surely. The first press report of the Pakistan crisis came to my attention at noon on March 26th. An Associated Press story said that mass killings had taken place in Dhaka; soon thereafter I called friends in the Senate Press Gallery to ask if they had received similar reports and two called back confirming the AP. I began a series of telephone calls to contacts at the NSC, the State Department, USAID, and two former New Delhi colleagues at the CIA. One of them cited a cable that had come in from our Consulate in Dhaka reporting eye-witness accounts, that the mowing down by the Army had been pre-planned, indeed pin-pointed -- clusters of Bengali Muslim and Hindu civilians, students, intelligentsia, and armed personnel. The word “genocide” tumbled out of my mouth to an NSC interlocutor; there was silence at the other end; then the person said that is an overused word, but because tensions had reached a fever pitch in Dhaka over the December 1970 election’s suppression, maybe I was on to something.

I reported all of this to Senator Frank Church, including briefing him on the historic relationship between Nixon and Pakistan. He told me to follow developments closely, which I did over the weekend and into the beginning of the next week. That Monday the Senator expressed outrage at the denial of democracy that had occurred in the recent national election, the inhumanity of the Pakistani praetorian guard, and the inevitability of another failed American foreign policy, wherein Pakistan would join Vietnam.

That night I got home quite late, but I told my wife Joan, that I instinctively believed that genocide had started to happen in East Pakistan, and we had to do everything we could to make sure the United States was not on the side of the Pakistani military junta.

I backstopped Senator Church over the next 13 months, meeting continuously a variety of informed,
influential people, preparing briefing papers and Senate floor statements, communicating daily between and among Senate and House personal offices plus the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committees and the House Appropriations Committee, arranging meetings with Executive branch officials, as well as officials from other governments, the United Nations, eye-witnesses from East Pakistan, and academic and think tank experts, drafting and advocating legislation (the Saxbe-Church amendment) to change U.S. policy, planned and arranged a Senate trip to India and the East Pakistan border, dealt directly with American and foreign journalists, gave speeches representing the Senator at public and academic forums, and encouraged citizens to lobby Capitol Hill.

From the opening salvos of the genocide by Pakistan’s Army against East Bengalis through the late recognition by the Executive branch of the freshly minted Bangladesh government, there were nearly 50 speeches and statements in the Senate chamber. Thirty-seven Senators sponsored the Saxbe-Church amendment. On the House of Representatives side, 36 Congressmen made speeches and 61 sponsored legislation led by Representative Neil Gallagher of New Jersey cutting off American arms and ammunitions to Pakistan.

Three legislators especially stood out: Senators Frank Church (D-ID) and William Saxbe (R-OH) made more than 20 statements each in the Senate chamber, and Church participated in an inordinate number of Senate Foreign Relations Committee briefings and hearings. The two solons visited India together during the Thanksgiving holiday of 1971. Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) played a very special role. He spoke 15 times on the Senate floor; he conducted a number of Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees hearings; he took an August trip to witness the refugees and then in February 1972 he visited the newly independent nation-state of Bangladesh.

From the start, Senator Church was skeptical of our large-scale subsidized arms aid program to Pakistan, indeed giving a floor speech on October 14, 1970, in which he condemned our latest sales of lethal weaponry of a squadron of F-104As, seven B-57s, 300 APCs, and other items. He told his Senate colleagues that through our arms transfers we had been “badly burned in the 1965 war between Pakistan and India” and we could be “burned again.” He knew the Nixon Administration was lying to the
Legislative branch about our current dealings with Rawalpindi and he knew about Nixon’s favoritism toward Pakistan, so he decided in the East Pakistan saga to load his Senate speeches with accounts by credible eye-witnesses and journalists on the spot. This meant a heavy dose of insertions into the daily Congressional Record of newspaper, magazine, and thoughtful analyses. For example, on May 18th, his statement “We must stop sending arms to Pakistan” contained 38 pages. On June 22nd, his statement on “Arms to Pakistan Revealed” consisted of 31 pages, and his statement of July 7, “The utter wrongness of our Pakistan policy” was reinforced with 68 pages of empirical data.

Each time the Congressional Record came out the next morning after one of these beefy submissions, I looked for the speech and the inserts, and was aghast at the space we had consumed. But these full statements achieved four goals - it informed the American public, it offset the White House’s propaganda, it gave encouragement and comfort to Bengalis working at the Pakistani Embassy in Washington that they had friends in the nation’s capital, and it set the stage for and gave impetus to a legislative-executive test of strength over the direction of policy. This issue would be a moral one, a human rights issue, an effort to try to stop backing the wrong horse in a civil war, a contest between idealists and realists in foreign policy.

Besides collecting information from my Administration sources and talking at length with foreign correspondents of major American newspapers, I received a constant stream of visitors from the Subcontinent as well as American academics. But it was an unusual group of firsthand observers who came to Washington in the spring and found their way to Capitol Hill. They were a dozen or so young yet accomplished American medical doctors who had been working at an USAID-sponsored research laboratory in East Pakistan to come up with anti-cholera regimes to overcome an epidemic of cholera sufferers. These well-trained, highly motivated individuals had immediate credibility when they spoke in Washington and they spoke clearly about the vast amount of destruction and death they had experienced since late March. They knew they were lucky to be alive.

I had been saying this to my wife and to them as well, especially Doctors Bucky Greenough, Jon E. Rohde, and David Nalin, that we needed to set up a central information house to garner grassroots support to pressure and persuade elected representatives on Capitol Hill to stop arms to Pakistan legislatively and to feed stories to the press. I knew firsthand from my experiences dealing with anti-Vietnam war legislation that Congress is more likely to reflect public sentiment than is the executive branch. Letters, telegrams, and telephone messages, had to be generated into Senate and House of Representatives offices so that they could know public sentiment. Personal meetings with the elected principal and/or his professional staff were even better. Follow up had to take place. Newspaper stories and opinion pieces plus television commentaries had to be stimulated for public consumption, especially in the home state and/or district, and for insertions into the Congressional Record.
Bengalis in the Pakistan Embassy, the newly arrived cholera experts, academics, and other South Asia visitors poured through our small row house at 313 A Street two blocks behind the Supreme Court in northeast Washington.

Joan, nursing our six-month old first baby Amy, hosted a steady stream of house guests, sometimes they were our overnight guests. The subject was ways to zero-in and arouse the American public about the folly of our White House policy. From these spontaneous seminars came the idea of establishing the Bangladesh Information Center, which Greenough, Nalin, and two activists, Anna Braun Tayler and Molhsin Siddique, founded, renting a small townhouse space on Seward Square on the northeast side of the Capitol Hill neighborhood. Later two very effective young men, David Weisbrod, a former Peace Corps Volunteer like myself and a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, and Kaiser Zaman, a highly personable and smart Bengali managed the office. Joan and several others were motivated, reliable associates and volunteers.

Professional Senate aides working on the crisis, in particular the extra effective Jerry Tinker and Dale DeHaan of the Kennedy Subcommittee on Refugees, Mike Gertner, Senator William Saxbe’s (R-OH) lawyer, myself, and assorted staffers associated with the House Foreign Affairs Committee benefitted from the Bangladesh Information Center. As Weisbrod wrote several years afterwards, “The Bangladesh Information Center as an organized advocate served a critical role in keeping the issue moving forward to the point where the Saxbe-Church amendment was ultimately passed.”

Anecdotes will demonstrate this point of effectiveness. As the Indo-Pak war raged, information came to the BIC that the Nixon Administration, against the law and contrary to its own public statements, was still supplying arms to Pakistan. I shared the information with the professional staff of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The BIC staff shared the information, including bills of lading listing the arms, spare parts, and material onboard the Padma in New York harbor and bound for Karachi with Tad Szulc, an award-winning New York Times reporter, who broke a front-page story along with photographs on June 22nd with the headline, “U.S. military goods sent to Pakistan despite ban.” Szulc also revealed documents that another Pakistani ship, the Sunderbans, had already sailed from New York six weeks earlier containing among its inventory parts for armored personnel carriers.

BIC advocates organized a demonstration to bring a halt to the loading of a Pakistani commercial ship docked in Baltimore Harbor. According to Dr. Nalin, who was deeply involved, “a flotilla of small boats and canoes tried to block” the vessel and “workers of the Longshoreman’s Association refused to load the ship.” The Quakers were arrested; the ship set sail, but the publicity and complicity of Nixon and Kissinger was on the front pages of newspapers and news magazines throughout the country and world.

From the beginning, Senators opposing acquiescing to the Bangladesh carnage favored cutting off arms to the Rawalpindi government and supported as well the liberation of Bangladesh. As indicated, Church jumped out in front to lead like-minded Senators. He was soon joined by key colleagues on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where Church was in the upper rankings on the Democratic side. In 1968 and 1969, the Committee had become the epicenter of opposition to U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Church regarded the Indochina war as not serving the country’s security interest, as did Senators J. William Fulbright (D-AK), the chairman, Mike Mansfield (D-MT), an expert on Asia and the Senate Majority Leader, John Sherman Cooper (R-KY), an aristocrat from Kentucky, a former ambassador to India under President Eisenhower, and who had teamed with Church three times on amendments restricting American military actions in Laos and Cambodia, and Clifford Case (R-NJ), another oppositional leader. Fulbright in particular saw the war as leading to less democracy in the United States. The Committee became the center of antagonism
Another Senator, though not on the Committee on Foreign Relations, would join these important solons. William Saxbe (R-OH) was a leading lawyer, legislator, and loyal Republican from the state of Ohio. The Administration had assumed he would be supportive of President Nixon's policy in favor of Pakistan in the crisis. However, he crossed over to the opposition due to the lobbying of his son's college roommate, Dr. Jon E. Rodhe, who had been working at the Dhaka Cholera Lab. This is an excellent example that just one individual can make a difference.

Saxbe and Church teamed up on an amendment to stop arms to Pakistan. Mike Gertner came to my house on a Sunday morning for brunch and amendment writing. It was an easy partnership. In late October 1971, Saxbe and Church and their wives and aides traveled to India to observe the refugee devastation from Calcutta to East Pakistan's messy border and to talk with Prime Minister Gandhi and her aides in New Delhi. I remember distinctly how shocked both Senators were mingling with the refugees. On the day of our departure, November 3rd, the Pakistani Air Force bombed points in Gujarat state; our aircraft was delayed at the Bombay International Airport, but the personnel knew that Pakistani Air Force jets could not reach the area. Nevertheless this was war. Saxbe and Church went home with new credibility on the issue and determined to pass their amendment.

By the spring, a different kind of potent legislator stepped forward to become an opposition leader. Once Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) became engaged, the lion did roar. He used his position as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees to bring the horrors occurring in East Pakistan and the Indian state of West Bengal to a wide swath of public attention around the world. As mentioned, Kennedy was ably served by Tinker, having lived in India as an academic researcher and where we had met at an American Embassy party in 1969, and DeHaan, who later became an U.N. official.

The Kennedy Subcommittee held several hearings on what Yahya Khan had wrought in trying to kill so many of his own citizens and dislocating so many more. It was these hearings and trips to India by Kennedy and his staff in August 1971, particularly the many photographs of the brother of President John F. Kennedy and Senator Robert Kennedy tramping through mud and misery and underfed infants in the sewer-pipe refugee camps located between the East Pakistan border and the outskirts of Calcutta, that highlighted the plight of displaced Bangladeshis and countered the bland and false information coming out of the executive branch in Washington and junta in Rawalpindi. Kennedy's persona gave voice through the airwaves of BBC, the Free Bengal radio Sweadhin Bangla Betar Kendro, and All India Radio. In the Subcommittee's report, "Crisis in South Asia," he (Kennedy) stated he had bore witness to "one of the most appalling tides of human misery in modern times."

Nixon and Kissinger sustained their opposition to any restrictions on their hold on the reigns of executive power and did what they could in pressuring Senators to keep delaying the passage of legislation. The Pakistan government did the same. I offer here two personal anecdotes concerning this fierce opposition. In December, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs Joseph Sisco called on Church in his private office. The Senator asked me to sit in and take notes. Sisco talked and talked about how important Pakistan was to the United States and our nascent relationship with China. At one point, he stopped his arguments and looked at me, pointing his finger, and said to Church, "And he's a fifth column for India!" Church admonished Sisco for such a McCarthy-esque accusation. I just shook my head, but kept quiet, which was hard to do.

Coinciding with the Sisco incident, the Government of Pakistan through its controlled press mentioned me by name, stating that I was "an enemy of the State of Pakistan." Great honor being known by the enemies one makes, indeed!
It is important to put these incidents into context. All along, Nixon had blamed India for stoking the outbreak of the Bengali rebellion in March. By December, Kissinger was blaming India for the outbreak of war. These talking points were cover for the under the table support that the Administration was providing Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Saxbe-Church amendment in the Senate and the Gallagher amendment in the House of Representatives became one and signed into law in December, which the President then violated by continuing to keep arms and ammunition flowing to Pakistan.

This was another example of Washington, it is never over until it is over!

The Press

It was the news media that brought the lies and illegalities to the public's attention, but one journalist in particular should be applauded: my friend Jack Anderson and his two legmen, Les Whitten and Brit Hume. It was Anderson who opened the lid to shine sunlight onto the policy secrets of Nixon and his National Security Adviser.

When Pakistan launched its surprise attack on India on December 3rd, world opinion was almost universal in its condemnation of the aggression and Nixon informed congressional leaders that the U.S. would maintain “absolute neutrality” and would not become “physically involved in any way.” In fact, the President secretly plotted to rush arms to the belligerent state. Circumventing the legislation, Kissinger came up with a scheme to have intermediaries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey supply the weaponry, skirting the law and avoiding visible American fingerprints. “I like the idea,” Nixon responded. “Have it done one step away” so that if the truth leaked out, “we can have it denied.”

The State Department was against this maneuver, warning that third-party transactions were illegal. Nixon proceeded anyway, issuing a “directive” that provided Pakistan as we have seen above with covert shipments of our fighter jets and other arms. Kissinger acknowledged the risk the White House was taking. “We are standing alone against our public opinion, against our whole bureaucracy at the very edge of legality.”

Under these circumstances, in an open democratic society, Washington works its ways.

Unbeknownst to Kissinger, a bureaucrat upset at this “edge of legality” manipulation became an informant of Jack Anderson, a nationwide columnist with over 130 newspaper outlets. As reporter Mark Felstein has written, Anderson met the government official in the aisle of a Dart Drugs Store in Washington amidst the Christmas cards display and whispered to the columnist the Administration had just dispatched a navy armada to the Bay of Bengal near Bangladesh in what could set off a “nuclear powder keg” between the two superpowers. The 7th Fleet task force was made up of eight warships carrying 100 fighter bombers, 2,000 Marines, and nuclear weapons, all in the name of rescuing American citizens. At the next meeting in a Washington alley, the informant gave Anderson manila envelopes filled with classified documents.

White House tape recordings of these days in December reveal that Nixon wanted to put a “little pressure” on India and Kissinger wanted to give the Soviets “a warning” and recommended that the Administration “brazen it up” to make their “bluff” sound more convincing. The two top officials agreed there was “a high possibility” that the aggressive American maneuvers would ultimately fail, but the National Security Advisor said, “(A)t least we’re coming off like men” and President of the United States added that the policy would demonstrate that “the man in the White House was tough.”
In his columns over the next month, Anderson exposed Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy deceit in the nine-month Bangladesh crisis and the short Indo-Pakistan war. Anderson quotes Kissinger admitting, “The president does not want to be even handed …. I am getting hell every half hour from the president that we are not being tough enough on India.” And in the most infamous line of the whole tragic saga, Anderson revealed Kissinger uttering, “He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan.” News outlets around the world followed Anderson’s lead and published lengthy excerpts from his pilfered documents. What followed were mocking headlines and stories about Nixon and Kissinger. “Tilt! Tilt! Tilt! like an old-fashioned pinball machine,” one journalist wrote. The White House response was to claim that Jack Anderson had endangered national security by publishing the documents. Indicating that he still had not understood the enormous human tragedy that had occurred on his watch, Nixon said the Anderson revelations were “one of the most serious incidents” of the entire India-Pakistan War. He went on, “The leak came as a shock …. From a diplomatic point of view, the leak was embarrassing; from the point of view of national security, it was intolerable.”

Despite all of the Administration’s distorted and reckless and risky efforts, the Pakistan Army was quickly overrun by India’s superior forces. Two months after instigating the war, Pakistan surrendered in a humiliating rout. Eastern Pakistan became the independent state of Bangladesh. General Yahya, who was in a drunken stupor throughout much of the fighting, resigned in disgrace and spent the next five years under house arrest. As we know today, over four decades later, the shrunken country Pakistan still is not functional or a democracy; it is haunted by military coups, an outsized and unmanaged intelligence service, political executions, corruption beyond the charts. On the other side of South Asia, Bangladesh is functional, its economy most notably enjoying the fruits of GDP real growth and a pluralistic polity.

The triangular forces of power in Washington - executive, legislative, media - in the debate over policy, functioned during the Bangladesh crisis, but at a cost. The noted American historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., wrote, “By outlining the ‘tilt’ policy only behind closed doors, the Nixon Administration deprived Congress and the electorate of the opportunity - one might say the right - to discuss President Nixon’s pro-Pakistan program on its merits.” This is an unpardonable sin in a democracy, in this case rectified to some extent by an anonymous, disgusted, and courageous bureaucrat, with the help of Jack Anderson.

In the end, President Nixon was left embarrassed, angry, and convinced of the hopelessness of attempting to play a constructive role in South Asia. America’s interests in the region had been very badly served.

Thomas A. Dine has had over a half century career on the front lines of American foreign policy - on Capitol Hill, in the executive branch, with non-governmental organizations, written extensively, and lived in the Philippines, India, and the Czech Republic. His focus has been South Asia, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.
Progress of Bangladesh in last four decades defied prediction of all naysayers and dooms day prophets. A country that started forty years ago on a low income comparable with the bottom ten of world’s nations is now comfortably poised to come out of the cusp of least developed nationhood and become a middle income nation in the next decade. Despite a negative forecast on our future economic development and frequent battering by nature, the resilient people of Bangladesh have found a way to forge ahead. They found leaders from among themselves who understood their needs, stood by them in times of their misery, and helped them get out of it. Entrepreneurs came out of the woodwork to provide for goods and services that the people needed, and then they found a way to find a market for these beyond the confines of their own country. If Bangladesh is a country to be counted among the nations that have shown resilience in every down turn, it is because of its people. If Bangladesh has achieved any recognition for its 40 plus years of growth, it is because of its people. If Bangladesh has any reason to look forward to a future even brighter, it is for its people.

