



## Research Article

# 21st Century Geopolitical Doctrine for Bangladesh to Become a Smart Power: A Bangladeshi Perspective

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### Abstract

After a grueling nine-month conflict with Pakistan, Bangladesh gained independence as a sovereign nation on December 16, 1971. The economically successful South Asian nation that was previously known as the "bottomless basket" has become known as a "development miracle." The country has regained geopolitical significance both within and outside the area due to its proximity to other countries and strategic location, which has been supported by astounding economic development. Bangladesh is faced with several geopolitical issues amid a changing regional and global geopolitical scene, the mitigation of which calls for prudent actions. But Bangladesh, as a contemporary geopolitical actor, lacks a wise geopolitical philosophy that could serve as a guide for dealing with those problems. This study proposes the creation of a coherent and pertinent geopolitical ideology that can help a nation achieve geopolitical graduation as a Smart Power and address current geopolitical issues shortly.

### Introduction

By annihilating Pakistan in a bloody war fifty years ago, Bangladesh signaled her entry into the international stage as a sovereign nation. Few individuals thought the infant state would survive, much less advance in growth. Bangladesh experienced many issues in the first few decades following

its independence, including political instability, natural disasters, military coups, political violence, and corruption, among others. These initial hurdles were overcome, nevertheless, by Bangladesh. Not only did it endure them, but it also penned an Asian miracle tale of progress through both social and economic development. Bangladesh's

founding in 1971 did not garner much attention, but as it celebrates its golden jubilee, the country has received plaudits from all around the world for its economic and social improvement. The "Asian Development miracle," once derided as "the bottomless basket," is now celebrated. The country's geopolitical relevance has increased as a result of the ongoing economic development over the past few years. Bangladesh has always been involved in geopolitics due to its birth during the tumultuous Cold War era. In her history, Bangladesh has never been free from the enmity of powerful nations—whether it be the ongoing rivalry between India and Pakistan, the conflict between the US and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War, or the Sino-Western or Sino-Indian rivalry in the modern world. Due to the rekindled interest of the major world powers in this region, the geopolitical landscape of South Asia has also shifted recently. Two nuclear-armed countries in South Asia, China, and India, are constantly working on different plans and intentions to alter the geopolitical landscape of this region in their favor. Additionally, to offset China's ascent in this region, the aging Superpower America has redirected its geopolitical attention to the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, regional geopolitics is becoming more and more competitive. Due to its strategic location and close closeness to these big governments, Bangladesh has attracted their attention. Bangladesh now finds greater relevance and significance due to its geographical potential as a result of the growing presence of China in this region, the United States' shifting geopolitical focus, and India's deliberate efforts to maintain its regional dominance (Riaz and Parvez, 2021a). However, Bangladesh's geopolitical area is not constrained to South Asia in the contemporary globe where the geopolitical landscape is always changing. It instead reaches from the Bay of Bengal to South Asia, the Middle East to Africa, and even the global stage. Bangladesh is currently at a geopolitical crossroads where it must act diplomatically to resolve disputes with neighbors, maintain balance in relations with powerful nations, expand its geopolitical space beyond South Asia by fostering diplomatic engagements, transform its physical geography into image geography by reestablishing democratic values and human rights principles, and play a significant role in addressing non-traditional security issues like climate change, transnational organized crime, and nuclear proliferation. However, the potential emergence of Bangladesh as an active actor in both the regional and global arena is called into question by the absence of a cunning geopolitical strategy. Due to shifts in foreign policy and political regimes since Bangladesh became a sovereign state, it has been difficult to develop a successful geopolitical theory. However, Bangladesh now faces significant challenges in balancing major powers, fostering

diplomatic engagements to safeguard its national interests, and enhancing its military and defense capabilities due to the country's expanding economy, geographic proximity, and constantly changing regional and global geopolitics. This study presents a cogent geopolitical doctrine for Bangladesh that combines hard power and soft power components to secure that nation's geopolitical graduation as a smart power that will successfully direct itself to address all geopolitical issues in the future.

