## Bangabandhu's foreign policy legacy can still guide us



commemorating the 47th

anniversary of the dastardly

assassination of our founding father

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

it would behove us as a nation to

introspect and reflect deeply on his

Fifty years ago, when Bangladesh

emerged as a sovereign, independent

state after having wrested its

through a blood-soaked, nine-

month-long Liberation War, it had

as a "bottomless basket case" - an

epithet that still rankles with us.

very different country. Bangladesh's

progressive transition, from a

"bottomless basket case" in 1972 to

and relegated to the sidelines.

**FILES** 

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TARIQ KARIM

the nation this month state, contextualises its every move steeped in mourning, or action within the overall rubric of preservation and advancement of its own national interest, of maintaining a happy equilibrium between its boundless aspirations and the Rahman and almost his entire family, numerous challenges to the new state's viability. These foundational precepts must be buttressed by abiding legacy as well, which many of a hard-nosed pragmatism and us appear to have taken for granted understanding of the inescapable reality that while one may choose one's friends, one cannot choose one's neighbourhood; and that while friendship may exist between peoples independence from Pakistan and persons (which even then are vulnerable to change), "friendship" between states is primarily driven been written off contemptuously by the national demands of each state professing such friendship,

Today, 50 years later, Bangladesh is a protean in nature. In this context, friendship between states may best be described as the state of relatively happy equilibrium lower-middle income status in 2015, between two or more states that have

rendering such friendship very

THE ICONOCLAST heartland of fossil fuel reserves of (geographically located at one related fora, and calls for at least a being perceived as a bridging nation the world – the Persian Gulf. The continuing "war-fought-at-distance" between two major Gulf powers in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Iran, shows no sign of abatement, being culturally and ideologically inimical to each other, even though professing to share the same faith. An extension of this struggle magnifies and

stage of separation from us to our minimum regional collaboration north-northeast), both engaged now in vigorous shadow boxing and a very risky brinkmanship in the deadly arena located at the Himalayan heights. In our Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean region we see two competing, even contesting, narratives, namely the Indo-Pacific

pending the more difficult task of global convergence on issues.

Bangladesh's critically important geo-strategic location is highly vulnerable

all major, middle, or minor powers

Today the focus of attention by almost

very onerous responsibility as well. Bangladesh's prosperity was historically derived from its locational advantage that today is much enhanced, and in future will continue to be derived from this bridging role. Successfully sustaining this role will also depend on its ability to maintain the best of relations with all countries, whether located near or far from it.

located at Asia's very epicentre. This

lays us open to vulnerabilities as never

before, but places on our shoulders a

Our salvation lies in hewing to the fundamental moorings of our foreign policy that had been laid by Bangabandhu in the early years of our independence. We must adhere, without wavering, to the bedrock principle of "friendship to all with malice towards none". We cannot afford to align ourselves with anyone, against anyone. On the contrary, the current diverse challenges described above all demand, compellingly to my mind, that we, in geo-strategic and geo-political terms, recalibrate the tools and policies we inherited from Bangabandhu to truly transform ourselves into the "Switzerland of the East", anchored by "positive neutrality".

On this occasion of mourning his diabolic assassination 47 years ago, let us therefore reflect on the timeless legacy that he left us of the principles of our foreign policy that enabled our fledgling state to survive and grow in the last 50 years. Let us today reaffirm our continuing commitment to abide by those fundamental principles and chart our course judiciously and pragmatically for the next 50 years.

address by the author at a seminar to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, Bangabandhu's birth centenary



VISUAL: STAR

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from LDC in 1972 to developing managed to arrive at a mutually country status now, reads like a fairy

Today, Bangladesh has acquired food autarky. It even extended fiscal support to Sri Lanka in 2021-22, and disaster management assistance to Maldives. It has also had to, perforce, The world is, once again, in the grip provide shelter to over 1.2 million refugees from Myanmar since 2017.

inconsequential country anymore. in the process of kaleidoscopically Its geo-strategic importance has fluctuating alliances. Tearing at us catapulted astronomically, with all globally today are deeply divisive global focus swivelling to the Indo-Pacific region.

What enabled us to survive and grow?