Over the past four decades, Bangladesh has made some of the biggest gains in the basic condition of people’s lives ever seen anywhere. Between 1980 and 2011, Bangladesh’s Human Development Index increased from 0.303 to 0.500, an increase of 65.0% or average annual increase of about 1.6%. Our literacy rate has trebled over last four decades; we have led the developing world in growth in female literacy. Our exports have boomed; we are now the second largest exporter of manufactured garments after China. ‘Made in Bangladesh’ is a brand name that we can proudly wear as a badge of honor. Brave new community leaders ushered in groundbreaking ways to fight poverty, raise literacy, increase rural income and provide safe water and sanitation nationwide.

Let us look at the progress so far in some detail. The country that once bought millions of tons of food grains to feed its people has not only filled the food gap, it has the potential to become a food surplus country now. From a meager production of less than 12 million metric tons in 1974, our total production last year was nearly 35 million metric tons. That is a whopping 300 per cent increase in less than four decades. The other extraordinary growth has been in the textile front. From a paltry export of less than a billion dollar in 1976-77, the country now makes nearly 24 billion dollars a year by exporting manufactured textile goods. All these hefty increases came from the people, the working people of Bangladesh. And all of this has helped to make the country’s gross income from a meager 30 billion dollars
in the seventies to nearly 130 billion dollars now. Although our overall literacy rate is still low at 50%, our female literacy rate made a quantum leap from less than 30% three decades ago to nearly 80% now for women between 15-25. Over the same period child mortality fell by two-thirds and maternal mortality fell by three-quarters. It now stands at 194 deaths per 100,000 births. In 1990 women could expect to live a year less than men; now they can expect to live two years more.

If the trends in both economic and human development of the last 20 years continue at least at the same level, Bangladesh is forecast to come out of the least developed country bracket to the middle income category in the next five to 10 years. The imponderable question is can or will this forecast hold?

The main factors contributing to the impressive growth in health, education, and our economy in past two decades have been co-operative efforts of government, NGOs, and donor agencies in health and education sectors, a stable macroeconomic environment, continued growth in crop production, huge expansion in apparel industry and worker’s remittances, and meteoric rise in micro financing. The last factor also played a large role in the reduction of poverty particularly at village level.

In health and education, work by the government, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies has been at the root of raising literacy, in particular, the female population of Bangladesh. The efforts of NGOs have also been extended to making healthcare more accessible to the poor in the country. According to analysts, the NGOs have played a pioneering role in addressing the government and, in some cases; market failures as far as access to healthcare and education are concerned.

The agricultural sector in Bangladesh has performed rather miraculously, impacted hugely by boro crop aided by irrigation, and partly due to absence of natural calamities in the past few years. We have achieved a remarkable success in attaining a near self-sufficiency in the production of rice, the staple food of the nation. The other significant catalyst in reducing poverty

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Sources: World Bank; UNICEF; WHO

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has been the rise of microfinance initiated by such institutions as Grameen Bank, BRAC, and other NGOs. This has generated thousands of self-employed entrepreneurs in the countryside. Remittances from Bangladeshis employed overseas have also played a key role in uplifting the rural economy.

The ready made garments industry is another remarkable growth area where a large number of people, mostly women and the poor, have found work in the urban areas. The industry, which began in the low end of employment spectrum, now engages over million workers majority of who are females.

All of these have been helped by a stable macroeconomic environment buttressed by sound fiscal policies, market reforms, and investment incentives.

Forecasting development prospects of Bangladesh in a single year is like forecasting harvesting prospects of a single crop in a single season. Just as it is easy to say that barring any catastrophic event such as drought or flood the crop that has been sown will yield the expected harvest in a given season, it is fairly easy to say that the conditions that have helped Bangladesh to achieve the progress in last two decades will not disappear in the coming year or two. What is more difficult is to speculate on sustained progress of the country for the next five years and more.

To begin with three areas that expose our vulnerability to sustained development are our poor and outdated infrastructure, poor public sector management, and weaknesses in private investment, in particular foreign investment. Obviously, these are the priority areas that will need our focus and attention in the coming years.

Our physical infrastructure is perhaps the poorest in all of South Asia. Despite years of increased government spending on new roads and highways over the past decades less than 10% of our roads are paved compared with nearly 50% in India and more than 60% in Pakistan. A major highway project is way behind schedule because of implementation problems. Our biggest bridge project—the Padma bridge—is still awaiting financing. Our ports badly need modernization and improvement.

We have currently a total generation capacity of about 6,800 MW; however, no more than 50 percent of the additional capacity is normally in active use because of closure of power plants and underutilization of their total generation capacity. We once took pride in our gas energy sources and their reported reserves; however, the situation has reversed with dwindling gas energy and reserves. Between February 2011 and February 2012 the rise in supply was 5.6 percent, far short of the annual growth in demand in recent years. The gas supply in last three years has marginally increased at an average growth of 7.4 percent. At the same time, demand for gas increased by 12.3 per cent resulting a yawning demand-supply gap. Constricted access to gas supply is obviously holding back new investments.

Our public sector management, which incidentally is responsible for the largest portion of the economy, is probably the weakest in all of South Asia. As a report by an international aid agency
once observed our public sector has its pockets of excellence, but collectively its performance leaves a lot to be desired. Lack of qualified and trained human resources in our public service continue to plague the country’s public sector management and implementation of development programs. A major improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of the government is needed if Bangladesh has to sustain growth, reduce poverty, and manage development opportunities and challenges of the future.

Private investment in our economy is still the lowest in comparison with our neighbors. Foreign direct investment was about $768 million in 2011 dropping from $913 million the previous year. We are hoping that this year it will cross $1 billion, but only if the energy supply shows some positive improvement.

Despite these drawbacks and negative aspects that our economy faces, the short term prospects of continuing the current pace of growth are good. Experts opine that high rate of growth of past five years may not be achieved going forward mostly due to exogenous reasons, but it is still expected to be around 6% this year. The economy will not have very robust growth but it will not slip backward either provided we take the necessary steps to prevent any slippage.

To keep this rate of growth and the economy in motion there are several areas that the government will have to give priorities and pay maximum attention. These are higher investments in physical infrastructure, power and energy supply, and substantial improvement in Annual Development Plan (ADP) implementation for more efficient aid utilization.

The center piece of physical infrastructure investment should be Padma Bridge, and resolution of all issues related to its financing. The bridge is a major step toward economic development of roughly one fourth of Bangladesh covering the entire south west region. This will open avenues for a comprehensive development of the area that will eventually contribute to accelerated growth of GDP of the nation as a whole. Sooner we can begin the project faster will be the growth of our economy. Along with this vital scheme other projects that serious attention are completion of all major highways project including Chittagong-Dhaka four lane highway, and improvement of export infrastructure in two major ports.

Equal priority will need to be given to overcome the energy shortage gap, both in electric power and natural gas. As experts have observed this is one of the major impediments to private investment in Bangladesh. In spite of new addition to power supply the demand-supply gap during the crop sowing season is estimated to be 2,181 MW as against 1,965 MW three years ago (FY2009). Investment in additional power supply to meet this gap will have to be made. And to arrange for this additional power supply sources we have to invest in projects to tap our natural gas reserves.

Our Annual Development Program is a vital platform for inviting and attracting foreign financing. In a sense we showcase our development agenda through this program. But year after year we have shown a weakness in our implementation capacity even though we have increased the size of the program. It is not that we have failed to achieve all our targets; we have grown impressively in our economy and social development indicators with investment made through our Annual Development Program. But we need to do better. According to a recent report ADP last year recorded lower than targeted growth during July-January period of the current fiscal year. The lower than targeted expenditure in ADP has led to lower than planned use of foreign assistance. Low aid utilisation has compelled the government
to consider downsizing the ADP.

Obviously we need to change the direction. First and foremost step in this regard is adopting a more dynamic approach to development planning that takes into consideration the absorptive capacity of each sector. Second will be reforms in the institutions and government agencies that are charged with implementing the development program. This includes delegation of decision making and financial powers to project implementing units. Lastly, bringing reforms in the procurement process and ensuring transparency and accountability in the process is an imperative.

Our development partners as well as our own planners have reflected on the challenges that we face in building our economy for years, and many recommendations have been made to address the problems. But like our projects in development, the implementation of these recommendations has been slow. The recommendations primarily relate to improvement in the quality of our public sector management not only with good planning but also equipping ourselves well with resources implement these plans and oversee them. Some of these include proper vetting of the selected projects, allocation of resources based on priority, streamlining the responsibilities among different institutions such as Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, and the line ministries, devolution of decision making, and further streamlining of the procurement process to make it speedy, efficient, and transparent. The recommendations have also been made for significant restructuring of government and reform of local government institutions to create a more devolved system that operates with incentives for efficient behaviour at all levels.

Our Development Programs are well intentioned and to the extent we can these are resourced from earnings of our people and assistance from our foreign friends. We have just concluded forty years of our nationhood fighting odds, but we have survived and survived well. We should look forward to just not another year or another decade of progress and prosperity, but many decades to come. But we can only do this if we equip ourselves well. This will depend on how we manage ourselves in the coming years using the experience of last forty years learning from the best as well as the worst. To avoid the pitfalls we have to maintain our macroeconomic stability as well as political stability. Our economic management has so far been pragmatic, and we can expect this to continue in near term. However, our long term sustainability will also largely depend on how we manage our political future. Given the records of our achievement despite adversities and challenges we can reasonably assume that the country will continue to grow both economically and politically in 2013 and beyond if we all work together.

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Bangladesh’s economic and development gains since 2000 expand the strategic and economic opportunities for the United States in South Asia and East Asia. This growth and recent achievements in the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship, along with the political opening in neighboring Myanmar, create together the conditions for a new partnership to establish geographically uninterrupted and new political, trade and infrastructure ties between South and East Asia. If they choose to accelerate their partnership, American and Bangladeshi policy-makers can position Bangladesh as a bridge between the two Asias.

For the United States and Bangladesh to realize this unique opportunity requires even deeper partnership between the two countries. Already, the last four years have marked a new era in the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship. After a May 2012 visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the two countries held in November 2012 the first U.S.-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue, establishing a strategic partnership between the countries on a range of issues from security to development.

The existence of regularized, senior-level dialogue marks critical progress that advances the interests of both nations. This accomplishment, though, only begins to scratch the surface of the possibilities. Today, there are still more unrealized opportunities in U.S.-Bangladesh relations than realized ones. Indeed, Bangladesh’s economic growth and the shifting international political dynamics in Asia create the conditions for a deeply consequential partnership over the coming decades.

The key elements are in place - committed governments building mutually advantageous partnerships across a host of issues, complementary national interests in better linking South Asia and Southeast Asia, and an economic growth in Bangladesh that creates new prosperity for its people and new markets for American companies. However, for the potential to be realized, both the United States and Bangladesh must actively tend to...
their growing relationship and build on the cooperation already achieved. For Bangladesh, this means fostering the conditions for its further economic growth and, for the United States, it means remaining a steadfast partner over the mid- and long-term.

A partnership for prosperity

Despite the global economic downturn, growth in Bangladesh has continued. Averaging six percent since 2001, economic growth in Bangladesh has significantly decreased poverty - less than a third of Bangladeshis live on less than $1.25 a day now, compared to 57 percent in 1991. This has led to a net reduction of more than 15 million in the absolute number of Bangladeshis living in poverty over this period (from 60 million to 45 million), though the country’s population has grown by half to 150 million.

Through this growth, Bangladesh has made significant strides toward meeting a number of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the United Nations Development Programme, there has been notable success in health, reducing maternal mortality (with a 40 percent decrease between 2001 and 2010) and reducing childhood mortality (with a two-thirds decrease between 1990 and 2010, Bangladesh received a 2010 United Nations Award for achievements in this MDG.)

Thirty million Bangladeshis now count themselves in the middle
class, a number that will certainly grow over the coming decades. As Bangladesh seeks to become a middle-income economy by 2021, this group can be expected to continue to grow. Observing this trend in the New York Times in April 2012, Asia Development Bank economist Zahid Hossain found that “[d]omestic demand is growing and becoming an important driver of economic activity.”

Foreign firms are seizing this opportunity. On Foreign Direct Investment flows, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development’s 2012 World Investment Report ranked Bangladesh 16th of 74 recipient countries, receiving $1.13 billion in investment. This was a record for Bangladesh, a recent return for investment after an uptick and then downturn in the mid-2000s.

A December 2011 report by consulting firm McKinsey & Company described Bangladesh as the “sourcing country of choice” in its most important export industry, for ready-made garments. Said the report, “In the last 15 years, Bangladesh’s share of apparel exports to Europe and the US more than doubled, securing Bangladesh’s No. 3 position among importers to the European Union 15 and the No. 4 position among US importers ... Bangladesh offers two main ‘hard’ advantages - price and capacity.” Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan researchers have also named Bangladesh an economy to watch for foreign investors.

Despite these many achievements, significant gaps persist. Infrastructure, from roadways to international connectivity by air, land and sea, is limited. Access to reliable electricity is a major concern for businesses - the last World Bank Doing Business Report assessed Bangladesh as last of the 185 countries it measured on the ease of getting electricity. Labor conditions have sparked unrest - according to the New York Times, “representatives from 12 major brands and retailers, alarmed by the rising labor unrest, [last year] prodded the Bangladeshi government to address wage demands.”

According to the World Bank, trade practices also leave room for improvement. “Despite the trade liberalization reforms initiated in 1990s,” it found, “Bangladesh is still saddled with one of the least liberal trade policy regimes in the world ... Bangladesh faces a more favorable market access in developed markets because of its LDC status, but is yet to fully exploit this opportunity.”

On Bangladesh’s development record, large-scale poverty persists, education participation is not yet approaching MDG targets, and according to USAID, 40 percent of the population is undernourished and 20 percent of Bangladeshis are severely malnourished. Forty-three percent of children under five years of age suffer from moderate to severe stunting.

Bangladesh and the United States recognize and are responding together to these challenges. Bangladesh is the only Asian nation to partner with the United States on the three Presidential-level development initiatives - Feed the Future, the Global Climate Change initiative and the Global Health Initiative.

Focusing on the south of Bangladesh, the Feed the Future to expand food security will seek, according to USAID, “to help an estimated 879,000 vulnerable Bangladeshi women, children and family members-mostly smallholder farmers-escape hunger and poverty. More than 371,000 children will be reached with services to improve their nutrition and prevent stunting and child mortality.” The Global Climate Change Initiative works across Bangladesh on issues from biodiversity to increasing the use of renewable energy sources. The Global Health Initiative seeks to increase the effective use of family planning, expand the use of integrated population, health and nutrition services, and strengthen the health system in Bangladesh.

Other programs also help Bangladesh build the conditions for wider and deeper prosperity. For
example, the recent launch of the Edward M. Kennedy Center in Dhaka offers new leadership training and civic education, as well as human-rights programming to Bangladeshis. With the aspiration “to engage, inspire, connect, and empower citizens of all ages to better themselves, their communities, and our world,” the Center traces the long history of U.S. engagement in Bangladesh, from Senator Kennedy’s visit to Dhaka in 1972.

Together, this assistance and the economic trends visible in Bangladesh underscore great opportunity for U.S. firms and indicate that U.S. Government efforts to support economic growth in Bangladesh are worthwhile investments not only from a humanitarian standpoint, but in U.S. commercial and foreign policy interests. Analysts in their respective fields often study private-sector investment, trade facilitation and development assistance as separate efforts—because they advance different goals and interests, involve different actors with different motives, and because governments organize around each differently.

However, if they’re successful, the outcomes of these disparate efforts align and they are mutually supportive. Together, this set of investments will grow Bangladesh’s economy and the United States’, creating new economic opportunities for both.

Counted together, U.S. private-sector investment and development assistance will provide at least $2 billion to Bangladesh over the next five years. With an agreement to lower tariffs, one could effectively add a few hundred million dollars a year more.

Of the $2 billion in such investments, about half will be in U.S. development assistance. Over the next five years, in a time of leaner budgets for the U.S. Government, USAID plans to spend almost $1 billion -- $922 million -- in Bangladesh. This is a critical investment, and can be expected to play an important role in realizing the new opportunities in the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship.

Today, there is a pivotal opportunity to better connect East Asia and South Asia - and neighboring Bangladesh and Myanmar are at the center of this shift.

Leveraging the strategic value of deepening U.S.-Bangladesh relations

While economic growth creates important openings in trade and development for the United States, the opportunities to advance U.S. strategic interests in Bangladesh receive less attention, but have even greater potential. Today, there is a pivotal opportunity to better connect East Asia and South Asia - and neighboring Bangladesh and Myanmar are at the center of this shift.

South Asia has for decades been left out of East Asia-focused regional integration. Rated as the least economically integrated region in the world, less developed economically than most of Northeast and Southeast Asia, and subject to violent internal conflict in each country, this is perhaps not surprising. However unsurprising, this lack of integration slows economic development, decreases trade with the United States, undermines the adoption of global norms, and perpetuates a political geography that owes more to the colonial and Cold War eras than both millennia of history and the current era of growing trade and political ties across the East Asia-South Asia divide. Moreover, the most challenging potential drivers of conflict - water, territory, maritime security, terrorism, proliferation, climate change, migration, human and other illicit trafficking - all cross the East Asia-South Asia “boundary” and are increasingly recognized by governments in the region as requiring a coordinated response.

Connecting South Asia to East Asia should be a core goal of America’s leaders and diplomats. Demography, economic potential, historic ties and geopolitics, though, all point toward a rising importance for South Asia in the 21st century. The influence of India on the world stage grows, as does its economic and cultural impact around the world. It may become the world’s largest economy.
by the end of century. Bangladesh itself seeks to continue recent economic growth by building trade ties across the Bay of Bengal. Managed or not, the evolution of South Asia will therefore have strong effects across all of Asia - and, in America’s Pacific Century, on the United States.

