

BANGLADESH'S OLD DIPLOMACY WON'T SURVIVE NEW REALITIES



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In the post-July 2024 situation, Bangladesh has been facing several new strategic realities. At the domestic level, a generational shift has been redefining the political landscape and articulating the urge for justice as well as an equitable economic order. The graduation of Bangladesh in 2026 will again frame and reset our external relations with practically all partners. Such a reset will obviously demand corresponding reforms in many areas of our domestic policy and practices. Old mindsets and behaviours may have little relevance in the evolving actualities.

At the same time, several layers of geopolitical challenges are also greeting Bangladesh on the external front. The growing interest of global and regional powers in domestic issues, and their tendency to view them through a geopolitical lens, have added a new dimension of complexity. There is already strain between Bangladesh and India, and this tension is beginning to affect the broader geopolitical landscape. On its part, the Rohingya issue has already raised a red flag regionally and still requires a solution. Big power competition is also heating up in the Indo-Pacific region, with a direct impact on the Bay of Bengal and



In its foreign policy, Bangladesh must maintain a middle-ground approach rather than leaning too heavily towards any one side.

KEY POINTS

1. Bangladesh must recalibrate diplomacy to navigate post-2024 domestic geopolitical shifts.
2. Graduation in 2026 demands policy reforms and interest-based strategic partnerships.
3. Proactive reputation management and multilateral engagement are essential for interests.
4. Bangladesh must manage geopolitics with nuance through objective, coordinated diplomacy.
5. Effective domestic coordination strengthens economic diplomacy, credibility, and negotiating capacity.

the Indian Ocean region. Needless to say, the effective management of these hugely powerful geopolitical trends is essential to protect our identity, security, progress, and prosperity.

Against this backdrop, it may be useful to review some of the tools and techniques Bangladesh could employ in the near future to safely navigate these evolving challenges and build a new structure of mutually beneficial relationships with its partners. A few priorities could be considered for this purpose.

1. PURSUING PROACTIVE DIPLOMACY

Managing perception and rebuilding reputation: Over the years, our reputational repertoire has suffered due to a poor human rights record, a fractured political process, serious governance deficits, and an overreliance on the promotion of personality cult. In the process, the real strength of the nation, as represented by the huge entrepreneurial spirit of the common people, the power of the youth and women, as well as the strong determination of people to resist oppression and cultivate resilience

against all odds, has lost visibility.

In the context of the recent changes in Bangladesh, the need for reputation management has acquired a new salience. While it is easy to blame others for many of our problems, it is important to pay attention to how we define ourselves, what priorities we set for ourselves as a nation, how we pursue them, and what kind of company we keep. In the world of statecraft and diplomacy, signals, narratives, gestures, and initiatives can frame perception, which in many cases may shape reality as well.

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