

Bangladesh-USA Relationship: Some Facts and Factors

Abdul Quader Chowdhury writes from Montreal

MOST countries in the world give their relations with the USA a top priority. The collapse of the Non-Aligned Movement cleared the way for the USA to become sole superpower. People today don't talk much about Imperialism but Globalization. High-tech based globalization through the free market network put the USA in such a position that gives it advantage to influence and control the affairs and behaviours of other nations. And, historically, a special attention is focused on the Bangladesh-USA relationship.

The US is the Bangladesh's largest single trading partner and one of its largest foreign investors, with current investment of about \$750 million. Bilateral relationship is based on a large US food and economic aid programme which began as emergency relief in the seventies. The US appreciates Bangladesh's moderate role in international forums like the G-77, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the OIC. The two countries' militaries have shared a warm and mutually beneficial relationship. Bangladesh supported the USA during the Desert Shield operations (the Gulf War) and provided troops for the coalition. Bangladesh also sent trained manpower to different parts of world like African nations and Balkan region under the US led UN peacekeeping forces. They worked side by side when the US naval task force provided assistance after the devastating April 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh. The relief efforts of the US marines and sailors are credited with having saved as many as 200,000 lives. All these contributed to our current relations with the USA to grow stronger and closer.

What made Bangladesh, apparently, so important to the USA? As a whole, Asia recently emerged as a potential market for, and as skilled / half-skilled cheap labour supplier to the G-7 world. On the verge of the competition with EU, the USA is trying to seek this type of prospect from Bangladesh. The natural resources of Bangladesh also lure the USA's investment in the power and energy sector for the South Asian market. Rising democratic and secular trends of Bangladesh, an Asian Muslim nation, encouraged the USA to find a reliable friend when it has to deal with other conservative Islamic nations and forces. Geo-political position of Bangladesh also attracts the USA. Sometimes in 1903, G N Curzon, one of the most efficient imperial proconsuls in India declared that the geographical position of India would push her into the forefront of the interna-

tional politics. Bangladesh's position on the trade route between Europe and the Far-east via Mediterranean, the Red sea, the Indian Ocean and the strait of Malacca provides her a favourable commercial connection with rest of the world.

The historical backgrounds of the USA's relationship is also important to study and grasp lessons therefrom in order to formulate our foreign policy ensuring that our national interests and integrity are well secured. The then Nixon administration was against our Independence War of 1971. There were numerous reasons. That era was characterised by the cold war

highly controversial "gunboat diplomacy". Brit, as the Anderson Papers subsequently disclosed that after the first week of December Bangladesh was a *jail accorn*, the Nixon administration drawn a closed door decision that Bangladesh would need a large scale foreign aid; and by extending the aid, a sphere of US influence would be established in Bangladesh.

In 1972, the USA recognized Bangladesh as an independent nation in the world and kept to economically help us in various ways with a sort of political conservatism. The father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited the USA, specifically the

alternatively view that the USA's and donors' friendship, not the native voters, is one of the determining factors of gaining the state power. The mass people are fed up with corrupt politicians and frustrated with their mean policies. In any domestic crisis, big parties seek help (interference) from western ambassadors and representatives in Dhaka to get their political problems solved! That's why, the western envoys in Dhaka take advantages to interfere into our domestic politics in the name of helping develop the environment for more foreign aids and investments in Bangladesh. This is our national image and prestige issue. Normally, these

infrastructure building and service sectors; 2) increased scientific, IT, communication technology and management skill transfer to upgrade our huge human resources and decrease other burden some aids/loans; 3) investment of capital, knowledge and technology in our poor medical and educational sector to reduce wastage of our valuable human energy which is widely recognized abroad as an important asset for national development.

The recent development in Eurasian regional politics that needs timely and proper attention is that there is a growing trend of emergence of a new axis comprising Russia-China-India which is likely to be parallel to the USA axis in Asia or even in the world. So, Bangladesh should address it carefully and properly. Some experts suggest that Bangladesh should take more efforts to construct a solid relation with Russia and to consolidate it with China without ignoring the same with India. The expatriates of China and India significantly contributed in their home countries' recent tremendous development in the ways of 1) transferring capital, technology etc.; 2) boosting import-export trade; 3) lobbying with respective foreign country's political, business, experts and academic giants for their home-country's interests. The embassies of those respective nations actively helped to organize such a positive environment in the USA and all over Europe. But, the Bangladesh government and some non-government agencies and groups unfortunately are not doing such job enough in the western countries. Sectarian grouping and personal power clashes are the usual community activities of some people abroad while only handful are trying to do something constructive for our motherland.