## **Methodology**

For social science research, there are many approaches available. This research work mostly relies on scholarly views and Writings since its goal is to develop a coherent geopolitical doctrine for Bangladesh that would enable it to deal with the geopolitical issues brought about by the shifting regional and global geopolitical environment. In this study, both primary and secondary data are gathered using the qualitative method. In-depth interviews with academics, researchers, and other experts in the domains pertinent to the topic were used to gather primary data. Through the study of pertinent journals, newspapers, and online articles, secondary data are gathered.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Geopolitical Doctrine for Bangladesh***

The term "geopolitics" was originally used by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen, and it spread throughout Europe in the years between the two World Wars (Deudney, 2013). Geopolitics, according to Cambridge Dictionary, is the study of how a state's size, location, etc. affects its power and its interactions with other nations around the world (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It can be summed up as the investigation of the impact of spatial variables on inter-state interactions. The classical school and the critical school are two opposed schools of geopolitics. According to the classical school of geopolitics, a state can only increase its strength by militarily expanding its territory. In contrast to the Classical School, Critical Geopolitics promotes the idea that rather than expanding a state's territory through the use of military force, intellectual statecrafts, cultural artifacts, organizational processes, and diplomatic endeavors, among other things, form a state's spatiality. (Ahmed, 2017). Regarding the situation in Bangladesh, it has become clear that the country's geopolitical doctrine needs to be effective enough to manage the dual goals of preserving territorial sovereignty and expanding its operational zone to include South Asia and beyond Bangladesh needs to mix components from both the Classical and Critical schools of geopolitics while creating such a proactive and enabling doctrine so that it may manage its existence in a variety of geopolitical climates (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The author's geopolitical doctrine for Bangladesh

<b>Geopolitical Doctrine for Bangladesh</b>			
<b>Design</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Power Dimensions</b>
Combining aspects of the classical and critical schools of geopolitics	Extension of the functional space and preservation of territorial sovereignty to South Asia and beyond	Building military capability, intellectual statecraft, cultural artifacts, diplomatic initiatives, geoeconomics, etc.	Bangladesh will become a "Smart Power" by combining its hard power and soft power capabilities.

**Understanding Smart Power**

"Understanding Smart Power," introduced by Joseph S. Nye Jr. in his book "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics" (2004) on pages 7-10 and 169-171, is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept that has gained prominence in politics, international relations, and energy management. This concept emphasizes the strategic deployment of resources and influence to achieve specific objectives in a constantly evolving global landscape. Smart power encompasses various elements, including hard power (traditional military capabilities and coercion), soft power (shaping opinions and perceptions non-coercively), economic power (using a strong economy to forge alliances and promote development), technological advancements (leveraging technology for strategic advantage), diplomacy and multilateral engagement (cultivating alliances and skilled negotiations), and environmental and energy sustainability (investing in renewable energy and conservation). Smart power recognizes the need for a balanced and strategic combination of these elements to navigate international relations effectively, emphasizing non-coercive, persuasive, and cooperative approaches in shaping the global landscape.

**Geopolitical Doctrine for Bangladesh to Become a Smart Power in the 21st Century**

*Geography Cuts both ways:*

The most crucial element in Bangladesh's geopolitical game, its geographic location offers both advantages and disadvantages. Bangladesh is bordered by India on three sides, save from the south, except for a small border with Myanmar. Being a prisoner of geography places Bangladesh in a geopolitically unfavorable situation. For this reason, it becomes a geopolitical burden when a small nation like Bangladesh is bordered on all but one side by a large, powerful state and regional pivot like India (Uddin, 2016). However, the attitude has shifted recently, and Dhaka now views itself as land-linked rather than landlocked. Because of its geographic location, Bangladesh has the potential to become the state that links South Asia and South East Asia. Bangladesh therefore cannot be left

out of any joint effort between these two regional powerhouses. Therefore, geography gives Bangladesh a motivating role to play in becoming the center of regional connection to fully realize its geographic potential. Bangladesh's even distribution of land and water is another benefit bestowed by geography. It gives Bangladesh the chance to travel by land to its neighboring states, navigate the Bay of Bengal, and examine the potential benefits of the untapped blue economy. (Paul, 2015).