If a major accomplishment of post-Cold War U.S. diplomacy was to recognize the changing geography of international relations by expanding NATO, today, a similarly unique confluence of events creates the opportunity to expand what Washington often calls “Asia” to include South Asia. Growth in Bangladesh and the opening of Burma create the conditions for geographically uninterrupted and new political, trade and infrastructure ties from India through all of South, Southeast and Northeast Asia.

The Way Forward

Cooperation between the United States and Bangladesh can pay great dividends for both. There are economic opportunities that can create jobs for Americans and Bangladeshis, and development gains that can assist Bangladesh’s efforts to become a middle-income economy and build American soft power in Bangladesh and beyond.

There are also significant strategic opportunities that advance both countries’ national interests - in particular, to work together to position Bangladesh and Myanmar as an economically vibrant bridge between South and East Asia.

These opportunities are in keeping with both American and Bangladeshi values. As Gower Rizvi, adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, put it last year in a Daily Star op-ed:

“The two countries are committed to plural democracy, diversity, secularism and tolerance; a robust civil society as a seedbed of democracy; and an uncompromising attachment to the values of inalienable rights and freedom. Based on these values the two partners have worked shoulder to shoulder in many international fora and have fought together, along with other countries of the United Nations, for preserving international peace and to prevent oppression, discrimination, and violation of human rights.”

Despite common values, success is not inevitable. The benefit of the opportunities described here can only be realized through significant commitments on both sides.

In Bangladesh, continued investment and reform are necessary to improve the business environment, expand practices of good governance, protect workers and build the infrastructure that will support an economic expansion. Through sustained commitment to these tenets, Bangladesh can build the stable environment that will allow it to realize its aspirations to become a middle-income country by 2021.

Bangladesh must continue building the momentum toward greater openings to its neighbors. With the improvement in relations with India under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina...
and a precedent-breaking November 2012 trip by leaders of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party to Delhi, it may be possible to decrease barriers to cooperation with India irrespective of the political cycle in Bangladesh. Bilateral challenges with Myanmar, including the status and treatment of Rohingya refugees, must also be resolved.

From its side, the United States must also take a fresh look at its efforts in Bangladesh. It can take three additional actions to deepen the relationship.

First, an area for particular focus should be U.S. tariffs. According to Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Akramul Qader, Bangladesh pays $600 million in tariffs to the United States each year. By contrast, as noted above, U.S. development assistance to Bangladesh is in the range of $200 million.

Revisiting this tariff level, mostly affecting the garment industry - which, as noted above, is high-opportunity for Bangladesh and the United States - is an important idea worthy of further consideration. According to Sanchita Saxena of the University of California, Berkeley, in the New York Times, “studies have shown that extending duty-free access to South Asian goods would have negligible costs, yield huge benefits for Bangladesh’s economy and have minimal negative impact on African exports.”

Second, the United States should seek to engage South Asians in a dialogue on water the way it has with the Lower Mekong Initiative. Indian expert Brahma Chellaney reports in his Water: Asia’s New Battleground that Bangladesh’s water dependency ratio - that is, the percentage of its water resources dependent on the inflow of river and aquifer waters from across its borders - is 91.3 percent.

Third, given the attention, the Administration should consider offering a visit of President Obama to Bangladesh if recent progress continues in earnest. There could be multiple benchmarks - a successful election in January 2014, progress in regional integration and decreases to the impediments to doing business. Such a visit would raise the relationship to yet another higher level.

Conclusion

The recent new depth in the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship creates the conditions for both countries to realize important strategic and economic opportunities. Bangladesh can serve as a bridge between South and East Asia, if American and Bangladeshi policy-makers take their hard work to date further. Bangladesh must foster the conditions for its further economic growth and the United States must continue engagement over the mid- and long-term, despite the many other demands on its resources and focus. If both persist, the results will be nothing short of a redrawing of the map of Asia, with Bangladesh in a key, central role.

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Bangladesh, termed by Henry Kissinger as “the basket case” has moved forward, in several sectors especially in health, at a rate which can easily be termed as remarkable. The country has made considerable progress in improving reproductive, maternal, and child health in the last 20 years and is now considered to be on track to reach Millennium Development Goals 4 (reduction of under-5 mortality by two thirds) and 5 (reduce maternal mortality ratio by three quarters and achieve access to reproductive health).

WOMEN’S HEALTH

Maternal Mortality: Preliminary data from analysis of national maternal mortality surveys in 2001 and 2010 show that maternal mortality fell from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010, a 40% decline. This rate of decline was an average of about 5.5% per year\(^1\). There has been a decline in the direct causes of maternal deaths – hemorrhage, eclampsia, abortion and obstructed labor, with deaths from hemorrhage and eclampsia remaining the major direct causes of mortality, representing 31% and 20% of all deaths respectively in 2010. Indirect obstetric deaths also rose during this period to 35% of all maternal deaths\(^2\).

The decline in mortality suggest that there has been a change in care seeking behavior with more women choosing facilities for delivery and seeking services for managing obstetric complications. The data show the proportion of women delivering at a health facility increased from 9% in 2001 to 23% in 2010, which was primarily due to an increase in private sector facility deliveries. But a significant proportion of women still continue to deliver at home. Delivery with a Skilled Birth Attendant doubled from 12.2% in 2001 to 26.5% in 2010, with most of the deliveries taking place in facilities. More women sought care for obstetric complications during this period.

1. UN inter-agency maternal mortality estimates 1990-2010, WHO;
complications, rising from 53% in 2001 to 68% in 2010. This included seeking care either at home or in facilities, purchasing medicines from pharmacies. The proportion of women with some secondary education or greater increased by 18% within the cohort while the proportion of mothers with no education halved between 2001 and 2010. And of course, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) fell from 3.2 to 2.5 between 2001 and 2010, a 22% decline, also resulting in a decline in births to older mothers and high parity births, both of which are associated with higher maternal mortality.\(^3\)

There has also been an improvement to access to health with an additional 132 Union Health Centers (UHCs) and 1,500 Union Health and Family Welfare Centers (UHFWC) upgraded to provide basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care added in 2010 to the existing 59 district hospitals and 60 MCWCs offering comprehensive obstetric and neonatal care services (EmONC)\(^4\) in 2000. A program to reduce the financial barriers to care through a maternal health voucher scheme for pregnant women was introduced in 2007 and is now operational in 46 upazillas covering over 182,000 pregnant women. This scheme is said to have improved access to and increased utilization of facility based services.\(^5\)

**Fertility:** Bangladesh has achieved impressive declines in its fertility levels. This decline was most marked in the 1970s and 1980s. Between the 2007 and 2011 BDHS there has been almost a 15 percent decline in the total fertility rate, from 2.7 to 2.3 children per woman on average and 52% of couples use a modern contraceptive method (BDHS 2011, NIPORT 2012). These national averages mask considerable sub-national variations - fertility is lowest in Khulna division (1.9 births per woman), followed by Rajshahi and Rangpur at 2.1 births per woman. Sylhet and Chittagong, still have high fertility - 3.1 births per woman and 2.8 births per women, respectively. One of the expected outcomes of the current Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Development Program (HPNSDP) is to reduce fertility to 2.0 births per woman by 2016\(^6\). The districts under Rajshahi and Khulna divisions, have already attained replacement level fertility, with five districts already experiencing below the replacement level (1.8 to 2.0 children per woman), whereas the districts under the Sylhet and Chittagong divisions have fertility levels of one child on average above the replacement level of about 2.1 children per woman. This corresponds with the geographical distribution of contraceptive prevalence rates for modern methods, which are also lower in the majority of the districts under the Sylhet and Chittagong divisions.\(^7,8\)

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5. ibid
8. Population, Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Bangladesh: Towards Policy Convergence; Policy Note, South Asia Region, World Bank ( draft)
Studies on Bangladesh’s rapid fertility transition suggest family planning programs and the use of FP in the community comes out as one of the most important – if not the most important – factors in the fertility decline in Bangladesh between 1975 and 2007. Fertility levels are strongly linked to the use of family planning services. Until mid-1990s, TFR declined rapidly, largely due to a rapid increase in the use of FP service. This increase in FP use and decline infertility was mainly motivated by strong political commitment, improved method mix, introduction of Menstrual Regulation (MR), introduction of financial incentives in the FP program, increased community based demand generation activities, service delivery at the door steps, strong involvement of NGOs and communities and functional integration of MCH and FP services at the upazilla level and below.

From the mid-90s to early 2000 the decline in TFR slowed down, mainly due to a shift from door step delivery to clinic based service delivery and decrease in the use of long acting and permanent methods (IUD and sterilization). The further decline in fertility from the early 2000s, was mainly due to improved education, particularly for women, and significant improvements in pregnancy related services availability and accessibility. The fertility decline was in the 1970s and 1980s and the maternal mortality decline was between 2000-2010 – indicating that fertility decline was followed by mortality decline.

CHILD HEALTH:

Infant mortality has declined by 51% over the last 18 years, while child mortality and under-5 mortality have declined by 78 and 60%, respectively, over the same period. As under-5 mortality continues to decline, Bangladesh is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4 target of 48 deaths per 1,000 live births by the year 2015 and has received the United Nations MDG Award in 2009. It should be noted that Sylhet has the highest mortality rates for all mortality indicators except child mortality. Deaths in the neonatal period have however been slower to decline than those for older children, falling 38% during the same period, from 52 to 32 per 1,000 live births. Neonatal deaths now represent approximately 60% of all child deaths. But Bangladesh has made more progress in reducing neonatal deaths than most low-income countries. Over the last decade, extensive changes have occurred in health policy related to newborn care, including a National Neonatal Health Strategy. Civil society, NGOs and academics have played key roles in this alongside the government.

NUTRITION:

The data on nutrition, however, does not read very well. The rates of malnutrition in Bangladesh are among the highest in the world (FAO, 2011). More than 54% of preschool-age children, equivalent to more than 9.5 million children, are stunted, 56% are underweight and more than 17% are wasted. They also suffer from high rates of micronutrient deficiencies, particularly vitamin A, iron, iodine, and zinc deficiencies. Child malnutrition affects all the administrative divisions, with prevalence of underweight ranging from 49.8% in Khulna to 64.0% in Sylhet, the division which has also shown the highest prevalence of stunting (61.4%) and wasting (20.9%). Bangladeshi children also suffer from high rates of micronutrient deficiencies, particularly vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc deficiency. Consumption of vitamin A rich foods is low, suggesting that the underlying causes of Vitamin A deficiency require further attention and support. Anemia is also highly prevalent among children in Bangladesh. Maternal malnutrition, infections during pregnancy, anemia and repeated pregnancies contribute to low birth weight babies and a high rate of maternal mortality (UNICEF, 2009). Though maternal mortality rates have seen a steady decline over the past few decades, more than one-third of the female population in Bangladesh has a low body-mass and nearly 50% of women are anemic (UNICEF, 2009). More than 50 percent of women suffer from chronic energy deficiency and one-third of children in Bangladesh are born with low birth weight, which is directly attributable to mother’s nutrition status. As observed for children the same levels of differences persist in the prevalence of women malnutrition among administrative divisions.

POLITICAL WILL, POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND ORGANISATION OF SERVICE DELIVERY:

Political leaders who promote a cause can bring significant attention to issues and influence the policy agenda. Population growth was considered the biggest problem by those at the highest levels of government in Bangladesh and received sustained attention from political entrepreneurs. In 1973, Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman named population control and family planning as a national priority. This population policy was the foundation for subsequent policies and programs through the mid-1990s. All subsequent presidents continued to identify population growth as the country’s number one priority and to support the policies set by their predecessors. Therefore Bangladesh’s five-year development plans have guided the policies, priorities, resource allocation, and programs. All the five -year plans included a population component with goals to reduce population growth. Over time, the implementation strategies for these policies have moved from a vertical incentive-based schemes narrowly focused on use of FP methods and

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11 Gender-Inclusive Nutrition Activities in South Asia; Mapping Report: Soham Sen & Mikael Hook, South Asia Region - Social Development Unit, World Bank, June 2012.
delivered at the door step to overcome specific financial and cultural barriers, to a broader sector-wide integration of health and FP with service delivery at the community level. In 1987, the country’s president was awarded the UN Population Award. Thus, “starting with independence and through the 1980s when the bulk of the fertility decline occurred, support for population from political leaders was instrumental in placing and keeping population on the national policy agenda.”

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has developed and is implementing a sector-wide Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Program (HPNSDP) which is currently in its third phase and continuing through 2016. The HPNSDP defines an essential package of Reproductive Maternal Neonatal and Child Health (RMNCH) interventions and approaches to their implementation with guidelines in key technical areas, including maternal health, facility and community-Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), expanded program on immunization (EPI), infant and young child feeding, and neonatal health. The HPNSDP aims to deliver interventions along the continuum of care for women and children: from pre-pregnancy, through pregnancy and delivery, the postpartum period, and childhood. Approximately 20% of the HPNSDP budget is allocated to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH).

THE CHALLENGES IN REACHING THE LAST MILE IN MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH:

Demographic Dividend: An accelerated fertility reduction substantially increases the window of opportunity to capture the demographic dividend. Demographic Dividend is growth in a country’s economy resulting from a change in the age. It makes for a smaller population at young, dependent ages and for relatively more people in the adult groups- who comprise the productive labor force. Shifts in the balance of smaller populations of young dependents to larger populations of workers creates conditions for higher economic productivity and rising personal incomes; hence, the Demographic Dividend. Demographic Dividends have two parts, the first resulting from declining birth rates and an increased labor force supply, where, other things equal, per capita incomes will rise. The second demographic dividend results from a significant number of older workers motivated to invest in their financial security during retirement to lower reliance on or expectations that their families or governments will provide for their needs in old age. Achieving the demographic dividend requires concrete policy actions and immediate and sustained investments in family planning, health and education, as well as a policy environment that facilitates gender equality, flexible labor markets, and focus on youth, and market-based opportunities for investment, macroeconomic stability, and a thriving private sector to generate jobs. These policies effectively helped achieve the DD in the East Asian Tigers. The Demographic Dividend’s window of opportunity provides a limited window of opportunity to enact policies and promote investments that raise the human capital of young people while positioning them for greater economic productivity when they enter their working years. One of the commonly used criteria for determining the demographic dividend for a country is whether the computed value of the total dependency ratio remains less than 0.5. Bangladesh will reach that level of total dependency ratio by 2016 and the accelerated fertility transition model would provide a more favorable demographic window of opportunity in the next forty years.

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16. Hasan R, Reich M, Fink G; Agenda-Setting of Population In Bangladesh and West Bengal And Impact On Fertility, Harvard School Of Public Health (under publication)
18. Project Appraisal Document; Bangladesh Health Sector Development Program, World Bank, 2011;
Contraceptive Mix: Despite its initial successes, Bangladesh's family planning program faces several challenges. The current program's contraceptive method mix is dominated by short-term methods, whereas long-term/clinical methods would be needed to complete the fertility transition. Major interventions that could help accelerate the fertility decline are expanding the use of long-term family planning methods, and improving access to family planning services in underserved areas. Age at marriage has not changed much in Bangladesh: half of the teenage girls (15-19) have already at least one child\(^\text{19}\). The level of fertility appears to be a function of not only age at marriage but also the age at first birth and birth spacing; the latter being key in determining the total fertility rate. The three most feasible approaches to reduce the impact of population momentum are: delayed age at marriage, delayed age at first birth, and wider spacing of successive births. The last factor is the most successful proven approach for Bangladesh, as it has been observed in the Khulna and Rajshahi divisions.

Equity: General increases in intervention coverage for women and children in the last decade mask substantial differences by wealth, geographic area and other factors, including early marriage and pregnancy and education of the mother. When interventions are reviewed along the continuum of care, coverage gaps between the richest and poorest quintile are high for facility delivery, SBA delivery, and postpartum care within 2 days and low for antenatal care, ARI antibiotic treatment and full immunization coverage. No gaps by wealth quintile are noted for use of any contraception or modern contraception and treatment with ORT. Although use of contraception among married women of reproductive age show no differences by wealth quintile or urban/rural residence, there are substantial differences by geographic area, with coverage being lowest in the Chittagong and Sylhet divisions. Indicators on use of health services by the poorest wealth quintile showed but the absolute difference between the wealthiest and richest quintiles remains substantial. Overall, 65 percent of ever-married women age 15-49 live in a food secure environment. However, only 35 percent of women in the lowest wealth quintile are food secure compared with 90 percent of women in the highest wealth quintile. All of this suggests that more work is needed to close this equity gap\(^\text{20}\).

Neonatal Deaths: Neonatal deaths now represent 60% of all under-5 child deaths\(^\text{21}\). Reducing neonatal deaths require that key interventions will be delivered during pregnancy, delivery, and in the early postpartum period. Although improvements in coverage of key newborn interventions along the continuum of care have been seen in the last 10 years, coverage remains low. Because a high proportion of women continue to deliver at home, getting early postpartum care to women requires a community-based approach. Local trials have demonstrated that home visits by providers trained to deliver simple, effective interventions can improve key newborn care practices, care-seeking behavior, and reduce newborn mortality. These interventions will now need to be taken to scale.

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\(^{19}\) Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2011; National Institute of Population Research and Training Dhaka, Bangladesh, Mitra and Associates, Dhaka, Bangladesh, MEASURE DHS ICF International, Calverton, Maryland, U.S.A. January 2013

\(^{20}\) Notes for Discussion Asia-Pacific Leadership and Policy Dialogue for Women’s and Children’s Health: November 8, 2012 DRAFT

The U.S.-Bangladesh economic relationship has been steadily growing over the years, but there is much more potential for the U.S. to trade with the 7th most populous country in the world. Bangladesh is currently the United States’ 57th largest trading partner. The following is a quick profile of US-Bangladesh trade. The U.S. exports about $1.1 billion worth of goods to Bangladesh and imports about $5.1 billion annually. While the trade deficit is significant, U.S. exports to Bangladesh are growing at a remarkable rate, rising by 98.4 percent from 2010 to 2011 while Bangladesh’s exports rose at a modest 13.6 percent from 2010 to 2011. More than 90 percent of Bangladesh’s exports to the U.S. are concentrated in the area of apparel with some exports in fisheries and agricultural products. Top U.S. exports to Bangladesh include cotton, yarn and fabric, aircraft, machinery, and iron and steel products.

Commercial opportunities could be expanded in both markets. However, several stumbling blocks have hindered U.S.-Bangladesh trade from reaching its full potential. These include protectionism in the U.S. apparel sector characterized by high tariffs penalties on Bangladeshi apparel, labor compliance issues in the Bangladeshi apparel industry, and the absence of a systematic bilateral forum to address trade and investment issues.

