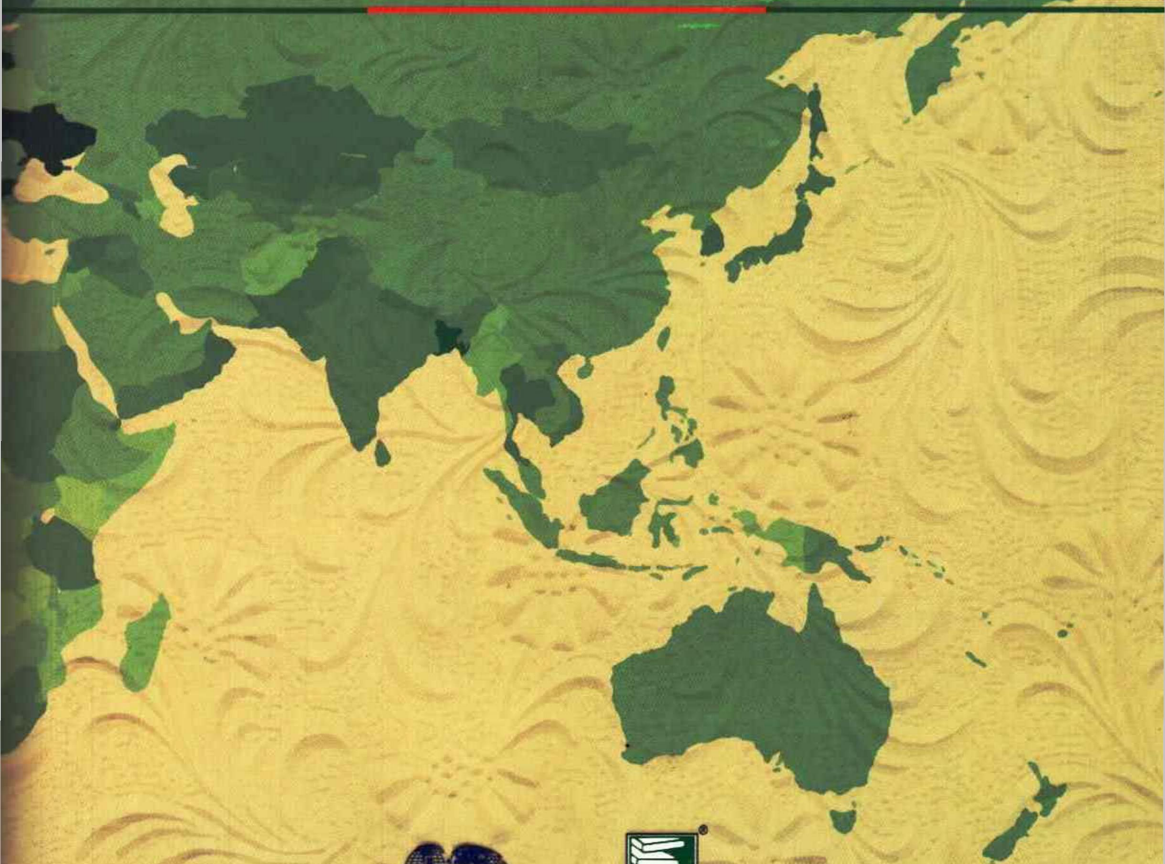


# CHANGING GLOBAL DYNAMICS

## BANGLADESH FOREIGN POLICY



The contemporary global dynamics permeated world nations with diverse and unprecedented challenges. In the post-Cold War period, there has been a major shift in the global power structure, where the United States created an expectation of a unipolar liberal world. However, it did not take long for this liberal uphoria to start fading. The worldwide rise of religious extremism and terrorism along with an intensified globalisation process makes 'conflict of ideologies' reach the global scale. Different forms of humanitarian crises, including Syrian refugee crisis, 'ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar and so on, have raised questions about the effectiveness of the international regimes. As the worldwide right-wing nationalist movements grow and right-wing populist parties start to gain ground in the political landscape of the northern hemisphere, the balance of global leadership started to tilt towards China and Russia. The US seemed to be reluctant to carry its burden of leadership, both at the front of global climate change and peacekeeping operations. This book articulates various aspects of these contemporary global dynamics and their wide-ranging political and economic implications for Bangladesh foreign policy.