Ensuring survivability of the state under very hostile circumstances in a deeply divided world was an imperative sine qua non for Bangladesh. The country's founding Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman understood only too well that in the post-colonial neo-Westphalian world disorder in which his newly founded state had emerged, every state is a part of a greater comity of nations. To survive viably, it had to first navigate through very treacherously mined waters and numerous hidden shoals that lay ahead in its voyage as a new state. A visionary foreign policy was among the first priorities of the day in early 1972.

## The imperatives of adhering to a

balanced foreign policy A fundamental dictum in foreign policy formulation and analysis is unquestionably this: each country, as a sovereign, independent nation-

acceptable alignment or coexistence of their national interests, which serves everyone in perceptibly equitable measure.

Fifty years later today, the wheels of history have turned full circle. of another cold war brewing, with a somewhat different configuration Today, Bangladesh is not an of protagonists and antagonists still forces, some new, some malevolent implosion and possible state failure offspring of the old. We see conflicts still raging between nations, indirectly and directly.

On our western horizon, in our immediate regional neighbourhood, we are witnessing live an internal churning evocative of a darkly foreboding resurgence of the divisive narrative of the thirties that drove and tore the subcontinent apart. The "cold-hot" conflict between India and Pakistan is much worse today than it was at the time of our independence, the dangers exacerbated by their both being armed to the teeth, primarily against each other, with conventional and nuclear weapons.

Craning further west, at one stage of separation, we see Afghanistan (with whom we had enjoyed excellent fraternal relations at the time of our birth) now plunging into uncertain implosion with the previous established government overthrown chaotically by the Taliban. Panning strategically caught squarely in the further west, we see horrendous middle, with the rising but internally effects on a multitude of innocents troubled power that is India (which caused by the continuing hostility surrounds us on all sides) and the between the states that control the next neo-superpower that is China

cannot afford to align ourselves with anyone,

north-west, we see new ideological or ideational struggles manifested in severe churnings domestically as well as across borders in the larger European arena, with Ukraine burning and reeling from Russian assault. If the flames of the current proxy war in Ukraine are not doused quickly, they may transform into a Third World War" that no one wants, with Europe once again becoming the hapless main theatre.

even further west, in what is known

Shifting our lens further west and

historically as the Levant.

In the US, we witness a surreal revival of the "Civil War syndrome" playing itself out uneasily, with a sharply and viscerally divided polity pitted against each other, short of being dug in trenches with bayonetfixed guns pointed at the "enemy".

Swivelling our gaze to our east now, we see our immediate neighbour Myanmar (with whom we had fairly good relations in the seventies) in the throes of imminent - an implosion that will be followed by the probable explosion of multiple cluster bombs that will not leave any of its neighbouring states, including a relatively stable Asean group, untouched. Bangladesh is already bearing the cost by sheltering over a million refugees from Myanmar.

Further to our east-northeast, we see the rising Red Star of China, its eves resolutely and impatiently set now to inexorably taking on the role in the 21st century as the world's largest economy and new superpower, nudging well aside the superpowers of the 20th century. We glimpse a still divided Korean peninsula, one nuclear armed, both with different, ideologically antagonistic allies; and a struggling Taiwan trying to evade falling gravitationally into mainland China's lap. All these do not lend to any sense of composure.

And so, here we are, geo-

becomes more intangibly complex Economic Forum (IPEF) led by the US and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) spearheaded by China, on the verge of clashing. Bangladesh is like a brittle walnut in the relentless jaws of two mighty nutcrackers pressing hard on us.

Compounding all the above is the inescapable fate that global warming and its deleterious effects on climate change have pushed Bangladesh into the list of most vulnerable countries globally. This last imminent danger of existential consequences for us fuels importance. The increasing attention and 50 years of relations with the our leadership role in all climate-

has pivoted to Asia. Contextually, the Indo-Pacific region is strategically at the heart of Asia.

If in our mind's eye we can disembody ourselves and reimagine our planet, viewing it from outer space, we would see an Oceanic planet with 71 percent of its surface immersed in deep waters. We This article is based on a keynote would see our location as being uncomfortably at the epicentre of this oceanic world. This heightens the perception of us as being of strategic on Bangladesh emanates from it EU.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Project Director

Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project Directorate of Technical Education

F/4-B, Agargaon A/A, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

www.asset-dte.gov.bd Request for Expression of Interest (Selection of Environmental & Social (E&S) safeguard Specialist)

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost for the Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project and intends to apply part of its for consulting services for the Project by some individual consultants.

