

What should be our food security strategy?



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THE rapid increase in global food prices in recent months have put many countries including Bangladesh in a crisis, especially affecting low and middle-income families as they spend a large share of their income on food. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Price Index has reached 158.5 points, higher than the previous peaks of 132.5 and 137.6, reached during the 2007-2008 and 2011 food crises, respectively. The Russia-Ukraine war, dry weather in several countries, and high prices of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser are responsible for lower food production and higher prices.

Across the world, rising food prices and reduced purchasing power due to inflationary pressure are worsening food security in many countries. Globally, according to FAO, as many as 46 countries including Bangladesh require external assistance to meet their food import needs. As per the Global Report on Food Crises 2022, 193 million people in 53 countries and territories are facing food insecurity.

According to FAO's July 2022 forecast, total global cereal production in 2022 is expected to be 2,792 million tonnes, which is 0.6 percent lower than that of 2021. Ukraine's maize production is forecasted to be 30 percent less than the average output of the last five years. Wheat production will be lower in the European Union, Argentina, and Iraq this year due to drier-than-normal weather, although improved harvest is expected in Canada, Australia, and the Russian Federation. Global rice production is forecasted to be 520.5 million tonnes, 0.4 percent lower in 2022 than in 2021. However, for Bangladesh, as per FAO's forecast, the total cereal production is expected to increase by 1.7 percent – from 62.6 million tonnes

in 2021 to 63.6 million tonnes in 2022. Bangladesh imported 4.86 million tonnes of rice and wheat till June 16 in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Along with the requirement of additional foreign exchange to import food grain, the import of fertiliser and fuel will also put pressure on Bangladesh's foreign exchange situation. Russia and Belarus are the two major fertiliser-exporting countries, and fertiliser prices surged by



nearly 20 percent between January and March this year, after they had already shot up three times since January 2021, causing agricultural product prices to rise.

The world trade in cereals is expected to contract by 2.4 percent in 2022-23 from the previous year. Globally, cereal prices have increased by 27.6 percent since June 2021. Wheat price has increased by 48.5 percent. The price of rice has, however, increased by only seven percent during this period. Bangladesh imported four times more wheat than rice in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

▲ **Rising food prices and reduced purchasing power due to inflationary pressure are worsening food security in many countries, including Bangladesh.**

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has reduced the availability of credit to deal with falling foreign exchange reserves that are crucial for the import of food, fuel, and fertiliser. The depletion of foreign exchange reserves due to payment of higher import bills against stagnant export volume is causing currency depreciation. This is forcing countries to adopt austerity measures, including restrictions on imports that are having adverse impact on household income.

The solution to the food crisis lies in the revival of the global economy, which contracted by 3.1 percent due to the Covid pandemic in 2020. Although the global

economy grew by 6.1 percent in 2021, with the growth continuing into the first quarter of 2022, the growth rate came down even before the start of the Ukraine war due to global supply chain disruptions and record public debt. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reduced the global growth forecast for 2022 by 0.8 percentage points to 3.6 percent. The lower growth rate will affect the income levels of the poor and vulnerable people and their effective demand for food will go down which will exacerbate poverty and malnutrition.

Bangladesh has been trying to tackle the sharp rise in food and fuel prices in a number of ways. Foremost among them is a deficit financing policy in both the last year's and the current year's budgets, with a gap of 6.2 percent and 5.4 percent of GDP, respectively. Bangladesh had to devalue the taka against the US dollar this year. This is expected to have a positive effect on export in due course. However, the tight monetary policies in the developed West and contraction of the global economy are challenges, against which the government has focused its attention to raising domestic resource mobilisation and employment generation to keep economic growth at a reasonably high level. The total public expenditure is earmarked to increase by 14.2 percent in FY2022-23 from the previous budget. Public services, education and technology, and transport and communication are three top sectors where budgetary expenditure will increase by 21 percent, 14 percent, and 24 percent, respectively, from the revised budget of last year.

To encourage the export sector and ensure stable foreign exchange inflow, the government has created a special fund of Tk 5,000 crore for salaries and wages of export-oriented industries. The export development fund has been nearly doubled to Tk 55,200 crore in FY2022-23. Also, an additional Tk 73,000 crore has been set aside for affected industries and service sector enterprises, and Tk 40,000 crore for lending against working capital for cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises (CMSMEs). The success of the government's strategy will, however, depend on adequate mobilisation of domestic resources.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

The Betrayal of the Left



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SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

AT the end of David Fincher's 1999 film, *Fight Club*, the unnamed narrator (played by Edward Norton) dispatches his alter ego, Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), and then watches as the buildings around him burst into flames, fulfilling his and his alter ego's desire to destroy modern civilisation. But in the Chinese version released earlier this year, the ending was replaced with an English-language title card that explained, "The police rapidly figured out the whole plan and arrested all criminals, successfully preventing the bomb from exploding. After the trial, Tyler was sent to a lunatic asylum to receive psychological treatment. He was discharged from the hospital in 2012."