The idea of tariff-free market access for Bangladeshi apparel has never been entertained seriously by the U.S. due to protectionist and other interest group concerns. Contrary to enhancing market access for Bangladeshi apparel, the U.S. is now considering revoking the little preference that it provides for Bangladeshi non-apparel exports, citing labor standards violations in the apparel sector. The U.S. does not view Bangladesh as meeting international labor standards set out by the International Labor...
Organizations (ILO) and it wants Bangladesh to sign a new Trade and Investment Framework and Cooperation Agreement (TICFA) which would have some benefits for U.S. investors in mostly non-apparel industries.

While Bangladesh is slowly but steadily working on meeting core ILO standards, it has little incentive to heed the call for a TICFA, given that its age-old appeal for apparel market access has been rejected to date. Both countries will need to re-examine their policies and adopt a long-term outlook in order to move the trade relationship forward.

A. Market Access for Bangladesh

Bangladesh has faced U.S. protectionist interests in the area of apparel for the last 30 years as it sought access the U.S market. To date, the U.S. has not provided any form of tariff relief for a product that has played a critical role in Bangladesh economic development. Several issues about U.S. protectionism in apparel are concerning: 1) Asian Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face special discrimination when it comes to U.S. tariff policy; 2) U.S. apparel tariffs do not necessarily protect U.S. jobs and are detrimental to poor American families; 3) the tariffs prevent Bangladesh from addressing poverty and investing in labor standards improvements.

1. Discrimination against Asian LDCs: The U.S. has provided majority of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) preferential market access under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Caribbean Basin Initiative and has liberalized tariffs on most products exported by the advanced countries. Bangladesh and 13 other Asian LDCs which rely on labor intensive manufactures such as apparel, have been left out entirely in the process. About 90 percent of Bangladesh’s exports constitute ready-made apparel, which means that Bangladesh faces U.S. tariffs averaging much higher than tariffs faced by most other LDCs, and perversely even higher than the tariffs faced by advanced countries such as France and UK.

Bangladesh currently has about 70 million people living below the poverty line excluding the 3.8 million people, mostly women, who work in the apparel industry in Bangladesh. Therefore tariff-free treatment for Bangladeshi apparel and the expanded employment resulting from it could mean directly lifting millions more out of poverty.

Since the U.S. has liberalized apparel tariffs for LDCs and non-LDC countries in Africa and the Caribbean, the poor in these countries have reaped benefits in terms of expanded employment. U.S. retailers have confirmed that tariff-free access for Bangladesh
would be a great incentive for them to expand operations in Bangladesh and create more jobs. These retailers have also emphasized that this will not necessarily be at the cost of preference erosion in other poor countries and the loss of jobs in sub-Saharan Africa or the Caribbean. Representatives from Gap have said that the company sources from Africa and the Caribbean for very specific reasons, unrelated to tariff concessions, and their sourcing patterns in these regions will not change due to the Asian LDCs receiving new tariff concessions. Unfortunately, Africa-focused lobby firms in Washington have been seen to join together with anti-trade unions in an opportunistic move to block any legislation that favors Bangladesh, Cambodia or other poor Asian LDCs. It is also relevant to note here that the majority of the African countries that receive tariff-free access for their apparel, have per capita incomes which are higher than Bangladesh’s. The U.S. tariff policy therefore does not quite meet standards of fairness.

2. Are Apparel Tariffs Good For Americans? Apparel tariffs do not serve the purpose of protecting U.S. jobs as U.S. labor unions like to claim, and neither are they good for the U.S. poor. A report from 2011 by the U.S. International Trade Commission shows apparel produced in low income countries like Bangladesh no longer compete with apparel produced in the United States because the U.S. is producing the types of apparel that poor countries are unable to manufacture. The report, titled “The Economic Effects of Significant U.S. Import Restraints, 2011” says that “domestic products no longer compete directly with imports. The limited remaining domestic production of textile and apparel articles is primarily for U.S. government defense contracts under the Berry Amendment; for high-end and niche markets willing to pay a premium price for higher quality, a more advanced product, and faster turnaround; and for medical and industrial protection purposes requiring specialized materials such as nonwoven, flame-resistant fabrics-products that low-cost countries are unable to manufacture because they lack the requisite advanced technologies.”

U.S. employment data also reveals that the U.S. simply does not have a competitive edge in apparel manufacturing. In 1970, before the IT revolution and the advent of the New Economy, some 1.34 million Americans worked for apparel manufacturers. But 40 years later only about 150,000 still do, but according to the ITC, they are not producing products that compete significantly with Bangladesh’s exports.

Who, then are the U.S. labor groups protecting through these tariffs on apparel? U.S. lawmakers should ask themselves whether it is sensible to impose its highest tariffs on products produced by 3.8 million people in a poor country like Bangladesh in order to raise some tariff revenue. These steep tariffs on textiles and apparel were put in place under the Hoover administration early in American history when the country needed to rely on tariff revenues. Sadly the policy has not been updated to reflect the realities of today’s global economy. Trade expert Edward Gresser of the Progressive Economy points out, “although clothes, shoes, luggage and household products, mostly produced by poor countries make up about 5% of U.S. imports, they raise about 60 percent of all tariff money” for the U.S. government. While most other advanced economies have shifted away their reliance on tariff revenues from the import of products produced by poor countries, the U.S. has left itself little incentive to scrap these tariffs.

Apparel tariffs paid by U.S. retailers to the U.S. government are also passed on to poor U.S. consumers in the form of higher prices. This poses a regressive tax on poor American families many of whom are the consumers of low-end imports from Bangladesh, whereas high-end imports from other countries face lower tariffs. A poor single mom in the U.S. pays a 32 percent import tax on her baby’s onesies from Target which says “Made in Bangladesh” while a wealthy person pays a 1.2 percent tariff for a luxury French scarf. U.S. tariff policy simply does not meet the economic logic test.
3. Tariffs Work Against Labor Standards Improvements: Tariffs collected by the U.S. government on Bangladeshi exports were an astounding $700 million in 2012, four times the amount of bilateral aid that Bangladesh receives from the United States. In the absence of these tariffs, Bangladesh could have had additional resources in terms of higher profits which it could have used to expand employment and make its factories a bit safer. Sanchita Saxena of University of California Berkeley explains in her recent New York Times article “American Tariffs, Bangladeshi Deaths”: “While American officials have condemned poor safety conditions at the factory and have urged the Bangladeshi government to raise wages and improve working conditions, the United States can do much more: It should bring down high tariffs on imports from Bangladesh and other Asian countries, which put pressure on contractors there to scrimp on labor standards in order to stay competitive.”

U.S. companies sourcing from Bangladesh are playing an important role in poverty reduction in a country where per capita income is just $770. Apparel tariffs have the detrimental impact of preventing further growth and employment in this very poor country desperately in need of creating jobs for a growing youth population. U.S. retailers who ultimately have to pay the tariffs to the U.S. government, are hesitant to aggressively expand investment in Bangladesh as a result of these tariffs.

B. Labor Compliance Issues and GSP

Bangladesh has made several important strides in protecting labor standards but it still has a lot to accomplish. U.S. lawmakers should understand that bringing about change in a sector with more than 5000 enterprises and 3.8 million workers will take time. A leading civil society anti-poverty organization in Bangladesh, the Centre for Policy Dialogue has said: “Rather than enforcing trade sanctions (on the ground of labor standards violations), the US could pursue a more proactive role and work with Bangladesh to address the attendant concerns and improve the situation of workers. If the GSP is withdrawn, through direct and indirect affects, it will be in the end the workers who will suffer. Such a prospect will put in harm’s way the contribution the garment sector has been making in terms of providing job opportunities particularly for women, poverty alleviation, social upliftment, women’s empowerment and Bangladesh’s overall economic growth.”

1. Revoking GSP Will Not Serve the Intended Purpose: U.S. labor groups cite labor standards violations in Bangladesh as a reason for curbing the U.S. Bangladesh trade relationship, or even rolling back existing trade with Bangladesh. Recent lapses in protecting labor standards in the export sector, namely a number of fire incidents in the apparel industry which killed workers have been cited to convince U.S. lawmakers to cancel the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). This comes as a confusing move since, as a trade preference program, GSP is of little consequence to Bangladesh. Only 0.62 percent of Bangladesh’s exports qualify for duty free treatment under GSP, since it does not include apparel.

At best, GSP cancellation will provide zero incentive for improvement in the apparel industry since Bangladeshi apparel does not receive duty free treatment. At worst, it is result in job losses for poor workers in the $26 million GSP-related export industry (which includes housewares, plastic bags etc) as well as widespread dislocation of workers in the apparel sector when other countries see this as a signal to withdraw investment in Bangladesh. The real losers will be the poor.
2. **Needed: A Tariff-Free Package Tied With Continuous Improvement:** If the U.S. is serious about promoting the conditions of workers in Bangladesh, it should first provide tariff-free access to the U.S. market for Bangladeshi apparel, and then make that access conditional on continuous improvements in labor standards. Since the apparel industry in Bangladesh has long been requesting more favorable treatment by U.S. trade policy, this would be the best way to catch their attention and incentivize improvements in labor standards in that industry. Bangladesh will be able to utilize these benefits unless it backslides on labor standards.

3. **Bangladesh’s Progress in Meeting Labor Standards:** Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh has struggled in certain areas of compliance. However, the country’s record in meeting labor standards has not been completely flawed either, and the U.S. needs to adopt a more balanced stance towards Bangladesh. The U.S. should reward Bangladesh for the progress it has made while exercising leverage through a tariff-free package for Bangladesh to keep the pressure on continuous improvement.

Bangladesh has ratified 33 ILO conventions including seven of the eight core ILO conventions. Over the past years, the government has taken several steps to implement some of these ratifications through Bangladesh Labor Act 2006, in cooperation with the ILO, the EU and other stakeholders, and strengthened institutions and agencies that deal with occupational safety. Child labor has been largely eliminated from the garment industry through stricter enforcement of safety regulations and tripartite initiatives between the government, the garment entrepreneurs’ association (BGMEA) and the ILO. Industry alliances have improved factories and formed workers welfare councils in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

The government has doubled the minimum wage for apparel workers and women workers now receive much more expanded benefits including longer maternity leaves and insurance benefits. All labor related prosecutions now take place in the Labor Court; the clearing of the large majority of cases has been expedited (with a few exceptions such as the Aminul Islam case), and complaints can be lodged by “aggrieved persons” as well as trade unions. The EPZ law has been brought into alignment with international standards, and according to a USAID report, key export associations have “all taken extensive initiatives to address labor problems in their member factories.” However, a number of these efforts have gone unnoticed by the United States.

4. **Freedom of Association:** An unrelenting demand from U.S. labor unions has been the enforcement of freedom of association. What U.S. labor unions refuse to acknowledge is that unions in Bangladesh are mere extensions of political parties and are exploiting workers for their own agendas instead of upholding the workers’ best interests. Union registration has been freely allowed under Bangladeshi labor law - until August 2010 there were 143 registered trade unions operating in the apparel sector. However, the freedom of association advantages that works in the U.S. context will not work in Bangladesh for the reasons just described.

U.S. unions and policymakers should instead work to support the worker welfare councils that industry stakeholders have been setting up. In some places, workers’ welfare councils have been replaced by workers’ associations that have support expanded functions including direct elections, and the right to discuss issues including collective bargaining in the areas of wages, working hours, etc. The U.S. could also support the work of such NGOs as Odhikar and Awaj Foundation which have engaged in rights training for workers, teaching them how to negotiate with employers without going on violent strikes and assisting workers in bringing suits to the labor courts.
Polls show that apparel workers in Bangladesh mostly complain about issues including long working hours, lack of appointment letters, lack of holidays, late payment and no dormitories. These concerns are being addressed through the workers’ welfare councils or workers’ associations and not necessarily through the politicized unions. Freedom of association is not cited by apparel workers as a top concern. One cannot help but wonder whether the demand by U.S. unions for freedom of association speaks to the real concerns of workers or whether it is part of a strategy on their expand union membership worldwide.

5. Fire Safety: The Bangladesh government has initiated a high-level inter-ministerial committee led by the director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence (FSCD) to make surprise inspection of factories. Industry stakeholders in Bangladesh in conjunction with interested U.S. brands are also carrying out their own safety measures. However, with regard to fire safety, the Bangladesh government and industry leaders must consistently acknowledge that this is a serious problem (they have sometimes undermined the severity of this problem in order to appease investors). The government and industry should then sign and immediately implement the comprehensive and independent Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement that has been developed by local and global labor rights organizations. The program includes independent inspections, public reporting, mandatory repairs and renovations, a central role for workers in both oversight and implementation, supplier contracts with sufficient financing and adequate pricing, and a binding contract to make these commitments enforceable. The supplier list, including subcontractors should be publicly disclosed. Bangladesh should also devote resources towards physically upgrading the buildings where production is housed, since many of these factories are not fit for industrial use. U.S. aid agencies could also contribute towards this. It is puzzling that the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which provides significant amount of funds for countries which have kept up their democratic traditions, is not considering Bangladesh as a potential candidate. Various countries in Africa with authoritarian governments as well as forced labor in industries such as coffee and cocoa have been awarded MCC compacts. The Philippines has also been awarded a compact whereas the country is noted to have serious violations of workers’ rights including murder, military harassments of union leaders by government forces, and regulations preventing worker strikes. USTR has two pending cases under GSP related to the Philippine government systematically undermining workers’ rights. If these other countries can be supported by the MCC and be provided resources to address labor-related problems, Bangladesh, with its record as a democratic nation with a commitment to workers’ rights should be a much stronger candidate for MCC privileges.

6. Bringing U.S. Retailers on Board: Efforts to improve labor standards in Bangladesh are often undermined by the major buying houses hired by U.S. retailers which are always on the lookout for cheaper sources of procurement. There is oftentimes a disconnect between “ethical buying” as touted by the brands and “unethical sourcing” practiced by their buying houses. U.S. lawmakers should bring U.S. retailers on board in ensuring workers’ safety in Bangladesh and demand that they assume the additional costs originating from compliance-related investment.

C. The Trade and Investment Framework and Cooperation Agreement

One problem that stands in the way of a more robust U.S.-Bangladesh trade relationship is that currently there is no formal bilateral forum for high-level dialogue on trade and investment issues. Bangladesh should seriously consider the merits of the Trade and Investment Cooperation and
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Framework Agreement (TICFA) if the U.S. government agrees to institute a system linking labor standards and tariff-free access for Bangladeshi apparel.

Bangladesh has long been in need of some relief for its exports. The idea of a TICFA, which would provide significant benefits for U.S. investors was a more recent proposal which is now being used as a bargaining chip by U.S. authorities when it comes to the tariff-free market access for apparel that Bangladesh seeks. However, tariff-free market access for Bangladesh is long overdue and should not be made conditional upon the signing of TICFA. This is equivalent to the U.S. moving the goal post for Bangladesh. Congress should immediately re-introduce the New Partnership for Development Act of 2009 introduced then by Congressman Jim McDermott, which ties incremental U.S. market access with improvements in labor standards. Once this legislation is passed, Bangladesh should sign the TICFA. Bangladesh should recognize that an institutional framework to address U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral trade issues is important and should make progress towards meeting some of the requirements outlined by the TIFCA.

D. Conclusion:

The U.S. needs a more balanced and strategic approach when it comes to its trade relationship in Bangladesh. The current state of affairs represents a stalemate. The goal of promoting the welfare of workers in the apparel sector in Bangladesh will be ill-served through sanctions on a small slice of Bangladeshi exports which do not currently receive tariff-free treatment. This will only serve to drive workers into poverty. Much more progress could be achieved through a program linking tariff-free access for apparel with labor standards improvements combined with a monitoring mechanism and capacity building funds.

For its own part, Bangladesh needs to take the concerns regarding factory fires seriously, implement the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement and work on continuous improvements for workers through the worker welfare councils and associations. The government must also urgently find a way to de-legitimize unions that are serving political purposes in the name of promoting workers’ rights. Once the U.S. moves to provide some much needed tariff relief for the apparel sector with a provision to roll back benefits based on labor rights violations, the Bangladesh government should also sign the TICFA and begin carrying out the demands under TICFA.

Bangladesh is favorably situated in the middle of the world’s three highest-growth areas—India, China, and Southeast Asia. The opportunities for U.S.-Bangladesh trade are immense and it is imperative that Bangladesh develop the necessary economic environment and connecting transport infrastructure to enhance its trade relations. Last, but not least, Bangladesh will also need to pay serious attention to diversifying its exports so it can take better advantage of programs such as the GSP.

The writer is the Executive Director of the U.S.-Bangladesh Advisory Council, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC working on promoting U.S.-Bangladesh relations economic development in both countries. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.
It has now been 28 years since my first visit to Bangladesh as a Fulbright scholar from Cornell University. I knew hardly anything about this relatively new country in 1985, but was fascinated to a part of its vibrant being. My wife and three-year-old son accompanied me on that four-month stint. We lived in staff quarters on the campus of University of Dhaka where I taught in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism. This year, University of Dhaka celebrates its centennial as the flagship educational institution in the country and the journalism school celebrates its semi-centennial. Much has changed.

I returned to Dhaka in 1992 for another Fulbright stint (this time with two additional children) and have continued to make regular visits to my beloved second home. As economists talk about the dramatic, positive change that has occurred in Bangladesh since I first visited in 1985, I have been fortunate to see this transformation with my own eyes.

I look forward to seeing the surprise my wife experiences when she sees Dhaka for the first time in nearly 20 years. She will marvel at the changing physical landscape with its modern buildings and ever-growing number of modern shopping centers. She will gasp at the multiple types of new housing that have eclipsed some of the single-family neighborhoods we traversed. She will see new prosperity around every corner and a growing middle class. She will be surprised to find more than twenty local channels on television compared to the one state channel she left behind. And, yes, she will notice the traffic jams that have become part of everyday life with a more prosperous population owning automobiles.

Bangladesh has been a place where world-class non-governmental organizations were born and prospered. The impressive records of BRAC and the Grameen Bank represent the best of that environment. These and other NGOs helped Bangladesh in remarkable ways whether it be agricultural output, population planning, women’s empowerment, public health standards, or micro finance.