**A K M Abdur Rahman** is Major General in Bangladesh Army and currently the Director General of BISS. He is a graduate from the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) and National Defence College (NDC), Dhaka. He is also a graduate of Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College and obtained Post Graduation Diploma (with Credit) on Strategic and Defence Studies from University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He is currently pursuing his PhD programme on "Coal Based Energy for the Sustainable Development of Bangladesh".

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BANGLADESH FOREIGN POLICY



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A PATHAK SHAMABESH BOOK

*Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy*

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

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## Dedication

*To the Martyrs of the Liberation War of 1971*

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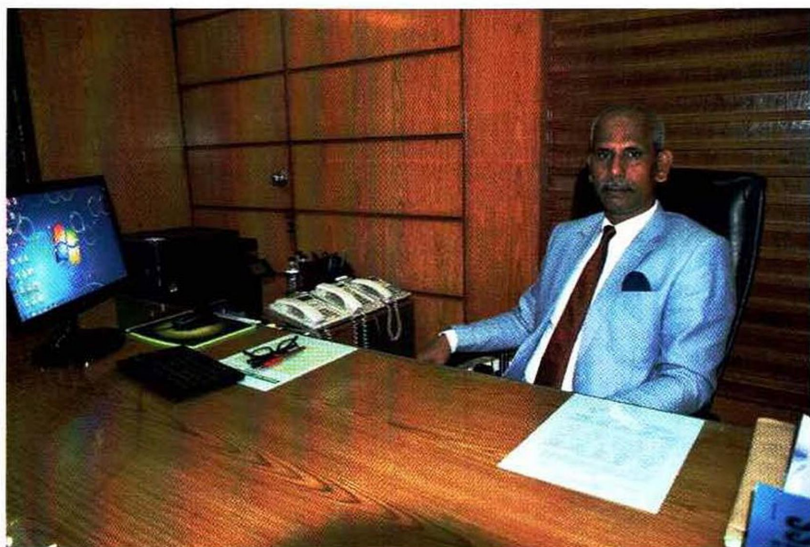
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADIPA	Association of Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
APMRN	Asia Pacific Migration Research Network
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEA	Bangladesh Economic Association
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
BCIM	Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar
BCIM-EC	Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar-Economic Corridor
BISS	Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BSF	Border Security Force
CCTF	Climate Change Trust Fund

CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CVF	Climate Vulnerable Forum
DFQF	Duty Free Quota Free
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
DScE	Dhaka School of Economics
DSCSC	Defence Services Command and Staff College
EBA	Everything But Arms
EPS	Employment Permit System
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSA	Free Syrian Army
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FY	Fiscal Year
G2G	Government to Government
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
GI	Geographical Indication
GO	Governmental Organisation
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
HHs	Households
HLD	High-Level Dialogue
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
MAU	Maritime Affairs Unit
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MIEs	Multilateral Implementing Entities
MM2H	Malaysia My Second Home
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDC	National Defence College
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIEs	National Implementing Entities
NSW	New South Wales
OAS	Organization of American States
OWG	Open Working Group
OBOR	One Belt One Road
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PKSF	Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation
PRI	Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh
PTA	Preferential Trading Arrangement
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
RMG	Ready-Made Garments
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
RoK	Republic of Korea
RRPs	Radical Right Populist Parties

SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAMREN	South Asia Migration Resource Network
SASEC	South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SID	Society for International Development
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
V20	Vulnerable 20
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

