

ISSN: 1683-8475  
E-ISSN: 2709-9016

# **NDC** *E-JOURNAL*

*Security Through Knowledge*



**VOLUME 05**

**NUMBER 01**

**JUNE 2025**

**A Peer Reviewed Professional E-Journal of the  
National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

*<http://ndcjournal.ndc.gov.bd/ndcj/index.php>*



# Editorial Team

---

## CHIEF PATRON

**Lieutenant General Mohammad Shaheenul Haque, OSP, BSP, ndc, hdmc, psc**

*Commandant*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## EDITOR IN CHIEF

**Mohammad Ridhwanul Haq, Ph.D**

*Professor & Coordinator, Management Development Programme*

*Institute of Business Administration (IBA)*

*University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**Colonel Muhammad Nurul Amin, BSP, afwc, psc**

*Director (Research and Academic)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**Lieutenant Colonel Md Badrul Ahsan Khan, afwc, psc, Engineers**

*Senior Research Fellow*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## **EDITORIAL ADVISORS**

**Major General Md Masudur Rahman, ndc, psc**

*Senior Directing Staff (Army)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Major General ASM Bahauddin, SUP, SPP, ndc, afwc, psc, G**

*Senior Directing Staff (Army)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Rear Admiral A K M Jakir Hossain, ndc, afwc, psc**

*Senior Directing Staff (Navy)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Air Vice Marshal M Mustafizur Rahman, BSP, GUP, nswc, afwc, psc, GD(P)**

*Senior Directing Staff (Air)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Major General Md Rashed Amin, OSP, rcds, ndc, psc (Retired)**

*Senior Directing Staff (Adjunct)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Major General Md Moshfequr Rahman, BSP, SGP, SUP, ndc, psc (Retired)**

*Senior Directing Staff (Adjunct)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Additional Secretary Yasmeen Parveen, ndc**

*Senior Directing Staff (Civil)*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## EDITORIAL THANKS

*The Executive Editor would like to thank the following scholars for their precious support:*

**Dr. Major General Abu Sayed Siddique,**  
**OSP, SUP, SPP, afwc, psc (Retired)**  
*Bangladesh Army*

**Rear Admiral Muhammad Anwarul Islam, NGP, ndc, afwc, psc (Retired)**  
*Bangladesh Navy*

**Rear Admiral A K M Jakir Hossain, ndc, afwc, psc**  
*Senior Directing Staff (Navy)*  
*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Brigadier General Md Mostafizur Rahman, ndc, hdmc, afwc, psc, PhD**  
*Chief Instructor, Armed Forces War Course Wing*  
*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Brigadier General Mohammad Sheraf Uddin Khan, ndc, afwc, psc**  
*Deputy Military Secretary*  
*Army Headquarters*

**Brigadier General Md Mahmudur Rahman Minhaz, SUP, afwc, psc**  
*Directing Staff, Armed Forces War Course Wing*  
*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Captain Mahmudul Haque Majumder, (L), NPP, hdmc, afwc, psc, BN**  
*GM (Planning & Estimating), BN Dockyard,*  
*New Mooring, Chattogram*

**Lieutenant Colonel Md Altab Hossain, PhD**  
*Associate Professor, Department of Nuclear Science & Engineering (NSE)*  
*Military Institute of Science & Technology*  
*Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka*

**Dr. Al Masud Hasanuzzaman**  
*Professor, Department of Government and Politics*  
*Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Bangladesh*

**Shahab Enam Khan**  
*Professor, Department of International Relations*  
*Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Bangladesh*

**Mohammad Mozahidul Islam, PhD**  
*Professor, Department of History*  
*Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Bangladesh*

**Dr. Md. Kamal Uddin**  
*Professor, Department of International Relations*  
*University of Chittagong, Bangladesh*

**Dr. Niloy Ranjan Biswas**  
*Professor, Department of International Relations*  
*University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Moinul Islam Zaber**  
*Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering*  
*University of Dhaka*

**Md. Obaidul Haque**  
*Associate Professor, Department of International Relations*  
*University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## **LANGUAGE EDITOR**

**Nishat Sultana**

*Associate Professor*

*Department of English*

*Begum Badrunnessa Government Girls College*

*Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## **COPY EDITORS**

**Md. Nazrul Islam**

*Assistant Director*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

**Azad Rahaman Munna**

*Assistant Programmer*

*National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*

## Foreword

---

In today's rapidly evolving world, intellectual discourse-shaped through critical thinking and informed writing, remains central to national and global progress. As the landscape of security, strategy, and development becomes increasingly complex, the need for rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship has never been more crucial. The National Defence College (NDC), Bangladesh, remains committed to fostering such scholarship through platforms like the NDC E-JOURNAL, a peer-reviewed, open-access publication that invites diverse perspectives on contemporary challenges.

Since its inception in 2020, the NDC E-JOURNAL has provided a credible academic space for scholars, practitioners, and professionals from Bangladesh and beyond to explore pressing issues ranging from traditional and non-traditional security to leadership, governance, development, and strategic policymaking. The journal encourages innovative thinking and evidence-based analysis-enabling dialogue across sectors, disciplines, and geographies. Its double-blind peer review process upholds the highest standards of academic integrity and ensures quality contributions from authors worldwide.

This fifth issue is a testament to our ongoing endeavour to promote a culture of critical inquiry and scholarly excellence. The articles featured here represent a wide spectrum of ideas and methodologies-demonstrating the richness of contemporary research in security studies and beyond. It is our aspiration that this publication will contribute meaningfully to both national discourse and global academic conversations.

I extend my sincere thanks to all the authors whose research has enriched this edition. I also place on record my deep appreciation for the peer reviewers, whose discerning feedback helps uphold the journal's academic rigor. My special gratitude goes to the editorial board for their dedication and professionalism in bringing this issue to publication.

May the NDC E-JOURNAL continue to inspire thought, dialogue, and innovation for years to come.



---

**Lieutenant General Mohammad Shaheenul Haque**  
**OSP, BSP, ndc, hdmc, psc**  
*Commandant, National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh*  
*Chief Patron, NDC E-JOURNAL*

## The Editor in Chief's Note

---

The NDC E-JOURNAL is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic and professional journal that provides an important platform for critical discourse on national and international security and development. It encourages engagement not only with traditional strategic themes but also with emerging and non-traditional issues that shape today's global environment. Each article published is selected through a rigorous review process to ensure academic integrity, originality, and high epistemic value.

Over time, submissions to the journal have expanded in both quality and scope, reflecting a growing recognition of the NDC E-JOURNAL within scholarly and professional circles. This fifth volume showcases a diverse range of topics-capturing pressing national and global concerns through evidence-based and policy-relevant scholarship. From maritime security and economic resilience to information warfare, geopolitical retrospection, and the socio-cultural dimensions of juvenile delinquency, the articles reflect a nuanced understanding of contemporary challenges facing Bangladesh and the wider region.

This edition also underscores the growing need for knowledge integration across strategic studies, governance, defence technology, and societal transformation. We are confident that these contributions will offer valuable insights to academics, practitioners, and policymakers alike.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Chief Patron, Editorial Advisors, and the Editorial Team for their unwavering support. I also thank our authors and reviewers whose dedication ensures the continued growth of this publication. I also acknowledge with thanks the valuable support provided by the NDC staff throughout this journey.

We look forward to receiving more analytical, innovative, and impactful submissions in the future. The NDC E-JOURNAL remains committed to promoting intellectual inquiry and contributing to the strategic discourse of Bangladesh and beyond.



**Mohammad Ridhwanul Haq, Ph.D**

*Professor & Coordinator, Management Development Programme  
Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka  
Editor in Chief, NDC E-JOURNAL*

# Index

---

## ARTICLES

1. JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A STUDY ON YOUNG GANG CULTURE IN DHAKA CITY 01-24  
*Brigadier General S M Anwar Hossain, ndc, afwc, psc*
2. FOOD AND NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF SRI LANKA'S CHEMICAL FERTILIZER BAN 2021: STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR BANGLADESH 25-50  
*Air Commodore SPVK Senadheera, RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc*
3. ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY FOR TRADE AND ECONOMY: POLICY MEASURES FOR EFFECTIVE MARITIME SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH 51-81  
*Commodore Ziaur Rahman, (TAS), NGP, ndc, afwc, psc, BN*
4. REDISCOVERING THE POWER OF PURPOSE: HOW TIPPING POINTS MOTIVATE TO FIGHT 82-111  
*Brigadier General Kazi Anisuzzaman, nswc, afwc, psc*
5. ESTABLISHING AN INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE (IFC) AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER FOR MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS (MDA) IN BANGLADESH: A FUNCTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE 112-148  
*Commodore Mustaque Ahmed, (G), NPP, ndc, psc, BN*
6. CONCEPTUALIZING INFORMATION WARFARE: A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES 149-172  
*Brigadier General Sufi Mohammad Moinuddin, SUP, afwc, psc*
7. STRANGE PAUSE AFTER A DECISIVE VICTORY: REVISITING THE GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION OF NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE DURING BANGLADESH'S LIBERATION WAR 173-202  
*Group Captain Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, acsc, psc, PhD (Retired)*



---

## JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A STUDY ON YOUNG GANG CULTURE IN DHAKA CITY

**Brigadier General S M Anwar Hossain, ndc, afwc, psc**

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*(Received: 13th April 2025; Accepted: 21st June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)*

---

**Abstract:** Juvenile delinquency and its gang culture is considered as one of the major concerns for urban areas in our country especially in Dhaka city. The main objective of this study is to find out the major contributing factors for juvenile delinquency and its gang culture in Dhaka city area. The study adapted both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data have been collected from juvenile delinquents through questionnaire and also key informant interviews were done for better understanding of the research problem. Non-probability Purposive Sampling technique was used in the study. Moreover, various articles, books and news published in newspapers were consulted. The study reveals that the major factors for juvenile delinquency are economic, family, social and cultural issues. Notable causes of gang formation are influence of big brother, senior-junior problem, lack of playground, availability of connectivity through various electronic media etc.