Why would the Chinese authorities change the ending of a film that is highly critical of Western liberal society, disqualifying its critical political stance as an expression of madness? The reason is simple: For China's leaders, defending established power is more important than advancing a particular ideological agenda.

Recall that in mid-October 2019, the Chinese media launched a propaganda campaign claiming that, as CNN puts it, "demonstrations in Europe and South America are the direct result of Western tolerance of Hong Kong unrest," the implication being that protesters in Chile and Spain were taking their cues from those in Hong Kong. As is often the case, the Communist Party of China (CPC) was discreetly promoting a sense of solidarity among all who hold power and face a rebellious or unhappy populace. Western and Chinese leaders, the CPC seemed to be saying, ultimately have the same basic interest – transcending ideological and geopolitical tensions – in maintaining political quiescence.

Now consider recent developments in the US. On June 18, Texas Republicans declared that President Joe Biden "was not legitimately elected," echoing similar statements by other Republicans around the country. Consider this fact alongside the American public's growing fatigue over the Ukraine war, and a dark prospect emerges: What if Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, wins the 2024 presidential election? In addition to cracking down on dissent and political opposition at home, he might also enter a pact with Russia, abandoning the Ukrainians in the same way that he did the Kurds in Syria. After all, Trump has never been reluctant to stand in

solidarity with the world's autocrats.

During Ukraine's 2014 Maidan uprising, a leaked recording of a telephone call captured a senior US State Department official, Victoria Nuland, saying to the US ambassador to Ukraine, "F*** the EU." Since then, Russian President Vladimir Putin has been pursuing precisely that objective, supporting Brexit, Catalan separatism, and far-right figures such as Marine Le Pen in France and Matteo Salvini in Italy.

The anti-European axis that unites Putin with certain trends in the US is one of the most dangerous elements in today's politics. If African, Asian, and Latin American governments follow their old anti-European instincts and lean towards Russia, we will have entered a sad new world in which those in power stand in lockstep solidarity with each other. In this world, what would happen to the marginalised and oppressed victims of unaccountable power, whom the left traditionally has defended?

Sadly, some Western leftists, such as film director Oliver Stone, have long parroted the Kremlin's claim that Maidan was a US-orchestrated putsch against a democratically elected government. This is plainly false. The protests that began on November 21, 2013, in Kyiv's *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square), may have been chaotic, featuring a variety of political tendencies and foreign interference, but there is no doubt that they were an authentic popular revolt.

By contrast, the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol most certainly was not an "American Maidan." There is growing evidence to show that it was largely orchestrated ahead of time, and that Trump – then the most powerful man in the country – more or less knew what was in store for that day. Still, immediately following the insurrection, before all the details were known, some of my leftist friends channelled a sense of loss. "The wrong people are taking over the seat of power," they lamented. "We should be doing it!"

It is worth revisiting what Putin said on February 21, 2022. After claiming that Ukraine was created by Lenin, he went on to remark that the Bolsheviks' "grateful progeny" in Ukraine had "overturned monuments to Lenin. They call it decommunisation. You want decommunisation? Very well, this suits us just fine. But why stop halfway? We are ready to show what real decommunisation would mean for Ukraine." With that, Putin launched his "special military operation."

Putin's logic is clear: since Ukraine is (supposedly) a Communist creation, true decommunisation requires that Ukraine be eliminated. But "decommunisation" also conjures an agenda that aims to erase the last traces of the welfare state – a central pillar of the left's legacy. For years,

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Russian and Chinese leaders have panicked whenever a popular rebellion has exploded somewhere in their sphere of influence. As a rule, they interpret such events as plots – their term for them is "colour revolutions" – instigated by the West. China's regime is now at least honest enough to admit that there is deep dissatisfaction around the world. Its answer is to appeal to the shared

sense of insecurity that many in positions of power feel. The left's response, by contrast, should be to maintain solidarity with those who resist aggressive, arbitrary power, whether in Ukraine or elsewhere. Otherwise, well, we all know how that movie ends.