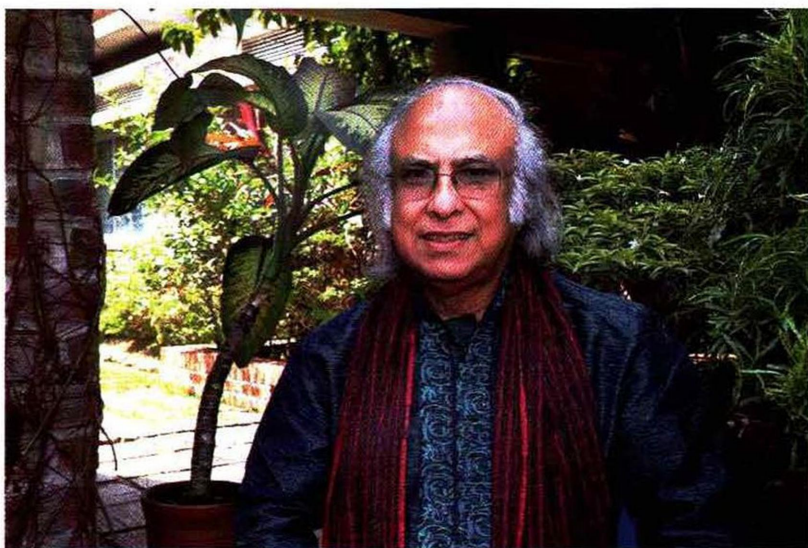
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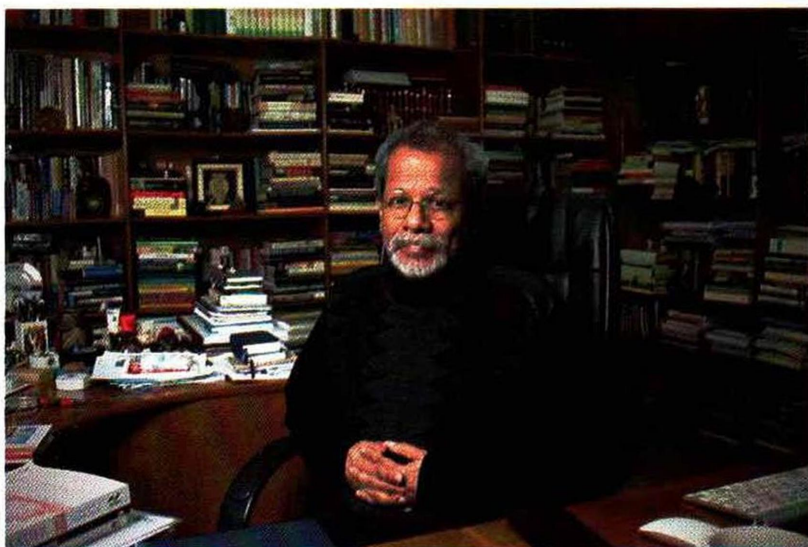
Studies from National University of Bangladesh. He is also a graduate of Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College and obtained Post Graduation Diploma (with Credit) on Strategic and Defence Studies from University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He did his MPhil on the title “Energy Security of Bangladesh: Governance Challenges” from Bangladesh University of Professionals. He is currently pursuing his PhD programme on “Coal Based Energy for the Sustainable Development of Bangladesh”. He has to his credit a few publications and edited more than 20 academic books and journals. He has participated in more than 30 international seminars, dialogues and conferences abroad on important national, international and strategic issues. He also presented a number of research papers in various academic forums at home and abroad. His areas of interest are energy security, connectivity and security related issues.



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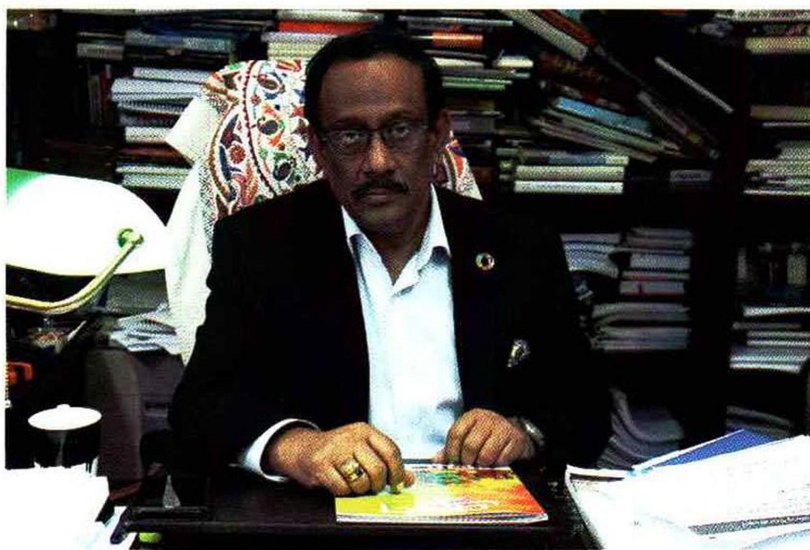
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# FOREWORD