**Keywords:** *Juvenile, Gang Culture, Delinquents*

---

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A child may be considered as juvenile, who has not completed a specific age mentioned in the law of any country and doesn't bear resemblance of an adult person. On the other way, unwelcomed action, omission or immoral behaviour socially not accepted or permitted in any society is known as delinquency. Juvenile Delinquency is unacceptable and antisocial behaviour which is against the law and committed by a child whose age is less than 18 years. According to Bangladesh Penal Code 1860, nothing is an offence which is committed by a child under nine years of age. Juvenile Delinquents are those offenders including boys and girls who are normally under 18 years of age (The Children Act, 2013). Young gang activity is a special form of juvenile delinquency. The rate of this type of gang activities by juveniles are increasing at a very alarming pace and has become one of the most pressing challenges in today's criminal justice system of Bangladesh.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The juvenile gang culture is a new facet of juvenile crime. Recent violent activities by young gangs in Bangladesh have put families, law enforcing agencies, and the government in great concern. The concern is not only because this is a new crime trend but also for the involvement of juveniles in such crimes. Most of the juvenile gang members get involved in various petty crimes like eve-teasing, pick-pocketing, mugging, drug abuse to serious crimes like big theft, dacoity, murder, kidnapping etc. According to law enforcing agencies at least 50-60 gangs are active in different parts of Dhaka city. At present juvenile delinquency and its gang culture is posing a serious threat to the peace and tranquility of city dwellers. This is because of two reasons: firstly, it is a new crime trend in Bangladesh, and secondly, juveniles are involved here and there is every possibility that these young people may become habitual criminals if no effective controlling measure is being crafted. So, the issue needs to be addressed immediately before getting much worse and cause damage to the society.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

The rationale of this study is three-fold. Firstly, to look at the elements that influence juvenile delinquency and gang culture in Dhaka city. This study is also significant since socioeconomic factors have profound impact on children and adolescents,

particularly those aged between twelve to eighteen years. An effort will be taken to identify the types of crime, socioeconomic factors and steps which should be implemented to prevent juvenile delinquency in Dhaka city. Secondly, findings of this research work are an addition to existing literature and knowledge on young gang culture. Thus, this research is an endeavour to fill the knowledge gap in this regard and the outcome of this study may be used for theoretical perspective. Thirdly, policy makers will get a comprehensive understanding about the nature of young gang culture in Dhaka City. Findings of this research may help them to design effective strategies to control this emerging menace to the society. Therefore, this study will contribute towards social development in Bangladesh.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

### **Main Objective**

To identify the factors behind juvenile delinquency and its gang culture in Dhaka city.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify the nature of juvenile gangs and type of crimes committed by them in Dhaka city.
- To get a deeper insight on the relation of juvenile delinquency with family and class related issues by making a comparison on juvenile crimes and related gang activities in between areas like new and old Dhaka represented by Dhanmondi and Kamrangir Char respectively.
- To provide recommendations to alleviate juvenile delinquency and gang culture in Dhaka city.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To fulfil the research objectives, the study will also try to find out answer of the following research questions:

- What are the main factors behind juvenile delinquency and related gang culture in Dhaka city?
- What are the types of crimes committed by the juvenile gang members in modern residential areas and crowded slum areas in Dhaka city?

- What are the remedies to alleviate juvenile delinquency and related gang culture in Dhaka city?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world and is the 7th most populous country in the world (UNFPA Bangladesh, 2020). A certain percentage of this population is juveniles. A large percentage of people are living under the poverty line here. On the other hand, poverty is no longer the biggest reason of juvenile delinquency in our country. More and more children from solvent and affluent families are also getting involved in crime. So, we can clearly make a comment that juvenile delinquency is no longer a family and class related issue (Zaman, 2020).

Abdul Hakim Sarker (2001), in his PhD research entitled “Juvenile Delinquency: Dhaka City Experience” has examined the issue of adolescent delinquency in the context of socio-economic and ecological context of Dhaka City. The main objective of the study is to examine the socioeconomic factors that influence juvenile delinquency in Dhaka.

Nahid Ferdousi (2012), in her book “Juvenile Justice System in Bangladesh,” makes an effort to analyse the legal framework, institutional structure, and judicial procedure of the juvenile justice system in Bangladesh objectively.

With regard to its abrupt societal shift brought in by modernity, technology and globalisation, Bangladesh is currently in a transitional phase. Rising rape, particularly of children, parental murder by children and vice versa, extramarital and non-traditional sexual relationships, an obsession with pornography, use of narcotics and drugs, particularly Yaba, by young boys and girls are some of the major problems in Bangladesh at this transitional time (Rahman, 2019).

Troubled childhood has an ever-lasting impact on the life of an individual. This has a direct correlation with juvenile delinquency. Various case studies from contemporary happenings in the society clearly manifests that gang culture is no more a phenomenon confined in big cities rather it is becoming an all-pervasive intractable problem (Karzon, 2023).

Investigation into the nature and socio-cultural elements related with juvenile gangs show that, issues like distorted parent-child relationships, broken families,

involvement of family members in crime, punishment by the parents, child abuse, child labour, poverty, unemployment, peer-group influence, drug addiction, lack of recreation, lack of religious education, lack of morality, parental multi marriage, derogatory remarks and punishment by the teachers contributes in juvenile gang activities (Islam, 2010).

To address the recurrent delinquency by juveniles in Dhaka city, a host of measures are needed. Effectiveness of the Child Development Centres in addressing this trend of crime is of utmost importance. Other significant issues that require attention include the enhancement of the juvenile justice system, legislative and judicial reforms, modernization of prisons, advancement of law enforcement, bolstering of monitoring systems, and expansion of awareness campaigns. The current Juvenile Justice System has been given less prominence in Bangladesh's legislature. The Juvenile Justice System is governed by a variety of laws, rules, and executive orders that do not safeguard the dignity of juveniles or their reintegration into the society (Zaman, 2020).

## **RESEARCH GAP**

Gang formation is an urban phenomenon, which is spreading rapidly in urban areas with the advancement of economy and information technology. From recent incidents we see poverty is no longer the biggest reason of juvenile delinquency in our country. More and more children from solvent and affluent families are also getting involved in crime. So, comparison of juvenile crimes and their types committed by the young gangs in modern residential areas and crowded slum areas can give us a deeper insight on the relation of juvenile delinquency with family and class related issues.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Social Learning Theory.** Leading proponent of this theory Albert Bandura argues that, individuals pick up hostility and violence through observation of others' behavior. Children mimic other people's behaviour to learn how to act appropriately. Examples, which largely originate from the family, the subculture, and the media, are how behaviour is socially transmitted (Adler, Mueller. & Laufer, 2004).

**Social Disorganization Theory.** The theory argues that a person's behavioural decisions are primarily influenced by their social and physical circumstances. According to this idea, a person's residence has a greater impact on forecasting criminal behaviour than their personal traits. In underprivileged urban neighbourhoods, the culture encourages youth to become criminals (Henry McKay and Clifford Shaw). Therefore, according to the Social Disorganisation Theory, location is important when it comes to anything related to criminality.

**Strain Theory.** Sociologist Robert K. Merton claims that societal structure, not culture, is what causes juvenile delinquents to associate with crime. According to this theory, poverty prevents certain people from using legal means to achieve socially desirable aims, which leads to crime. Merton offers five social adjustments that one can make to succeed. Innovation, Retreatism, Ritualism, Conformity, and Rebellion were the five adaptations. A young offender from a low-income neighbourhood who lacks the tools to educate himself or improve his situation will likely adopt the social norms that are already prevalent there.

**Social Control Theory.** Travis Hirschi in an effort to understand why people follow the law, thought that people only turn into criminals when their "bond" to society weakens. People always desire "to belong," and if they don't feel like they fit in with society, they turn to criminal activity.

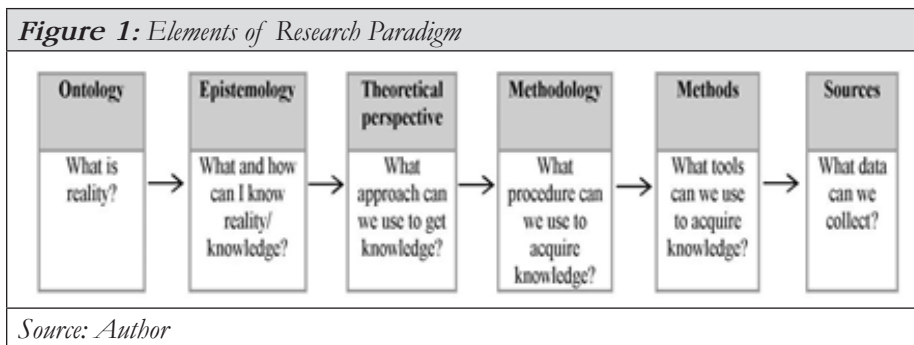
**Differential Association Theory.** Edwin Sutherland offered two causes for criminal behaviour; historical/genetic, or situational. Situational crimes are determined by the circumstances present at the moment of the crime, while genetic crimes are determined by the experiences of the offender. However, this theory has been criticized for its failure to explain the behaviour of lone criminals (Bhosle, 2009).

