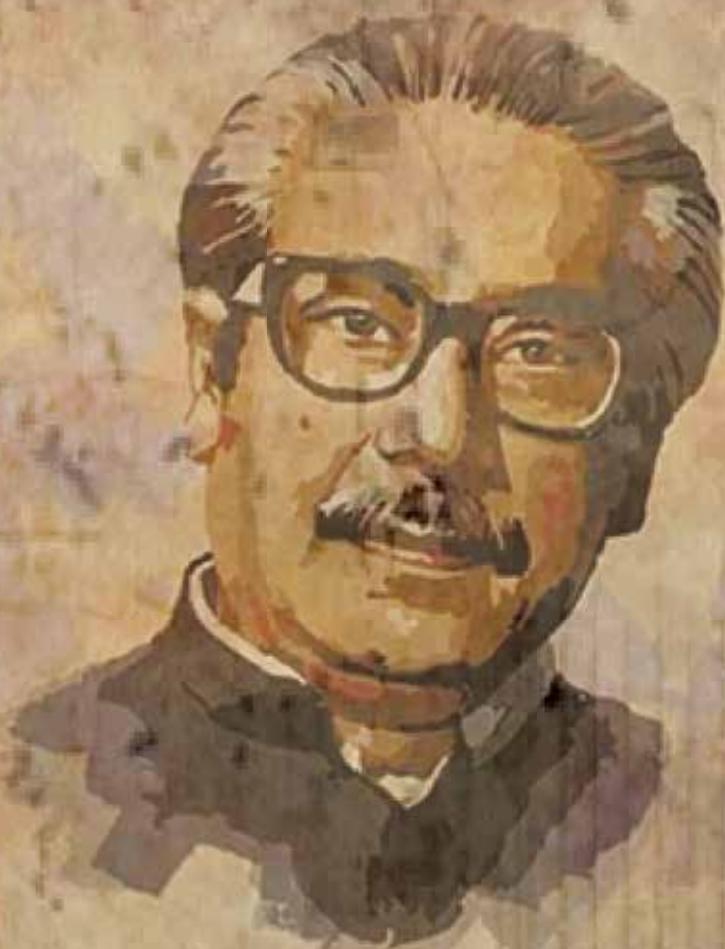


PROCEEDINGS
Webinar on

BANGABANDHU AND BANGLADESH: LEADERSHIP AND FOREIGN POLICY



BIISS Auditorium, Dhaka
13 December 2020

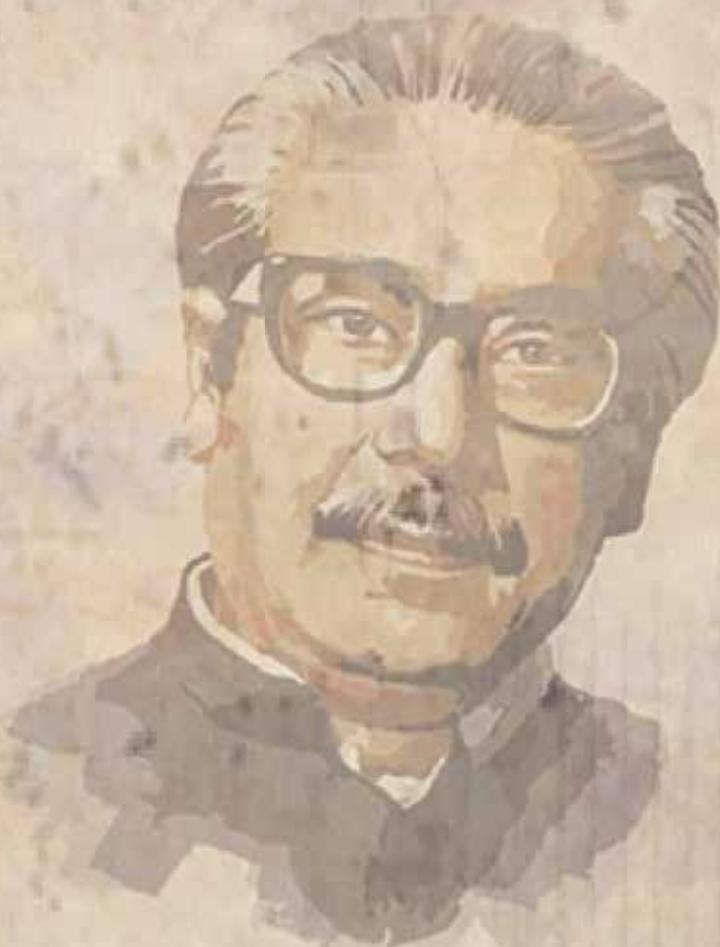


Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)



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Webinar on

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Leadership and Foreign Policy

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organized an international Webinar on “Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Leadership and Foreign Policy” on 13 December 2020 from 1100 to 1400 hours. His Excellency **Md Shahriar Alam, MP**, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was present as the Chief Guest. Six scholars from home and abroad made presentations in the webinar. The event was chaired by **Ambassador M Fazlul Karim**, Chairman, BIISS. **Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te**, Director General of BIISS delivered the welcome address. The webinar was attended by senior officials from the Bangladesh government, representatives from different foreign missions, former ambassadors, business personalities, members of academia, researchers, faculties of



Remarks by the Chair



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Chairman, BIISS, commenced his speech by extending a warm welcome to the Chief Guest, distinguished panellists, excellencies, and the audiences. He expressed his profound respect and deep gratitude to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose gifted leadership Bangladesh fought the War of Liberation. He also paid tribute to the heroic freedom fighters who fought valiantly to drive out the invaders from the Bangladeshi soil. He said that the month of December inexorably evokes the memories of the War of Liberation, while it overwhelms all with the immense joy of Bangladesh's glorious victory. At the same breadth, it saddens people's hearts remembering millions of Bengalis, especially the innocent civilians and the intellectuals who were brutally murdered by the invading forces. He offered a call of special prayers for all the martyrs of the Liberation War.

Ambassador Karim opined that Bangabandhu had an unflinching commitment for his country and people. It was him who taught the people how to dream about independence and the future of prosperity. During his long political career and continuous struggle, Bangabandhu went through immense hardships and made great sacrifices to secure his people's due rights. As the uncontested leader of the Bengalis, Bangabandhu was able to unite the masses. The people of Bangladesh could perceive that Bangabandhu had the charisma, leadership qualities and the vision to realize the dream of an independent Bangladesh. Therefore, they all rallied behind him. While demonstrating unparalleled courage and bravery in the quest for freedom, Bangabandhu was equally apt to manage and run a war-devastated country. After the independence, the country was confronted with a number of crucial challenges, which included among others—rebuilding the war-ravaged country, securing recognition from foreign countries, the trial of Pakistani military prisoners of war, obtaining assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources to revamp the economy and resettling the displaced people and the refugees who had crossed the border into India to save their lives. With wisdom and



prudence, Bangabandhu successfully resolved most of these problems within a very short period of time, which bears the testimony of a great leader.

Ambassador Karim remarked that Bangabandhu realized the importance of diplomacy and close relations with the outside world for the nascent country. He took immediate steps to establish the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and arrange officers and facilities for it. He enunciated the much talked about foreign policy dictum—"Friendship with all and malice towards none", that still guides Bangladesh's relations with the outside world. Bangabandhu's farsighted vision of foreign policy helped Bangladesh secure a distinct position in the international arena. Bangabandhu appreciated the significance of following a dual-track approach in foreign affairs—that is blessing the importance of both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. On the one hand, he travelled to the capitals of a number of powerful countries of the world; also made sustained efforts for the country to become members of various international organizations. He visited India, the then USSR, Japan, the United States and some Middle Eastern countries among others. Special envoys were dispatched to some of the Middle Eastern countries as well as China to gain their recognition and support. The newly independent country obtained the membership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); and efforts were there to receive the United Nations' membership. Bangabandhu attended summit meetings of these international organizations, which allowed articulating his vision of peaceful world order.

Ambassador Karim commented that Bangabandhu always sided with the oppressed people of the world and strongly supported their causes in his speeches.

Welcome Address



Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te

Director General

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

In his address, ***Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te***, Director General, BIISS, welcomed everyone to the webinar, a series of activities organized by BIISS in its effort to celebrate the Mujib's Birth Centenary. At the outset, he paid deepest tribute to the memory of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and those valiant martyrs of this land who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their motherland.

In his remarks, General Bari said that history testifies, leadership has consequences, and many-a-times it changed the course of history. Transformational leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had shaped the fate of Bangali national identity and rendered a great enthusiasm in every nationalist movement of this country. He added that Bangabandhu's charismatic capability, idealistic influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualistic communication had moulded the spirit of autonomy and emancipation of this nation.

While highlighting the features of Bangabandhu's leadership from different phases, General Bari mentioned that at the first stage of Bangabandhu's leadership, as a young nationalist activist, he was committed to attaining experience through organizing people against oppressions. In the second stage, he emerged as an accomplished Bengali nationalist leader and started translating nationalist spirit into the spirit of independence—making the blueprint of emancipation, the Six-points which is better known as the “birth certificate written in advance”; achieving people's mandate in favour of autonomy; and ultimately converting the people's mandate into people's war. At the third stage, Bangabandhu established the nascent state in the world and became an architect of policy-infrastructure to lift the nation from the wreckage of war and put it on the track to prosperity.