The USA is interested in our huge natural and human resources. To materialize our goal, we can take advantage of it. Our government should address it in a right way at the right time. In the year 2000, the US President Bill Clinton and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina exchanged state visits. The purpose of Clinton's visit was clear: 1) pursuing the US investment deal in our energy sector; 2) firm assurance of Bangladesh's role against all sorts of terrorism, drug and human trafficking; 3) assurance of regional co-operation for peace working especially with India and Pakistan; and 4) management of aid, grants and loans in various projects. Reciprocally, the main purposes of Hasina's visit make dynamic our relations with the USA, all these factors need special considerations.



In the year 2000, the US President Bill Clinton and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina exchanged state visits.

between two super powers (USA and USSR) that made US policy far deep rooted in the anti-Communist Asian politics. Specifically, after the murder (1953) of then Pak PM, Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistani government signed military pacts with the USA called the SEATO and the CENTO. Then the USA thought that Pakistan could be a good channel to communicate with the Muslim world, perhaps even in building relationship with China. On the other hand, Pakistan thought that it could get help from the USA to protect its national geographical integrity against its traditional enemy. As the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) crisis deepened and Nixon Administration's (secret) visit to China came nearer, the USA became more dependent on the then Pak regime, and showed open support to Pakistan against India and thus the Bangladesh Liberation War. When all regular diplomacy against India's position on our national struggle was failed, they (USA and Pakistani) resorted to a

UNO, in October 1974. However, that visit didn't produce any positive breakthrough in our relations with the USA. In August 1975, Mujib was brutally assassinated in a coup d'état by a group of hostile Army officers. Reaping the benefits out of that situation, a section of the military and civil bureaucrats formed series of governments afterward and tried their best to establish a closer relation with the USA. First the Zia government and then the Ershad government pursued the free economic policy opening our unorganized market to the foreign investors and gave incentives to the private sector. They somewhat regulated the multi-party democratic politics. Those efforts helped to satisfy the westerners, especially the USA administration. Today, a growing trend concerning the USA-Bangladesh issues has assumed a multi-level attention in our political and social arena.

But the way big party politicians currently act in our antagonistic politics, it shows that they are not supposed to be the way of upholding and strengthening our national sovereignty. The main reason for this is that the politicians do not give the nation's interests maximum priority over their party or personal interests. But a country like Bangladesh needs a steady, unique, foreign policy based on national consensus processed in parliament with the participation of major parties. Change in government must not and should not change this policy. Foreign Minister should be such a personality who has best professional qualities, modern education and outlook, higher communication and persuasion skills etc. In this case, only party affiliation should not be the norm. Foreign policy must be framed in such a way that would yield a free and healthy environment in which Bangladesh would fare stronger, economically, politically and culturally. To achieve this goal, Bangladesh needs to set its priorities of agenda. Today, we need 1) foreign investment inflow in production,

2) increased scientific, IT, communication technology and management skill transfer to upgrade our huge human resources and decrease other burden some aids/loans; 3) investment of capital, knowledge and technology in our poor medical and educational sector to reduce wastage of our valuable human energy which is widely recognized abroad as an important asset for national development.

Leadership in the 21st Century

by Bishwa Nath Brahma

THE leader of the future will supposed be one who can create a culture or a value system centered upon principles. Creating such a culture in a business, government, school, hospital, non-profit organisation, family or other constituents of social will be a tremendous and exciting challenge in this new era and will only be achieved by leaders, be they emerging or seasoned, who have the vision, courage and humility to constantly learn and grow. Those people and organisations who have a passion for learning learning through listening and seeing; observing emerging trends; sensing, evaluating past success and mistakes

and absorbing the lessons that conscience and principles teach us. Such learning leaders will not resist change, they will embrace it. The world has changed in a very profound way. So many more dynamic, competitive forces are operating. Quality standards have risen particularly in the global market. It may be possible to survive in a local market without meeting these standards, perhaps even in a regional market but certainly not in a global market.

In all sectors business, government, healthcare, social, or non-profit service the market place is demanding that organi-

sations transform themselves. They must be able to produce services and goods and deliver them in a fast, friendly and flexible way and on a consistent basis that serves the needs of both internal and external customers. This requires a workforce not only to be allowed to give its full creativity and talent, but enabled, encouraged and rewarded for doing so. Even though tens of hundreds of organisations are deeply involved in quality initiatives designed to produce those results, transformation is not yet achieved because of a lack of trust in the culture.