The contemporary global dynamics permeated world nations with diverse and unprecedented challenges. In the post-Cold War period, there has been a major shift in the global power structure, where the United States (US) created an expectation of a unipolar liberal world. However, it did not take long for this liberal uphoria to start fading. The worldwide rise of religious extremism and terrorism along with an intensified globalisation process makes ‘conflict of ideologies’ reach the global scale. Different forms of humanitarian crises, including Syrian refugee crisis, ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Myanmar and so on, have raised questions about the effectiveness of the international regimes. As the worldwide right wing nationalist movements grew and right wing populist parties started to gain ground in the political landscape of the northern hemisphere, the balance of global leadership started to tilt towards China and Russia. With the Trump administration at the helm, the US seemed to be reluctant to carry its burden of leadership, both at the front of global climate change and peacekeeping operations. All these have wide range of political and economic implications for Bangladesh.

Given this backdrop, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised a seminar on “Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy” on 10 January 2018 at BISS auditorium, Dhaka. The objective of the seminar was to enrich and contribute to the

existing academic and policy discourse regarding Bangladesh's foreign policy. Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, graced the Inaugural Session as the Chief Guest. Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was present as the Special Guest of the Seminar and as the Chief Guest of the Working Session. Mr Md Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, summed up the Working Session. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS presided over the Inaugural Session and Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, former Chief Information Commissioner chaired the Working Session. The present volume is the compilation of the revised and edited version of the papers presented in the seminar.

I would like to acknowledge Nazmul Arifeen, Research Fellow, Sajid Karim, Moutusi Islam, Shanjida Shahab Uddin, Rubel Molla, Lam-ya Mostaque, Syeda Tanzia Sultana and Rubiat Afrose Raka, Research Officers of BISS for their assistance in preparing the manuscript.

I hope this book will be an important reference material in the literature of Bangladesh foreign policy, and useful reading for the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, teachers and students of international relations, experts, researchers, diplomatic correspondents, practitioners, donors and development partners, and others who are interested in this discourse.

BISS, Dhaka  
July 2018

A K M Abdur Rahman



**Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP**  
Foreign Minister  
Government of the People's Republic  
of Bangladesh



## **Address of the Chief Guest**

in the seminar titled “Changing Global Dynamics:  
Bangladesh Foreign Policy”  
10 January 2018

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman BIISS, Distinguished Speakers, Esteemed Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, As-salamu Alaikum, Adab and Good morning!

I thank the *Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies* for organising this seminar.

The topic of today's seminar—‘*Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy*’ is particularly timely as we begin a new year with new

hopes and aspirations. It is indeed the right moment for us to analyse the events of 2017 to understand the changing dynamics of the global politics and how Bangladesh fared into it. The presentations and discourses of today's seminar would surely guide us into the future.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

To understand the global dynamics of international politics, we need to revisit some important events of 2017.

The newly elected United Nation (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres declared 2017 as the year of 'peace'. Ironically, 2017 started with a massive terrorist attack when innocent people in Istanbul gathered at a club to welcome the New Year. The attack, for which Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility, claimed at least 39 lives. The terror continued throughout the year of 2017 in various parts of the world, mostly in the Islamic World covering Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Pakistan. In most of the cases, the attacks were either claimed by or attributed to violent extremist entities giving a chilling signal to the world that the menace of extremism is far from fading.

The change of power in United States affected the lives of people all over the world, particularly when it decided to opt out from major international understandings such as Paris Climate Deal. Fortunately, the populist trend in global politics slowed down in 2017 with the election of liberals in Germany and France, another two major global powers in contemporary world.

The latest controversial move of the United States was to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital defying numerous UN Security Council Resolutions against it. This was a significant blow to the Middle East Peace Process of which United States itself was a major broker. The threats to peace continued in 2017 with raging tensions between North Korea and the United States over nuclear armaments.

In 2017, the world witnessed one of the fastest growing human movements of the history as Myanmar orchestrated an unprecedented

exodus of Rohingyas from its Rakhine State. More than six hundred fifty thousand desperate Rohingyas entered Bangladesh in three months' time crossing a border of 40 miles only. The helpless Rohingyas faced worst forms of human rights violations owing to their religion and race. Bangladesh, as immediate neighbour, had to bear the burden of hosting now over one million forcibly displaced population in its territory.