*Geopolitics with the Bordering States:*

India and Myanmar are involved in Bangladesh's geopolitics with its surrounding states because these two nations are its neighbors. The fifth-longest land border in modern times, Bangladesh's 4,096 km border with India, is shared by both countries. When India recognized Bangladesh as a sovereign state on December 6, 1971, the two nations marked the occasion as the golden anniversary of their friendship. The two neighboring states have had a long-standing connection with just a few sharp swings between Sheikh Mujib's first democratic government and the current one. The history, legacy, culture, and ethnolinguistic origins that two adjacent states have shared for millennia have served as the foundation of their connection. It was enhanced when India provided Bangladesh with unwavering military assistance and provided refuge to 10 million refugees during the Liberation War of 1971. The mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity has helped this relationship grow throughout the years. Peacefully settling their long-running land and marine issues in recent years between the two nations exemplifies the depth of their inter-state relations. Two recent defense agreements were also signed by the two neighboring nations. Additionally, India has offered a Line of Credit (LOC) for \$500 million to Bangladesh for the country to purchase defense-related goods (Shazzad, 2021 a). However, some concerns upset the fabric of a friendly relationship between the two countries, including a significant trade imbalance, illegal immigration, border killing, and sharing of water from similar rivers. In addition, India's failure to assist Bangladesh in the Rohingya crisis and inability to deliver

on its promise to give the agreed-upon doses of vaccination caused public unrest in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, making it impossible to ignore its presence. In a similar vein, Bangladesh is significant to India's geostrategic calculations and as such, India cannot ignore the importance of a positive relationship with it. To settle bilateral challenges and promote mutual collaboration, both nations must fundamentally rethink their relationship (Yasmin, 2021). Myanmar is another next-door neighbor with which Bangladesh shares 271 kilometers of border. When Myanmar recognized Bangladesh on January 13, 1972, it started a bilateral relationship between the two countries. The Rohingya crisis and Myanmar's use of cartographic propaganda against Bangladesh are only two examples of the issues causing tension in relations between the two neighbors. The two nations' economic ties are also hampered by trade imbalances, even though Myanmar may be a prospective market for Bangladeshi exports of items including medicines, leather goods, vegetables, textiles, and readymade garments (RMG). (Ahmed, 2017). Bangladesh must develop a neighborhood policy that allows for the amicable resolution of bilateral disputes and the promotion of collaboration, as it cannot conduct war against India and Myanmar owing to its unfavorable location.

#### ***Navigating Survival in Changing South Asian Landscape***

South Asia is a crucial connection connecting the rise of the Asian continent to the global economy. With an average GDP growth of 7.1%, South Asia, which is home to one-fourth of all people on the planet, is one of the fastest-growing areas in the globe. Given that 40 percent of the population is under 25, this area is known as the growth engine for future Asia (The Daily Star, 2019). But because of deteriorating interstate relations, a lack of regional mechanisms, and unrelenting rivalry between two nuclear powers, this region is among the most unstable in the world. Iran and Pakistan. The growing influence of China, Indian attempts to dominate the region, Sino-Indian competition to become the region's pivot, and the United States shift in emphasis to the Indo-Pacific region to limit China have all contributed to the geopolitical environment becoming more complex. Bangladesh has been entangled in the Sino-American and Sino-Indian competition in such a tumultuous geopolitical environment. Bangladesh is playing its part with a balancing act while global actors like the USA and China participate in this grand geopolitical game with the regional pivot of India. As a developing nation like Bangladesh, where the main objective is economic rather than geopolitical, Bangladesh should carefully adhere to and maintain its policy of nonalignment to obtain better commercial deals and strengthen its negotiating leverage (Ahmed, 2022).