**Labelling Theory.** This theory is founded on the ideas of George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, W.I. Thomas, Charles Horton Cooley, and Herbert Blumer, and it comes from a sociological theory called "Symbolic Interactionism." According to the theory, young individuals are more inclined to commit crimes if they are given the label of criminal (Adler, Mueller, & Laufer, p. 19).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Methodology - The Philosophy of the Research

As this study focused on the causes of young gang culture in Bangladesh which is a social issue, this research incorporated Interpretivist Paradigm as the research paradigm - including Constructionist ontology and Interpretivist epistemology. Guba established the relationship among the elements of research paradigms which is as under (Guba, 1990):



**The Study Area.** Area of the study is selected purposively from Dhanmondi and Kamrangirchar, Mohammadpur Geneva Camp area of Dhaka city. Dhanmondi, a high value residential area in new Dhaka, inhabited by upper class people and Kamrangirchar and Mohammadpur Geneva Camp are densely populated area inhabited mostly by working class people of old Dhaka. The aim is to make a comparison of juvenile gang culture within two types of areas in Dhaka city.

## METHODS

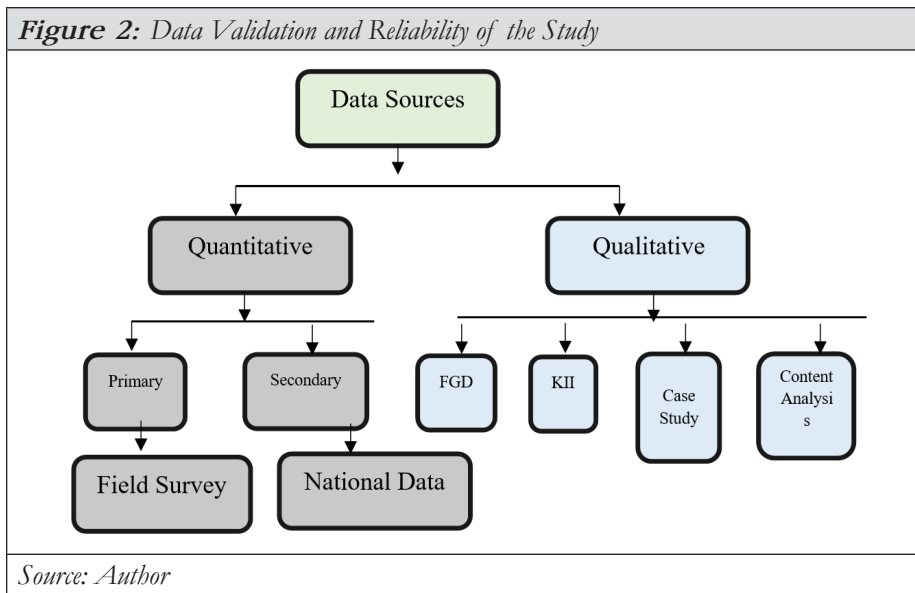
**Main Method.** The study will explore some factors and dimensions of juvenile delinquency in some selected parts of Dhaka city (Dhanmondi, Kamrangirchar, Mohammadpur Geneva Camp Area) adopting both qualitative and quantitative way of research.

**Population.** Population of this study is the teenagers (from 12 to 18 years), only boys of Dhaka city from Dhanmondi, Kamrangirchar, Mohammadpur Geneva Camp Area having the following criteria:

- Against whom at least one complaint has been lodged either to police, to community, to his family, or to his school or to any other authority related to his deviant behaviour.
- Who is a member of a young gang (group of at least 5 teenagers) that involves in deviant behaviour.

**Sampling Technique.** A Non-Probability Purposive Sampling technique is adopted to select samples and units of analysis.

## SOURCES OF DATA



An all-out attempt was made to produce reliable data. Validity of the data has been verified after data production. Parents and teenagers were surveyed and interviewed, and observational techniques were used to determine whether they were providing accurate information. To identify outliers, these data have also been contrasted with professional judgement.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

A reliable study requires ethical consideration at every stage. In this investigation, ethical concerns have been appropriately maintained. The researcher did not coerce anyone into taking part in the study; instead, interviews with respondents were conducted at times, locations, and with levels of willingness that suited the respondents. The goal of data collection was explained to respondents and key informants prior to data generation. The researcher requested their cooperation and official (oral) consent before the interview. The respondents' privacy has been properly protected.

## ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA AND RESULTS

### Factors Contributing to Juvenile Delinquency in Dhaka City

Survey data were collected from 80 male juvenile delinquents from Mohammadpur Geneva Camp and Kamrangirchar of Dhaka city. The collected survey data were analysed using Likert Scale. A five-point Likert Scale was used where the following values have been assigned:

<i>Table 1: Likert Scale</i>				
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5
<i>Source: Author</i>				

The mean of each question has been calculated and range were set like this:

<i>Table 2: Average Value of Likert Scale</i>				
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1 - 1.8	1.9 - 2.6	2.7 - 3.4	3.5 - 4.2	4.3 - 5
<i>Source: Author</i>				

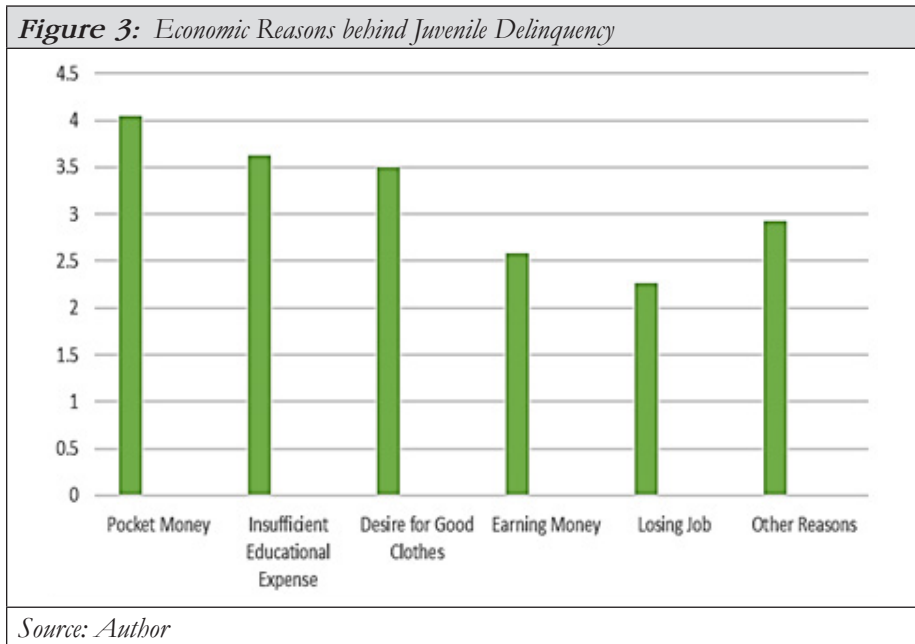
The Likert-Scale Questionnaire was comprised of five categories, namely Economic Reasons, Family Reasons, Societal Reasons, and Cultural Reasons behind resorting to delinquent acts by these juveniles, and one category of questions was aimed to find out the causes of juvenile gang formation.

### Economic Reasons

**Table 3: Economic Causes of Juvenile Delinquency**

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
Pocket Money	0	16	4	20	40	4.05
Insufficient Educational Expenses	5	10	5	50	10	3.62
Desire for Good Clothes	0	25	10	25	20	3.5
Earning Money	0	60	3	7	10	2.58
Losing Job	0	70	0	10	0	2.27
Other Reasons	0	10	65	5	0	2.93

*Source: Author*

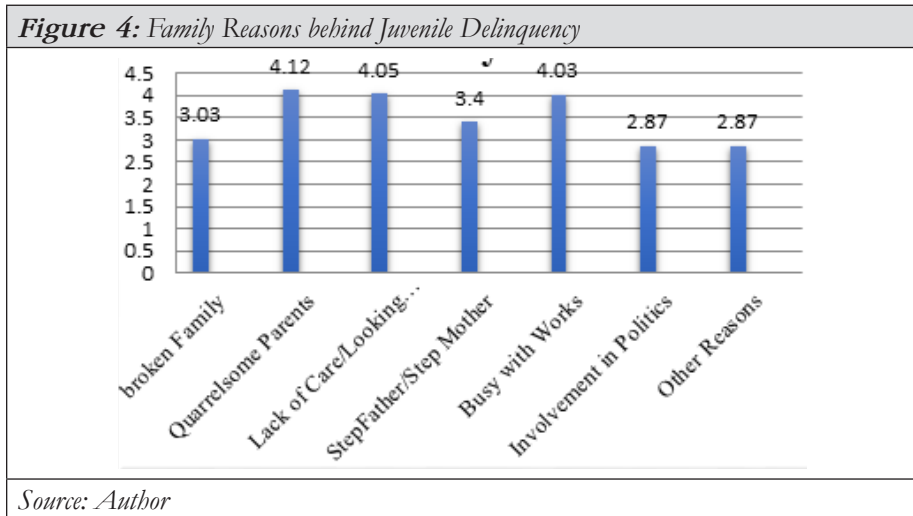


## Family Reasons

**Table 4: Family Causes of Juvenile Delinquency**

Factors	Strongly Disagree	isagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
Broken Family	1	40	4	25	10	3.03
Quarrelsome Parents	0	8	17	12	43	4.12
Lack of care / looking after	0	5	14	45	16	4.05
Step Father/ Step Mother	0	27	6	35	12	3.4
Busy with works/ no time for children	0	3	12	45	20	4.03
Involvement in politics	0	40	10	30	0	2.87
Other reasons	0	10	70	0	0	2.87