That strong base of government and NGO initiatives sometimes overshadowed the struggling private sector. Now, as I return to Bangladesh, the dynamic is changing. The private sector is starting to gain strength as never before. The Bangladeshi government has established export zones where foreign companies can enter the marketplace on very business-friendly terms including total ownership.

The private sector is starting to gain strength as never before. The Bangladeshi government has established export zones where foreign companies can enter the marketplace on very business-friendly terms including total ownership.
being put in place to fund start-ups and more thought is being given to how to help small businesses develop and prosper. The middle class is growing at an accelerated rate that provides fertile ground for business development and consumer demand.

When I first arrived in Bangladesh, the private sector was a minor factor in the country’s development. The foreign assistance engine was providing much of the dynamism in the economy. Foreign aid is still important, but the country’s private sector is exploding in sectors garments, pharmaceuticals, banking, telecom, leather, and shipbuilding.

Pioneering entrepreneurial undertakings are happening not only in large industries but also in medium, small and cottage industries. The contribution of large and medium industry (manufacturing) to GDP has grown from $2.3 billion in 1996-97 to $6.9 billion in 2010-11. The current growth rate for those industries is nearly 11 percent. While not growing quite as fast, small and cottage industry (manufacturing) grew from $1 billion to $2.6 billion in the same period with a current growth rate of 7 percent.¹ Small and medium enterprises are now providing more than 50% of the rural population’s employment and income.

The concept of entrepreneurship is growing among young Bangladeshis. The self-employment rate grew from 30% in 1995-96 to 41% in 2010.² Industries like IT, light engineering and metal-working, plastics and other synthetics, educational services, beauty parlor, tourism, music, mobile tech, advertising and public relation, media-print, etc. are flourishing along with the traditional agro-processing/agri-business. Despite many obstacles, young entrepreneurs’ passion and commitment are seeing them through to success. Bangladesh’s migration towards increasing prosperity during the past two decades has also manifested itself in the attitudes of its new generation. During the past nine years, 12 groups of young Bangladeshis have visited our campus at the University of Oklahoma (OU) for training and professional experiences. With each group, there has been unmistakable optimism and belief in the future of their country. This is not a generation with its hands in its pockets and its eyes on the ground. This is a generation that is reaching for the stars.

Nowhere have I seen this can-do spirit manifested more than with two groups of young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs that visited OU in 2012. Each had started his/her own business or had become an important part of an existing family business. They represent in many ways the ferment that is transforming the private sector landscape.

Our partner on the entrepreneurs project is BRAC University, the academic arm of the highly respected NGO of the same name. Specifically, we are working with the Center for Entrepreneurship Development (CED)

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¹ http://www.mof.gov.bd
² www.bbs.gov.bd
in the business school that is focused on nurturing private sector initiative by a new generation. CED mounts seminars for aspiring entrepreneurs, conducts workshops on the nuts and bolts of setting up a business and through its publications monitors the heartbeat of new business initiatives in Bangladesh.

With BRAC University’s help, we recruited two dozen Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to spend a month in Oklahoma working with a business similar to theirs. A like number of Oklahomans traveled to Bangladesh to re-unite with their counterparts and learn more about the emerging entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

Through that experience, some remarkable relationships have been forged that provide a window on what is happening at the grass roots of business activity in Bangladesh. We believe it is a harbinger of broader, more robust economic development.

I would like to share with you fascinating success stories of four such emerging entrepreneurs of Bangladesh.

1. Mahmud Hasan Sohag, Onnorokom Groups

Mr. Sohag is a portfolio entrepreneur who has several ventures under the umbrella of Onnorokon Groups. His vision is to build “quality education, entrepreneurship, innovation and research” in Bangladesh. Pi Labs Bangladesh Ltd. is part of Onnorokon Groups which is a pioneer manufacturer of “Electronic Voting Machine (EVP)” for Bangladesh. Sohag worked with the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) to invent the device which was first used during the Chittagong City Corporation election in 2010.

As Sohag’s experience shows, the IT service industry is becoming a popular and opportunistic field where young businessmen can become successful financially and serve their country at the same time. According to the survey of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services-BASIS (2011) the overall size of the IT/ITeS industry in Bangladesh reached $250 million in 2010, only a fraction of its potential. The Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau reports that IT sector growth was 28.14% in FY 2010-11. Bangladesh was included in Gartner’s Top 30 locations for offshore services in 2010 for the first time (Gartner, 2010). The Amsterdam-based KPMG placed Bangladesh with Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam as emerging Asian IT services suppliers. They reported that a good pool of enthusiastic IT people and rapid acceptance of IT services in Bangladesh are advantages for the country to be an IT service exporting country.

Sohag is very optimistic regarding his country’s prospects. He says, “One of the main advantages of our IT-based industry is that now there is a huge domestic demand for IT products and services. Even if Bangladesh does not go for international export and only focuses on its domestic demand still the opportunities are huge. This is high time (Gartner, 2010).
for many investors to take some first mover advantages in several areas of IT.”

2. Minhaz Anwar, Better Stories Ltd.

BetterStories Limited is an ideas agency with three business units: Media, Communications & ICT, Training & Research and Business Incubation. Mr. Minhaz says, “The concept of business incubation is totally new in Bangladesh. We are pioneering, incubating and accelerating new but ethical and green businesses in Bangladesh with an aim to graduate the entrepreneurs to the leadership of the country. We want to create at least 1,000 leaders by 2050.”

Business incubation is a well-accepted idea in the western world where government funds 95% of these establishments. But in Bangladesh, BetterStories is the first private initiative.

Minhaz says BetterStories Ltd is now facing three challenges: (1) a lack of market demand for incubation services; (2) lack of a developed entrepreneurial culture and (3) a lack of policy support. BetterStories is now planning to nurture and support ten business startups to create ten success stories of entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. Minhaz says he wants to, “appeal to our political parties to consider the needs of the youth of Bangladesh in your manifesto. Let the youth entrepreneurs grow through incubation.” Clearly, Minhaz is blazing a trail for others to follow.

3. Sharnalata Roy, Woman Fashion World

The new generation entrepreneurs of Bangladesh includes some motivated women. Sharnalata Roy belongs to this niche group.

Among all fields, women dominate the beauty/makeover industry in Bangladesh. Financial institutions, government organizations, and NGOs are helping adolescent girls to start a beauty parlor. This is a field with ample opportunity for female achievement, especially for marginalized women.

Sharnalata Roy who owns a beauty parlor and beautification training center in Sylhet called Women Fashion World is a shining example of how a Bangladeshi woman can be successful in this enterprise. She has also developed a nonprofit organization named “Community Development Society” by investing her business profit in this organization.

Like many female entrepreneurs, Sharnalata has a strong social conscience and a passion to develop her own service projects. She has already conducted several free training projects to help indigenous females of Bangladesh learn beautification skills so that they might enter the profession. In addition, she has also provided beautification trainings and counseling to...
destitute women.

4. AZM Saifuddin, Paper Rhyme Advertising Limited

Like other rapidly expanding Asian nations like Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, India and Indonesia, Bangladesh’s advertising and public relation industry is growing fast. An entrepreneur who is taking advantage of the growing demand for communication services, is A Z M Saifuddin, the Managing Director of Paper Rhyme Advertising Limited in Dhaka. An entrepreneur who is taking advantage of the growing demand for communication services, A Z M Saifuddin is the Managing Director of Paper Rhyme Advertising Limited in Dhaka.

Saif’s vision is to offer its clients one-stop total creative, media and advertising solutions (advertising & public relation)- from strategic brand planning and the development of powerful creative ideas to an efficient execution of campaigns with the highest possible media and public relation coverage. Saif says, “Although we have several obstacles now, we’ll be able to be more settled within the next 10 years. We just need more quality professionals from our youth and a basic level of political stability from our political parties. With all odds we’ll move forward.” The message Saif brought back from Oklahoma is that social media counts and that his agency needs to be right in the middle of it in a big way. He is determined to make his agency the premier digital enterprise in Bangladesh.

Because of his immense talents as a public speaker, writer and networker, Saif is positioned to be a spokesperson for entrepreneurship in Bangladesh and to rally his fellow business owners to action. Saif is trying to build an entrepreneurs organization in Dhaka that can meet regularly to share information, encourage colleagues and advance the cause of the private sector.

Conclusion

These four young Bangladeshis are representative of the two dozen entrepreneurs we brought to Oklahoma under a U.S. State Department grant in 2012 and the thousands behind them whose dreams are just emerging. A flatter world has given them awareness of fellow risk-takers and innovators across borders. They are better educated and better prepared than any other generation in Bangladesh’s history to assume this challenge. All of my colleagues at the University of Oklahoma felt certain that these young business men and women were arriving on the scene at exactly the right time and that their chances of bold success had never been better. We look forward with great anticipation to watching this sector emerge as private entrepreneurs assume an unprecedented role in the Bangladeshi economy and society.

Joe Foote is Dean of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. Rahnuma Ahmed, graduate student in Gaylord College, provided research assistance and contributed content for this article. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.
Chevron and Bangladesh Boost Investment to Grow Supply of Vital Natural Gas

New energy will soon start flowing to businesses and homes in Bangladesh thanks to hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment pledged by Chevron, the nation’s top energy development partner, and national oil company Petrobangla.

The two companies in 2012 committed to separate projects to produce more natural gas and improve gas-delivery infrastructure for one of Asia’s fastest growing economies.

“Increased gas production is essential to growing the country’s electricity supply, economic growth and quality of life,” said Geoffrey Strong, Chevron’s Country Manager for Bangladesh. “As Bangladesh works to diversify and grow its over-all mix of energy, developing its own gas resources will continue to create jobs and new energy for many years to come.”

But there is much more to this energy partnership story. Collaborating with government, local leaders and nonprofit agencies, Chevron has invested steadily not just in resources, but in the people of Bangladesh and their needs, especially infrastructure, small business development, health services and education.

“We’re helping Bangladesh grow both its gas energy and its human energy as well,” says Strong. “We’re especially committed to sourcing our workforce from within the local communities where we work.”

Building on Progress

In April of last year, Chevron started up its new Muchai compression station, increasing the delivery of gas via the North-South pipeline. The project created 750 jobs at its peak and set a new standard for safe construction.
At that time, Chevron was already the country’s biggest gas producer and its largest foreign investor. It has invested $1 billion over the past decade to develop the Sylhet area’s big Bibiyana Field and the smaller Moulavi Bazar and Jalalabad fields, which together have been supplying over 1 billion cubic feet per day. Today, Chevron’s operations employ about 3,000 Bangladeshis and past development and pipeline projects created thousands more jobs.

Then in July, Chevron announced that it would invest some $500 million to add wells and expand processing facilities to increase gas production from Bibiyana by another 300 million cubic feet per day.

The Bibiyana expansion is scheduled for startup in 2014. In addition, the company will increase production of condensate by 4,000 barrels per day, adding a valuable stream of light petroleum to a Bangladesh economy otherwise dependent on imported oil.

“This is truly a huge step forward for Bangladesh’s development. Chevron’s decision to make this investment reflects its confidence in Bangladesh’s future and underscores the company’s long-term commitment to the country,” said U.S. Ambassador Dan Mozena, adding that the new gas supplies will help the country build both its middle class and its economy as it works toward becoming “the next Asian Tiger.”

Petrobangla Pipeline is Key

However, the Bibiyana project can only advance if the country adds more distribution capacity. So in November, Dhanuwa. Expected to create numerous construction jobs, the pipeline project aims to start delivering steady volumes of new gas from the Bibiyana expansion to the country’s south and west regions, notably the Gazipur industrial belt, by 2014.

“The working together to develop and grow the natural gas sector, Chevron and Bangladesh provide an outstanding example for public-private collaboration,” says Pierre Breber, managing director for Chevron’s Asia South operations, which include the Bangladesh partnership.

The Value of Energy

The Bibiyana expansion comes at a critical point in the country’s energy crisis. According to the World Bank, growth of gross domestic product (GDP) in Bangladesh slowed to about 6.3 percent last year - well below the target of 7 percent -- and will be under 6 percent this year, due in the National Economic Council approved Petrobangla’s plans to build a 137-kilometer pipeline from Bibiyana to part to the global recession. On the bright side, industrial growth was healthy in 2012, and foreign direct investment surpassed $1 billion for the second time in the country’s history.

But the performance could have been better with adequate gas and power supplies. The country’s protracted energy shortage - including serious power interruptions to industry, business and consumers -- remains one of its most pressing economic burdens, according to World Bank. Says a recent report: “Investment targets of the medium term budget framework 2013 to 2017 face major obstacles in shortage of electricity and gas supplies.”

Gas Demand Outpacing Supply

The World Bank cited inadequate gas supply as a top concern. Present gas demand is about 2.5
billion cubic feet per day, some 400 million cf/d greater than domestic production - and about 80 percent of power in Bangladesh comes from gas-fired power plants.

Gas supply growth isn’t keeping up with demand, and the widening shortfall has arrested new hookups to households and businesses, the bank says: “There is an urgent need to further exploit untapped reserves and modernize and expand the distribution channel to meet shortages, increase supplies to industries, and to establish gas based power plants.”

Many believe Bangladesh can and should do more to find and develop new gas resources - and that one priority should be offering competitive terms to energy companies to attract both capital and technology. At the same time, Chevron and others believe the best way to achieve energy security is to develop all forms of energy and also aggressively improve energy efficiency everywhere.

**Gas is Key in Energy Mix**

The country is pursuing renewable wind and solar power. Domestic coal and imported liquefied natural gas may ultimately help Bangladesh meet its energy needs. But in the meantime, low-carbon, cost-efficient domestic gas will remain essential, and output from Chevron’s Bangladesh operations will provide the largest share in the years immediately ahead.

“Bibiyana is the largest producing gas field in Bangladesh and a leading example of how technology, investment and expertise can help countries use domestic resources to secure reliable, cleaner-burning, and affordable sources of energy,” said Melody Meyer, president of Chevron Asia Pacific Exploration and Production Co. “We are pleased to play a central role in that development effort and are committed to helping Bangladesh build a vibrant natural gas industry.”

**Investing in Communities**

Of course, natural gas is not the only natural resource requiring investment in this vibrant country - the welfare of the people of Bangladesh is equally important to the nation’s future, says Strong. Chevron has invested continuously in the community, funding and supporting activities and programs focused on education, health care, small business development and the environment. Today, the company’s initiatives annually affect the lives of some 30,000 people in its project areas in a positive way.
“Community engagement is an essential part of our business here,” says Strong. “Having a good relationship with the community gives us our social license to operate. It also gives us a lot of satisfaction to be able to touch the lives of so many people in our areas of operation.”

According to Naser Ahmed, Chevron’s Director for External Affairs in Bangladesh, Chevron’s community partnership model emphasizes close relationships with leading non-governmental organizations (NGOs) combined with outreach and strong ties with people living in project areas: “There were several challenges at the beginning, when we first started implementing our social development programs. But our programs have been successful largely because our communities eventually embraced and supported them.”

**Improving Livelihoods**

Notably, the company provides resources to help people gain the skills needed to improve their standard of living while preserving their culture.

About 4,000 families living in over 100 villages near Chevron’s Bibiyana, Moulavi Bazar and Jalalabad fields receive training and resources to start new businesses through the company’s economic development programs. These are run by NGO partners the Institute of Development Affairs (IDEA), Prochestra and the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS).

Households and schools in two villages near Moulavi Bazar have also received improved cooking stoves, solar photovoltaic panels and biogas plants (small facilities that produce energy from organic waste). In 2012, this project was expanded to 500 families in five villages near Bibiyana.

“It is our goal to place communities firmly at the driving seat of their own development. We want to ensure that they are closely involved at all stages of the project,” says Ahmed, a native Bangladeshi.

**Active Community Members**

In addition to the company’s community programs, Chevron Bangladesh employees are personally involved in helping local people live better and expand their possibilities. Says Ahmed:

“Our employees participate in projects alongside our neighbors because they are active members of the community.”

In 2012, over 400 Chevron Bangladesh employees donated blood as part of the World Health Organization’s annual World Blood Donor Day. Also in 2012, Chevron helped plant nearly 14,000 saplings on roadsides and at schools and clinics near Bibiyana, Jalalabad and Moulavi Bazar. And each year, Chevron volunteers help Habitat for Humanity International build low-cost, durable homes for people in need.

**Supporting Public Health**

Public health is also a top priority. Working with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Smiling Sun Franchise Program, Chevron has helped establish three Smiling Sun clinics in its project areas.

Every year, these facilities provide 72,000 health care services to villagers near the Bibiyana and Moulavi Bazar gas fields. Chevron’s partner, the Jalalabad Rotary Club, organizes free annual eye care clinics where patients receive checkups, free eyeglasses and cataract treatment. In 2012, around 90 free cataract removal surgeries were sponsored.
Helping Schools and Students

In addition, Chevron is committed to improving the quality and availability of education for students near its operating areas. The company’s scholarship drive for disadvantaged, meritorious students was launched in 2001, and since then, thousands of students have received help. In 2012, the company provided additional teacher support at three schools and funded around 1,100 scholarships.

Meanwhile, Chevron has extended a pre-primary program with Save the Children that will serve about 1,800 out-of-school children in 60 schools in the Bibiyana and Jalalabad areas. The initiative supports efforts to improve children’s learning experiences – for example, helping to establish computer learning centers in two schools near Bibiyana and Moulavi Bazar. Also, an education endowment fund helps pay for school uniforms, sports equipment and school furniture. And the company contributes to a five-year program that offers scholarships to students from across Asia and the Middle East who attend the Asian University for Women.

Investing for a Bright Future

“We believe that the key to success to any social development initiative is to fuel people’s basic aspiration for self-improvement,” says Ahmed. “So we strive to inspire communities to drive their own development. More than anything else, our programs are focused on building awareness of a better future. The very idea of hope can act as a catalyst for real, sustainable change.”

Views expressed herein are the Chevron’s own.

“We believe that the key to success to any social development initiative is to fuel people’s basic aspiration for self-improvement....”
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted an important study, “Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policy Makers.” The study began by claiming, “The role of Diaspora in development strategies, poverty reduction and economic growth is attracting considerable policy interest.” The study highlighted the potential of the Diasporas in a number of areas such as business creation, trade links, investments, remittances, skills circulation, exchange of experiences and even making deep impacts on social and cultural roles of men and women in the country of their birth.