He then focused on Bangabandhu's state-building efforts. He expressed that Bangabandhu relocated his efforts towards policy-making and institution-building in



independent Bangladesh. At first, Bangabandhu awarded the nation with a constitution in 1972, reflecting the spirit of the liberation war. Then he focused on socio-economic development and undertook several policy initiatives, such as the third industrial revolution, nationalization policy, formulating maritime policy, forming Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission for making a knowledge-based society, etc. He also added that Bangabandhu had emphasized public investments in agriculture, rural infrastructure and cottage industries and formulated the first Five-Year-Plan of Bangladesh in 1973. Allowing women in all spheres of public life through article 28 of the 1972 constitution, Bangabandhu made a milestone step for women empowerment in this country.

General Bari also shed light on different aspects of Bangabandhu's foreign policy. He expressed that, to uplift the dignity of this nation in the international arena, Bangabandhu adopted a futuristic foreign policy. The philosophy of Bangabandhu followed a holistic approach of prioritizing national interests, respecting the sovereignty of other countries, holistic development and cooperation based on mutual trust and respect, peaceful solution of disputes through negotiation, and uplifting the global peace etc. which have vividly reflected in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. Despite the Cold War's ideological dialectic, Bangabandhu was firm in pursuing his principle of "friendship to all malice to none", which is considered the main thread of Bangladesh's foreign policy. The speaker believed that Bangladesh pioneered "negotiation" as a tool of peaceful resolution of disputes since the Father of the Nation coined this spirit in the foreign policy; and now, it becomes a unique tradition of Bangladesh and an example for the world.

General Bari further informed the audience that Bangabandhu led Bangladesh in the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Non-Alignment Movement. Twenty five year-long Bangladesh-India Friendship Treaty was one of the milestones to enhance the relationship between the two neighbours. He emphasized that the idealistic influence and intellect of Bangabandhu was demonstrated through his

Presentations



Professor Dr Gobinda Chakraborty

Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka

At the outset, ***Professor Dr Gobinda Chakraborty***, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka, thanked BISS and its entire team for organizing the webinar. He also registered his gratitude for the opportunity to share some of his thoughts on post-war reconstruction of Bangladesh while the country is celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the eve of the 50th birth anniversary of Bangladesh. The speaker offered his deepest tribute to the Father of the Nation and all the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the independence of Bangladesh. He said that Bangabandhu's vision continues to be relevant in today's uncertain and challenging times. Bangabandhu's tireless activism, vision and transformational leadership epitomize the principles of advancing social inclusion, empowerment and justice for all while putting emphasis on strengthening international cooperation by fostering foreign policy principle, "friendship to all malice to none".

Reflecting on the economic growth and development of Bangladesh, Professor Chakraborty opined that over the five decades, the country has achieved remarkable progress in accelerating inclusive development. Notably, Bangladesh's inclusive economic growth above 7 per cent for over the past decade has significantly contributed to reducing extreme poverty. Moreover, life expectancy has remarkably increased, child mortality and maternal mortality sharply declined, women's empowerment increased, digital connectivity expanded and massive infrastructural development accomplished. Professor Chakraborty believed that the founding stone of today's Bangladesh was deeply laid in Bangabandhu's tireless persuasion of constructing Bangladesh through the nationalistic slogan, "Sonar Bangla".

While discussing the concept of "post-war reconstruction", Professor Chakraborty informed the audience that any armed warfare basically destroys all aspects of the social, political, economic and cultural fabrics. Since warfare aims to destroy the civilian

world, post-war praxis and projects have become an attempt to efface the effects of war and to reclaim a pre-war status quo. The post-1971 War of Liberation phase was an exception because Bangladesh was not looking for reclaiming the status quo. Instead, the country was eager to form an independent sovereign entity through post-war reconstruction and a massive state-building process. Reconstruction is the term that usually applied to the recovery of construction of social, economic, cultural, political and judicial systems completed at the policy level, as well as at the grass-root level. Still, there is mass theoretical and practical confusion concerning the complexities of the term "reconstruction", whose discourses compete for dominance within international organisations. The dominant discourse of reconstruction is humanitarian assistance that promotes post-war social and economic transformations for the civilian population. Post-war reconstruction has many different meanings. It includes an entire range of tasks from repairing individuals shattered in the wars to reorganizing societies and rebuilding cultural heritage. It involves a proactive programme of physical and social rebuilding in an attempt to address and rectify the underlying causes of conflict and create the foundation for sustainable development. It is, thus, a search for inner peace, understanding the reasons of the war as well as the physical reconstruction of the infrastructure.

Professor Chakraborty further elaborated that the concept of "post-war reconstruction" traditionally includes 4Rs: repatriation, resettlement, reconciliation, and reintegration. Scholars like Beck, Samuel P. Huntington, Fareed Zakaria and Francis Fukuyama all agreed that post-war reconstruction or state-building needs its specific sequencing. Usually, in sequencing, security and order come first, followed by economic development, and only then, democracy. There also seems to be a consensus that the reconstruction with the wrong sequencing is always risky. The state-building process must start with the creation of a coherent nation, something usually requires changing borders, or moving population, and has seldom in human history been accomplished without violence. State-building, in a strict sense, is about creating a Weberian monopoly of legitimate violence over a defined territory; and, therefore, has at its core, the concentration of the means of coercion under the control of a central political authority. However, in all the cases of post-war reconstruction, it is indeed clear, while macroeconomic stability is important in post-war settings, political stability may depend upon the successful mobilization of the resources required to meet more immediate needs, such as the social reintegration of ex-combatants, for our case, freedom fighters, and the strengthening of



imported and local raw materials, which resulted in a substantial move forward in terms of meeting operation cost and achieving minimum targets.

Professor Chakraborty mentioned, under the leadership of Bangabandhu, the housing and settlement sector was divided into ten different sections: The Building Directorate, the Khulna Development Authority, the Dhaka Improvement Trust, the Chattogram Development Authority, the Public Works Department, the Directorate of Fire Services, the Police Directorate, the Parjatan Sangstha, the Bangladesh Rifles, and the Office of the Surveyor General. Bangabandhu took a personal interest in the coordinated engagement of these different stakeholders and allotted an amount geared to meet the immediate basic needs. Post-war reconstruction always needs financial and budgetary needs by formalizing public finance. Under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh launched its first national budget for the financial year 1972-1973, fixing priorities on agriculture, education and social welfare, which also included the construction of houses for freedom fighters who lost everything during the liberation war. In line with the national budget, Bangabandhu also took special initiative to launch Bangladesh's first Five-year Plan 1973-1978, targeting poverty reduction and ensuring education, health, food and housing for all. Bangabandhu put genuine emphasis on agriculture, small and medium enterprises and cottage industries for employment generation and reducing income inequality. In the front of political governance and reconstruction, Bangabandhu gave Bangladesh a full-fledged constitution on 04 November 1972, only 325 days after the country's liberation. A general consensus was there on four basic principles of state policy—democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism. The most important feature of the constitution was its attempt and synthesis between democracy and socialism, which was popularly known as Mujibism in Bangladesh. It provided the usual democratic rights to the citizens in part three of the constitution from article 26 to article 47, that included right to equality before the law, protection from arbitrary arrest, freedom of movement, freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and right to association and assembly. But the exercise of most of the rights was still subject to the reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interest of the security of the state or public order, public health, morality, and decency. Article 37 of the constitution acknowledged that no person shall be deprived of life, or personal liberties. All laws inconsistent with the fundamental rights shall be voided on the ground of inconsistency. Thus, the constitution protects citizens against arbitrary and unjust actions of the executive and administrative branches.

Bangabandhu started the political process of public representation through the first general election under the constitution, held on 07 March 1973. At the international level, it's mainly due to Bangabandhu's personal appeal, nearly 100 countries including most of the major powers during the 1970s, recognized Bangladesh within a few months of the independence. The United Nations (UN) set up United Nations Relief Operations in Dhaka, which was later renamed as United Nations Relief Operations of Bangladesh after the country joined the UN. On the basis of Bangabandhu's forward-looking foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence, Bangladesh was able to establish close and cooperative ties with all the countries of the world within a very short time. Bangabandhu joined the Non-Aligned Movement, Commonwealth, OIC, and finally the UN between 1972 to 1974. Earlier, Bangladesh joined the World Bank, International Monetary Fund