#### ***Playing with the Rising Dragon***

China has become one of the key stakeholders in South Asia's shifting geopolitical landscape. Despite not being a South Asian state, it has been working tirelessly over the past few years to expand its influence by getting involved in the economic diplomacy of the nations in this region. To offer emergency Coronavirus vaccines to nations including Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, China also intends to use vaccine diplomacy (Hage and Hasan, 2022). Bangladesh, like some other South Asian nations, is crucial in China's geostrategic calculations because of its strategic location for implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vision that China has long held. Furthermore, the Bay of Bengal is strategically important to China since it can provide port facilities and a different route to the Indian Ocean. China, which is Bangladesh's top trade partner and a major supplier of armaments, is similarly acknowledged as a key strategic ally. It has also increased its investment in Bangladesh over the past few years to ensure that various development initiatives are accomplished quickly. However, China has consistently supported Myanmar in the Rohingya crisis, crushing hopes for the Rohingyas' speedy return home. To avoid becoming caught in the Chinese debt trap, Bangladesh should also exercise subtlety. In addition, if relations with the West suffer owing to concerns about human rights abuse and democratic disintegration, the government of Bangladesh should reserve China as a countervailing strategic partner (Riaz and Parvez, 2021).

#### ***Decaying Great Power Inclining to deepen ties***

Since its inception, the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and the USA has had ups and downs. Because the USA steadfastly opposed Bangladesh's quest for independence and Bangladesh later joined the Soviet bloc after its establishment, the relationship has never been particularly friendly. For many years, Washington also viewed Bangladesh through the eyes of Delhi. However, current American analysts have stated that the US' reliance on India to restrain China may harm the US' reputation in Bangladesh (Riaz and Parvez, 2021). Instead, their academics have advocated for strengthening bilateral ties with Bangladesh to increase American interest in the Indo-Pacific area. Deeper bilateral connections with the US could benefit Bangladesh as the US starts to cease its strategic indifference, as this would lessen Bangladesh's reliance on India and China. (Mohan, 2021).

#### ***Geopolitical Space beyond South Asia***

The geopolitical environment of Bangladesh has expanded outside South Asia due to its growing geopolitical prominence and interest from the international world. For instance, the European Union (EU) is one of Bangladesh's main trading partners, and it also accounts for about 40% of Bangladesh's overall foreign aid receipts. Although trade



and foreign aid are at the core of relations between the EU and Bangladesh, experts believe that Bangladesh should ask the EU for assistance in the areas of Rohingya repatriation, access to COVID-19 vaccines, and GSP-F status for duty-free access to the European market given the likelihood of a shift in the EU's political stance as a result of the restructuring of the world order (Rahman, 2021). A majority-Muslim nation, Bangladesh, maintains cordial ties with the Muslim countries of the Middle East. The reason behind this is that the majority of people in Bangladesh are Muslims. Bangladesh's largest labor export market is still the Middle East, which enables it to receive remittances that have fueled its recent economic growth. Bangladesh has recently earned organizational space in several international and regional forums through active participation and leadership positions.

### ***Managing the New Great Game in the Bay of Bengal***

The Bay of Bengal is inextricably tied to Bangladesh's recent strategic relevance to the major regional and international powers. Due to the Bay of Bengal's strategic location at the intersection of South Asia and South East Asia and the uninterrupted operation of sea lines of communication (SLOC), the Great Power competition has found a new stage in the region (Kabir and Ahmad, 2015). Bangladesh currently has to contend with both littoral and extra-littoral players like China, India, the United States, Japan, and Australia who are competing with one another through various strategic alliances like the QUAD, the AUKUS, the BIMSTEC, and the BRI to protect their interests in the Bay of Bengal. Because every act of alignment could ultimately become a strategic burden Bangladesh shouldn't lean towards any of these groupings.

### ***Playing Cards through Greater Engagement***

In the initial stages of the pandemic, the economic and health situations in the majority of the countries were devastating. During that time, Bangladesh sent COVID-19 aid and assistance to India, announced a \$200 million currency swap in favor of Sri Lanka to help it reduce its debt burden, and provided another \$200 million loan to the Maldives, all of which were inspired by the foreign policy of the nation's founder, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh also sought to promote cooperation with other neighboring states and beyond. Additionally, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent trip to France provided favorable conditions for increased bilateral cooperation in trade, defense, and climate change issues. When it comes to influencing South Asia and beyond, Bangladesh can use these sorts of diplomatic engagements. Bangladesh must therefore keep up these engagement initiatives to increase its influence in South Asia and outside (Shovon, 2022).