The increasing awareness and understanding about the Diaspora and their potential of becoming major development partners is highly encouraging. In fact, Diaspora groups have been making significant contributions on their own, with and without recognition, since long. Many such groups did not wait for any call; instead they took their own initiative and gave back to the land with which they felt they had deep emotional ties. If national policies can effectively tap into this vibrant milieu of a vast diaspora network, the potential for harnessing their varied skills and furthering national development is almost limitless.

Many countries have actually begun to strengthen ties with their diaspora networks. Among these countries are powerhouses such as China, India, South Korea, South Africa, and Mexico. Other less developed countries, especially from the African continent, are also following suit to reap the benefits of a win-win
relationship. The motivation to involve the diasporas in the home countries’ development strategies are many (IOM study):

- Engaging Diasporas in the development process can limit the costs of emigration and mitigate brain drain.
- Emigrants improve their skills abroad which, on their return, should benefit home countries.
- Engaging diasporas might have a beneficial trickle-down effect for home countries.
- Integrating diaspora inputs into endogenous growth projects [can] represent real added value for the national economy.
- Including diasporas in existing development strategies can garner many innovative ideas.

Interest in the Bangladeshi Diaspora

The Bangladesh diaspora has not escaped attention in the country. Zafar Sobhan called for a Ministry of Non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) Affairs and the need to integrate the NRBs into the mainstream economy (May 19, 2006 - Daily Star).

Dewan Sadek Afzal (February 5, 2007 DS) suggested the need to promote NRB investments and to provide one-stop services to the toiling Bangladeshis who send back substantial amounts of remittances, many hoping to buying a small plot of land to enjoy some creature comforts. After surviving inhuman labor conditions in a foreign land, even this dream faces many hurdles back home, each siphoning off a chunk of the hard-earned wealth of the hapless NRB.

Halimur Khan (Feb 6, 2007 DS) provided concrete figures about the substantive and growing amount of remittances reaching US$6.4 billion in 2007 that is about double at present. He particularly urged the authorities to devise ways of 1) reducing remittance costs 2) providing access to more remittance centers 3) negotiating with employing governments to ensure frequent and legal transfers, and 4) ensuring safer methods by which money can be transferred.

Anis Chowdhury (Feb 10, 2007 DS) suggested, analytically, ways to circumvent the Gregory Effect by allowing NRBs to imports goods rather than money to keep the value of the Taka competitive for exporters.

I personally urged the government (Feb 14, 2008 DS) to aggressively protect and defend the rights of the NRBs in distant lands where they need a strong and reassuring backing to avoid being exploited or even harmed by opportunistic foreign nationals, employers and governments. In many cases aggrieved Bangladeshis have not only been denied justice; they have paid far more dearly in the hands of cruel and inhuman employers in hostile lands. Often these NRBs find no assistance in their times of difficulty. They must be spared this travesty!

Research in Higher Education

One area that is little understood or explored in Bangladesh is the role of research in higher education. How this activity can be linked to the work of the Diaspora is discussed next. It cannot be emphasized enough that higher education plays a strategic role in the evolution of society, not only as an engine for human development, but also as an incubator and repository of knowledge with untold potential. Given this potential, higher education institutions (HEIs) are being increasingly scrutinized for the quality and value they deliver, both in terms of knowledge generation (research) and dissemination (teaching).
Ultimately, the HEIs must serve their communities that often face tremendous adversities and are challenged inordinately by intricate problems. To do so, the role of research is pivotal. Research, in fact, is a potent instrument that can harness knowledge, extend it further, and transform the economy and the nation. To many, the role of research in the advancement of society is indispensable. Universities in the advanced countries take deep pride in this nation-building pursuit of their scholars. Pennsylvania State University, where I work, brims with pride when the accomplishments of its scholars are presented to the wider community. Referring to research, one such university document states, “Ideas and innovations [through research] are the precious currency of the 21st century economy, driving new products and technologies, and solving many of society’s pressing problems.”

Similarly, research at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education is also instructive; it emphasizes, “...how to best link education research to practice so that it becomes ‘usable knowledge’-tools, materials, and curricula that are further tested and studied in classrooms and school systems.” Clearly, researchers at Harvard’s School of Education are firmly rooted in their context, providing meaningful research for their own classrooms and school systems. The questions that must be contemplated today in the context of Bangladesh’s research environment are: How much knowledge is being produced by the HEIs and how relevant and usable are they?

Unfortunately, the state of research in Bangladesh leaves much to be desired. For example, a University Grants Commission (UGC) document states clearly:

“Bangladesh does not have a national strategy for research and the role of universities in undertaking research is affected by many constraints. An effective mechanism to link programs between universities (and research institutes) and industry and business, whether at home or abroad, is still to be established. Finally, there is a lack of an appropriate funding mechanism on a suitable scale to encourage basic and applied research in the universities and in different research organizations.” (http://www.heqep-ugc.gov.bd/About.aspx)

If academia wants to provide intellectual leadership, it must re-evaluate its role in society within the overall scheme of the knowledge needs of Bangladesh, formulate a clear vision, and bring knowledge generation (research) to the forefront....
Role of the Academic Diaspora in Strengthening Research

The academic Diaspora can help invigorate the research activities of the HEIs in Bangladesh and focus their efforts on “real” nation-building matters. Lamenting the current research environment in Bangladesh, Rehman Sobhan points to the “lack of effective demand for research within the policymaking establishments [with] a strong demotivating influence on the social science research community.” As a consequence, he suggests, “… the research agendas in the social sciences have been effectively re-colonized. The development agencies now largely determine the terms of reference (TOR) of such research, the methodologies to be used and quite often the outcomes to be attained.” Sobhan contends that such agendas are supported by a class of “intellectual acolytes” whose thinking has been shaped by the donors via consultancy projects and related incentives.

I wish to emphasize here that research in Bangladesh’s HEIs can be strengthened via an important but largely ignored possibility: partnering with Diaspora academics, many of whom are rising in rank and stature in overseas universities and centers of excellence. Working jointly with them, many important problems and issues confronting the nation today could be better addressed.

It is important to note that other nations in the region are stepping up their research programs in collaboration with their diasporas to gain in competitiveness. Hong Kong recently committed $18 billion to a long run research program that involves not just scholars from Hong Kong, but scholars from all over the world. A big chunk of this money is reserved for special research themes related to Hong Kong’s long term development and strategic direction.

Similarly, in the case of Bangladesh, both local and Diaspora researchers can benefit from cooperative endeavors where the gains can be substantive and mutual. Diaspora researchers are likely to have advanced training in the methods of research they can share; they also have a need to publish as requirements for tenure and promotion, or they may simply be eager to participate in the advancement of their country of birth through targeted research from which the country might benefit. Researchers in Bangladesh may provide the advantage of being close to data and funding sources, while joint publications can project both parties into policy-making domains or even international forums where their research would get wider recognition.
Diaspora academics can also serve as mentors, assisting the nouveau researchers and seeing their work through to fruition. They can provide access for the Bangladeshi researchers to the latest research studies and evolution of thinking in a particular field. This is possible because most Diaspora academics have access to electronic libraries and a wealth of research materials they can avail through their institutions. While access to research materials for Bangladeshi researchers is improving, it is still a far cry. By working together it may even be possible to advance new theoretical frameworks of international importance or develop technical innovations with locally relevant adaptations that may be of use to important stakeholders.

Diaspora academics may also be invited by research committees to evaluate research proposals for funding and/or to confer higher degrees. In addition to evaluating research proposals, senior Diaspora academics can also help evaluate the research once it is completed to ensure that the quality and relevance of the study were appropriately reflected in the research outcomes and recommendations. These research projects can ultimately be guided for publication in journals and other appropriate outlets to share, widely, the knowledge generated.

In most HEIs and research organizations abroad, the promotion of faculty and research staff is often subjected to “external” evaluation. For example, in the United States, faculty tenure and promotion to senior ranks is contingent on external evaluations in which senior faculty members from other institutions evaluate the overall quality of their research and determine whether the line of research is promising enough to warrant progression to senior ranks. Diaspora academics could assist universities in Bangladesh with similar external evaluations, helping to sift and sort the plethora of applicants seeking a higher rank without fear of political interference when making their recommendations. Diaspora researchers who have attained some measure of recognition can thus help identify the superstar researchers from the ordinary ones and further their research agendas with advanced ideas.

Many Diaspora academics also visit Bangladesh periodically for a variety of reasons. During their visits, they could be invited to conduct workshops and training programs for junior faculty on matters of interest such as the latest research methodologies, tools, and techniques of research that are better able to address the complex realities of a research problem. This would also strengthen and upgrade the quality of research in the country.

Where possible, Diaspora academics could be integrated into local university boards and their decision-making circles to share their experiences and policy perspectives gained from their respective universities. They could help shape policy and influence practice in the universities that would support initiatives in building towards regional status, leading to global recognition. By being in these boards, not only could the diaspora academics help improve the quality of knowledge production; they could also provide valuable inputs to strengthen the knowledge dissemination (teaching) activities by introducing pedagogical approaches that shift the emphasis from rote memorization to deep learning and meaningful application of emerging and contextual knowledge.

Diaspora academics could also help academia in Bangladesh with contacts and access to higher education programs abroad. To become world-class universities and to scale up to the quality levels of universities in advanced countries, it is imperative that the faculty in Bangladesh’s HEIs are well trained, especially in epistemology and methodological skills to tackle local research problems with greater degrees of sophistication. To this end the help of the diaspora academics can be invaluable.

Finally, the Diaspora academics could collaborate with local universities in Bangladesh to start up publication programs, establish research journals to archive new and evolving streams of local
knowledge, collaborate in book publication programs, and become members of editorial boards and other academic ventures that are all part of the knowledge generation enterprise. There is also the prospect that diaspora academics, driven by their desire to help build world-class universities in their home country, could work to establish “research chairs” in Bangladesh universities. They could help establish guidelines for these chairs, raise money to support them, and provide the lead in instituting excellence in research through making “apolitical” chair appointments.

That Diaspora academics can serve as a vital resource and foster a more conducive climate of research in the country must be accepted, pursued with serious intent, and recognized as a part of development strategy: The time has come. Many such academics would welcome the prospects of working on significant issues pertinent to the development of Bangladesh.

As one example, the capital and durable goods industry of Bangladesh presents a singularly important opportunity. The successful establishment of a domestic capital goods industry with in-house design and analysis capabilities would result in the creation and retention of high-level technical skills in the country that would ultimately ensure the well-being of the country. This is because the production of capital goods and related activities require very complex and sophisticated technical and engineering skills; once this knowledge and experience is gained through collaboration with diaspora academics, or even practitioners, the country’s productivity and income will see manifold increases.

The component of the capital goods industry that adds the greatest value is the design and analysis function, which is best supported by research that can imbue the products with greater intellectual sophistication. In this regard, establishing research centers with connections between BUET or RUET and recognized academic diasporas can go a long way in furthering development and growth in the capital goods industry.

Such design and analysis centers to advance the capital goods industry can even spur the growth and development of related academic disciplines such as finance, economics, marketing, management, operations, law and so on, thus creating space for greater diaspora engagement. As development in the capital goods industry picks up, the research skills of the diaspora from other disciplines can be enjoined to build the industry more elaborately with enormous potential.

**A Concluding Thought**

The Diaspora academics must be able to find opportunities to engage with various research issues in Bangladesh with huge nation-building potential. They do not expect any special treatment. However, a simple invitation, some recognition, and a healthy dose of openness and communication with them could lead to the development of many innovative programs with prospects of high returns for Bangladesh. As in the past, there may be some resistance to such initiatives from within the country. Whatever the reason for such resistance, an apex body within the country must take the lead to pursue this idea vigorously; otherwise, a significant opportunity stands to be forfeited.

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Bangladesh: an undervalued brand in need for recognition
-Syed Munir Khasru

To quote from the article titled “Bangladesh: Out of the Basket” in the November 3, 2012 issue of the Economist, “Many people feared Bangladesh would not survive as an independent state. One famine, three military coups and four catastrophic floods later, the country that Henry Kissinger once dismissed as “a basket case” is still a test. But no longer in the sense of being the bare minimum that others should seek to surpass. Now, Bangladesh has become a standard for others to live up to”.

If one looks into the events that shaped modern civilization, they would be surprised as to how seemingly trivial things have determined the direction in which history takes turn. 2000 years ago, in the time of the Roman Empire, three things - spices - the mere produce of a weed, silk - the larvae of a beetle, and rice - the produce of a grass, brought about a revolution, and changed the course of history. Voyages were made by travelers all over the world, in search of spices, silk, and other riches that were to be found in the Indian subcontinent, where the abundance of life amazed all those who came to visit. The land was so fertile that if a seed were thrown on to the ground, a plant would grow on its own. The incredible prosperity of the land held all in awe, and European geographers located paradise at the mouth of the Ganges, where Bengal lay.

While today’s Bengal is far from paradise, up until the 16th Century, Bengal was among the wealthiest part of the subcontinent. Today, after having been torn and tried by natural, political and economic challenges, Bangladesh is gradually rising again. The country still has a long way to go, but it is bursting with potential, life, and resource. The nation, just like its soil, is incredibly prolific, making the most of what is given, paying no heed to obstacles, and growing. Growing at a rate that surprises the world and forces those who disregarded it earlier to be amazed by what the country can and able to do.

While Bangladesh has been performing well in numerous sectors, her success in the production of Readymade Garments (RMG) is unparalleled to any other industry. Bangladesh has earned a good name worldwide for the production of RMG and the crafty people working in this sector have proven their skills to the rest of the world. The journey of RMG sector in Bangladesh begin only in the early 1980s,
when a few Bangladeshis received free training in the production of RMG from Daewoo, a Korean Company. After these Bangladeshis returned home, a few among them had the entrepreneurial zeal to break ties with the factories they had been working for and started their own factories. The enterprises set up by these men were the initial sparks that eventually fired exponential growth of the RMG industry of Bangladesh over the last few decades. In the 1980s, there were only 50 factories employing only a few thousand people. Currently, there are 4,490 manufacturing units, employing over 4 million people. Garments made in Bangladesh are worn throughout the world and across all economic strata. Once given the opportunity and knowledge, a country as small as Bangladesh has proven its capacity, and earned global recognition for its products. Today, Bangladesh stands as the 4th largest exporter of RMG and its revenues and competency in the industry have stood the test of time.

Another sector which has started to grow at a remarkable pace is IT. A country where even 15 years ago, computers were an unaffordable luxury for 99% people, is at present poised to become a hub for IT outsourcing. GARTNER, a leading international research and consultancy firm has placed Bangladesh among the world’s top 30 destinations for IT outsourcing. Bangladesh has been placed at par with countries like China, India, Malaysia and Thailand in terms of delivering IT based solutions. Interestingly enough, one of the biggest reasons that can account for this considerable success in the IT sector is the fact that Bangladesh’s education system has deeply entrenched links to the English language for centuries. Technical expertise, coupled with excellent communication skills in English, make Bangladesh a lucrative destination for software and IT service outsourcing for potential customers. A study by the World Bank in 2008 concluded that as one of the largest Anglophone countries in the world, Bangladesh is poised for triple digit growth in its export of software and IT services. Stunning growth in the RMG, IT and pharmaceutical sectors are the greatest indicators that has marked Bangladesh’s rise to becoming a prosperous nation with improved living standards for its people.

Despite periodic political instability, since return to parliamentary form of democracy in 1991, consolidation of democratic practices has been an ongoing process. Bangladesh is one of the rare countries in the world where the position of Head of Government has been occupied by women leaders for the last two decades. Governance has been broadly improving in recent years as reflected in the steady, if inadequate, improvement in Corruption Perception Index. According to Reporters without Borders, Bangladesh has a better standing in terms of press freedom compared to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. In terms of economic and political freedom, the country has graduated from ‘not free’ to a ‘partly free’ status in the assessment of the Freedom House. New information technologies and media have created new modalities of citizen
Climate hazards can seriously impact the life and livelihood of the people and the environment. However, the people of Bangladesh have proved their resilience and adaptability in facing various natural disasters.

Bangladesh is under ‘extreme risk’ due to climate change as per Climate Change Vulnerability Index 2012. Two-thirds of the country is vulnerable to monsoon flooding. Climate hazards can seriously impact the life and livelihood of the people and the environment. However, the people of Bangladesh have proved their resilience and adaptability in facing various natural disasters and manmade havocs and public investments in disaster preparedness system have boosted the resilience.

Compared to their South Asian peers, women of Bangladesh have a high degree of labor force participation and school enrollment rate, while having low level of vulnerability to violence as per World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report 2011 and OECD Atlas of Gender & Development 2010. Poverty in Bangladesh has fallen from 40% in 2005 to 31.5% in 2010. However, more than 40 million people remain undernourished. Around half of all children under 5 are stunted due to malnourishment. At the same time, Bangladesh has raised its grain production by 350% since 1972. The rapid increase in agricultural productivity is matched by a food security policy framework including a National Food Policy. Life expectancy rose from 59 to 69 percent in the last decade and Bangladesh now has a better life expectancy than that of South Asian average of 65 years.

With around 90% of the population consisting of Sunni Muslims and another 9% Hindus, apart from some stray incidents, overall Bangladesh has maintained a congenial environment of stable religious freedom and harmony. While Islam is the state religion, the constitution identifies secularism as one of the fundamental principles of state policy. Works of writers like Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, and mystic Fakir Lalan Shai reflects the humanistic orientation of Bangladeshis. The US Department of State in its Report on International Religious Freedom 2011 notes that treatment of religious minorities has improved markedly in recent times.

Over the last 20 years, Bangladesh has made exemplary improvements in almost every indicator of human welfare. Girls’ education has progressed significantly and the country has drastically reduced the numbers of early deaths of infants, children and mothers. Some of these changes are among the fastest social improvements ever seen in the modern era. Bangladesh was one of six countries in Asia and Africa awarded for its progress toward achieving its Millennium Development Goals, a
set of targets that aim to eradicate extreme poverty and boost health, education and the status of women world-wide by 2015. In its 42 years of existence, Bangladesh has demonstrated its firm commitment to international peace and amity. It is one of the top contributor countries in UN peacekeeping missions and has participated in around 40 countries for sustaining peace.