Source: Author

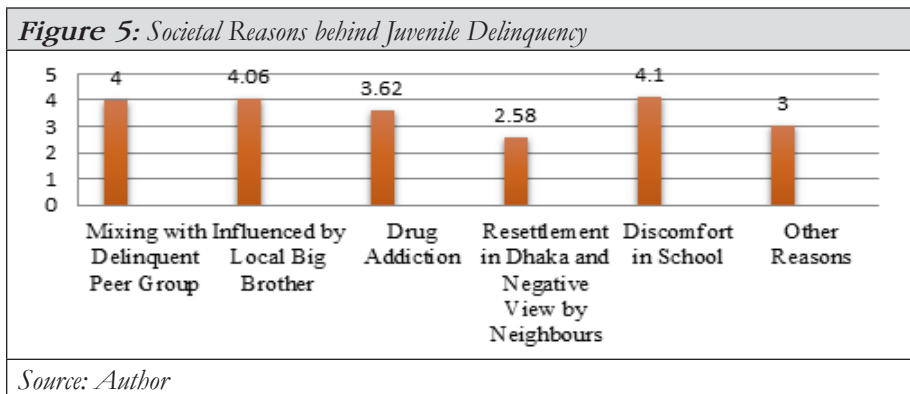


### Societal Reasons

**Table 5: Social Causes of Juvenile Delinquency**

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
Mixing with delinquent peer group	0	5	0	70	5	4.00
Influenced by local big brother	0	0	5	65	10	4.06
Drug addiction/mixing with addicted delinquent	0	10	15	50	5	3.62
Resettlement in Dhaka and negative views by neighbours	5	5	10	60	0	3.56
Discomfort in school	0	16	0	24	40	4.1
Other reasons	0	15	50	15		3.00

*Source: Author*

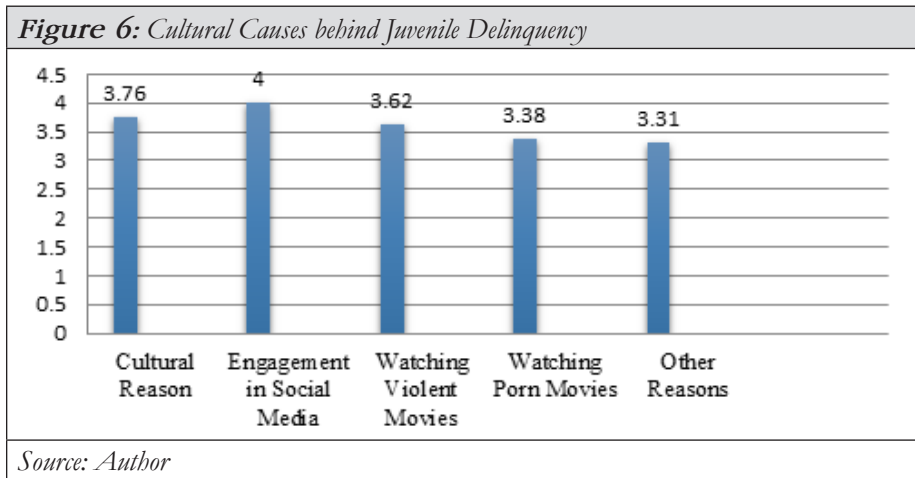


## Cultural Reasons

**Table 6: Cultural Causes of Juvenile Delinquency**

Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
Cultural Reason	0	3	20	50	7	3.76
Engagement in social media	0	5	5	55	15	4.00
Watching violent movies	0	0	5	52	23	4.22
Watching porn movies	0	5	10	55	10	3.38
Other Reasons	0	0	55	25	0	3.31

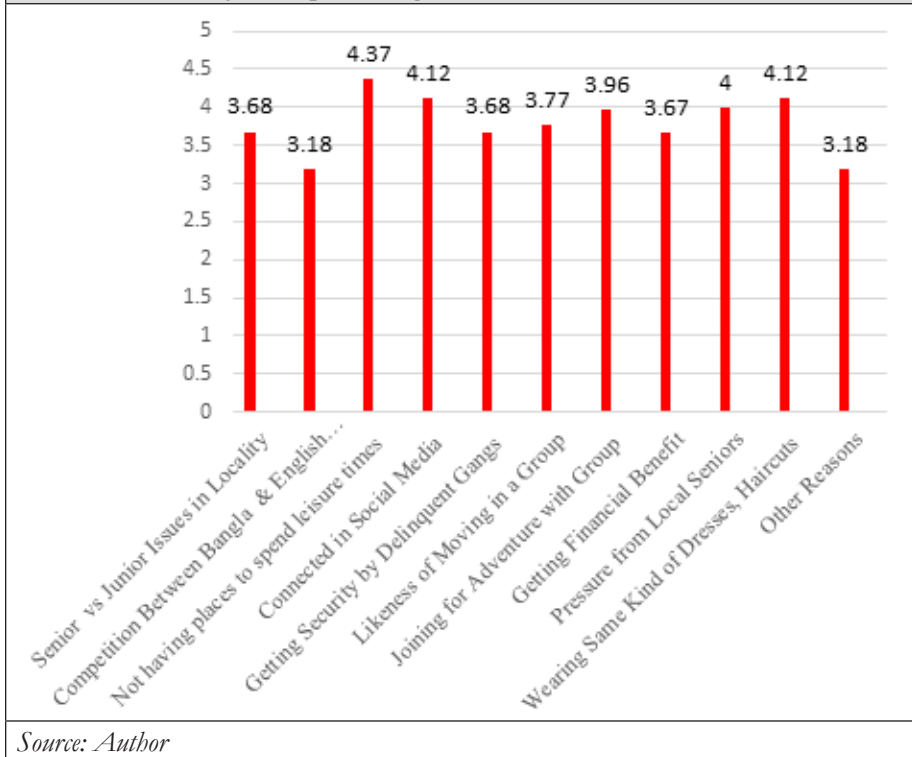
Source: Author



### Causes of Delinquent Gang Formation

<b>Table 7: Causes of Delinquent Gang Formation</b>						
Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average
Senior vs Junior Issues in locality	0	15	0	60	5	3.68
Competition between Bangla and English Medium	0	45	0	10	25	3.18
Not having places to spend leisure times	0	10	0	20	50	4.37
Connected in Social Media	0	0	0	70	10	4.12
Getting Security by Delinquent Gangs	0	10	5	65	0	3.68
Getting financial benefit	0	20	10	50	0	3.67
Likeness of moving in a group	0	9	0	71	0	3.77
Joining for adventure with group	0	0	5	73	2	3.96
Pressure from local seniors	0	5	5	55	15	4.00
Wearing same kind of dresses, haircuts	0	5	0	55	20	4.12
Other Reasons	0	0	65	15	0	3.18
<i>Source: Author</i>						

**Figure 7: Causes of Delinquent Gang Formation**



### Factors behind Juvenile Delinquency and Causes of Juvenile Crimes

To get a deeper insight on the subject, interviews were conducted in semi-structured form with total seven Key Informants from different fields like academia, members of law enforcement agencies, correction officer, lawyers, and crime journalists etc. The issue was discussed at length and the KIIs were informed about the objective of the research. The key findings are discussed below:

Professor Dr. Zia Rahman, Dean, Social Science Department, Dhaka University and eminent criminologist argued that transition of society, lack of proper family education, extortion, poverty, showing heroism, lack of social bonding, lengthy process of our justice system are the main contributing factors behind Juvenile delinquency. While asked about the causes he mentioned about tendency of showing off strength, patronizing from ruling party/political party leaders, lack of recreational activities both social and cultural, lack of lessons from family, unlimited access to internet.

Professor Hafizur Rahman Karzon, Department of Law, Dhaka University. According to him, inadequate means of recreation, family pattern, and easy access to internet, drugs etc contributes largely towards juvenile delinquency while area-based dominance, institute-based dominance, inadequate means of recreation, influence of big brothers, financial benefit are the major causes for getting involved in such crimes.

Associate Professor Shaharia Afrin, Head, Department of Criminology, Dhaka University argued that poverty, lack of good parenting, peer group bad influence, availability of drugs, influence of social media, insufficient playground are the main contributing factors behind Juvenile delinquency. While asked about the causes she mentioned about detachment of the parents, broken family, lack of monitoring, commercialization of education, poverty, unemployment, poor living standards, lack of recreational facilities, influence of social media and foreign culture.

DIG Joydeb Kumar Vadra, Crime Branch, Police Headquarters. According to him, unawareness of guardians, not spending enough time with children, roaming around the area, lengthy process of our justice system, neutral family, lack of social bonding etc contributes largely towards juvenile delinquency while lack of family bonding among juveniles and adults, nothing interesting to do for the juveniles to spend their leisure times, show off tendency by excessive use of social sites, intimidating others are the major causes for getting involved in such crimes.

Additional SP Masum Ahmed, Dhanmondi Thana, DMP, argued that, area-based dominance, institute-based dominance, lack of suitable recreational opportunities, communication through social media, intimidate others, loose family bonding, influence of social sites, lack of extracurricular activities, no idol to follow in front of them are the major factors and main causes behind juvenile delinquencies in the society.

Advocate Sheikh Mahmud Hossain, Supreme Court, Dhaka. According to him, negligence in implementing laws, quarrelsome family, poverty, lack of recreational facilities, negligence on bad manners of children, lack of teachings on religion, moral education, emotions of children, working parents are the major factors and main causes behind juvenile delinquencies in the society

Md Iahiatuzzaman, Child Development Centre, Tongi unawareness of guardians, insufficient time spent with children, absence of family norms, rampant societal deterioration, long term closure of educational institutions during corona

pandemic, use of social media, peer pressure etc are the major factors and main causes behind juvenile delinquencies in the society.

## **DISCUSSION ON COLLECTED DATA AND INFORMATION**

### **Factors Contributing to Gang Culture**

- Senior vs Junior Issues are something that may be the primary cause of gang formation in Dhaka city. The maximum number of respondents agreed that this is one of the leading causes of gang formation.
- While majority did not agree that ill competition between Bangla and English Medium is a key reason, only a handful supported the reason for gang formation.
- On being asked, majority of the respondents agreed that, they are involved in a gang as they are connected with other delinquent juveniles through social media, making it a major reason for forming/joining gangs.
- Adventuring with a group is one of the factors for which maximum respondents agreed to have formed/joined gangs.
- Majority of the respondents think that joining a gang increases the chances of getting security.
- Majority of respondents said they were getting financial benefit from gang activities.
- A staggering number of respondents agreed that they liked the idea of moving in a group to intimidate others.
- Majority of the respondents agreed to have received pressure from seniors/local mastans about joining gangs.
- Wearing same kind of dresses, haircuts were high for participants who agreed in these reasons.