### ***Greater emphasis on Image Geography***

Bangladesh has been quite effective in transforming its physical geography to image geography in recent years. Previously infamous for its political unrest, military takeovers, natural disasters, and corruption, the country has transformed into a leader in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), establishing global peace and security through UN peacekeeping missions, rooting out terrorism and religious extremism, addressing natural disasters and climate vulnerabilities, and establishing a secular and tolerant society in a country with a majority Muslim population. However, Bangladesh has also been dealing with a crisis of confidence as a result of claims of human rights abuses, a declining public sphere, irregular elections, and democratic degradation. The Bangladeshi government should play a crucial role in regaining the state's positive reputation by acting quickly to address these problems.

### ***Future Looks Bright, Yet Challenges Wait***

Bangladesh's opportunity to play a proactive role in South Asia and the wider world has increased due to its growing relevance in a shifting regional and global geopolitical landscape underpinned by recent economic and developmental success. However, Bangladesh is being criticized for its recent democratic losses and subpar management of human rights. Bangladesh also has a significant geopolitical disadvantage in that it lacks a well-defined geopolitical doctrine. The idea put out by current geopolitics is to combine hard power applications with soft power capabilities to guarantee state longevity and protect national interests. Bangladesh must keep in mind that it cannot declare war against its neighbors or neglect its military readiness due to its location next to the politically unstable Myanmar and under the nose of South Asian superpower India. To further its peaceful progress, it must forge diplomatic ties and mutually beneficial collaborations with other nations. To improve its geopolitical position, Bangladesh must therefore look forward to combining its efforts to strengthen both hard power capabilities and soft power measures.

### ***Bangladesh's Unique Position- and Others strategic significance for becoming Smart Power in the 21st Century:***

Bangladesh, located in South Asia, is a nation of nearly 170 million people. Despite its relatively small geographical size, the country's geopolitical significance cannot be understated. It shares borders with India, Myanmar, and China and has access to the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh's economic growth has been impressive in recent years, with the country emerging as a major player in the global textile industry and other sectors.

However, Bangladesh faces a range of challenges, including political instability, environmental concerns, and regional tensions. To navigate these challenges and emerge as a smart power, Bangladesh must adopt a comprehensive geopolitical doctrine.

Here is a detailed description of each component of the proposed doctrine:

*Economic Growth and Diversification:*

In the context of crafting a "21st Century Geopolitical Doctrine for Bangladesh to Become a Smart Power: A Bangladeshi Perspective," Bangladesh's pursuit of a "21st Century Geopolitical Doctrine for Smart Power" demands a critical evaluation of its economic dynamics, acknowledging the risks associated with overreliance on the textile and garment industry. To evolve into a smart power, diversification is crucial, involving targeted investments in technology, agricultural modernization, and renewable energy. Hasan (2021) emphasizes strategic economic diversification as essential for smart power status, focusing on a Bangladeshi perspective. Rahman (2022) underscores the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in technological ascendance, aligning with the need for technology-driven investments. Additionally, Ahmed (2023) advocates for a renewable energy transition to ensure sustainable growth and climate resilience, aligning with Bangladesh's environmental challenges. In essence, Bangladesh's smart power journey hinges on economic diversification, emphasizing technology, agricultural modernization, and renewable energy.

*Demographic dividend:*

With a burgeoning population of nearly 170 million, Bangladesh stands at a crucial juncture in the 21st century. It possesses a substantial demographic dividend, a powerful asset that can be leveraged to steer the nation toward becoming a smart power on the global stage. At the heart of this dividend lies a youthful and rapidly expanding workforce, brimming with untapped potential. (Khan, 2020). However, the realization of this potential is contingent upon strategic investments in education, skills development, and job creation. Bangladesh's future as a smart power hinges on its ability to harness this demographic advantage, nurturing a well-educated and skilled populace capable of driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and enhancing the country's geopolitical influence. (Ahmed, 2021).

*Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation:*

Diplomacy emerged as a fundamental pillar of Bangladesh's foreign policy strategy. This piece underscores the critical role diplomacy plays in safeguarding Bangladesh's national interests and achieving its strategic objectives. Given its unique geographic location, sharing borders with India, Myanmar, and China, effective diplomacy is deemed

essential for maintaining positive and cooperative relations with neighboring countries, facilitating the resolution of border disputes, and promoting regional stability. (Rahman, 2019). This writing also places a strong emphasis on Bangladesh's active participation in regional cooperation initiatives, particularly within the SAARC framework. Regional initiatives, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), offer avenues for collaboration and trade. (Islam, 2020). It highlights the potential for leveraging diplomatic efforts to foster economic and political cooperation with neighboring nations, addressing common challenges such as poverty alleviation and environmental issues. Furthermore, This writing encourages Bangladesh to explore strategic alliances with key regional and global players to align interests for mutual benefit, potentially engaging with countries like India, China, and others on projects that promote economic growth and stability. In summary, the documents underscore the pivotal roles of diplomacy and regional cooperation in shaping Bangladesh's path toward becoming a smart power capable of addressing geopolitical challenges and contributing to regional stability and prosperity. (Chowdhury, 2021).

*Education and Innovation:*

The pivotal role of education and innovation is highlighted as essential components in Bangladesh's journey towards smart power status. This writing underscores the significance of a robust educational foundation, spanning from primary to tertiary levels, as the bedrock for nurturing a skilled workforce capable of contributing to various sectors crucial for national development. (Amin, 2021). Simultaneously, it emphasizes the importance of fostering a culture of innovation, encouraging research and development initiatives, and promoting entrepreneurship. These measures are seen as vital steps that will enable Bangladesh to harness innovation as a potent catalyst for economic growth and technological advancement, ultimately enhancing its standing in the evolving geopolitics of the 21st century. (Rahman, 2022).

*Cultural Exchange:*

The concept of cultural exchange emerges as a strategic avenue for Bangladesh to harness its rich cultural heritage in the pursuit of soft power. The compositions underscore the significance of actively promoting cultural exchange programs, encompassing diverse avenues such as art exhibitions, music festivals, and culinary events. (Rahman, 2019). These initiatives are portrayed as powerful tools to not only enhance Bangladesh's cultural influence but also to draw global attention and tourism. By doing so, Bangladesh can stimulate its economy, foster a positive global image, and solidify its position as a smart power actively engaged in the evolving dynamics of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape. (Khan, 2020).

#### *Rohingya Issue and Humanitarian Efforts:*

The Rohingya issue and Bangladesh's humanitarian efforts are integral to its pursuit of smart power status. Active involvement in international peacekeeping missions reflects the nation's commitment to global stability and human rights. This engagement not only showcases Bangladesh as a responsible global citizen but also enhances its diplomatic standing and soft power influence. The nation's adept handling of the Rohingya refugee crisis exemplifies its role in humanitarian diplomacy, contributing significantly to regional and global interests (Hage and Hasan, 2022). Bangladesh's efficient crisis management and collaboration with international organizations, including the UNHCR, not only addresses immediate suffering but also resonates globally (Riaz and Parvez, 2021). This empathetic approach solidifies Bangladesh's standing as a compassionate actor on the world stage, navigating complex humanitarian challenges and advancing geopolitical importance through trust and respect from the international community.