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বাংলাদেশ শিল্প কারিগরি সহায়তা কেন্দ্র (বিটাক)			
("যোগাযোগ, সুনামগঞ্জ, বরিশাল, হাটুয়া, জামালপুর ও হাটুয়া জেলায় বিটাকের ৬টি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প)			
১১৬/খ, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা ঢাকা-১২০৮			
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি			
স্মরণীয় নং: ৩৬.০৬.০০০০.০২৫.১৫.০০১.২২/১৯২০		তারিখ: ১৭/০৭/২০২২খ্রিঃ	
বাংলাদেশ শিল্প কারিগরি সহায়তা কেন্দ্র (বিটাক) কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নাবলী "যোগাযোগ, সুনামগঞ্জ, বরিশাল, হাটুয়া, জামালপুর ও হাটুয়া জেলায় বিটাকের ৬টি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প এর জন্য অর্ডিন্যান্সি প্রক্রিয়ায় জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে অর্ডিন্যান্সি নীতিমালা ২০১৮ অনুসারে প্রকৃত জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহকারী/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিম্নলিখিত শর্তে সীমাবদ্ধকৃত খস্মে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে।			
(০১)	মহাপ্রাঙ্গ/বিভাগ	:	শিল্প মহাপ্রাঙ্গ।
(০২)	সহকারী নাম	:	বাংলাদেশ শিল্প কারিগরি সহায়তা কেন্দ্র (বিটাক), ১১৬/খ, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
(০৩)	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	:	বিটাক কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নাবলী "যোগাযোগ, সুনামগঞ্জ, বরিশাল, হাটুয়া, জামালপুর ও হাটুয়া জেলায় বিটাকের ৬টি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প।
(০৪)	প্রকিউরমেন্ট মেথড	:	যোগাযোগ পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
(০৫)	আবেদনকৃত কাজের ধরন	:	অর্ডিন্যান্সি প্রক্রিয়ায় জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহ।
(০৬)	দরপত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	:	নং ৩৬.০৬.০০০০.০২৫.১৫.০০১.২২/ তারিখ: ১৭/০৭/২০২২খ্রিঃ।
(০৭)	টেন্ডার নির্দিষ্টকৃত মূল্য	:	প্রতিটি নির্দিষ্টকৃত মূল্য ১০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা (অসংকল্পযোগ্য)।
(০৮)	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	:	১৬/০৭/২০২২খ্রিঃ।
(০৯)	দরপত্র প্রদানের শেষ তারিখ	:	০১/০৮/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
(১০)	দরপত্র বাতিল করার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	০২/০৮/২০২২খ্রিঃ, সকাল ১১.০০ ঘটিকা, অফিস বিল্ডিং, বিটাক, ঢাকা।
(১১)	দরপত্র বাতিল ঘোষণার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	০২/০৮/২০২২খ্রিঃ, সকাল ১১.৩৫ ঘটিকা, সফটক (শিটকলা), বিটাক, ১১৬/খ, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
(১২)	যে অফিস হতে দরপত্র পত্রের মাধ্যমে তার পদবি	:	হিসাবরক্ষক, প্রকল্প অফিস, বিটাক, ১১৬/খ, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
(১৩)	জামানত ও জামানত প্রদান প্রতিষ্ঠান	:	সরকারকে সরবরাহকৃত জনস্বার্থের অনুকূলে নিরাপত্তা জামানত হিসেবে ৬৫,০০০.০০ (পঞ্চাশ হাজার) টাকা পে-অর্ডার অথবা ব্যাংক ড্রাফট অথবা প্রকল্প পরিচালক, বিটাকের ৬টি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন শীর্ষক প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়ন জমা দিতে হবে।
(১৪)	দরপত্র দাখিলকারীর যোগাযোগ	:	অর্ডিন্যান্সি প্রক্রিয়ায় জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহের প্রকল্পের হিসেবে কলকাতা ও প্রতিষ্ঠান পরিদর্শন অধিদপ্তর কর্তৃক প্রদানকৃত হালনাগাদ লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ভাউচিং সার্টিফিকেট ও হালনাগাদ আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদ, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি (হালনাগাদ) এবং সমস্তকৃত্রিম জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহের ও (ফিল) কার্যের পূর্ণ অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র।
(১৫)	কাজের বিবরণ	:	অর্ডিন্যান্সি প্রক্রিয়ায় নিম্নলিখিত জনস্বার্থের সেবা সরবরাহ।
(১৬)	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ও পদবি	ক্রম নং	সেবার নাম
		০১	প্রকল্পের সেবা (বিশেষ সেবা-২)
		০২	কম্পিউটার সেবা (কারিগরি-১)
		০৩	ড্রাইভার (পার্ট) (কারিগরি-২)
		০৪	অফিস/কর্মসামগ্রিক (কারিগরি-৩)
(১৭)	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা	:	ড. মোঃ জালাল উদ্দিন, প্রকল্প পরিচালক, "যোগাযোগ, সুনামগঞ্জ, বরিশাল, হাটুয়া, জামালপুর ও হাটুয়া জেলায় বিটাকের ৬টি কেন্দ্র স্থাপন" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প।
(১৮)	অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী	:	প্রকল্প অফিস, বিটাক, ঢাকা, ১১৬/খ, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
(১৯)	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	:	
(২০)	বিজ্ঞপ্তি বিতরণের প্রদানসিদ্ধি	:	www.bttac.gov.bd-তে প্রদত্ত হবে।
তারিখ: ১৬/০৭/২০২২		ড. মোঃ জালাল উদ্দিন প্রকল্প পরিচালক	