In the Muslim world, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) continued to play a leading role in matters of concern for the Islamic World. Apart from continuing its direct military actions in Yemen, KSA sponsored the first-ever Islamic Alliance against terrorism making its intent to take firm stand against terrorism very clear. Sadly, unity of the Muslim Ummah remained a distant reality even in 2017, which was reflected through the incident of blockade against Qatar by six Muslim countries.

Britain's exit from the EU, popularly known as Brexit remained alive in the global economic discourses. While connectivity at various regional blocs showed some promises, US' retreat from multi-lateralism came as a shock.

The events of 2017 also indicate a positive change in the world order. Countries are taking leads in various thematic issues to ensure survival of the global understandings. France is taking the lead role in climate diplomacy while countries like Bangladesh and Germany created example of humanitarian diplomacy by sheltering forcibly displaced people from other countries. New alliances are being forged among nations. Sectoral cooperation is replacing wholesale bilateral dependency.

The contemporary diplomacy thus offers opportunities for every State to gain something from a deal as the foreign policy engagements of each country are becoming specialised in nature. Each country is offered with multiple choices for securing its sustainable future.

*Dear Friends,*

The dynamics of international politics are changing rapidly. Individuals and non-state actors are taking prominence in decision-making of the

States. The growing physical connectivity among the geographical territories for trade and economy are redefining the state boundaries. Thus, some often term the current geopolitical changes as ‘transformational’.

The adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN in 2015 has offered yet another opportunity to the nations for exploring multifaceted international cooperation. The SDGs encompass all aspects of human life and thus gives individual States opening for collaborations based on their needs. The current development economics of the world has become combination of existing and new drivers of globalisation and a State’s own set of priorities.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

In such a dynamic global environment, how does Bangladesh articulate its foreign policy?

The foreign policy of Bangladesh is founded on the famous dictum of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which is “*Friendship to all and malice towards none*”.

Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy objectives are further elaborated in Article 25 (1) of Bangladesh Constitution that enunciates that the State shall conduct its international relations based on the principles of peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for international law and the UN Charter, and strive for people’s social and economic emancipation.

The contemporary foreign policy of Bangladesh advocates for balanced and good neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries in South and South-East Asia. Bangladesh enjoys best of its relations with its largest neighbour India. It is the policy of friendly and good neighbourly relations with neighbours that guided us through this difficult time with our neighbour Myanmar. You are all aware that the Rohingya influx from Myanmar to Bangladesh has soured our relations in the recent times. However, we remained steadfast in our foreign policy objective and continued our bilateral engagements with Myanmar. We hope to see the problem to be resolved permanently with sustainable return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.

In order to protect and promote its national interest, Bangladesh has also expanded its foreign relations beyond its immediate neighbours encompassing East Asia and Pacific countries to Europe and America. Bangladesh has forged excellent partnership with EU and other European countries in recent years, which are paying dividend both in trade as well as in furthering our shared values in ensuring sustainable future for our nations. Our engagement beyond our traditional partners like United States, UK, Russia, China and Japan has yielded benefits during the testing time.

Bangladesh has remained focused on its development pursuits through wider integration at the regional and subregional level. Through active participation in various connectivity initiatives like Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN), Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar (BCIM) etc., Bangladesh is not only protecting its national interest, it has also contributed in the regional peace and stability.

Multilateralism, particularly through UN system, remains Bangladesh's diplomatic strength where Bangladesh engages as an active voice in various normative and policy making initiatives. Bangladesh has maintained its success in promoting international peace and security through peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

One key foreign policy priority of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the able daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has been to situate Bangladesh at International setting as a responsible and responsive state. This is aptly been manifested in her Vision 2021, Vision 2041 and the ambitious 'Digital Bangladesh' campaign that dreams to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based society.

In the coming days, Bangladesh will continue to pursue its peace-centric and sustainable development focused approach in the international forum. On the domestic front the development agenda will continue to take priority which will be furthered by regional integration and connectivity. The major thrust of our future foreign policy priorities would be—

**First—Deeper engagement with Europe:** The relationship with European countries will cover economic ties, democratic values as well as partnership in the areas of protection of environment.

**Second—Maritime cooperation and blue economy:** With our maritime boundaries settled, we will continue to develop partnership in the maritime field for realisation of our ‘Blue Economy’ pursuits.