One of the factors that played a major part in achieving this award is the introduction of micro credit, and excellent communication network throughout the country through world class NGOs like BRAC and Grameen Bank. This simple concept has revolutionized credit facilities that are extended to the impoverished segment of the population, and is hailed as a potent tool for poverty alleviation. Today the Bangladesh model, as represented by the likes of BRAC and Grameen Bank are being replicated around the world in earnest. BRAC recently has been internationally awarded as the largest and best NGO of the world.

In the last three years, the number of mobile phone subscribers has increased from 45 million to 95 million. Bangladesh has, among the most pervasive mobile phone network in the world, an incredibly low call rates. Today, more than 70% of Bangladeshi has access to telephone services and this massive improvement of communication has had a remarkable impact on development. Not only has it made people more mobile, it also has changed the way people conduct business, eliminating the middlemen who often used to deprive farmers and workers from profit, ensuring a more equitable distribution of income.

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Not only has the country shown immense improvement in terms of social and economic development, but in the last 5 years, Bangladesh also has established itself as quite a sporty nation. The country’s national cricket team has made remarkable strides in international cricket and gained the reputation of being a formidable team by winning a number of major tournaments. The country has produced the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal who have won accolades in the international arena. Bangladesh’s success on the cricket field, coupled with the intense enthusiasm with which its people follow cricket has resulted in the country becoming a major destination for international cricket. In February 2011, more than a billion people watched as Bangladesh hosted the lavish opening ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011. This mega event was not only a testament to Bangladesh’s growing repertoire as an international cricketing powerhouse but also to the country’s organizational ability.
Despite being a country that is talked about for its numerous achievements in multiple sectors, Bangladesh is a country that remains unacceptably under visited. Given the stigma of poverty and floods associated instantly with the name of Bangladesh, this is not a big surprise. However, lying within this small area, are tiger-filled Sundarbans, the unseen relics of long-forgotten Buddhist kingdoms in Rangamati, lush and abundant tea plantations around Srimangal, tribal groups, glorious beaches at Cox’s Bazar that stretch for eternity, freshwater dolphins and deep-water whales. The best part of visiting Bangladesh is to experience the sense of genuine adventure, the feeling of being in a place where every single person is a fighter, with fire in their belly and passion in their heart. The best part of visiting Bangladesh is learning how welcoming and hospitable people can be, no matter how meager their means and income may be.

Bangladesh is a country mired with problems and bottlenecks, but what is more important, yet overshadowed, is the fact that even with so many crises to fight, so many hurdles to overcome, Bangladesh, or more precisely, the people of Bangladesh have kept on fighting, and with a few exceptions, have kept on winning. The time has come, when the world looks past the impoverished faces and takes note of the optimistic, ever burning spirits of the people that has driven the country forward, regardless of what thorns were laid in the path. The journey continues much to the awe and wonder of the rest of the world. It is time that Bangladesh is branded for not only what it is today but also for what it can become tomorrow as opposed to what has been historically, and mostly mistakenly, perceived by the outside world.

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U.S. relations with Bangladesh have evolved significantly over time. In past decades, U.S. perceptions of Bangladesh have been shaped largely by either broad policy concerns originating outside of Asia or by humanitarian concerns. In recent years, the United States has realized that Bangladesh could serve as a vital partner in addressing some of the major issues confronting our world, including food security, global health and climate change. In the future, Washington will also view Bangladesh as a key player in the increasingly important Indo-Pacific region. Developments in Bangladesh and the United States will determine to what extent the two countries can benefit from this shift in perspective. Over the longer term, however, a closer and more mature relationship appears to be the most likely outcome.

This paper is written from the U.S. perspective. It focuses largely on U.S. perceptions of Bangladesh; how those perceptions have shaped U.S. policy towards Bangladesh in the past; how those perceptions have changed over time; and how current U.S. perceptions and of the region are likely to influence U.S. ties with Bangladesh in the future.

The Past: Humanitarian Assistance

The birth of Bangladesh highlighted the two drivers of U.S. policy in the region at that time: humanitarian concerns and broader geo-political considerations, centered far away. The great Bhola cyclone of November 1970, left over 400,000 people dead and led to accusations in what was then East Pakistan that the central government in Islamabad did not do enough to assist relief efforts. This perception, in turn, helped fuel the overwhelming victory of the pro-autonomy Awami League in the December 1970 elections.

In contrast, external players - including the United States - seemed to respond to the post-cyclone humanitarian crisis with alacrity. Within days, the first of ten U.S. helicopters arrived in the area and began ferrying food and other supplies to the victims. (This stood in sharp contrast to the failure of the Pakistan central government to transfer any helicopters from the West to the East to assist in the relief efforts.) Ultimately, the U.S. provided some $39 million in emergency relief assistance and $50 million in food aid following the cyclone. The U.S. also authorized an additional $100 million to help rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the cyclone-affected regions. Ultimately, however, the Pakistani central authorities declined to accept the assistance. (Note: The above figures represent 1970/71 U.S. dollars; the equivalent figures in current U.S. dollars would be much higher.)

Geopolitical Concerns

The War of Liberation that erupted in March of 1971 presented U.S. policy makers with tough decisions. The U.S. Consulate General in Dhaka, as well as almost all Western media, accurately and vividly portrayed the atrocities being committed on the ground by Pakistani forces and their sympathizers. Many in the U.S. Congress and U.S. public opinion more broadly sympathized with the people of then East Pakistan. The highest levels of the U.S. government, however, looked at developments on the
ground in Dhaka and elsewhere through the prism of the ongoing Cold War with the Soviet Union. This perspective led to a U.S. policy on the events in what is now Bangladesh that became viewed as a tilt towards Pakistan.

First and foremost, U.S. policy makers perceived Pakistan as a staunch ally of the United States in the struggle with the Soviet Union. Indeed, Pakistan as a charter member of both the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), had become a treaty ally of the United States, one that Washington viewed as a bulwark against possible Soviet incursions into South and Southwest Asia. In contrast, the United States viewed with increasing suspicion India, the main supporter of the rebel forces in the War of Liberation. In the eyes of Washington, following the 1965 war with Pakistan, India appeared to be edging closer and closer to the Soviet Union. Thus, some in Washington feared that the war in East Pakistan could end up leading to the break-up of an allied state, Pakistan, and the creation of a successor state, Bangladesh, that would follow India in a policy of friendship towards the Soviet Union.

During this period, the United States was eager to pull out honorably from its war in Vietnam. President Nixon viewed a rapprochement with China as a means not only to achieve this goal, but also to strike a heavy geopolitical blow against the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union’s relations with China were already frigid, the prospect of a China enjoying good relations with the U.S. would greatly complicate matters for Moscow. In 1971, the United States was covertly conducting negotiations with the Chinese, using the facilitation of President Yahya and the central Pakistan government. These negotiations led to two seminal visits to Beijing: the secret visit by National Security Advisor Kissinger to Beijing in July 1971 (by way of a flight from Pakistan) and the momentous visit by President Nixon in February 1972. Ultimately these visits led to the normalization of relations between the United States and China.

Some observers believe it easy to overstate the impact of Pakistan’s support for U.S. diplomatic efforts with China on U.S. policy toward Pakistan during the War of Liberation. Others note that the U.S. repeatedly asked for restraint on the part of the Yahya government and (perhaps reluctantly) implemented an arms embargo against Pakistan - and India - during the war. Still, it appears undeniable that Cold War considerations greatly influenced U.S. decision-making during Bangladesh’s War of Liberation.

Evolution of U.S. Ties with post-Liberation Bangladesh

In the years following the War of Liberation, U.S. policy makers gradually realized that Bangladesh was not about to become a full-fledged partner of the Soviet Union. Instead, the humanitarian needs caused by the destruction of the war and the instability that followed, as well as a perceived need to keep Bangladesh out of the Soviet camp, led Washington to believe that development assistance should be a key driver of the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship. Development assistance has remained an important component of U.S. policy towards Bangladesh. Since Liberation, Bangladesh has received over $6 billion in development assistance from the United States. At the same time, however, South Asia in general was becoming somewhat of a backwater for U.S. foreign policy: Washington policy makers viewed the region as a relatively stable, but poor, part of the globe where U.S. interests were neither under immediate threat nor could achieve huge progress. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provided the glaring exception to this view. It took an event with enormous implication for U.S.-Soviet relations to focus Washington’s attention again on South Asia - and this focus was limited largely to Afghanistan and Pakistan, barely touching the rest of South Asia.

At the beginning of the 1990’s two developments reshaped U.S. perceptions of Bangladesh. The first
was the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the first time in decades, the United States did not face a determined foe, leaving Washington free to shape foreign policy based on other considerations. More generally, Washington policy makers downgraded the importance of foreign relations in the list of U.S. national priorities, concentrating instead on matters such as the economy.

The second development that reshaped views in Washington was the return of full-fledged democracy to Bangladesh. At the time, many in Washington believed that Bangladesh’s democratization was part of a larger historical movement, which was leading to the triumph of democracy and free markets everywhere from Eastern Europe to Africa to Latin America. Washington wanted these new democracies to do well – and assumed they would. By and large, the U.S. hoped, the world was moving in the right direction.

The Post- 9/11 World

9/11 shattered the relative complacency that characterized U.S. perceptions of the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The U.S. homeland had been attacked for the first time since Pearl Harbor, and the government felt the need to protect U.S. citizens. U.S. foreign policy attention shifted to thwarting Al-Qaeda and its allies, and eventually the U.S. engaged in land wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

U.S. perceptions of Bangladesh shifted dramatically during this period, reflecting both the U.S. need to deal with what it perceived as a global terrorism threat and changes on the ground inside Bangladesh. U.S. policy makers began to realize that Bangladesh represented an enormously populous, but relatively moderate, Muslim-majority democracy. Just as important, Bangladesh’s continuing economic growth and success in a number of social indicators held out hope for a brighter future for its citizens. Thus, the United States began to accelerate engagement with Bangladesh on a number of fronts: U.S. assistance to Bangladesh tripled between 2007 and 2011; Secretary of State Clinton visited Bangladesh in 2012; and the two countries instituted a formal dialogue process. The U.S. also cooperated closely - and successfully - with the government of Bangladesh in the struggle against terrorism.

Moreover, Washington began to appreciate that Bangladesh could serve as a vital partner in addressing some of the major challenges the world was facing in the new millennium. On issues ranging from food security to global health to climate change, the United States found that Bangladesh could make real progress and serve as a positive example for other countries.

Future U.S.-Bangladesh Ties

Predicting the future is always more difficult than analyzing the past. With respect to relations between two nations, personal relationships among leaders or unexpected developments in either of the countries can alter expectations – as can totally unexpected developments outside the control of either government. Still, from the U.S. perspective, the key ingredients have come into place for an increasingly close and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh in the coming years.

Most fundamentally, the two nations – and their people – agree
on the importance of democracy. Poll after poll inside Bangladesh highlights the commitment of the Bangladeshi people to democracy. As long as that commitment continues, Bangladesh will continue to have the broad support of the United States.

For decades, U.S. policy makers viewed development assistance as the key lever in the bilateral relationship with Bangladesh. That was not a bad thing: it reflected both a desire to engage with Bangladesh and the real progress that U.S. development assistance was helping Bangladesh to achieve. In recent years, however, Bangladesh’s solid economic progress has made its relationship with the United States more diverse – and more mature. The United States has become the largest single market for Bangladesh’s rapidly growing exports – and US exports to Bangladesh have soared in recent years. Bangladesh, in turn, has become an increasingly attractive destination for the sort of foreign direct investment that could greatly accelerate the country’s economic growth – and lift scores of millions of Bangladeshis out of poverty. In the future, the United States and Bangladesh must not only discuss trade and investment issues but also reach agreements that will guarantee the expansion of exports and investments in both directions.

The U.S. “Re-balance” to Asia

From the Washington perspective, however, perhaps the single most important factor driving the United States towards a closer relationship with Bangladesh is the U.S. perception that the world is changing. Both President Obama and then-Secretary Clinton have spoken eloquently about the need to recognize this change by rebalancing U.S. policy in the direction of Asia. Many outside commentators proclaim this vision to be too vague; others proclaim it threatening; still others proclaim it has no substance.

Simply put, however, the re-balancing represents nothing less than a recognition that U.S. global interests - strategic, investment, trade, and cultural, among others - will increasingly focus on the Indo-Pacific region. This area now produces well over half the world’s wealth. Over 40 percent of U.S. trade is now with the region - and that trade is growing rapidly. Almost two-thirds of the foreign students in the United States come from this region. The region now provides the largest number of immigrants moving to the United States. This region also features tensions from the India-Pakistan border through the South China to the Korean peninsula. All these trends will have an increasing impact on the United States in the coming decades. Simply put, the United States cannot afford to ignore the challenges and opportunities present in the Indo-Pacific region.

Senior U.S. officials have consistently stressed that the rebalance of America’s global efforts is not focused solely on East Asia, but stretches into the Indian Ocean. East and South Asia represent a continuum, covering a variety of countries with shared histories and cultural and religious influences. Many of the countries are experiencing consistent, solid economic growth. Increasingly, the two regions are looking at each other, trying to judge the possibilities for future cooperation. The U.S. rebalance recognizes and welcomes the growing closeness between the nations of East and South Asia.

Bangladesh and the Rebalance

The U.S. rebalance means that over time the United States will likely put even greater emphasis on developing cooperative relations with Bangladesh. These efforts will reflect both the growing intrinsic importance of Bangladesh itself and its potential as a key actor in East and South Asia.
Bilaterally, Bangladesh’s fast-growing economy, strong commitment to democracy, its key role in addressing global issues of importance, and its friendly relations with its neighbors make it an ideal partner for the U.S. in the region. In addition to traditional cooperation on development and security issues, the U.S. will likely want to work increasingly with Bangladesh on trade and investment and people-to-people ties; such efforts would both broaden and deepen the relationships between the two nations and their people.

Regionally, Bangladesh’s location means that Dhaka will determine to an important degree how quickly and effectively the fast-growing economies of South Asia integrate with those of Southeast Asia. Along with Myanmar, Bangladesh could serve as the bridge connecting the transportation, communication, and energy networks of the two regions. To do so, Dhaka would have to take a series of decisions, some of which might be controversial. If it is willing to make those decisions, however, Dhaka would almost certainly ensure faster, and likely more equitable, growth not only for Bangladesh itself but also for much of South and Southeast Asia.

Some Caveats

Predicting a general trend towards closer, more positive ties between Bangladesh and the United States seems a fairly safe bet. Still, developments in either of the two countries could slow down that trend.

On the U.S. side, a number of possible developments could slow down the implementation of the re-balancing towards Asia. These could include: budgetary constraints that might limit funds for development or security cooperation in Asia; a serious crisis in another part of the world that forces the U.S. government to focus much of its attention on that crisis; or new personnel at the top of the U.S. government wanting to implement different priorities. With respect to engaging with Bangladesh specifically, any movement away from democracy would make it hard for Washington to justify accelerating cooperation with Dhaka.

Bangladesh, for its part, might decide, either as a result of domestic politics or external pressures, that it does not want a closer relationship with the United States at this point in time.

The Bottom Line

While some possible developments might impede the move towards closer relations between the United States and Bangladesh, over time the general trend towards closer bilateral relations will likely continue.

On the U.S. side, the re-balance to Asia does not represent the wishes of specific individuals within the U.S. government. Rather it represents the acknowledgement that U.S. global interests have shifted irreversibly to the Indo-Pacific region. While there might be fits and starts, U.S. policy attention over time will have to focus increasingly on that region. More specifically, Bangladesh’s large population, commitment to democracy, fast-growing economy, and critical location will ensure that the United States will increasingly want to deal with Dhaka on matters of mutual interest.

And finally, over time, Bangladesh will acknowledge the indispensability of dealing in a positive manner with the United States - a major power which wants to assist Bangladesh’s efforts to build a democratic, stable, and prosperous nation.

James F. Moriarty, Managing Director for South Asia, BowerGroupAsia; Ambassador (ret.), former Ambassador to Bangladesh and to Nepal and former Special Assistant to the President. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.
Bangladesh is a dynamic South Asian nation located between the rising economic giants of India and China and just west of the growing economies of South-East Asia. It is also situated at the head of the Bay of Bengal, which provides it ready access to the thriving sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and to the markets of both the Atlantic and Pacific. Bangladesh is home to the seventh largest population on earth and is the third most populous Muslim-majority nation, yet, it is a moderate and democratic nation. A shining example of a tolerant, stable and developing county in a region racked with violent extremism and international tensions, Bangladesh matters to the United States of America. It matters because it is strategically located in a part of the world that is gaining influence on the world stage—a part of the world where governments are having to defend constitutionalism, the rule of law, and human rights against the violent threats of ideological radicalism.

The Asia Pivot

One merely needs to look at the various documents and statements of U.S. officials all highlighting America’s new strategic priorities for the 21st century. They are replete with references to a region in which Bangladesh occupies a central location, the Asia-Pacific region.

While the United States was absorbed in two conflicts during the 9/11 decade, the global economy was dramatically changing. In Asia, major developments in global trade and economic growth occurred at a rapid pace. In an effort to refocus American attention on the primary region shaping these changing dynamics, President Barack Obama outlined a dramatic pivot to Asia.

The U.S. Department of Defense’s new Strategic Guidance issued in January 2012 highlights the United States’ new strategic priority clearly:

“We will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to
the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for the Asia-Pacific Security.”

In diplomatic circles, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton clearly emphasized a similar point in her November 2011 feature article in Foreign Policy:

“Harnessing Asia’s growth and dynamism is central to American economic and strategic interests and a key priority for President Obama. Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology. Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress.”

Essentially, in order to ensure Asia’s-and by extension America’s-continued prosperity, there must be sustained security and stability in the region. Maintaining freedom of navigation and continued access to the global commons is critical for economic interdependence, and America feels it can play a leading role in this regard. Nowhere has this become more important than in the Indian Ocean region.

Linked to the Pacific Ocean, Persian Gulf and Suez Canal through major transit choke points, such as the Straits of Malacca, Hormuz and Shatt al-Arab, the Indian Ocean is one of strategic importance to the global economy. Its value has, therefore, naturally allowed it to become a playground for competition among regional powers, such as China and India. With a growing region comes the inevitable territorial and maritime disputes that threaten the very stability the United States seeks to foster. Consequently, the United States is a third major power seeking to influence the area. But this influence is positive in nature, as Secretary Clinton also clearly presented in her article:

“We are the only power with a network of strong alliances in the region, no territorial ambitions, and a long record of providing for the common good. Along with our allies, we have underwritten regional security for decades -- patrolling Asia’s sea lanes and preserving stability-and that in turn has helped create the conditions for growth.”