Dr Smruti S Pattanaik

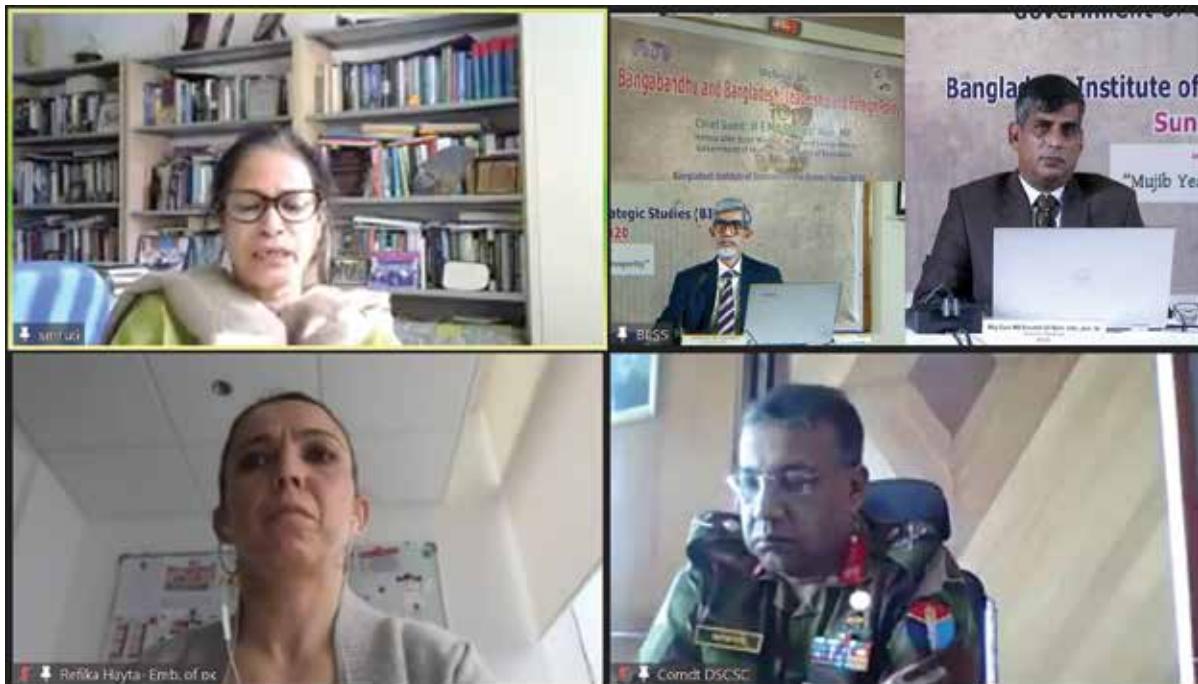
Research Fellow

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

Dr Smruti S Pattanaik, Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, thanked BISS and other faculty members of the Institute for organizing the webinar. She commenced her speech with a quotation from Bangabandhu's memoir—"As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me; as a Bengali, I am deeply involved in all that concerns Bengalis, this abiding involvement is born of and nourished by love and enduring love which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being." This, in a nutshell, summarizes Bangabandhu's life which he dedicated to the deprived and distressed people of the region, especially to the people of Bangladesh, said Dr Pattanaik. While highlighting Bangabandhu's early life, Dr Pattanaik said that Bangabandhu's early life provides a glimpse to his political career and the issues he prioritize, especially the issues related to the depressed people and people of Bengal. Bangabandhu's early life was influenced by his early years of association with the Pakistan movement, and later with the movement for the liberation of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu's struggle to establish democracy can be equated with his identification with a vast number of people who were economically and politically oppressed. Bangabandhu not only unites them but also mobilized them in his journey towards democracy which ultimately led to the war of liberation.

Dr Pattanaik remarked that Bangabandhu's leadership quality and his empathy for the people was evident from the very early period of his life, especially when he was a student of Islamia College in Kolkata. His leadership quality was recognized by Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who took him under his wings and largely influenced his political ideology.

Dr Pattanaik believed Bangabandhu's leadership as a leader of the oppressed is demonstrated in three key aspects of his politics. Firstly, as a young leader, Bangabandhu understood the position of Muslims as a minority in undivided India. His belief in emancipation motivated him to be a part of the Muslim youth group. He played an important role in canvassing for the party. He also tried to bring together leaders, like Fazlul Haque to Muslim league and played a role in the reconciliation of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Abul Hashim, Maulana Ikram Khan; because he felt that the divisions and differences between the leaders would not help the Muslim league in Bengal. As a person who believed Hindus and Muslims could stay together as equal citizens once partition was



through did not survive long. And, during the course of politics, he realized that Bengalis do not matter in the politics of Pakistan. He saw how Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was side-lined in the evolving politics of Pakistan soon after the partition. Secondly, he became aware of the situation in Bengal after he formed the East Pakistan Muslim Student League, for which he travelled many parts of the country at that point of time. When the Muslim League National Guard was dissolved by Khawaja Nazimuddin, many workers, who tirelessly had worked for the Muslim League prior to the partition, lost their jobs. Bangabandhu was very unhappy with the situation. He felt these workers, who in fact had contributed to the building of the nation, left at large due to the soft-sided policies of the politicians. Speaking about the politicians who occupied power and the bureaucracy, whom he held responsible for the miseries of the fellow Bengalis, Bangabandhu wrote in his memoir, "these people do not have the mindset required to build self-reliant people for an independent country and to earn the confidence of the masses." Bangabandhu became one of the enthusiastic proponents of the Awami Muslim League when it was formed in 1949. As an organization, it was established to put forward the political aspiration of the Bengalis. Dr Pattanaik again quoted Bangabandhu, "the demand of the majority must be made, we will continue our movement in Bengal to make Bengali as the state language; certainly, we are ready to work for this cause." Bangabandhu was put behind bars for demonstrating and demanding that Bengali needs to be recognized as one of the official languages. It needs to be reiterated that Bangabandhu was very clear and could see that without the recognition of Bengali as a national language, it was not possible to lead a dignified life. However, the Pakistani government tried to label the protestors as agents of India, communists and traitors to drive masses against Bangabandhu and his supporters. Bangabandhu realized that Pakistani regime was hoodwinking the religious-minded people of East Pakistan with the argument that Urdu should be the state language since it is an Islamic language. Bangabandhu said that every race loves their mother tongue; no nation

had tolerated any attempt to insult its mother tongue. Finally, Bangabandhu's commitment towards the downtrodden was evident when he protested against the government order which instructed those who helped in harvesting the crops and therefore gets a share in the crops would not be able to take back the harvest. They had to comply with it as the government imposed a ban on transporting food grains. Bangabandhu protested against it; he empathized with the poor and also protested against the Jinnah fund, which was established by Nazimuddin at that point of time, where people including the rural poor were forced to contribute. In another instance, when workers of Dhaka University were evicted from their residence to make way for the government employees, Bangabandhu supported their demand and took these workers to meet the Vice-Chancellor. However, he was not successful since the University was closed. As a result, Bangabandhu, along with the students, raised funds to help the striking employees. There are several such instances in Bangabandhu's political career following the establishment of East Pakistan Awami League. Bangabandhu stood for secularism and non-communal politics and wished to base his politics on a sound manifesto, a lesson that he learned during his political career. He was conscious of the trust that ordinary people had on him.

While highlighting the socio-economic situation of Bangladesh before the independence, Dr Pattanaik remarked that the economic situation of East Pakistan was terrible at that time. There was little state investment in agriculture, yields were low, and poverty was widespread. Bangabandhu recognized these and took steps so that he could liberate his people, what many referred to as colonial bondage. He linked the prosperity of the oppressed mass to the establishment of democracy in Pakistan. His



politics focused on making lives better for his fellow Bengalis. His six-point programme also reflected his commitment to uplift the people of his country. He was conscious of the fact that all the export earnings that Pakistan had from East Pakistan were spent on the West. East Pakistan remained poor, and its people suffered. By 1969-70, per capita income in West Pakistan was 61 per cent higher than that of the East. The six-point programme of the party was also known as the “Charter of Freedom”, which was presented at the Awami League Council held on 18 March 1966. While giving a speech at Paltan Maidan, Bangabandhu said that no amount of naked threat can distract the deprived Bengalis from their demand for provincial autonomy based on their six-point programme.

Dr Pattanaik opined that Bangabandhu’s leadership stood vital and perhaps nobody could have led the liberation movement as he did and inspire. The speaker quoted G W Choudhury—“In a democracy, the majority should not have any fear of domination, nor should they have asked for safeguards, such as regional autonomy, reservation of places in the civil service and the army and guarantees that the economic development of their region would not be neglected, nor their culture threatened.” But for two decades, the majority Bengali population did feel obliged to seek these guarantees which was in fact pointed out in this six-point programme; and when they were not granted, Bengali nationalism began to gather momentum until ultimately it became a national movement for the creation of a separate state under the able leadership of Bangabandhu. In the famous 7th March speech, which was one of the most powerful speeches in the history that prepared people for the mass movement, Bangabandhu said, “The bloody history of Bangalis tortured in Bangla itself. The history of the last twenty three years is the history



Dr Sufia Khanom

Senior Research Fellow

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

At the outset, ***Dr Sufia Khanom***, Senior Research Fellow, BISS, shared that, as a student of feminist studies, she felt extremely honoured and privileged to look back at the initiatives taken by the Father of the Nation and the greatest Bengali ever, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the advancement of women. She shared that the role of Bangabandhu in women's empowerment and dignity is extremely relevant for Bangladesh as the nation is celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation this year. With this brief introduction, she introduced the sections of her presentation on "Bangabandhu and Empowerment of Women". The first section is about understanding empowerment, second is about Bangabandhu's empowerment that started with his family members, and the final section is about the contributions of Bangabandhu to women empowerment.

In the first part, Dr Khanom discussed the theoretical framework of empowerment. Then she focused on Bangabandhu and his reflection of empowerment through family relations. Bangabandhu's thoughts on women's empowerment were also reflected through his attitude towards female family members. Bangabandhu had deep love and respect for his wife, Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib. He was completely indebted to her because she took care of the family in his absence. In addition, she gave him the support he needed to stand by his people. Bangabandhu's life as recorded in the "**Unfinished Memoirs**", and the "**The Prison Diaries**", was one of the unending sacrifices, unremitting courage, and unwavering commitment. In his book, Bangabandhu recounted numerous memories regarding his wife. Alone inside the prison cell, he thought about his ailing parents, wife and children. Reflecting on Bangabandhu's role, Dr Khanom referred to a quote of Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the eldest child of Bangabandhu where she said, "My mother always encouraged him to do politics for the people of this country, never pulled him back, she never cared for her own interest, even she never thought what she would get in life". About the influence of Bangabandhu's wife in his political life, the Prime Minister mentioned suggestions of her mother to Bangabandhu before he had gone to deliver his historic 7th March address at Suhrawardy Udyana in 1971. The Prime Minister said that Bangabandhu used to learn about the party's leaders and workers through his wife when she met him in jail during the Pakistan period. Even regarding his elder daughters' marriage proposals, he says she was studying, let her study and pass the

IA and BA exams, then we will see of it. This is a great thought, and Bangabandhu realized the importance of education and economic emancipation of women.