#### *Technology and Cybersecurity:*

The imperatives of technology and cyber security emerge as pivotal pillars of Bangladesh's strategic vision. The pieces emphasize that in an increasingly interconnected world, Bangladesh must prioritize investments in technology and cyber security to safeguard its national interests. Developing a robust cyber security infrastructure is deemed essential not only to defend against evolving cyber threats but also to protect critical information vital to the nation's security and prosperity. (Islam, 2020). Simultaneously, fostering a technology-friendly environment is seen as a strategic move to position Bangladesh as a significant contributor to the global technology landscape. This approach can attract foreign investment, drive economic growth, and ultimately bolster Bangladesh's standing as a smart power, well-prepared to navigate the complex geopolitical dynamics of the 21st century. (Ahmed, 2021).

#### *Maritime Resources and the Blue Economy:*

Bangladesh's strategic location in the Bay of Bengal is a significant geopolitical advantage, particularly in the context of maritime resources and the blue economy (Hasan, 2020). The Bay of Bengal has become a global focal point due to the increasing demand for energy resources (Hasan & Noman, 2018). With extensive maritime territory, Bangladesh is well-positioned for offshore oil and gas exploration, potentially becoming a regional energy hub (Bangladesh Maritime Policy, 2016). Efficient utilization of these resources not only enhances energy security but also drives economic growth, offering opportunities for the growing population. Additionally, Bangladesh can play a key role in regional cooperation to manage these resources sustainably and prevent conflicts over maritime boundaries. Collaborative efforts with neighboring countries and international stakeholders can

establish a peaceful and prosperous maritime environment in the Bay of Bengal, benefiting both Bangladesh and the global community. In the evolving geopolitics and increasing energy demands of the present era, Bangladesh's strategic use of its maritime resources for the blue economy is pivotal in shaping regional and global interests.

#### *Climate Change and Environmental Diplomacy:*

Bangladesh's unique geographic location in the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers, coupled with its low-lying topography, exposes it to significant vulnerabilities from climate change (Ahmed, 2017). The nation grapples with rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events, posing existential threats (Shazzad, 2021). This vulnerability positions Bangladesh as a key player in global climate negotiations and environmental diplomacy. Advocating for climate justice, the country aims to highlight the disproportionate impact on vulnerable nations and the need for urgent international cooperation (Ahmed, 2017). Actively engaging in global discussions and calling for adaptation funding, Bangladesh seeks support to mitigate climate change effects domestically while contributing to the global fight against this crisis. This approach not only safeguards Bangladesh's interests but also establishes it as an influential international player, reinforcing its global standing and contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development and environmental protection.

#### *Counterterrorism Cooperation and regional stability:*

Bangladesh plays a crucial role in countering terrorism and extremism, with significant implications for regional stability in South Asia and beyond (Ahmed, 2017). Through cooperation with international partners, including the United States and European countries, Bangladesh actively engages in intelligence-sharing and counterterrorism efforts. The nation's commitment to preventing radicalization and promoting moderate interpretations of Islam aligns with global powers' interests in combating terrorism and maintaining regional stability. Given its proximity to regions affected by extremist activities, such as the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, Bangladesh's efforts contribute to mitigating security risks and fostering a more secure environment. The country's effective collaboration in counterterrorism initiatives enhances its geopolitical importance and solidifies its role as a responsible actor in the global fight against terrorism, aligning its interests with those of the international community (Shazzad, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's formation as an independent state was recently commemorated. Even 50 years after gaining its independence, Bangladesh lacks a wise geopolitical ideology that can serve as its beacon of

light as it navigates its survival in a constantly changing local and global geopolitical context. However, such a deficiency could hinder Bangladesh's future aspirations to become a proactive player and severely limit its capacity to exercise geopolitical influence. As a developing nation, Bangladesh now has to simultaneously work on improving its military readiness to defend its territory from any external assault while claiming its place in the modern world through more aggressive diplomatic contacts. This is because Bangladesh, as a prosperous state, cannot disregard the need to improve its military capabilities nor can it forget about maximizing the potential of its soft power to play a proactive role in the regional and global arena. To create a better geopolitical doctrine that may help Bangladesh realize its potential as a Smart Power and protect its geopolitical interests throughout the world, it must mix the elements of both hard and soft power.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with the present publication.

### Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally at all stages of research and manuscript preparation. Final form of manuscript was approved by both authors.

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