**Juvenile Delinquency in Dhaka City.** Modern Residential Area Vs Crowded Slum Area. To identify the nature of gang activities in modern residential area represented by Dhanmondi and crowded slum area represented by Mohammadpur Geneva Camp and Kamrangir Char area, a Focus Group Discussion was

conducted at Dhanmondi Thana with total six police officers of different ranks like Additional SP, OC, SI and ASI of police. According to the participants the gang activity in modern residential area is mostly done by the outsiders coming from adjoining Rayer Bazar, Hazaribag area. The members of gangs usually assemble during evening in some pre-designated areas previously decided and inform each member through internet apps. After assembly they carry out various anti-social activities. English medium school going juveniles residing in Dhanmondi residential area usually participate in gang activities around the issue of girlfriends, drug use, shisha bar etc. Due to lack of playgrounds juveniles mostly hang around restaurants, shisha bars and spent their time. Spending time with friends in restaurants has become the main means of recreation for them.

**Nature of the Gangs.** Interviewing 07 Key Informants with a semi-structured questionnaire, and conducting three FGDs (Police Headquarters, Dhanmondi Thana, Dhaka University) the author found some significant as well as common nature and characteristics of youth gangs of Dhaka City. There are mainly 10-15 members having almost similar age or in a particular age group and proximate living areas in a gang and they operate as a group in specific areas. They also have specific group names and same appearances such as same haircut or color, tattoos or dress up, etc. They mainly operate under the leadership of their big brother whom they address as “Boro Bhai” of their areas with the objective of benefiting from their offences in order to reach their goals. Moreover, they share common things like switch gears, small knives, and cigarettes, and portray aggressive behaviour and gestures as well. Furthermore, if we look into their criminal activities, first they involve in various types of street fighting in their areas to gain dominance and they start from small and petty crimes such as snatching, theft, pick pocketing which lead them to bigger ones like aggravated assault, murder, dacoity, etc. and they dare to do those under some political leaders who want to create a motion of fear among the people in order to be able to control their areas. After committing several crimes and availing shelters from political leaders, many of these groups involve themselves in drug misuse and illegal drugs business for their financial amenities.

**Signs of a Juvenile Gang Member.** Following can be the indicators for a child to be the member of a juvenile gang:

- Not mixing up with the family members as before.
- Change in behavior and not interested to go to school. Doing bad in academic performance.

- Parents receiving frequent complaints from others.
- Always mood off, manifestation of frustration and rage.
- Starting use of new or unknown slang words.
- Unexplained money or valuables in possession.
- Breaking parental rules consistently.
- Staying out unusually late without reason.
- Sudden change in dresses in a particular style or 'uniform' similar to that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour.
- Change in appearances and hair style, wearing ear rings.
- Keep aloof from of positive activities.
- New nickname.
- Unexplained physical injuries, or refusal to seek/receive medical treatment for injuries.
- Graffiti style 'tags' on possessions, school books, walls.
- Always connected with other juveniles of same kind through mobile phone or internet.
- Separated from old friends and loitering around with new friends.
- Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups
- of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past.
- Being scared when entering certain areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Juvenile delinquency is a very crucial problem for any society. Its bad impact propagates to every corner of the society and exerts a serious impact on the very fabric of all societal institutions. It is not only a matter of law enforcing agency rather it is a holistic issue where all other social and state machinery needs to be engaged. To control juvenile delinquency and its gang culture following measures can be taken:

**Proper Family Environment.** Family is a very important element for child development and to some extent acts as determining factor for children's subsequent involvement in crime. Children learn many things from their families

including behaviour and attitude. We can reduce delinquency by establishing family bonds in which each family member has certain duties and responsibilities. Good family environment is very important for children to be grown up as a worthy citizen of the country.

**Parental Love, Affection, Supervision and Guidance.** Parents have to look after their children, where they are going, with whom they are mixing up, are they going to school regularly, what is their performance in the school, how they are spending their leisure time, are they facing any sort of problem, is there any behavioural change happening to them etc. Misbehaving, scolding, excessive control, using harsh and strict commands, lack of freedom of expression, beating or use of abusive languages to the children should be avoided by the parents. But no way it means that they have to allow the children whatever they like. There should be some kind of balance between their control and love and affection.

**Role of Educational Institutions.** Educational institutions should give greater emphasis on moral and religious education. Any kind of physical or mental pressure should not be applied on the children. Teachers should not use abusive languages or any kind of discrimination to the children. School Management Committee and teachers should work together to bring new idea that can help prevent delinquency.

**Drop Out from the School.** Among the juvenile delinquents dropped out from the school is a large group. A young student may become dropped out from school for various socio-economic reasons. These includes poverty, expenditure of schooling, distance from school, beating and abusive behaviour from the teacher, teasing by the peer student, not interested in studies, failed in the exam etc. Measures to be taken to stop dropping out from school to check juvenile delinquency.

**Enough Space for Physical and Other Activity.** We need to create enough space to provide the juveniles with opportunities to play and engage with various cultural and recreational activities. These recreation programs should be designed in such a way that they would fit the personalities and skills that the children have. Extra-curricular activities, such as music, dance, sports, martial arts, painting, etc, have to be provided to the children to keep their minds refreshing and occupied.

**Effective Use of Internet and Social Media.** The easy access to internet and social media stuffs are very dangerous to adolescents. So, we have to put restrictions on free use of internet and social media. In that case parents, senior

citizens of the society, educational institution, social institutions and government has important role to play.

**Prevent Drug Addiction.** Drug addiction is one of the major causes for juvenile delinquency. There are lots of examples where juveniles get involved in delinquent path due to drug abuse. For that close monitoring on with whom the children are mixing, is there any change in their behaviour etc needs to be monitored strictly. Again, law enforcing agencies need to be more active on the prevention of drug abuse.

**Role of Law Enforcing Agencies.** Police has a very important role in case of prevention and detection of offences done by the juveniles. Police should increase their preventive measure like patrolling, controlling abuse of drugs, community meeting to sensitize the parents and children, visiting educational institutions to give advice to the teachers and positive motivation to the children etc. They also should maintain the updated list of deviated juveniles and monitor their activities.

**Investigation and Trial of Juvenile Delinquents.** Investigation of juvenile delinquency cases should not be perfunctory. These cases should be investigated maintaining high professional standard so that no delinquent get acquittal due to poor investigation. In the trial phase juvenile delinquency should be given priority by the judicial department. Cases should not remain pending for years together.

**Strengthen the Juvenile Development Centres.** The handful of Child Development Centres (CDC) that we have in our country is not equipped to create a congenial atmosphere for the development of the delinquent juveniles. Unfortunately, in some cases children are held in regular prisons, despite the fact that holding children in adult prisons is strictly prohibited. In CDCs the youngsters are not given a healthy nutrition, medical treatment, or education, let alone rehabilitative measures. So, this system should be updated and strictly monitored.

**Initiative from Social Welfare Department.** The Social Welfare Department has to take good initiatives to control juvenile delinquency. For the betterment of probation management there should be Permanent Probation Officer in each district. There must be a good partnership between the CDC authority, guardians of the juvenile delinquents, Police and the other law enforcing agencies, the children court, psychotherapist and the researchers for the sake of a better future of the juveniles.

## **CONCLUSION**

Juveniles are the future leaders of a country. They will lead the nation in near future. Our country, Bangladesh was a less developed country couple of years ago. Right now, our economy is heading towards a prosperous future. For a developing country like Bangladesh it is important to have a less problematic society. To get the full benefit of existing demographic dividend phase, a country must utilize its total manpower. So, to achieve the ultimate goal of sustainable prosperity, we must keep our juveniles free from crime, criminal activity, anxiety and social unrest. It will accelerate the pace towards a new dimension of happiness and prosperous future.

## **REFERENCES**

- Adler, F., Mueller, G.O.W., & Laufer, W.S., 2004. *Criminology*. 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Agnew, R., 1985. *Social Control Theory and Delinquency: A Longitudinal Test*, p. 47-61.
- Ahmed, M., & Hossain, S., 2017. *Twelve Young Gangs are Active in Crime*. Daily ProthomAlo, 23 April. p. 1-2.
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), 2010. *The Children Act, 2013* (pdf). Available at: <https://www.blast.org.bd/content/publications/The-Children-Act%202013.pdf> [Accessed 23 August 2023].
- Bhosle, S., 2009. *Female Crime in India and Theoretical Perspective of Crime*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publication. p. 63
- Burt, C., 2021. *Juvenile Delinquency (Meaning, Definitions Causes and Prevention Measures)*. Available at: <https://eduindex.org/2021/07/09/juvenile-delinquency-meaning-definitions-causes-and-prevention-measures/> [Accessed 12 May 2023]
- Cohen, A., 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The culture of the Gang*. Free Press, New York.
- Das, T., 2019. *Gangs of teens cause concern*. New Age. Daily New Age. 09 September 2023
- Daily Industry. 2021. *Misuse of Technology Behind Rising Offense*. 14 June 2021. Available at: <https://dailyindustry.ncws> [Accessed on 16 June 2023]

Ferdousi, N., 2012. Juvenile Justice System in Bangladesh. 5th ed. Academic Press and Publishers Library, Dhaka.

Guba, E G., 1990. The Paradigm Dialogue, Sage Publications.