Then, Dr Khanom elaborated on how Bangabandhu contributed to his citizens and women's personal development. Here, by development, she referred to the sense of self, the individual confidence and the capacity. Reference was also made of Begum Rokeya, the pioneer of women's movement who made a call for awakening the women saying you just educate your daughters and let them make their own livelihood. To make that happen, women need to be given scopes in all spheres of life to flourish their merits and talents so that they will grow up with all human qualities, moving in the world arena with dignity and competing with the pace of this world. With this vision, Bangabandhu's empowerment thought was first documented in his book, "**Amar Dekha Noyachin**", where he mentioned several times how much it is important to the development of women as a sense of self, individual confidence, and capacity building. In the constitution of 1972, equal rights were declared several times in articles 27 and 28. Moreover, the First Five-Year Plan emphasized the capacity development of women through education and better health services. Around 60 per cent of destroyed educational institutions were rebuilt by BDT51 crore, and about 36 thousand primary schools and few thousand high schools were nationalized. During that time, the education commission was formed on 26 July 1972 and BDT3 crore 72 lakh was allotted for the next year. Additionally, 33 bighas of land in Savar were allotted for women's skill development in agriculture in 1973, since Bangabandhu recognized that education is the most important component for women's development and to rebuild their confidence and capacity. Bangabandhu also identified women's connection with the agricultural activities in Bangladesh and gave emphasis on the development of the agriculture sector and women's involvement with this sector.

As the second component of operating dimensions of empowerment, Dr Khanom elaborately discussed relational development which involves developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decision-making within it. In this aspect, she reminded the audience that Bangabandhu awarded the "Birangana" and "War Heroines", and Bangabandhu was the first person who recognized the contributions of the mothers and sisters who were tortured by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local

Reflections through Family Relations

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cohorts during the liberation war of 1971. Bangabandhu asked the people to give women their due respect. He set a humane example by saying that it is not only the man but also the women who sacrificed their lives and dignity for this independence. He realized that our feudal society's patriarchal mindset might drive women into a hell of disgrace and humiliation. So, without any delay, Bangabandhu asked the Bangladeshis to give due honour and dignity to the women oppressed by the Pakistani army and called them his daughter. On 22 December 1971, the government of Bangladesh declared that the women rape victim were brave ladies. Bangabandhu's initiatives to rehabilitate the rape victims and bring them into mainstream society need to be commended. Later, Bangabandhu arranged the marriage of many "Birangana" telling them to write his name as the father and 32 Dhanmondi as their address as many did not want to disclose the identities. Not only that, on 01 February 1972, a women rehabilitation centre was established. Later it was upgraded to women's rehabilitation and welfare foundation in 1974 to enhance their capacity and make their position strong in the society. Moreover, Bangladesh Abandoned Children Order, 1972 was taken to give the war children a better and dignified life.

To emphasize how Bangabandhu's decisions encouraged women empowerment, Dr Khanom shared many relevant examples. She highlighted that Bangabandhu appointed two women ministers to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs to give the women a power position so that they can contribute to society. A 10 per cent quota for women in the government job was also created in 1972. Dr Nilima Ibrahim was the first Director General of Bangla Academy in 1974. Muslim Marriages and Divorces Act was framed in 1974. The "Girls Guide Association" was also extended and restructured. With these activities, Bangabandhu tried to enhance the capacity of women and their participation. Their voice can be heard in this empowerment process, and they can contribute to the country's development.

As the third component of the empowerment framework, Dr Khanom spoke about the collective dimension, which includes the involvement in political structure but might also cover the collective action based on cooperation rather than competition. Here she referred to a quote of Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain from his forthcoming book chapter on "Bangabandhu and Bangali Nationalism", where he said "Bangali nationalism was piloted by Bangabandhu. It was a recipe for people's welfare both at home and across the world. Once the Bangali nationhood culminated in statehood, Bangali nationalism transcended to the world with its intrinsic ethos of self-assertion by the exploited peoples. With Bangabandhu, therefore, Bangali nationalism broadened itself into internationalism—a perfect liberal nationalism." During this liberation war, although the women were the victims of body politics where they were treated as the bearer of Bengali ethno markers, but they were not only the mere victim of violence, they also contributed as the caregiver and participated directly in the war. So, this nationalism also touches them.

At this point, Dr Khanom reminded the audience that women were active participants in all nationalist movements, even before the liberation war. Bangabandhu opened the women wing of Awami League in 1969 which produced many female influential leaders in the future. Fifteen per cent of seats were reserved in the parliament to make women visible in the policy-making processes so that they can put the positive responses and gender-sensitive responses in the policy process. Bangabandhu also participated in the first women



Professor Shahab Enam Khan

Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University

Professor Shahab Enam Khan, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, made his presentation on “Bangladesh Foreign Policy: Regional Politics and Policies under the Bangabandhu Regime between 1971 and 1975”. At the outset, he noted that it was his pleasure and certainly an honour to be in the presence of two history-makers: Barrister Amir Ul Islam, and Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain who have been a constant encouragement and inspiration for him to learn history beyond myopic prejudice. He also noted that Barrister Amir Ul Islam is the living testimony to what he was going to deliver on the topic.

As a background to his presentation, he highlighted about the Cold War syndromes or the Cold War equation as also highlighted by both the Chairman and the Director General of BISS and reminded us all with a quote of Bangabandhu when he spoke to Dainik Bangla on 14 May 1972, where he was categorically reminding the nation that, “We maybe a small country but we have many achievements to be proud of. We have sacrificed blood for achieving our independence. If anyone interferes in our internal affairs, we will resist them.” It was an unfortunate fact in Bangladesh’s history that he was assassinated, otherwise, today, the Father of the Nation would have turned 100 and we would have cherished his remarkable leadership throughout the history. But when he assumed the leadership, it was the era of great maneuver. It means he had to deal with a number of issues, not only the war ravaged country but it was misbegotten decade of the Cold war, where we have seen regional instability, failure in economy, and rising eccentric leadership in some countries. There were myopic interests within the two blocs and that is exactly where Bangabandhu comes in and he had to balance three things which many of the great leaders now-a-days need not have to. One was of course the reconstruction of domestic economy; second, was maintaining an equal handed win-win relationship with the neighbours and the third, was to eventually present Bangladesh as a glorious nation and the nation of the victors in the international community.

Professor Khan mentioned that he has visited over the past few years the British Library, the Office of the Historians in the Universities, the US State Department, the National Archives in People’s Republic of China and the archives in Delhi and he had unfathomed access to these rather restricted areas to gather all the information that he is

going to present in the webinar. Different regimes wrote about Bangabandhu according to their political realism. As he was born almost a decade after the liberation war, for him to revisit that particular time required a great deal of patience to have access to information, and to bring in those past for the benefit of the future and the present generation of International Relations' practitioners and the foreign policy students and definitely, the historians.

Bangabandhu was one of the greatest multilateralists, Professor Khan noted. If we listen to the statements given back in 1971, when Alexis Johnson not Henry Kissinger, labelled Bangladesh as "international basket case" and Kissinger replied that this is not our basket case. From there today, if we think about Shashi Tharoor's recent book in 2016, "An Era of Darkness", where he said that "Dhaka, once again a global capital with prosperity that was once the great center of muslin production, whose population fell from several lakhs in 1760 to about 50,000 by the 1820s due to the long British oppression". Bangabandhu brought us back to the prosperity.

Bangabandhu never hesitated about his relationship with countries like Vietnam and he was absolutely critical when many of our neighbouring countries were not critical of Vietnam and he put strong words in favour of the oppressed in Vietnam. If we go back to the history, we must appreciate our neighbouring country India's presence but then again that was a competing result of international politics. Now, if you look at Bangabandhu's regional approaches to three countries, viz. Pakistan, India and Myanmar rather than going to other countries for the sake of time, he really figured it out that Bangladesh sits between South and Southeast Asia. He was mindful of the facts about what happened in Myanmar then Barma and in Rakhine over the centuries and he was not hesitant in communicating and sitting with President Ne Win. He was mindful about the 1947 partition of India upon which he reflected during his conversation with Gerald Ford in Washington; the Korean War that he discussed in global platforms during the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit; he was mindful of 1962 Sino-Indian war which he reflected upon in his memoirs; and of course he was very much aware of the aftermath of 1965 Indo-Pakistan war and 1967 Nathu La and Chu La clashes.