So the first role of the leader is to be a model of principle-

centered leadership. Whenever a person or an organisation is principle-centered, that person or organisation becomes a model an example to other people and organisation. It is that kind of model, the kind of character, competence and action that produces trust among people, motivate them to identify with this model and be influenced by it. There is a combination of character (who you are as a person) and competence (what you can do). These two qualities represent your potential. And when you actually do it when you put action together with character you are perceived as modeling.

The leader of the future will

by nurul-ur-rabbi



James Bond
BY IAN FLEMING
DRAWING BY HORAK



apparently be the same as the leader of the present. There will be little change outwardly, but an internal change will make him/her the leader of the future and he will bring in the required transformation. The main source to personal change seems to be pain and passion. If you are not feeling this pain and passion there is rarely enough motivation or humility for change. Without such pain and passion people tend to be too involved in themselves and their world to raise above their own interests or for that matter politics.

The primary driving force of change now is the global economy itself. The standard of quality now is so high that unless you have an empowered workforce and a spirit of partnership with all stakeholders, you cannot compete.

whether you work in the private sector or public sector in economic or social field. We are becoming increasingly and painfully aware of the perilous weakening of our social structure. Drugs, gangs, illiteracy, poverty, crime, violence, these all are continuing in a downward spiral.

Leaders of the present are beginning to recognise that such social problems put at risk anything in society. The leaders of the future realise that the solutions to these problems are far beyond the ability of the sectors that have traditionally been expected to deal with them, namely the government and social sector.

The enormous needs in society call for a great responsibility to be discharged. People are supposed to serve. Life is a mission, not a career. The whole spirit of this philosophy should pervade our minds.

The inherent capacity to

choose, to develop a new vision to make a promise and then keep it in any area of life should always be a moment of truth for every true leader.

Affirmations: Reflections on the Death of My Mother

by Neeman A. Sobhan

and the unravelling of our own selves starts.

In the first week of mourning, at odd moments, I would feel an irrepressible urge to phone my mother or write to her, as if she were only gone away on a trip. Then a sea of silence would crash around me and like Rilke composing the first lines of his Duino Elegies at the castle on the sea near Trieste, I too, wanted to shout: 'If I cried out, who would hear me up there, among the angelic orders?

But somehow, stumblingly, from the wilderness of my sorrow, I found again and again that I had been heard. The voice of the wind has returned to me with a different, comforting kind of silence; now, I constantly feel the spiritual presence of my mother, like a blessing. Ever since she passed away, she has been working small miracles for me easing my everyday problems, smoothing my life. I feel she is even closer now than before. She is with me all the time, in my intuitions, insights, thoughts, feelings and actions. I am now convinced that death is not an end: it's merely a transformation.

So who am I, and how real am I this child of shadowy memories, of fragments from the past? And who was she, the woman with the frozen expression we buried? And the body we consecrated to the grave? How could it have given me birth, given me life, and then vanished into the earth as if she never existed, as if death were a casual trip to be undertaken without saying goodbye? If my life-giver were insubstantial like a bubble, what did that make me? Today, I am an unreasonable, questioning child walling to be picked up and comforted with answers.

After the prayers and religious

rituals that quieten my pain and tame the winds, I sit within my desolation and take stock of my bereavement. What I see is a flapping tent whose main pegs have gone. The love and support of family and friends keep the tent in place. Still, for now, it's a chill and windy place where my grief is.

The death of a father leaves a

gaping hole in your life, changes

the physical circumstances

of your world and causes emotional

upheavals, but since we are born

of our mothers, the effects of her

death are far reaching, changing

all the equations of our inner self:

her negation blurs and threatens

to negate, the defining lines of our

own existence and identity. We

are rooted in our mothers and her

removal uproots us, exiles us

from what we consider the

certainties of life. We are knitted into the maternal and when the

mother goes, the needles drop

and

the

grief

is

private

and

it

is

the

end

of

my

days

but

in

spirit

after

the

body

is

buried

and

the

spirit

is

the

end

of

my

life

but

in

my

heart

but

in

my

spirit

but

in

my

life

but

in

my

spirit

but

in

my

life

but

in

my

spirit

but

in

my

life