1	Ministry/Division:	Technical & Madrasha Education Division				
2	Agency:	Directorate of Technical Education				
3	Procuring Entity Name:	Project Director, Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project				
4	Procuring Entity Code:	Not used at present				
5	Procuring Entity District:	Dhaka				
6	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant (Time based)				
7	Invitation Ref No.:	57.03.0000.000.07.008.21- 283				
8	Date:	22.08.2022				
KEY	INFORMATION					
9	Procurement Method:	Individual Consultant Selection (Time Based)				
FUN	DING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds:	Development Budget (IDA)				
-11	Development Partners:	International Development Association (IDA)				
PAR	TICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project Code:	P-167506				
13	Project Name:	ccelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project				
14	EOI Closing Date and Time:	21.09.2022 and 5.00 P.M.				
INFO	ORMATION FOR APPLICANTS					
15	Brief Description of Assignment:					
•	Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) actions	will be responsible for: th the Environmental & Social Framework (ESF) requirement and Environmental and including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) actions; and Social (ES) Assessment, the E&S safeguard specialist will be responsible fo				

- but not limited to Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), Occupational Health and Safety Plan (OHP), Community Health and Safety Plan (CHSP), Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), Labor Management Procedure (LMP), Security Personnel Management Plan, etc., as and when required. The E&S safeguard specialist will make necessary arrangement for the approval of these instruments from competent authority of the Project and the World Bank;
- Any other task assigned by the PD/PMU.
- N.B. Please see the ToR for detail description of assignment 16 Experience, Resources and Delivery Capacity Required:
- At least Master degree with honors in Environmental Science, Sociology, Human Resources, Anthropology, Women and Gender Studies, Social Welfare, Business Administration or related subject Experience
  - Minimum 10 years working experience with a Development Organization or Development Projects in the field of Environment or Social Development;
    At least 4 years' experience in Development Project funded by Multilateral Organizations such as ADB/IICA/World Bank;
  - Knowledge and Certification of GoB Laws, Acts and Regulations regarding Environment, Labor, Gender, Resettlement, Ethnic Minority, Social issues, Epidemic, Pandemic issues, on Economic Zone labor Laws and welfare policy;
- Knowledge and Certification with COVID-19 protocols of GoB and World Health Organization (WHO); Familiarity with World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (EFS) and Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) as
- well as Environment, Health and Safety Guidelines (EHSG); Training on Social Safeguard or Environmental issues from reputed organizations

17	Other Details (If Applicable):	Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form (hard copy) with softcopy (both in .pdf and .docx format in pen drive) to the address below by 17:00 hours Bangladesh Standard Time by 21 September 2022. Interested applicants shall obtain further information from the Project office during office time in any working day before the closing date. The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment, evaluation criteria and application formats can be found and downloaded from the website <a href="https://www.asset-dte.gov.bd">www.asset-dte.gov.bd</a> .					
18	Association with foreign firm is:	Not Applicable					
19	Ref No.	Phasing of Services	Location	Indicative Start Date	Indicative Completion Date		
	57.03.0000.000.07.008.21-283	24 Person Month	DTE, Dhaka	01 November, 2022	31 October, 2024		
PRC	CURING ENTITY DETAILS						
20	Name of Official Inviting EOI:	Md. Mohsin					
21	Designation of Official Inviting EOI:	Project Director(Additional Secretary), ASSET Project					
22	Address of Official Inviting EOI:	Project Director, Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project, Directorate of Technical Education, Room No					

Contact details of Official Inviting EOI Tel: 02-41024953 24 The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender

Project Director (Additional Secretary)

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the office of the Registrar, are invited from the Bangladeshi nationals for filling up one permanent post of Associate Professor in the Department of Statistics at the pay scale of Tk. 50,000-71,200/- (National Pay Scale-2015).

**QUALIFICATIONS**: Candidates must have high academic qualifications preferably with a PhD. or equivalent degree in Statistics. They should have at least 7 (seven) years teaching and research experience in a University or an Institute of Advanced Research. They should have original research works published in recognized research journals. Experience and performance as a teacher as well as significant contribution to different areas of University activities especially in guiding the overall educational and co-curricular activities of the students will also be treated as qualification. In special cases the condition of period of experience may be relaxed.

Eleven copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials, marksheets and proof of experience along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 1000/-(One thousand) only, payable to the Registrar, should reach him on or before 22/09/2022. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel.

My 22.08.2022 (Md. Mohsin)