**Third—Regional integration and multi-modal connectivity:** As a natural connect between South and South-East Asia and beyond, Bangladesh will continue to pursue regional cooperation as an engine for sustainable growth and economic integration through Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), BBIN, South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) and BCIM.

**Fourth—Focusing on immediate neighbours:** Given the shared political, cultural and social, economic history over centuries, India remains our most important partner. With Myanmar, the issue of Rohingya influx remained as an irritant in bilateral relations. With the repatriation of the Rohingyas under the arrangement signed on 23 November 2017, we hope to have a new beginning with Myanmar.

**Fifth—Effective partnership for economic interests:** To secure economic benefits we will continue to forge effective partnerships with other countries. We have already developed such partnerships with India, China, Japan, the UK and the US in the recent years across mega infrastructure, power and energy sector projects, etc.

**Sixth—Realisation of sustainable development goals:** Bangladesh would continue to stretch its partnership on multiple fronts for realisation of sustainable development goals.

**Seventh—Promotion of justice, rule of law and human rights:** Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the keys to our existence. After ending the culture of impunity through the trial of war criminals who committed genocide and crimes against humanity during our war of liberation in 1971, we are now focusing on international recognition of the 1971 genocide.

**Eighth—Maintaining lead role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding:**

Bangladesh will continue to maintain a lead role in the UN peacekeeping operations by contributing troops, police, including women peacekeepers. We would also gradually initiate greater focus on peacebuilding activities.

*Ladies and gentleman,*

In accomplishing these objectives, we would employ a mix of tools and options at bilateral, regional and multilateral level. As we have done recently with the issue of Rohingyas, we will continue to utilise our image in the multilateral forum to further our national interest.

Over the past decade, Bangladesh foreign policy has taken multiple retours keeping the basic principles of engagement intact. Beyond our deeper engagement with Western Europe, our outreach to Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America has been extended to explore new markets for our products and labour and thus to best ensure Bangladesh's economic security.

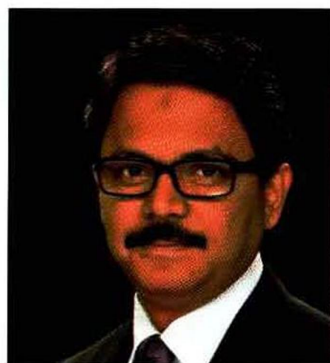
In the coming days, we would continue to work together to fulfil our foreign policy vision and strategy under the normative guidelines of Vision 2021 and Vision 2041. Drawing on our rich history and accomplishments, we will strive to demonstrate to the world why Bangladesh should matter. We all need to think of innovative ways to accomplish that.

That will be all for today. Thank you for your patient hearing.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu!



**Md Shahriar Alam, MP**  
State Minister  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Government of the People's Republic of  
Bangladesh



## **Address of the Special Guest**

in the seminar titled “Changing Global Dynamics:  
Bangladesh Foreign Policy”

10 January 2018

At the outset, I wish you all a very happy new year 2018. There is very little left for me to address after the detailed speeches delivered by the Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary. The speech of the Foreign Minister gave a clear outline of Bangladesh's foreign policy while the deliberations of Foreign Secretary highlighted the challenges ahead.

In 1971, the per capita income of Bangladesh was about US\$100. The government faced so many challenges during that period. Today,

Bangladesh has per capita income of US\$1610. However, the journey from US\$100 to US\$1610 was not a smooth one. What Bangladesh achieved during the past nine years, if these steps were taken twenty years ago, then the present Bangladesh could have been achieved way before. The daughter of the Father of the Nation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through her visionary and prudent leadership has created a prosperous Bangladesh for us all.

The government is planning to celebrate the graduation of Bangladesh from a Least Developed Country (LDC) to a developing country in March this year. Bangladesh, as such, has to make progress on capacity issues in the coming days. As an LDC, Bangladesh benefits from the most favourable regime available under the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), namely the Everything But Arms (EBA) arrangement. EBA grants the 48 LDCs, including Bangladesh this benefit. We have to prepare ourselves to get GSP Plus facilities as we graduate from the LDC status. Therefore, the country has to take necessary preparations from all quarters, including government and private sectors. One of our key foreign policy priorities is the broader and deeper engagement with Europe and EU.