Bangabandhu was very mindful of the psychological makeup of Chou En-Lai, Professor Khan noted. Bangabandhu was very much concerned about the McMahon Line which came up in his discussions and he referred to Chou En-Lai. In fact, Chou En-Lai in 1959 wrote to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, by saying that we do not recognize the McMahon Line and hence, the pragmatism and wisdom of Bangabandhu could really be captured from his saying that this is going to be an unfinished business for a long time to come. He was very mindful of the relationship between Myanmar and Beijing. In the same letter Chou En-Lai wrote, "An important question concerning the Sino-Indian boundary is the question about the so-called McMahon Line. I discussed this with Your Excellency as well as with Prime Minister U Nu of Myanmar." So now we can see that it is very difficult to see Myanmar beyond the orbit of China and that was quite articulated since 1959. Regarding the Sino-India Relationship, Professor Khan noted that the USSR Ambassador Ivan Bendiktov in 1962 wrote a cable to Moscow by saying that India has finally rejected the proposal of the PRC about negotiations. In fact, he was referring to one comrade, saying that the entire affair was completely the opposite, Indian troops crossed the McMahon line and attacked the Chinese force forward to the north of that line. That cable was also available in Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Chinese response was also a factor for him in engaging with India, Pakistan and of course Myanmar at the later point of time. He was definitely very concerned about the relationship between Pakistan and OIC. And OIC was not a factor for him only to gain access to the Muslim World which was comprised of 57 countries. But definitely, the access to these 57 countries for a newly independent country was extremely critical and it was also a part of oil crisis which he discussed with Gerald Ford at that point of time and therefore, it was the economic interest rather than political one that was a key feature in Bangabandhu's visit to Lahore. However, the visit was not only a visit rather he went there because a six-member delegation came to convince him that included the OIC Secretary General and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and both of them were bridging the gaps between Bangabandhu and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This allowed Bangladesh to attend the OIC Summit, which compelled Pakistan to recognize Bangladesh as an independent state. So we should not forget that part of the history where how strongly he was pushing and sitting in the middle of the Middle Eastern equation.

Bangabandhu was also very clear about the role of Sri Lanka and China's relationship. This relationship was a critical factor as demonstrated when the Chinese Ambassador declassified later by saying, "Mrs Bandaranaike is obviously taking sides with India, judging from her recommendations at the Colombo Conference and her so-called clarification of her recommendations during her visit to India." This had also been fed to Bangabandhu's commitment and he was quite clear about it. That has also moulded his understanding about the genesis of regional conflicts. Bangabandhu was concerned about the Eisenhower and Johnson administration's policy which was later-on reflected through Nixon and Ford administrations.

Kissinger, by the end of the year, was quite clear that the war is going to be in favour of the Bengali nationalists. The state department's declassified documents show that he was telling Nixon then that Pakistanis are going to lose. The Nixon-Kissinger duo was convinced that China would play their part in the situation hence deploying the 7th fleet was debated. Nixon and Kissinger were debating whether there was a need for 7th



fleet or not. So, Kissinger asked President Nixon, "What in God's name did Yahya do for us? When we get in trouble, this is what all these countries are going to do for us", therefore, there was innate amentia regarding South Asia because they thought that South Asia will not be very stable in serving the interest of the US State Department and Kissinger, later on, also brought in the issue of arms sell. Kissinger was telling, "Well, the way we can make it legal, I mean coming into the war is to resume arms sales through—if we, if you announce that Pakistan is now eligible for the purchase of arms". We can see that how Kissinger, as mentioned in the book, "The Trial of Kissinger", which is a very interesting book everybody has to read, and others were playing with words with regard to Bangladesh. We should not forget the USSR's contribution in the Security Council but perhaps I must remind that the 7th fleet had another political dimension too. It was used in Taiwan case; it was part of pacific command; and of course the 7th fleet came to the Bay of Bengal through the Strait of Malacca and I had this declassified cable where it was said that the commander was writing in the morning of December 1971 and in response of Indo-Pakistani war that "ENTERPRISE left Yankee Station en route to the Strait of Malacca holding area as the Flagship of Task Force 74." Indian Ocean operations, therefore, were devoted to contingency planning, surface surveillance and reporting. During Task Force 74's stay in the Indian Ocean at least one unit (and usually more) of the Soviet Indian Ocean Force was in company with the Task Force. Which means the Soviet maritime brigades or the warships were also there. And Bangabandhu was extremely careful about Nixon-Indira Gandhi tie. When Mrs Gandhi visited Washington and met Nixon on 05 November, the proceedings of that meeting was quite interesting and in that case there was no indication that Mr Nixon had agreed to the Indian proposal that United States would exert pressure on Yahya Khan to release Sheikh Mujib and negotiate through him to a peaceful political solution to East Pakistan civil war. Now on the other hand, Mrs Gandhi was asking for and looking for aid for the looming famine that was coming there and in fact, it was very difficult for Mrs Gandhi to really step into the politics of war for the very simple

reason that it was the moment when Indian economy was in the down slope. That was a problem for them to choose between the politics of pragmatism and the diversionary politics when the unpopularity was rising high. Bangabandhu had of course learned from the history, now this is something that we need to understand that the international politics is a struggle for power and hence the regional politics is also a struggle for power. When he asked Mrs Gandhi to withdraw the troops it was not only about the withdrawing of troops but it was also about giving a message to the world that Bangladesh is capable of its own arms forces plus it was a clear message to the Muslim world along with NAM states that Bangladesh is no longer a part of any kind of secondary influence. He also signed the landmark LBA and immediately ratified it although the neighbouring country took more than five decades to ratify it. This only shows our valiant leader's great faith on bilateral instruments along with the respect for multilateralism.

When Bangabandhu went to meet Gerald Ford, he was also meeting the World Bank President McNamara. And when he was talking to Kurt Waldheim, he emphasized that the prisoners should go and of course Delhi agreement was done. He instructed the people, the UNHCR to conduct the repatriation that was going on. When he was in conversation with McNamara, McNamara was asking Bangabandhu, "when are you devaluing your currency?" and Bangabandhu quite interestingly replied "if you were my finance minister in place of Tajuddin Ahmed, I could have done it tomorrow morning, so have faith on Tajuddin." This is the fantastic vocabulary between the two. Now when Ford and he were talking, Bangabandhu was telling Ford "You know the history of my country. Its condition after the war was likened to that of Germany in 1945. I want to thank you for your help to us. Before the war, we were divided by India. The capital was in the West. Bangladesh wasn't too bad in 1947. Seventy percent of the representatives in the Parliament were from the West; I was in the Parliament. Most of the Administration was destroyed in the war or left for India. Even in the rest, we couldn't get out of the West. Everyone has been suffering, first from the war, then from drought, then from the floods. Thanks to help from countries like you, no one is starving. We have had to import everything. Since then we started to bring our trade deficit down, until the inflation, drought and the floods came. Now what Ford said, "We congratulate you on your independence and UN membership. I was up there two weeks ago. I was encouraged with the improving attitude toward the UN. The American people in recent times have a better attitude towards the United Nations. I hope we can all work better in the United Nations. If it is just a debating society, it is no good. But we should use it to make it work and I need your help." This is where the Bangabandhu's pragmatism lies and when he was talking with all these states' leaders. I have seen many of the documents which I could have otherwise shared at some time.

Professor Khan highlighted that, Bangabandhu's meetings in Delhi, Lahore, Moscow, and Washington testify to the necessity of balancing the bipolar world, which now has shifted to Beijing-Washington tautness. Perhaps his able daughter is looking into that particular challenge which the father encountered between USSR and USA. Now, it is between USA and China. Bangladesh's foreign relations were the product of inescapable historical forces and the socio-economic needs of the war ravaged country. Undoubtedly, post-liberation Bangladesh struggled to alter the colonial institutions which is still a problem and the mindsets that have been highly resistant to the reform because the society was designed by that.



Professor Dr A S M Ali Ashraf

Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka

At the outset, **Professor Dr A S M Ali Ashraf**, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, thanked BISS for providing him with the opportunity to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his birth centenary in front of a well-informed and dignified audience. He presented on “Balancing Divergent Global Powers”, reflecting on Bangabandhu’s Leadership and Strategy. He argued that the foreign policy priorities, choices and the decisions made by Bangabandhu and the way he projected Bangladesh’s national interest in the international forums, clearly demonstrated a transformational leadership. Bangabandhu maintained a very balanced and pragmatic foreign policy which reflects his transformational and visionary leadership.

In his presentation, Professor Ashraf focused on theory and practice or evidence that reflects the theory’s relevance and implications. He began with two central questions:

1. How did Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman prioritize Bangladesh’s foreign policy during the post-independence years?
2. How did he lead the foreign policy decision making process balancing the divergent global powers?

Professor Ashraf noted that the foreign policy choice for newly independent countries is quite important and interesting for the students of international affairs. As Bangladesh is going to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its independence in March 2021 and the country is also celebrating the birth centenary of its great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the speaker said that it is important to understand how did the post-independent regime of Bangladesh articulated and executed the foreign policy priorities.

The theory that Professor Ashraf used in his presentation was neoclassical realism. This theory argues that external influence and domestic politics both impact foreign policy choices. The key concepts that he tried to uncover in his presentation were leadership, balancing and divergent powers. He mentioned that academics defined leadership into two dimensions—one is transactional, and the other is transformational. Transactional leadership talks more about the day-to-day operations, and it is more about dealing with the short-term challenges. But transformational leadership is more about

the long-term challenges, more about identifying priorities, and making long-term and high-impact foreign policy legacies. And transformational leaders also make effective use and promotion of the national interest. He added that balancing is a very interesting term but has different connotations for countries based on their power configuration or their capabilities. It has an offensive connotation as well as a defensive connotation. For great powers and superpowers, balancing is about counterbalancing—it is about countering the influence of a global competitor. But for a newly independent country like Bangladesh from 1971-1975, the priority was not about offensive balancing. It was more about maintaining the territorial sovereignty of the country and also the autonomy of decisions. It was about to what extent, a newly-independent country can make decisions that reflect the country's dignity.