Overall, the United States’ strategy is to reinforce collaboration in the region. This can be achieved through bilateral and multilateral engagement, such as military-to-military relations. Modest programs of military cooperation do not promote conflict; rather, improved military capability provides a basis for interconnectivity and coordination in times of threat or disaster, thus promoting peace and security.

For instance, America and Bangladesh’s military-to-military partnership has led to enhanced security in the region. Bangladesh’s ability to secure its own maritime borders, combat piracy, and prevent the smuggling of weapons, people and drugs has allowed it to become a force multiplier for all who rely on secure sea lines in the Asia-Pacific.

Bangladesh’s access to the Indian Ocean is also of importance to its own energy interests. As an article in The Economist recently noted, “The obvious solutions to Bangladesh’s long-term energy future would be a mix of coal and gas imports from Myanmar or the Middle East.” These would be vital contributions to its individual growth.

As Bangladesh strengthens ties with its neighbors in the region - India, China, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan - it helps bring stability through integration instead of competition. A key initiative for the United States has been the development of the Indo-Pacific Economic corridor, meant to enhance commercial ties by helping to create east-west connectivity. This highway would start in India, move through Bangladesh and Myanmar, and finally connect to Southeast Asia. Bangladesh sits at the nexus of this initiative. If Bangladesh can one day become a major transit and trade route for the surrounding countries,
it can be a major economic power commensurate with its size. Places, such as the historical sea port of Chittagong, have the potential to become key transit points for exports around the region. Today, neighboring Myanmar is opening up to the world. This provides Bangladesh with a unique opportunity to take advantage of Myanmar’s immense natural gas exports (second only to Indonesia in the region), while simultaneously helping it enter the regional order successfully.

Another example of positive regional integration is Bangladesh’s recent signing of a new visa regime and extradition treaty with India. These two developments have helped facilitate meaningful interaction and their ability to clamp down on security issues affecting both. Relations between the two countries have been improving steadily since 2009, helping increase economic and diplomatic engagement. Perhaps these developments will help lead to treaties on water sharing and the transit of Indian goods across Bangladesh. The other Asian giant, China, also has strong ties with Bangladesh. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s January 2013 report, China is one of Bangladesh’s key trading partners and chief supplier of military aid.

But, the United States does not only seek partnership with Bangladesh for strategic purposes. As the U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dan Mozena, has stated, America works hard to “promote a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic.” America looks for nations who share similar values. In Bangladesh, the United States has found itself a democratic and secular partner willing to work to better the lives of those in its country and the region. One that has become a partner in all four of President Obama’s global initiatives: Engagement with the global Muslim community, Global Climate Change, Feed the Future, and Global Health. By working together in these four areas, Bangladesh ensures its role as a contributor to regional stability.

A direct product of the global initiatives partnership has been an America heavily engaged in Bangladesh’s disaster preparedness. The region has experienced a high number of natural disasters over the years. This is one of the dangerous effects of climate change, and Bangladesh has not been immune from this phenomenon. Natural disasters, such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes can potentially lead to instability through population displacement, disease and death. This is especially true for nations with large poverty stricken populations, of which Bangladesh is one.

In the end, Bangladesh’s interests in maritime security, regional engagement, and freedom of navigation naturally align with those of the United States and make them a key strategic partner in the Asia pivot.

**Countering Violent Extremism**

While America’s rebalancing towards Asia is primarily for economic purposes, America still works to protect itself and its allies from terror threats. Since 9/11, the United States has found itself in an ongoing Global War on Terror. Militant groups such as al-Qaeda and its affiliates, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and others have proliferated in various South Asian countries. With their desire to impose violent fundamentalist values, they threaten the security not only of the United States, but also of nuclear powers like Pakistan, India and potentially China.

Active militant groups in South Asia run counter to maintaining regional stability, the pillar of the Asia pivot.
Pivot. They can cross borders and strike in various countries, often causing friction between the state finding itself the victim and the state where the actors originated.

The 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, led by Lashkar-e-Taiba members out of Pakistan, were a chilling reminder of how close two nuclear powers could come to war over the actions of a few violent extremists. Lashkar-e-Taiba is a prime example of an extremist organization known to have networks throughout much of South Asia.

A similar extremist group of concern to Bangladesh, India and the United States has been Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), who has actively tried to spread its violent ideology and activities in Bangladesh for over a decade. A range of militants attributed to HuJI have conducted terror attacks in India and Pakistan as well. In an effort to crack down on HuJI jihadists, the Bangladeshi government banned the militant group in 2005. Additionally, the current Bangladeshi government of Sheikh Hasina took decisive action, consistent with Bangladeshi law, to apprehend, try and punish these extremist leaders. The government has even used educational means to help defeat the radicalization of Bangladeshi youth within its school systems. For instance, it has been reported that the government issued guidelines to all of the country’s schools on how to discuss militancy and its dangers in order to defeat the promotion of violence.

Counterterrorism cooperation has helped Bangladesh develop a new and useful relationship with India, one considered historically testy. The extradition treaty -- mentioned earlier-- signed by New Delhi and Dhaka has allowed both countries to clamp down on insurgents, terrorists and separatists who freely cross their borders. Progress in this area should help build trust between the two neighbors.

The United States has also provided meaningful counterterrorism assistance in the form of police training and counter-radicalization programs. For example, America has supported Bangladesh in their
efforts to create a new National Academy for Security Training. This counterterrorism cooperation has been a part of a wider American effort to defeat various terrorist networks in the region. In just a couple of years, the cooperation has proved to be mutually beneficial and effective, resulting in a Bangladesh far less likely to serve as a base or transit point for terrorist groups.

Bangladesh stands as an example to the world of a Muslim-majority nation that effectively deals with violent fundamentalist groups. Even with a large poverty stricken population, Bangladesh has somehow been able to prevent these areas from becoming major breeding grounds for terrorists. The country’s traditional, Sufi-influenced and moderate culture might play a role because it acts as a natural counterforce to the groups advocating extremism. These are all attributes of great interest to the United States and the international community.

Bangladesh’s proven success in counterterrorism cooperation and assistance with the United States can also serve as a model for America’s national security strategy. The United States will have to find cheaper ways to degrade global terror networks in the coming age of austerity. Large military operations designed to defeat terror groups, akin to America’s war in Afghanistan, will no longer be viable in the near future. It is, therefore, in America’s interests to enhance the capabilities of a various host nations’ security forces, thereby enabling them to degrade any growing terror threats with minimal outside assistance.

The Near Future

Bangladesh has overcome enormous challenges in the recent past. It is a country with great development accomplishments and economic growth. But, to take full advantage of its economic location, Bangladesh must work to resolve the issues of inadequate ports, roads, railroads, and power and energy supplies. These deficiencies are counter-productive to Bangladesh becoming an integral part of Asia’s rise. It’s in America’s interests to see Bangladesh overcome these challenges and become an economic power.

Bangladesh’s immediate, short-term challenge is managing its elections, an event capable of unleashing political instability. Therefore, it’s also in America’s interests for a peaceful transition or preservation of power to occur; in turn, allowing Bangladesh to serve as a democratic model to the region.

In the foreseeable future, the United States will find a credible partner in Bangladesh as it rebalances towards Asia. Both should take full advantage of this incredible opportunity in the interest of mutual prosperity and growth.

*Kip Whittington is a Research Associate at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. Please note that the views expressed in this article do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.*
Bangladesh: A Success Story in Counter Terrorism

-Shahab Enam Khan

The fight against terrorism, in particular terrorism emerging from religious and ideological extremism, has become a focus area of foreign and security policies of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has developed a combined approach, including global, regional, and national initiatives, to counter the menace of extremist terrorism and religious militancy. As a result, Bangladesh has become a success story on counterterrorism in the context of South Asia and global Political Order. Much of the current success began after the present government that was formed in 2009. The present government in Bangladesh has left no stone unturned to counter terrorism since it assumed power in January 2009. Addressing the 67th UN General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vowed to continue a policy of zero tolerance for countering terrorism in Bangladesh. Besides, the country signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000. As an effort to build a strong counter terrorism regime, the current government has undertaken a number of commendable steps which includes legal reforms, strengthening of law enforcement agencies, anti-terrorism and anti-extremism awareness campaigns, and modernization of education curriculums. Therefore, the counter terrorism regime in Bangladesh includes law enforcement and intelligence agencies, legal apparatus, relevant stakeholders of the government involved in countering terrorism in Bangladesh, media and civil society.

In its pursuit against terrorism and extremism, the government has undertaken comprehensive measures, which involve legal reforms and forming of new institutions, to make Bangladesh’s anti terrorism and anti money laundering legislative and institutional regime compatible with the Plan of Action of the UN CT strategy. In order to do so, the Anti Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2012, and the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012 has been enacted. In its effort to monitor proliferation of and curb terrorist finance, the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Bangladesh Bank issued a circular to chief executive officers and managing directors of all commercial banks, non-bank financial institutions, money changers, insurance companies and the country’s other respective institutions to execute these two laws in their organizations. Bangladesh is now set to join the Egmont Group - an international network of financial intelligence units - for combating money laundering at a global scale.

Apart from strong anti terrorism and money laundering acts, the Mutual Legal Assistance Act, 2012 has been enacted. This...
Act provides a legal framework for inter-country cooperation in carrying out enquiries, prosecutions and trial of criminal activities. This law empowers the government of Bangladesh to freeze properties of criminals and terrorists and their equipment used in criminal activities in line with the request of a foreign country. Besides, Bangladesh and India has signed an extradition treaty on January 28, 2013. This legal cooperation between Bangladesh and India on extradition and countering terrorism is crucial for disrupting regional connections and networks among terrorist outfits in South Asia. Bangladesh and India has agreed to implement a Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) and has agreed to increase the number of joint patrolling with a view to curbing criminal activities along the border. It is worth noting that, Bangladesh has been cooperating with a number of partner nations including India, the United States, and several European Countries on counter terrorism issues.

At an institutional level, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) has formed a seventeen member ‘National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention (NCMRP)’ comprising relevant ministries and security agencies to tackle terrorism and mobilize public opinion against extremist activities. The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) has also been taken steps to promote institutional cooperation and information sharing among the intelligence and law enforcement agencies. An eight member ‘National Committee for Intelligence Coordination (NCIC), with the Prime Minister as its Chairperson, to coordinate the intelligence activities of the different agencies has become operational. Along with these high-level Committees, NSI has recently taken a significant step to establish a ‘Combined Threat Assessment Centre’ (CTAC) to assess threats in relation to specific people, places, events and sectors. The government has so far banned four extremist outfits Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI-B), Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) and Shahadat-e-Al Hikma. These initiatives have bolstered the process of counter terrorism drive in Bangladesh.

Apart from the legal and institutional arrangements, the government has integrated the participation of civil society, NGOs and media in strengthening the counter terrorism regime. Since the government has been conducting a multifaceted strategy to counter terrorism, it has included the issues of modernization of mainstream and madrassa education, public awareness, women empowerment, campaigning for secular and moderate cultural values. The media and civil society, along with other relevant government functionaries, are now mutually working in promoting awareness against the menace of terrorism and reducing the growth of extremism in Bangladesh. For instance, leaders of different progressive political parties and social organizations have formed Sampradayikata-Jangibad Birodhi Mancha (a platform against communalism and militancy) to promote awareness against communalism and militancy organizing
Foreign Policy Issues

seminars, workshops, processions and human chains. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has been organizing awareness programs against terrorism in different schools and colleges. The National Education Policy 2010 includes measures to reform the country’s madrassa education. This reform is also a part of the government’s strategy to bring madrassas which are considered by some experts to be a breeding ground for Islamist militancy, into the mainstream education system and eliminate the chance of any students becoming radicalized.

Islamic Foundation, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is also conducting several programs to counter religious extremism and fanaticism, setting up of service oriented organization, publication of Islamic books and periodicals, organizing the training of Imams of mosques and providing employment to poor and under-privileged Muslims. It has seven Imam Training Academy Centers and 31 Islamic Mission Centers through which imams from across the country are being trained to play an instrumental role in the overall development of Bangladesh. It is further organizing coordination programs including imams and muezzins in each union under the directive of ‘NCMRP’ headed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA).

Despite these commendable efforts by the government, according to a study published in the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), the country has witnessed 18 terrorism/insurgency-related fatalities in total, including 17 militants and one civilian, in 14 incidents of killings through 2012. Three Islamist terrorism linked fatalities occurred, including one civilian and two terrorists; in 2010, six such fatalities were recorded, including three civilians and three militants. This is a significant contrast with 2005, when Bangladesh experienced 35 Islamist terrorism linked fatalities, including 26 civilians and nine terrorists. However, the notable factor is that the punitive measures taken by the law enforcement agencies have failed to dampen the spirit of die-hard activists of the banned extremist outfits, mostly Islamist extremists, to carry on their activities. Some of the militants of these banned outfits, particularly those belongs to Hizbut Tahrir, are regrouping at different places across the country. Therefore, to continue the success on curbing terrorism in Bangladesh strengthening the human resource, tactical, and financial capacities of the law enforcement agencies is urgently required. This would also require an effective national counter-terrorism strategy which could provide unified, coordinated, and coherent guidance in improving the operational capabilities of the law enforcement agencies, in facilitating public participation in counter terrorism initiatives, and in ensuring sustainable political commitment.

It is indeed a fact that the political will of the present government in countering terrorism in all forms and manifestations has made their counter-terrorism efforts successful.

The Author is Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, and Research Director, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. Views expressed herein are the author’s own.
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

Hon’ble Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP and H.E. Mr Akramul Qader, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA receiving US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Dhaka

Hon’ble Foreign Minister, Dr. Dipu Moni, MP with US Acting Secretary of State, William J. Burns

National and Independence Day Reception at the Embassy

H.E. Akramul Qader speaking at the National and Independence Day Reception
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

H.E. Akramul Qader speaking at the Victory Day program

H.E. Akramul Qader receiving guests at the Armed Forces Day reception

H.E. Akramul Qader with high-level State Department officials in a reception commemorating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

H.E. Akramul Qader with the performers of Mohajoner Nao, a musical drama commemorating the 40th anniversary of the US-Bangladesh diplomatic relations

H.E. Akramul Qader, Hon’ble Minister for Food and Disaster Management, Dr. Abdur Razzaque, and Mr. Mitul Desai, Senior Adviser of US State Department enjoying ‘Mohajoner Nao’

H.E. Akramul Qader with US Ambassador to Bangladesh H.E. Dan W. Mozena at Bangladesh Embassy, Washington, DC
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

H.E. Akramul Qader with Congressman Adam Schiff

H.E. Akramul Qader at the Embassy reception commemorating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

H.E. Akramul Qader with Congressman Sander M Levin

Armed Forces Day reception at the Embassy

H.E. Akramul Qader inaugurating Embassy Library

H.E. Akramul Qader speaking at the Baul Festival organized by the Embassy in the Washington Monument ground
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

Ms. Suraiya Begum, Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs speaking at the Baul Festival organized by the Embassy

Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes briefing labor rights groups at the Embassy

H.E. Akramul Qader distributing awards to the Diaspora groups on the Bangla New Year Day for promoting Bangladesh in the US

A cultural evening with the Professionals in the City

Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith speaking at the annual fund-raising dinner of Samhati, a Washington based philanthropic organization

Cultural performance at an event jointly organized by the Embassy and Bangladesh Liberation War Archives
Visitors enjoying cultural performance at the Embassy Open House program

Mr. Nazmul Hoque and Mrs. Rasheda Rawnak Khan anchoring the Bangla New Year Program at the Embassy

Reception commemorating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

H.E. Akramul Qader and US Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Ms. Ann Stock interacting with Bangla learning US university students

H.E. Akramul Qader inaugurating solo painting exhibition of Shumona Haque

H.E. Akramul Qader with a visiting group of students and faculty members of the University of North Carolina
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

H.E. Akramul Qader in a meeting with US State Department officials at the Embassy

Members of Bangladesh Embassy Family performing at Pohela Boishakh program

H.E. Akramul Qader with Congresswoman Betty McCollum

H.E. Akramul Qader with Senator Dick Durbin

Mr. Tom Dine, an awardee of Friends of Liberation War Honour, speaking at the Victory Day program

Mr. Wahid Hossain, Economic Minister performing at the Victory Day program
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

Mrs. Rifat Sultana Akram, wife of Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA speaking at the Victory Day program

Symposium on Bangladesh-US Economic Relations organized by the Embassy

Shahanara Monica, First Secretary performing at the Language Martyrs’ Day and International Mother Language Day

Cultural performance by the Embassy family at the Victory Day program

Sitar evening of Alif Laila celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

H. E. Akramul Qader with a former peace corp member at a Reception organized by the Embassy
Glimpses of Embassy Activities

Mrs. Rifat Sultana Akram, wife of Bangladesh Ambassador to the US with the guests at the Embassy Open House

Winners of the Drawing Competition organized on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation

A group of visiting Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to the University of Oklahoma meeting H. E. Akramul Qader at the Embassy

Painting exhibition of Rejaul Karim commemorating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

Paraguayan performers at Martyrs’ Day and International Mother Language Day program

Cultural Performance by Embassy Family at the Language Martyrs’ Day and International Mother Language Day program
জন্তা ব্যাংকের আকর্ষণীয় তিনটি সঞ্চয় স্কিম

জমা টাকা ৬ বছর বিশ্বাস
(জমার পর্যায়ে)

৫০,০০০ টাকা এর বায়ুমণ্ডলীয় অঞ্চলের অন্য এককী ক্ষুদ্র করণে ৬ বছরের শেষে জমা সঞ্চয়ীর ফুল ফ্রোন্ট।

শাসিক আহ্বান প্রক্রিয়া (আহ্বানবিহিন)

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মাধ্যমিক মূল্য ক্রিয়া (আহ্বানবিহিন)

নতুন ক্রিয়া তের মধ্যে জমা সঞ্চয়ীর প্রথম পদার্থ থেকে মাধ্যমিক মূল্য ক্রিয়ার প্রচুর সাহায্য জন্য সঞ্চয়ীর জমা ভুমিকা হবে।

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