We need to make good progress in the area of Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Bangladesh is the 46th largest economy of the world. And among these 46 countries, Bangladesh is the only country which has no FTA with other countries. We are, however, working to have FTA with Sri Lanka, which would be Bangladesh's first such deal with any country. The deal can overcome the tariff and non-tariff obstructions to mutual trade. We also have some FTAs in the pipeline. At the same time, we are focusing on Preferential Trading Arrangement (PTA) with some other countries.

In the regional plain, Bangladesh will continue to pursue cooperation and partnership-building through South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), BIMSTEC, BBIN and BCIM-EC. Specifically, Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar-Economic Corridor is highly significant. BCIM-EC is a sub-regional grouping that seeks to

strengthen friendly cooperation among the four member nations linking South Asia with Southeast and East Asia by establishing multimodal connectivity and harnessing economic complementarities. Moreover, this is the only forum where China and India are members along with Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is actively pursuing greater regional cooperation in the South and Southeast Asia. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) offers scope to Bangladesh to have greater economic and other contacts with the countries in these regions. It was a prudent step by the government of Sheikh Hasina to establish the Secretariat of BIMSTEC in Dhaka in 2014. The BIMSTEC Secretariat is the first-ever Headquarters of any inter-governmental organisation established in Bangladesh.

One of the challenges of Bangladesh's foreign policy is to uphold the motto of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, "friendship to all, malice towards none", which means the country has been working with everyone and it is prepared to work with everyone. Bangladesh will move forward as long as it maintains the foreign policy dictum of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The current state of the relationship with Myanmar is the legacy of the shortsighted decisions taken by the Khaleda Zia-led BNP government. Things could have been different with Myanmar if the erstwhile Khaleda Zia-led BNP government allowed them to take gas pipeline to India through Bangladesh. There was a proposal to build the gas pipeline through Bangladesh in 2004, but the then BNP government refused to cooperate in a way that has created a 'trust deficit' with Myanmar. The government is currently negotiating to return more than 650,000 Rohingyas who have fled their homes in Rakhine State after a military crackdown began on 25 August 2017, following attacks on army and police posts by Rohingya insurgents. Bangladesh has made a commendable job in obtaining support from

the international community on Rohingya issue. The EU was at the forefront with Bangladesh while putting international pressure on Myanmar following the latest episode of Rohingya crisis. The UN General Assembly has urged Myanmar to end military campaign against Rohingya and called for the appointment of a UN special envoy. Besides, Chinese Foreign Minister expressed China's willingness to facilitate a dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar while visiting Dhaka in November 2017.

One point that is raised during the seminar is that manpower export from Bangladesh has significantly declined as no new overseas job market was created. Moreover, many of the major recipient countries continued restricting recruitment from Bangladesh. Let me tell you that the manpower export is very much dependent on the economic capacity of the recipient country. We have signed new agreements with Saudi Arabia. We have also achieved positive progress in manpower export to Oman. In 2008, there were only 70-75 thousand Bangladeshi workers in Oman which has increased to around 700,000 in 2017. The Sheikh Hasina government had faced challenges initially to send manpower to Malaysia as the then BNP government fielded a war criminal as the candidate for the OIC Secretary General defying Malaysia's request. These imprudent initiatives never help in one's relations with other countries.

Another key priority for us is the Blue Economy. The foreign policy has shifted from land-focused to ocean-based to explore the opportunities in the Oceans and Seas. There is a need of massive capacity building in this regard. The Honourable Prime Minister established the Maritime Affairs Unit (MAU) under MoFA to deal with maritime issues. Bangladesh will continue to maintain a leading role in the UN peacekeeping operations by contributing troops, police, including female peacekeepers. Bangladesh has gained a positive image around the world through peacekeeping operations. A glaring example is Kuwait, where Bangladeshis are well respected. Bangladesh is expanding its relations with African countries and also is reviving its relations with Eastern Europe.

I want to conclude by congratulating BIISS for the wonderful initiative of organising the seminar at the beginning of the year on the historic homecoming day of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We are willing to work in such an open consultative way in the coming days as well. I hope that everyone will work together to achieve the goal of Bangladesh becoming a developed nation by 2041.

I thank you all.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.