While talking about divergent powers, based on the stock of material power and ideational power, Professor Ashraf referred to international relations scholars who speak about superpowers which have incomparable stock of economic and military power. The great powers are less than superpowers having a good stock of global military capabilities, but the difference between great powers and superpowers is often made by the fact that superpowers do not hesitate to exercise force, but great powers often do not show the willingness to exercise force. In the first five years of Bangladesh's independence from 1971-75, reconstruction of the economy and diplomatic recognition were top priorities as well as reaching out to the oil-rich Gulf countries. So in that context, the divergent powers of Bangladesh foreign policy in the first five years not only included superpowers and great powers, it also included economic powers of the oil-rich countries. Ideational powers also matter, when the non-aligned countries from Africa and Asia came up with an interesting idea that they should disassociate from the Cold War bloc politics. Bangabandhu rightly picked up to follow the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) principle which allowed him to articulate how Bangladesh should develop friendly relations with India and the neighbouring countries, recognizing the fact of India's great contribution to the Liberation War.

The data and the method that Professor Ashraf used in his presentation heavily depended on the memoirs and speeches. The method was purely qualitative in which

he relied on interpretive analysis. The speaker then highlighted the existing literature, in which he explored what was being written about Bangabandhu's foreign policy. He noted that he found a good volume of materials focusing on the foreign policy legacy of Bangabandhu. He started with The Unfinished Memories. Besides, the foreign policy practitioners of Bangabandhu's time had written extensively, and their writings clearly projected the foreign policy aspirations and articulations of Bangladesh, as evident from many different decisions taken by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The historical analysis also provided a rich volume of data regarding how Bangabandhu managed to articulate bilateral, multilateral and regional relations and how Bangabandhu thought about developing relations with small, civilian, economic and military powers. The speaker also looked at the political analysis, among which some of those he found pretty descriptive, some very critical; some talked about Bangabandhu and Bangladesh. Professor Ashraf mentioned that Bangladesh had been projected by foreign scholars like Lawrence Ziring and Archer Blood as a very romantic nation and Bangabandhu as a very charismatic leader. So by connecting all these literature, the speaker believed that a rich volume of data regarding the foreign policy legacy of Bangabandhu could be found.

Professor Ashraf argued that, despite having a lot of historical materials, a thin body of literature was academic—which were theory-driven. Therefore, in his paper, he attempted to address that research gap. He focused on five different things while discussing the evidence regarding Bangabandhu's foreign policy priorities and decisions. His prioritization pointed out that getting UN membership was the topmost priority. Though Bangabandhu articulated both bilateral and multilateral foreign policy, the presenter said it was a visionary decision to prioritize getting the UN membership which would provide the country with a global and strategic platform where Bangladesh could manifest that it is not a small, war-ravaged country or poor country, but it is a country that would like to become a spokesperson for the Third World countries. The speaker mentioned that the road to the UN was not quite smooth, and Bangladesh made strategic decisions to become a member of the UN system. Long before Bangladesh became a member of the UN, it became a member of the WHO and ILO, got financial support from the UNDP, became a member of the UNESCO and FAO. All these clearly indicated Bangladesh's multilateralism-based foreign policy orientation. It also depicted the diplomats' ability of that time who were working pretty hard to make sure that Bangabandhu's foreign policy priorities were well executed. By the time Bangladesh became a member of the UN, it was almost inevitable that the country was already a **de facto** member of the UN. Only the **de jure** recognition was needed, and there were Chinese diplomacy and behind the scene Pakistani diplomacy.

The second foreign policy priority and decision that Professor Ashraf discussed was navigating through the Cold War bloc politics. The Cold War was a geopolitical competition between the two superpowers; it was an ideological confrontation between the Soviet communism and American democracy. So, finding a middle path was a top priority for Bangladesh because the country did not want to be branded either as a member of the Soviet bloc or the American bloc. So, looking at the diplomatic recognitions that Bangladesh secured did prioritize not only cementing its relations with the Soviet Union which provided crucial support in the Liberation War, but also the other three great powers, and the members of the P5. It was China that kept Bangladesh waiting for quite

□ 2. Navigating through Cold War – Search for a balanced relationship

- USSR: 25 Jan 1972
- UK: 4 Feb 1972 (Commonwealth: 18 Apr 1972)
- France: 14 Feb 1972
- USA: 4 April 1972

- China: "Long Wait"
■ 31 Aug 1975



some time. And unfortunately, the recognition from China did not come during the lifetime of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Thirdly, Professor Ashraf highlighted the fact that Bangladesh, being one of the largest Muslim majority countries, had to consider financial aid from the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries. The 1973 oil shock and the global oil price hike necessitated Bangladesh to cultivate warm relations with the Muslim world to get preferential oil price. The way Bangabandhu's diplomats reached out to the powerful countries in the Middle East was extraordinary. Saudi Arabia was trying quite hard, and Bangabandhu himself met King Faisal in 1973 at the NAM Summit in Algeria. He also dispatched his Foreign Minister to make sure that Bangladesh gets diplomatic recognition from Saudi Arabia. Although Egypt gave diplomatic recognition much later, it was one of the two Middle Eastern countries other than Iraq that voted for Bangladesh's entry to the WHO. When the Arab-Israel war began, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made a prompt decision to dispatch a small team of Bangladesh Army medical team to provide medical support to the Arab brothers. It was a signal that Bangladesh was there to help. Eventually, it was the Egyptian permanent representative to the UN who brokered with the Chinese delegate to make sure that Chinese ultimate blockade is removed from Bangladesh's entry to the UN in 1974. So, the diplomatic relation with Egypt was cultivated; it was nurtured as a long-term strategic goal to make sure that these countries become supportive to Bangladesh's aspiration to become a UN member. A few countries also gave Bangladesh their diplomatic recognition in 1972 and also after 1972, but those lists indicate that there was a variation in the attitudes among the Muslim countries towards the recognition of Bangladesh. Though Bangabandhu prioritized building a non-aligned identity which was quite evident from his visible presence at NAM summits, he created an ideational context that the world is divided between the oppressed and the oppressor, and he was with the oppressed. His UN speech was fascinating and short, without any reflection of a newly independent country meagerly just trying to raise its head. It was not that Bangabandhu just attended the UN summit; it was more to make a visible presence.

Through content analysis, Professor Ashraf argued that the words Bangabandhu

chose, pronounced and articulated, talked about freedom and dignity. Dignity for a newly independent country was not something about succumbing to the choices of the great powers and unmatchable powers; but about waiting, resolving, calculating all the choices, understanding the cost and benefit of the foreign policy choices, making the right choice and waiting for the right moment. Sometimes Bangabandhu's response to the Saudi King was prompt but his response to the Soviet offer to do the salvage in the Chattogram port and Chalna port took time. In this context, the speaker commented that the visionary and transformational leadership is not only about leaders becoming legends just because of the charisma, it is also about how did they make the decisions, how much times did they take, whether they took a long time and for that, did they calculate the cost and benefit, and if they calculate, was a rational choice was made, and if a rational choice was made, was it reflected the national interest—these were the information that was unpacked from the memoirs, the speeches, and the archives. At the UN speech, Bangabandhu talked about the Third World countries and the colonized countries of the world. He was emerging as a spokesperson, talking more about how Bangladesh cared about the developing countries and the nonexistence of peace around the world. He also talked about global inequality, and he clearly knew that without reforming and restructuring the international economic system, there could not be a reduction of inequality. So, these were strategic decisions—whether to get the membership of the UN or diversifying diplomatic relations in the initial years not only with the Soviet Union, it was more about moving out of the Indo-Soviet alliance system and making an identity as diversifying relations and managing relations with everyone. It was the manifestation of a country's search for autonomy; the autonomy of dignified decisions.

Professor Ashraf then focused on the external pressures and internal incentives that were driving Bangabandhu's foreign policy as well as the domestic factors. He argued for at least two different incentives. First, there was wartime support from the Indo-Soviet alliance, which was clearly visible. At the same time, the American people, the American senators, and the Bangladeshi diasporas around the world were also providing external incentives to make sure that Bangladesh pursues very well-thought-out, dignified foreign policy priorities. Secondly, foreign policy decisions were made not in response to incentives

5. Aspirations for Third World Leadership

- Bangabandhu's UN speech, 25 Sept 1974:
- Freedom & dignity
- Struggle for peace and justice
- Way of the Future
- Global Inequality and search for a Just International Economic Order
- Peaceful Coexistence
- UN and People's Progress





but also in response to pressures, and there were intensive pressures, primarily coming from the Pakistan-US alliance. There was Pakistan's propaganda that a Muslim country was divided and secularism in Bangladesh was a reflection of lesser Muslim identity of Bangladeshis, and thus created tremendous diplomatic blockade towards Bangladesh's entry into the UN. These were serious pressures, and the speaker's argument was that foreign policy decisions taken at home would partly respond to these external pressures and partly were taken in the context of domestic compulsions. Professor Ashraf identified four different domestic compulsions—national interest, leadership and strategy, elite cohesion and public opinion. When it comes to leadership and strategy, he highlighted a few decisions made by Bangabandhu and what did those entail about his leadership standard. There were a lot of questions on why Bangabandhu made the first trip to London after being released from Pakistan, and there was a historical analysis that India was not happy because he was not even taking the Indian airlines. Looking at the narratives from foreign policy practitioners and speeches and memoirs of Bangabandhu, it was clear that getting to London would be reaching out to the Commonwealth countries because they would provide diplomatic recognition. Second was the support for the Arab nations in the Arab-Israel war. Bangabandhu not only dispatched an army medical team but also provided tea which was in abundant production in Bangladesh to make sure that the soldiers were warm enough to fight the enemy. As the Egyptian support was crucial for Bangladesh to get to the UN, the diplomats of that time identified that one of the UN Security Council members was Mauritania, with whom Bangladesh had no relations. So, Bangabandhu took the opportune decision when the Senegalese President was visiting Dhaka. He made an appeal to bring up the issue, thus making sure that Mauritania supports Bangladesh's bid to the UN membership, which worked pretty well. The visit to Washington DC was more about dispelling the myth that Bangladesh was sliding into the Indo-USSR axis. It was more about balancing the relations with great powers.