Hirschi, T., 1969. Causes of Delinquency. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Islam, M., 2010. "Juvenile Ganging in Slum Communities: The Dhaka City Perspective. <repository. Library, du. ac.bd>

Islam, U., 2018. Growth of Teen Gang Culture Worrying Experts. The Dhaka Tribune. 02 February. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2018/01/28/teen-gang-culture-worries-experts> [Accessed 12 May 2023]

Justice Audit Bangladesh. 2018. Child Development Centers (CDC). Available at: <https://bangladesh.justiceaudit.org/national-data/regional-services/child-development-centers/> [Accessed on 13 August 2023]

Karzon, S. H. R., 2008. Theoretical and Applied Criminology, Dhaka: PalalProkashoni.

Karzon, S. H. R., 2023. NonditoShoishob and Juvenile Crime and gang culture in Bangladesh. Dhaka: PathokSomabesh.

Khan, R., 2018. Causation of Young Gang Sub-Culture in Bangladesh: Application of Hirschi's Social Control Theory. MSS. Dhaka University.

Magee, B., 1998. The Story of Philosophy, London: Dorling Kindersley.

Makhvana, S., Patel, A., Dhingra, A., and Parmar, V., 2012. Mental Health: A Journey from Illness to Wellness, New Delhi: REDSHINE International Press.

Planning Commission, Dhaka.

Sheppard, S., 2016. The gangs of Bangladesh: Exploring organized crime, street gangs and 'illicit child labourers in Dhaka. p. 233-249.

UNFPA Bangladesh, 2020. Available at: <https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/en/node/24314>[Accessed on 13 August 2023]

Zaman, R., 2020. Impact of Child Development Centers on Recurrent Juvenile Delinquency in Bangladesh. MSS. Dhaka University. p. 32-33

## **AUTHOR**

**Brigadier General S M Anwar Hossain, ndc, afwc, psc** was commissioned on 19 December 1994 with 31 BMA Long Course in Corps of Engineers. He commanded 6 Infantry Brigade and 17 Engineer Construction Battalion. He served as the Managing Director of Jolshiri Abashon and worked as Additional Director General of 24 Engineer Construction Brigade. He is a Distinguished Instructor of Engineer Centre and School of Military Engineering. His important staff appointments include Brigade Major of 98 Composite Brigade, Private Secretary to the Principal Staff Officer at Armed Forces Division, General Staff Officer Grade-1 in Headquarters Army Training and Doctrine Command (ARTDOC) and Army Headquarters Engineer in Chief's Branch. Under blue helmet he has served as contingent member in UNMIL (Liberia) and as staff officer in Force Headquarters UNAMID (Darfur). He has done his graduation in Civil Engineering and Masters in Environmental Engineering from Military Institute of Science and Technology. He has also attained Masters in Criminology and Criminal Justice System from Dhaka University and Masters in Defence Studies from National University. The officer is a PhD fellow registered under Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) in the academic year 2022-23. Presently he is serving as the Director of Works and Chief Engineer of Bangladesh Navy.

*Email: 73anwar@gmail.com*



## FOOD AND NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF SRI LANKA'S CHEMICAL FERTILIZER BAN 2021: STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR BANGLADESH

Air Commodore SPVK Senadheera, RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc

*"Political necessities sometime turn out to be political mistakes"*

- George Bernard Shaw

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

(Received: 13th April 2025; Accepted: 21st June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)

**Abstract:** This study employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the impact of Sri Lanka's 2021 chemical fertilizer ban on food security and national stability, with strategic implications for Bangladesh. Recognizing the centrality of paddy and vegetables to food systems, data were collected through Google Form surveys involving 127 Sri Lankan consumers, 234 Sri Lankan and 54 Bangladeshi senior military officers. Convenience and purposive sampling guided participant selection. Key informant interviews with experts from Sri Lanka's HARTI and Bangladesh's Agricultural Extension Department, along with semi-structured interviews with security scholars Dr. Rohan Gunaratna and Dr. Atiur Rahman, provided in-depth sectoral and security insights. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with affected Sri Lankan farmers and Small Group Discussions (SGDs) with Bangladeshi officers from the National Defence Course 2024 further enriched the analysis. Document reviews from central banks, agriculture departments, and the WFP offered macro-level context. Findings reveal that the fertilizer ban critically undermined Sri Lanka's food production, contributing to widespread food insecurity, social unrest, and national instability. Comparative analysis with Bangladesh highlights shared vulnerabilities and the importance of embedding food security within national security frameworks. Recommendations include strengthening Bangladesh's National Committee for Security Affairs, improving inter-ministerial coordination, promoting sustainable agriculture, and enhancing regional collaboration. The study underscores that agricultural policy decisions directly affect state resilience, advocating for a multi-stakeholder, evidence-based approach to managing non-traditional security threats.

**Keywords:** *Chemical Fertilizer Ban, Food Security, National Stability, Agricultural Policy, Non-Traditional Security*

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2021, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) enacted a sudden and comprehensive ban on the importation of chemical fertilizers and synthetic agro-inputs, including urea and triple superphosphate. Framed as a national shift toward organic agriculture and environmental sustainability, the policy was implemented without prior consultation with stakeholders, transitional planning, or technical support. Rather than yielding anticipated environmental or productivity benefits, the policy precipitated a sharp decline in agricultural output, rising food prices, and socio-economic instability (HARTI, 2022; World Bank, 2023). These cascading effects significantly contributed to widespread public dissent and unrest, culminating in the 2022 'Aragalaya' (People's Uprising), thereby underscoring the link between agricultural policy, food security, and national stability.

From the firsthand experience as Commanding Officer of Sri Lanka Air Force Station Palaly in the Northern Province during 2021–2022, the researcher observed the negative impacts of the fertilizer ban on both civilian and military populations. Attempts by the military to support organic fertilizer production and promote cultivation through logistics and mechanization were undermined by the lack of technical supervision, agronomic expertise, and supply chain readiness. The resulting food shortages affected not only local communities but also ration stores and operational readiness. Security forces were increasingly deployed to manage public agitation and localized unrest—demonstrating how agricultural policy failures can pose direct risks to national security.

Internationally, food security is no longer viewed solely as a development issue but increasingly as a non-traditional security (NTS) concern. It intersects with resource scarcity, governance failure, climate change, and socio-political unrest (FAO, 2020; Buzan et al., 1998). Countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, ranking 79th and 80th respectively in the Global Food Security Index (GFSI), are particularly vulnerable to such compound risks, given their dependence on food imports, exposure to climate variability, and limited social protection infrastructure (EIU, 2023).

While a growing body of literature explores food insecurity and resilience, relatively few studies employ a comparative threat-modelling approach that connects abrupt agricultural reforms, systemic food vulnerabilities, and national security outcomes. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the impacts of Sri

Lanka's fertilizer ban and its strategic implications for food security governance in Bangladesh. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

- How has Sri Lanka's ban on chemical fertilizers impacted food production, agricultural practices, and national food security in Sri Lanka?
- What are the likely impacts of the ban on chemical fertilizers on Sri Lanka's national security, and the implications for economic stability, social unrest, and politics?
- What is the current state of food security in Bangladesh and what are the challenges and vulnerabilities that can impact national security dynamics?
- What are the recommendations to both countries to enhance food security and national security, based on the lessons learned from Sri Lanka's experience?

This study has four key contributions. Empirically, it employs a mixed-methods approach-surveys, interviews, and document analysis-to present new evidence on the multi-sectoral impacts of Sri Lanka's fertilizer ban. Comparatively, it pitted Sri Lanka's policy failure against Bangladesh's food security system in an attempt to examine shared vulnerabilities as well as potential resilience choices. At the policy level, it makes evidence-based recommendations to help Bangladesh integrate food security into national security strategy, institutionalize inter-agency coordination, and establish early warning systems. At the conceptual level, it adds to the growing literature on agricultural policy as a basis of national resilience, particularly in addressing non-traditional and climate security threats.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Sri Lanka's abrupt chemical fertilizer ban revealed the deep interconnection between agricultural policy, food security, and national stability. The resulting decline in crop yields, food shortages, and social unrest underscore the risks of poorly planned reforms. Given Bangladesh's similar vulnerabilities, this study offers a comparative analysis to identify systemic risks and propose evidence-based recommendations to strengthen food security resilience and national security.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adhered to the mixed-methods, where both quantitative and qualitative methods were taken to investigate Sri Lanka's chemical fertilizer ban and its impact on national and food security and draw implications for Bangladesh. Since vegetables and paddy are significant food security crops, data collection on vegetables and paddy was given high priority.

The quantitative component analyses the impact of Sri Lanka's fertilizer ban by examining changes in crop yields, food availability, inflation, and price trends—particularly for rice and vegetables—before and after the policy shift. It also evaluates corresponding indicators in Bangladesh including food production levels, fertilizer import costs, inflation, and projected food insecurity. Comparative data on cultivation areas, supply, and import indices are assessed to understand the broader implications for food affordability and national food security in both countries.

The qualitative component draws on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Small Group Discussions (SGDs), and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) to explore perceptions of food and national security in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. It examines the background and consequences of Sri Lanka's fertilizer ban capturing expert insights and firsthand experiences. Additionally, it investigates current food security challenges and vulnerabilities in Bangladesh, and assesses expert views on how food insecurity influences national security dynamics in both countries.

A mix of survey, interview, discussion, and document analysis was utilized to gather data for this study. Google Form surveys were distributed among 127 Sri Lankan consumers and 288 senior Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi military officers to determine the post-ban effects on national stability and food security. Convenience sampling was used for the consumer survey, while purposive sampling was used for military officers with respective national security experience.

KIIs with Mr. Shantha Hewage of HARTI Institute in Sri Lanka and Mr. Mostafa Khan Raihan of Agricultural Extension in Bangladesh were held on the food security dimensions in the two nations. Two SSIs were also conducted with Dr. Rohan Gunaratna (Sri Lanka) and Dr. Atiur Rahman (Bangladesh) to obtain national security perspectives.