In the context of leadership and strategy, Professor Ashraf said that transformational leaders search for dignified solutions. For example, the ports in Chattogram and Chalna were devastated, and there was a need for mine-clearing operations. Bangladesh initially appealed. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union proposed to accept their offer. Bangabandhu took a middle path. He said that it would be more pragmatic to give the mine-clearing operational responsibility to the Soviet Union in Chattogram port and the UN team in the Chalna port. It worked very well. So the decision was based on the calculation of what this newly independent country wanted—whether it should bank on relations with one country or with multiple countries as well as with international institutions.

Professor Ashraf also highlighted the issue of donor pressure during that time and remarked that the donor pressure was quite interesting. As Bangladesh's liabilities and assets were pending, the decision was pending with the Pakistani government. There were intensive pressures from the donors in Dhaka that Bangladesh would take responsibility of some of the loans. Bangabandhu clearly said that their demands were unjust and Bangladesh will not submit to it. And eventually, the donors complied with what Bangabandhu said. So, the fact here was that, just because Bangladesh was a newly independent nation, it should not succumb to the pressures of the foreign countries.



Mr M Ashique Rahman

Research Fellow

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Mr M Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow, BISS, made his presentation on "Bangabandhu and the Roots of Bangladesh Foreign Policy", which was a part of his ongoing research. So far, existing research and discussions on Bangabandhu and Bangladesh foreign policy focused on the foreign policy directions and the foreign policy initiatives that were taken by the Father of the Nation after the independence, but his research derived from his curiosity about the origin of the principles of Bangladesh's foreign policy. Since there were many experts and practitioners in the audience, he also solicited their valuable comments and suggestions.

At the outset, he highlighted about the basic principles of Bangladesh foreign policy and those were clearly mentioned in the Article 25 of the constitution as: respect for national sovereignty and equality; non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; peaceful settlement of international disputes; and respect for international law. These were more in line with the United Nations Charter and from these principles derive three more principles: the renunciation of the use of force in international relations; upholding the right of every people to freely determine and support for the oppressed people. But the main doctrine of Bangladesh's foreign policy have had been "friendship to all, and malice towards no one". Even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh repeatedly followed this in the foreign policy formulation of Bangladesh, which has become the motto and the main doctrine of Bangladesh's foreign policy. So, he wanted to find out the source and the origin of this doctrine. Very often analysts and researchers mistakenly mention this as constitutional provision, but it is not.

His assumption was that Bangabandhu, as the Father of the Nation, as an undisputed and charismatic leader, definitely had critical sway and influence on preparing the constitution in 1972 and thus formulating Bangladesh's foreign policy. It was his idea and philosophy that had been reflected in the formulation of the constitutional guidance, and "framing" of Bangladesh's foreign policy principles. He wanted to trace the source of these principles pondering upon, if those were Bangabandhu's ideas and philosophies, especially the doctrine of "friendship to all, and malice to none".

To give a theoretical underpinning to his analyses, he used 'levels of analysis' of

foreign policy and since this was about the leadership, so he employed individual level of analysis. The individual level of analysis assumes that individuals shape the course of history because it is their choices and decisions that drive the course of events. It implies that individuals and the decisions they make are the major determinants of foreign policy. So from that point of view he thought that it would help explore the origin of the basic principles or the roots of Bangladesh's foreign policy.

He focused on some of the components of individual level of analysis as highlighted by renowned scholars. James Rosenau, a very renowned scholar of foreign policy analysis, mentioned about individual values, the intellectual capability of the individual and his longstanding political experience shaping a country's foreign policy. However, modern literatures are focusing more on the individual personalities on one hand and perception of the leader on the other. Individual personalities refer to the personality traits, characters, beliefs and values of the leader. And perception is the process by which a person makes sense of events, which is more like a constructivist approach that emphasizes how a person views his environment and his surroundings. So, it is the process of 'framing'. From this theoretical vantage point, he moved forward to look at the origin of "friendship to all and malice towards no one".

The most recent one he found was in the aftermath of the Father of the Nation returning on 10th January 1972. On 15th January, 1972, there was an interview with a journalist from the AP in which Bangabandhu was extempore without any written script. Suddenly, the journalist asked him what kind of foreign policy he will undertake and Bangabandhu bluntly mentioned five principles chronologically. Those were: non-alignment; neutrality; independent; peaceful coexistence; and 'friendship to all and malice towards no one'. Mr Rahman found another reference that was before the 1970 elections, when the Father of the Nation was delivering a radio address on 28th October in 1970. He said that Bangladesh has to follow a free and fair foreign policy of non-alignment, and there he also mentioned all these principles, more or less. Bangabandhu talked

THE POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT

- Awami League has always been in favour of policy of non-alignment
- The lineage can be traced back as early as 1956, when Bangabandhu moved a motion in the National Legislative Assembly against French imperialism.
- But it can be traced further back in his visit to China in 1952.



about non-alignment when he mentioned about the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) treaty of Pakistan and he said that Bangladesh has decided not to associate with any such pact in future and of course the struggle for in favour of the suppressed and oppressed against the oppressor. And then at the end he mentioned that no hostility towards anybody, friendship with all. This was the principle based on which Bangladesh believed in peaceful coexistence with all the states of the world, particularly with its neighbouring ones.

He searched for any other reference of this particular doctrine and found its closest affinity with around hundred years back when the American President Abraham Lincoln was elected for second term. At the end of his inaugural speech, he said "with malice towards none and with charity for all". In a famous interview with David Frost on 18th January 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman mentioned Abraham Lincoln, Mao Tse-tung, and Nelson Mandela among the world leaders he admired. Perhaps in the back of his mind he had the rhythm of Abraham Lincoln, and then he came up with his own formulation and devised the doctrine of "friendship to all and malice towards no one".

While focusing on another principle which is the policy of non-alignment, Mr Rahman noted that the choice of this policy was necessary and it actually supported and benefitted Bangladesh in the post-Liberation War period. But the choice of this policy was not a post-war phenomenon; it was the choice of Awami League since its formation in 1949. But even then its origin can be traced back in 1956, when the Father of the Nation was the member of the National Legislative Assembly. In one session he stood up and mentioned about the French imperialist policies, the killings and massacres in Algeria and Morocco and asked the Speaker to observe a one-minute silence for the deceased people. Going back further, during Bangabandhu's visit to China in 1952, as a member of a delegation, he also attracted to this anti-imperialist philosophy.

He then deliberated on the factors that shaped the Father of the Nation's ideas and focused on two components of his leadership: his personality and perception. Bangabandhu, like any other individual, was a product of his time and space and his political worldviews were shaped by his associations with his own family, community, mentors and the larger society that he was born into. So it was his childhood and his upbringing that he derived from his middle-class family background had a critical influence. His political experiences, which were basically, long experiences of struggle, especially the experiences of imprisonment were very important. So, all these created the ideas or philosophical position of non-violence and cooperation and led him to profess the idea of "friendship to all, malice towards no one". The admiration of other great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and, Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela also helped to give form to these. It is not that he was very much influenced by them but it was his admiration for them that worked in the background in shaping and moulding his ideas and principles about Bangladesh's foreign policy.

In the conclusion, he said that the basic principles of Bangladesh's foreign policy as enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh are basically the reflection of the ideas and philosophies of Bangabandhu but the most important thing is that those are original to the Father of the Nation; it's not that he has borrowed them from elsewhere. He opined

Open Discussion



Ambassador Shamsher M Chowdhury, Former Foreign Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh, at the outset, conveyed deepest respect to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the martyrs of Bangladesh Liberation War. He reflected that Bangabandhu assumed responsibility of governing a war ravaged, newly independent Bangladesh with massive challenges internally and in the era of a very divisive bipolar world of the Cold War. Bangabandhu, therefore, had to launch the foreign relation aspect of Bangladesh in a very difficult and challenging background. Countries that had not openly stood by the freedom-loving people of Bangladesh during the glorious war of liberation in 1971, lined up to recognize Bangladesh soon thereafter. It was a clear tribute to the people of Bangladesh and more importantly, to the undisputed leader, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. But keeping in mind the position and location of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu believed in the dictum of safety in numbers that led Bangabandhu to take Bangladesh to the Commonwealth as early as 1972 and join the Non-Aligned Movement a year later. So, Bangladesh got into a group of countries very early on. That was a part of the vision of Bangabandhu.

The year 1974 was the hallmark of success of the foreign policy of Bangladesh under the pragmatic and visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation. In that year Bangabandhu took Bangladesh to the centre of the Islamic world by accepting the invitation of the countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as it is now called, and joining the OIC summit in Lahore. Going to Lahore was another part of Bangabandhu's major foreign policy move. In September of that year, Bangladesh formally joined the United Nations and Bangabandhu addressed the General Assembly and spoke in Bangla, thereby, giving not only the nation but its mother tongue a global recognition and status. It was not he was just addressing; he was giving much more of a status of Bangladesh to the United Nations.

Although the one-line description of the foreign policy of Bangladesh is "Friendship to all and malice to none", Bangabandhu's expression of the country's external outlook went far beyond that. Support for North Vietnam, recognition of the revolutionary government in Hanoi and for the people of Palestine in their just struggle for independence and statehood are examples of Bangabandhu's far-reaching and very broad foreign policy outlook. History is the testimony of Bangabandhu's forward-looking vision in shaping the foreign policy of Bangladesh.

H E Mr Vikram K Doraiswami, Indian High Commissioner to



Bangladesh, in his comments, began by extending greetings to the Honourable State Minister of Foreign Affairs for his valuable presence and remarks. He thanked Ambassador Fazlul Karim for hosting the important event as well as the distinguished panellists and participants. He said that it was the most opportune moment to celebrate one of the most seminal events of Asia's 20th century. The liberation of Bangladesh and the pioneering spirit and the vision of Bangabandhu's entity was a struggle for recognition of the rights of Bengali people. What Bangabandhu did was to put in place a clear sense of the priorities that were attached to democracy-based movements. A fundamental democratic movement was based on the quest of recognition of identity and rights of the Bengali people. According to him, it was central to the idea of a foreign policy that is based on values. So, for Bangladesh's foreign policy, the ideology provided by Bangabandhu in his years of struggle for the creation of this nation was perhaps the greatest asset. He opined that through the presentations by the panellists, Bangabandhu's clear sense of vision of how to play a difficult hand came out, a hand that was made miserably more difficult by the destruction during the war of liberation and through the withdrawal of Pakistani forces when intellectuals were killed on the eve of liberation, along with the



Address by the Chief Guest



H E Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP
Honourable State Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

At the outset of his speech, the Chief Guest, **H E Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP** Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, expressed his deepest respect to the memory of the greatest Bengali of all time, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the eve of our 49th victory day, Honourable State Minister extended his sincere homage to the memory of three million martyrs who made their supreme sacrifices and over two hundred thousand women who lost their innocence during our War of Liberation in 1971. He also appreciated the effort of BISS to organize such an event to celebrate the birth centenary of our Founding Father. He congratulated and appreciated the deliberations made by the panellists, assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken initiatives to preserve historical documents on Bangabandhu. H E Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP informed that many of such very precious documents were destroyed by BNP-Jamaat regime during their rule. So, the Ministry is in a process of collecting and connecting those events and dots in order to put the history right and straight and present it to the nation.

The Honourable State Minister thought that it will be prudent to revisit the foundations of our foreign policy that were laid down by the Father of the Nation during his lifetime and in retrospect, to reflect on whether we were successful in pursuing his path. The guiding principle of Bangladesh's foreign policy was derived from the philosophical root that was enshrined in the constitution by Bangabandhu. He congratulated Mr Ashique Rahman of BISS for shedding light on the root of the guiding principle of Bangladesh's foreign policy, "friendship to all and malice to none"

H E Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP, referred to the famous delineation from Bismarck who defined foreign policy as the extension of domestic policy and practitioners are very well aware of that fact. Therefore, he mentioned not only international structure, but

domestic realities that guided the great leader of this newly liberated nation to form the foreign policy based on peace, justice and nonalignment. The turbulent time of the Great Wars followed by the anti-colonial waves across the globe during those days, entrenched the longing for self-determination, peace and democracy into Bangabandhu's political philosophy. He, being a true son of the soil, did not take much to ascertain that as a nation, Bengali nation's identity and aspiration not only derived from the colonial past, rather, it also resided within the realm of Bengali nationalism.

The Honourable State Minister talked about Bangabandhu's resolute commitment for safeguarding global peace based on the UN charter that was codified magnificently in the constitution of Bangladesh that came into being in 1972, which goes like, "The State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter." The Honourable Chief Guest also mentioned that the aspirations behind this firm commitment was eloquently put into words by the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his maiden address in Bangla to the UN General Assembly on 25th September 1974: the noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of our people he went on to say, and I am quoting from his speech, "Millions of our people have made the supreme sacrifice. I know that the soul of our martyrs join us in pledging that the Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspiration of all men [and women] for peace and justice will be realized." Honourable State Minister told that, like a true statesman, Bangabandhu beautifully juxtaposed Bengalis' nationalist aspiration for freedom with the globally yearning for peace and justice in a world that was intensely polarized by the Cold War.

The Honourable Chief Guest talked about the Bangabandhu's philosophical foundation which worked as the base for Bangladesh's foreign policy objectives, which are further elaborated in Article 25 of the Bangladesh Constitution, enunciating that the State shall maintain its foreign relations based on the principles of peaceful settlement of international disputes. He further mentioned that Bangabandhu was very much, like all great leaders, a creation of his time and space but through his work left undeniable



mark on the history that transcends both time and national boundaries. His political and philosophical worldviews were shaped by his deep rooted bond with his own people, era, culture, socio-political struggle, mentors and the larger society.

Therefore, Bangabandhu was very much aware of the political reality that Bangladesh was born into. The rift between the US and the USSR was so extreme that the birth of Bangladesh put the two superpowers almost on a collision course in the Bay of Bengal during the final months of the War. Considering the Cold War situation, it was not surprising that another newly independent nation, born out of anti-colonial wave, was caught between the superpowers' tussle for supremacy. Thus, the Honourable State Minister mentioned that the main challenge for Bangabandhu was to reconstruct a war-ravaged economy. Bangabandhu took the helm in such a time when the economy was completely shattered, infrastructures and communications were completely destroyed due to the colonial rule of Pakistan and the nine months long War of Liberation. Under this demanding condition, Bangabandhu had to secure international recognition, assistance for reconstruction of the country and put Bangladesh on the world map as a self-reliant nation. In order to achieve these Herculean tasks, Bangabandhu realised the necessity of reaching out equally to both the superpowers and build practicable bridges with them. Bangabandhu's commitment to non-alignment stemmed from the deep-rooted belief that it was not in Bangladesh's interest to be caught in between the rival superpowers.

H E Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP expressed his firm belief that on the eve of birth centenary of the great leader, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh is very much on the right track to the "Sonar Bangla" that Bangabandhu always dreamt, spoke and worked for. He further mentioned that, in this great journey as a nation, Bangladesh has Bangabandhu's daughter, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as the leader of this country. Under her bold, visionary and charismatic leadership, the country continues to uphold Bangabandhu's brand of foreign policy which preaches balanced relations based on mutual trust and respect with great powers and good neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries in the immediate neighbourhood and beyond.

The Honourable State Minister reminded the audience regarding the present Rohingya influx from Myanmar into Bangladesh which has created a humanitarian crisis and soured the relations between the two nations. However, he also reiterated Bangladesh's firm commitment to remain on Bangabandhu's path of peace to continue Bangladesh's engagements with Myanmar to resolve this crisis in peaceful manner. He hoped to see the problem to be resolved permanently with sustainable return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar as expressed by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the UN General assembly.

The Honourable Chief Guest mentioned that Bangabandhu clearly understood that in a realist world which was marred by conflicts, war, and rivalry, it would be important for a country like Bangladesh not only to keep equidistance but uphold multilateralism and many of you appreciated that as well and particularly through the UN system. Hence, this remained Bangladesh's diplomatic strength till today where Bangladesh engages as an active voice in various normative and policymaking initiatives. Bangladesh has maintained its success in promoting international peace and security through peacekeeping and

Concluding Remarks



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

In his concluding remarks, ***Ambassador M Fazlul Karim***, Chairman, BIISS, said that the founding father of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was on the global diplomatic and political stage for less than four years. In that short span of time, his statesmanship and great acumen enabled Bangladesh to become a respected nation. His unparalleled attributes, supreme dedication and sacrifices made him not only an iconic leader to his countrymen, but also turned him into a political personality adored by the global leaders. He had a towering personality and Fidel Castro once commented, “I have not seen the Himalayas, but I have seen Sheikh Mujib”. In personality and courage, the man was the Himalayas. Wherever Bangabandhu went, he became the centre of attraction and earned the respect of the world leaders. Bangabandhu’s thoughts, visions and ideals are still relevant in present reality. He continued to inspire all in various field of activities. At present, populism and conservative nationalism have been gaining grounds in many parts of the world. Following Bangabandhu’s principles of equality, justice and non-discrimination, Ambassador Karim felt that states will be able to build more inclusive societies. Bangabandhu was in favour of crafting harmonious international relations by building partnerships and cooperation, ending the fierce competition for spheres of influence. If the leaders of the world at present follow his ideals and vision for a friction-free world, it will be possible to achieve the most desired peace and stability in the whole world.

Lastly, Ambassador Karim conveyed his sincere appreciation to all the learned

Edited By

Dr Mahfuz Kabir, Research Director
M Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow
Sajid Karim, Research Fellow

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