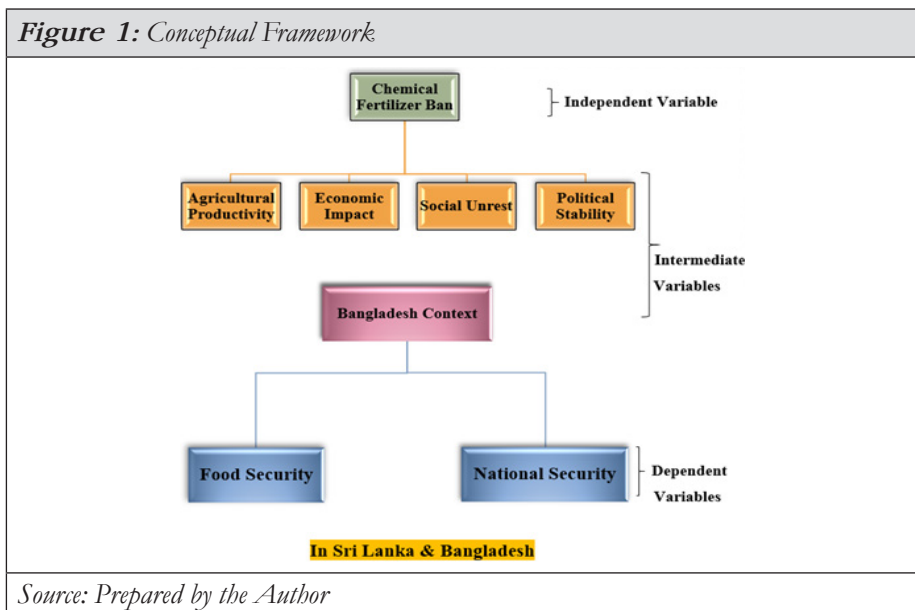
An FGD was conducted with Sri Lankan farmers of the Kurunegala district who were directly affected by the fertilizer ban, while an SGD was conducted with six

Bangladeshi military officers participating in the National Defence Course 2024 to assess the function of the National Committee of Security Affairs (NCSA). Further data was gathered from a range of documents, e.g., Central Banks’, Agriculture Departments’, Census and Statistics of the two countries, and World Food Programme (WFP) reports, in order to get more background data and check the validity of the primary data.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It employs a conceptual model that positions the 2021 Sri Lankan chemical fertilizer ban as the independent variable. It looks at its cascading implications for four intermediate variables: agricultural productivity, economic impact, social unrest, and political stability. The intermediate variables are utilized as major prisms through which the dependent variables of food security and national security in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are ascertained.

Applying this framework comparatively, the study analyzes how national stability and resilience in Sri Lanka are affected by shifts in intermediate factors caused by the fertilizer ban. The framework enables cross-contextual comparison of the effects of non-traditional security threats, such as food system disruptions, on state function and socio-political cohesion.



## **RELATED WORKS**

A number of scholarly works on Sri Lanka's 2021 ban on chemical fertilizers, their impacts on agricultural productivity, national security, and stability have been consolidated, and comparative lessons have been drawn as well from Bangladesh to contextualize the shared vulnerabilities.

Food security, by definition of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as frequent availability to sufficient, safe, and nutrient-rich food (FAO, 2018), depends upon productivity, trade, conflict, and climatic change (Barrett, 2010; Global Network Against Food Crises, 2019). Scholarly articles indicate to have robust relationships among food security and national security involving the threats of political instability, socio-economic inequities, and regional conflict (Ahmed et al., 2022; Fernando et al., 2021).

The 2021 ban drastically interfered with food systems. Crop yields declined due to agrochemical shortages (Samad et al., 2021; Wijerathna-Yapa et al., 2023), with 54% production losses and 25% of farmers considering agricultural exit (Wijerathna-Yapa et al., 2023). The policy, coupled with economic crises, resulted in food inflation, reduced accessibility, and socio-political instability (Salikuddin, 2024; Senaviratne & Herath, 2021). Researchers point out that abrupt changes require phased approaches, farmer training, and mixed fertilizer policies to avert destabilization of the nation (Jayasekera & Ranaweera, 2021; INSS, 2021).

While organic farming is health- and environment-friendly, effective implementation requires government support, market readiness, and soil rejuvenation time (Paranamana & Sarath, 2024; Ghose et al., 2023). The Sri Lankan experience reveals the result of ill-planning for transition.

Bangladesh's food security concerns are no different from those in other nations, with climate change, land scarcity, and overdependence on agriculture (Haque et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2019). Strategic action, like climate-resilient agriculture and phased organic conversion, has been given top priority to avert food crises and maintain national stability (Murshed & Uddin, 2020). Bangladesh's food insecurity also compromises national security via civilian unrest and migration pressures (Senaratne, 2023; Rahman, 2022).

While earlier research expounds on the socio-economic impact of Sri Lanka's fertilizer ban, less focus has been given to its broader national security context. The intersection of farm policy, global power, and domestic stability is still not explored to a large degree.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE BAN ON SRI LANKA'S FOOD AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

Sri Lanka's 2021 ban on chemical fertilizers to promote sustainable agriculture was not planned appropriately and strategically. The policy led to food shortages, inflation, social unrest, and undermining national security. Intended to reduce fertilizer import bills, the haste with which the ban was imposed without proper training to farmers and availability of organic fertilizer caused production to plummet drastically in crops like paddy and vegetables and impacted such a vital export industry as tea.

Rice and vegetable farmers experienced precipitous falls in productivity which led to rising food prices and compounding inflation. A consumer survey of 127 individuals identified perceived food availability and affordability declines.

Economic insecurity heightened with demonstrations such as the "Aragalaya" demonstrations. Food insecurity was linked with social unrest and government instability by consumers and military commanders. Inflation put pressure on livelihoods which intensified public dissatisfaction.

The fertilizer ban exposed weaknesses in national stability. Food insecurity and economic instability challenged social cohesion, military readiness, and national sovereignty, promoting greater dependence on foreign aid. Military intervention in regulating agriculture reinforced the gravity of the crisis. Sri Lanka's experience reminded us of the need for strategy-driven sequential reform in agriculture in order to avert unanticipated national security hazards. Bangladesh needs to learn considerably to enhance resilience, food security, and social stability through appropriate, well-considered policy balances.

## **FOOD SECURITY STATUS, ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES, AND VULNERABILITIES ON NATIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS IN BANGLADESH**

177 million people live in Bangladesh, which is severely impacted by food security problems that affect its food supply as well as national security. Its population density is high and arable land is low, making things worse, so it is relegated to a ranking just below Sri Lanka on the GFSI. The assessment is informed by the expertise of senior military commanders, specialist KIIs, consumer complaint,

and farm data. Both quantitative and qualitative methods reflect Bangladesh's food security status, learning from Sri Lanka's chemical fertilizer ban in 2021, highlighting socio-economic considerations and vulnerabilities. The report also recommends context-adjusted suggestions for Bangladesh to improve resilience and stabilize food supply.

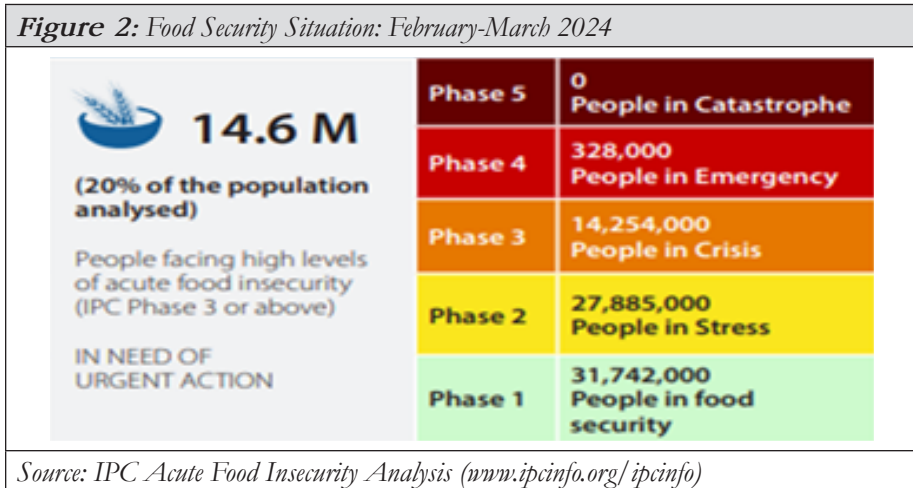
Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) (Bokhtiar & Samsuzzaman, 2023) pointed out that Bangladesh met tremendous success in grain, vegetable, fruit, fish, and livestock production. Bangladesh ranks the third highest rice and inland fish producer and a top-ten vegetable, potato, and fruit producer.

The production of rice rose to 37.6 million metric tons (MMT) in 2021 (BBS, 2021) amidst increase in population and reduced cropland since 1971. Vegetable crops rose to 16 MMT annually due to utilization of hybrid seed, and potato output rose to 9.9 MMT in 2021 from 0.9 MMT in 1971. For FY 2022-23, total food grain production enhanced by 2.6% to 40.27 MMT with the target of 44.66 MMT for FY 2023-24. Climatic shocks like cyclones and flooding at times disrupts market functioning.

The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) has developed 67 high-yielding rice varieties and systems such as Rice-Fish farming, raising production under diverse conditions (BRRI, 2014). Pulses and oilseed diversified farming has also improved nutrition.

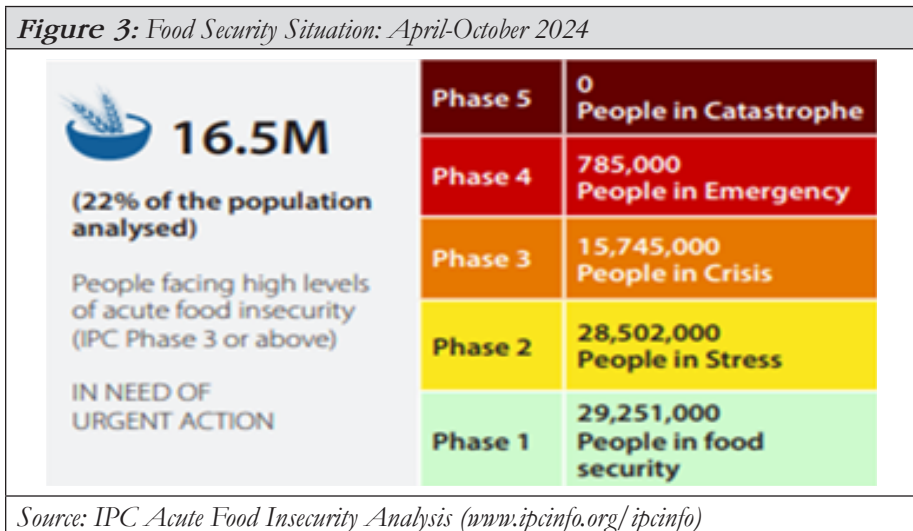
As per WFP Bangladesh Food Security Survey Brief (2023), increased food insecurity with over 13% moderately insecure households has been witnessed. Severe food insecurity of 14.6 million people due to unaffordable prices of food, climatic stresses, and poor earning opportunities targeting primarily the poorer households has been witnessed in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis (April 2024).

**Figure 2: Food Security Situation: February-March 2024**



A total of around 16.5 million people are projected to experience extreme acute food insecurity, rated IPC Phase 3 and above (Crisis or worse), for the period spanning April to October 2024. Intermittent climatic shocks joined by high inflation and shrinking chances of increasing household incomes are all putting significant pressures on the vulnerable households, therefore, worsening acute food insecurity for the population under focus (IPC, 2024).

**Figure 3: Food Security Situation: April-October 2024**



Former Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman picked up on potential threats from spiraling inflation and the cost of essential commodities that might trigger social unrest and impinge on cities. Lowered subsidies for fertilizer could damage crop productivity.

The WFP Food Security Survey Report (2023) shows the high price of food affecting 68% of households. Even though food inflation decreased to 7.91%, it is a serious concern. The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP) monitoring report (2023) shows CPI inflation rising from 5.6% in FY 2020/21 to 6.2% in FY 2021/22, while non-food inflation has always been behind food inflation.

Trading Economics (2024) provides the CPI in Bangladesh increased to 126.06 points in July from 123.38 points in June of 2024. The CPI in Bangladesh averaged 82.71 points from 2011 until 2024, reaching an all-time high of 126.06 points in July 2024 and a record low of 52.53 points in May 2011.

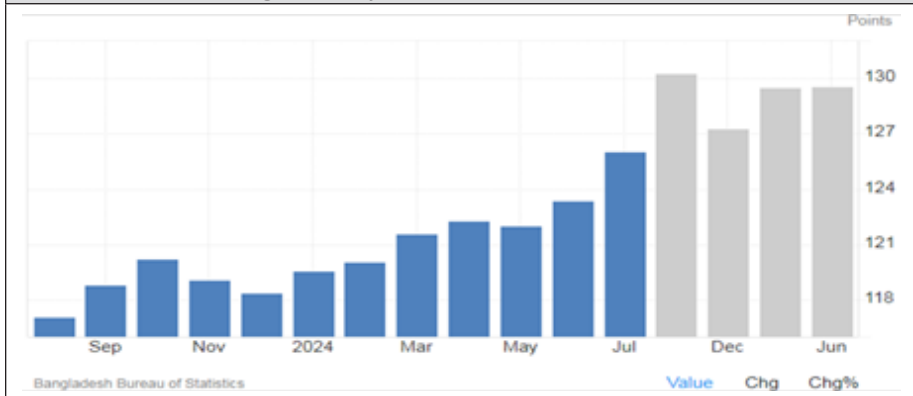
**Table 1: CPI in Bangladesh (July 2024)**

Related	Last	Previous	Unit	Reference
Consumer Price Index CPI	126.06	123.38	points	Jul 2024
CPI Transportation	119.79	119.48	points	Jul 2024
Food Inflation	14.10	10.42	percent	Jul 2024
GDP Deflator	137.95	130.84	points	Dec 2023
Inflation Rate YoY	11.66	9.72	percent	Jul 2024
Inflation Rate MoM	2.17	1.11	percent	Jul 2024

Source: *The Trading Economics*  
(<https://tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/consumer-priceindex-cpi>)

Bangladesh's CPI is predicted to be 130.24 points by the end of this quarter, where it is predicted to vacillate between 133.64 points in 2025 and 140.33 points in 2026 (Trading Economics, 2024).

**Figure 4: CPI in Bangladesh-Projection**



Source: *The Trading Economics*

(<https://tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/consumer-price-index-cpi>)

Food inflation in June 2024 was 10.42% according to New Age (2024) for low- and fixed-income households. Food inflation stood at 10.42% as reported by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in June, maintaining double-digit inflation in April (10.22%) and May (10.76%). The South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (2024) estimates actual food inflation as potentially higher than twice the reported figures for low- and fixed-income households.

The estimated growth in the population of Bangladesh to over 186 million by 2030 poses the challenge of meeting food and nutrition security. The urban expansion is encroaching on agricultural lands at a 1% yearly rate, negatively affecting food output. From 1976 to 2021, about 79,000 hectares of productive land were annually lost (BBS, 2021; Nuruzzaman, 2012). Even though urbanization raises standards of living, it creates poverty pockets and overwhelms services, exacerbating malnutrition and food insecurity, especially in urban regions (FAO, 2023).

Urbanization and Its Impact on Food Security: The expansion of rural settlements and urban industrial factories takes up approximately 0.24% of agricultural land annually, according to the Bangladesh ARC report 2023. The report also highlights that agricultural land conversion to non-agriculture is occurring at a staggering 1% per annum rate, endangering crop cultivation and food security.

**Table 2:** Alterations in the size of agricultural land over 1976-2021

Land use	1976*		2021**		Average annual rate of change during 1976–2021 (%)
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	
Agricultural land	9,88,1300	67.6	8,833,198	61.0	-0.24
Forest	2,20,7400	15.1	2,576,113	17.8	0.37
Rural settlement	885,600	6.1	1,122,670	7.7	0.59
Urban + industrial	26,700	0.2	81,945	0.6	4.60
Other uses	1,606,000	11.0	1,872,343	12.9	0.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,607,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14,486,269</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-0.02</b>

Source: Bangladesh ARC Report ([www.barc.portal.gov.bd](http://www.barc.portal.gov.bd))

In the period of the past two decades, agriculture’s contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined from 18% to 13%, while manufacturing and services rose (ADB, 2023). Agriculture still employs over 40% of the workforce despite this change, with issues like slow crop growth, low productivity, and profitability.

Government of Bangladesh (GOB) promoted organic cultivation, from 30,425 hectares in 2019 to 40,350 hectares in 2022, with emphasis on limited chemical use and soil improvement (NFNSP Monitoring Report, 2023). Coordination with food security and sustainability targets of organic farming continues to be crucial for economic progress (Murshed & Uddin, 2020).

Bangladesh spends Tk 15,000 crore annually on fertilizer import, with subsidy supporting agricultural production. Fertilizer subsidies went up by 101.3% in 2021/22 (Ministry of Agriculture, 2023).

**Table 3:** Fertilizer Imports, Subsidies Expenditure

Year	Subsidies (billion BDT)			Change from previous year			% of fertilizer subsidies in national budget	% of urea subsidies in fertilizer budget
	Urea	Non-urea	Total	Urea	Non-urea	Total		
2015-16	23.37	39.29	62.66	-13.7%	-7.0%	-9.6%	2.1%	37%
2016-17	11.82	22.59	34.41	-49.4%	-42.5%	-45.1%	1.0%	34%
2017-18	16.95	31.91	48.86	43.4%	41.3%	42.0%	1.2%	35%
2018-19	32.99	41.74	74.73	94.7%	30.8%	53.0%	1.7%	44%
2019-20	29.54	37.62	67.16	-10.4%	-9.9%	-10.1%	1.3%	44%
2020-21	24.86	49.35	74.21	-15.8%	31.2%	10.5%	1.31%	34%
2021-22	24.42	125.00	149.42	-1.8%	153.3%	101.3%	2.20%	16%

Source: Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture ([www.bbs.gov.bd](http://www.bbs.gov.bd))

Bangladesh, the 7th most disaster-prone nation in the world (UNDP, 2023), is highly exposed to climate-related hazards such as cyclones, floods, river erosion, salinity, and soil loss. Heavy reliance on agriculture, combined with high population density, and environmental degradation enhance vulnerability. Climate change increasingly impacts agricultural systems, water security, biodiversity, and livelihoods, rolling back four decades of advances in agriculture and nutrition and raising severe human rights concerns with respect to health and living conditions (BBS, 2011; Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Bangladesh's investments in disaster risk reduction have translated into reduced mortality, higher GDP growth, and higher food and nutrition security. The Climate Vulnerability Index recognizes integrated solutions-combining climate adaptation and food security, for instance-the 'Nobo-Jatra' project improving local resilience and nutrition benefits (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Yet, IPC analysis (2024) warns that climate shocks, economic stress, and market uncertainty are heightening food access, especially in cyclone- and flood-affected areas. Low incomes and high prices are offset by stable food production, driven by declining humanitarian assistance, social instability, and recurring disasters-highlighting intersecting vulnerabilities in economy, climate, and human rights.

The 'NoboJatra' program, launched in 2015 using United States Agency for International Development (USAID) financing, introduces a climate-conscious approach to disaster management that involves food security, nutrition, gender empowerment, and livelihoods. Implemented in 740 villages and over 850,000 people, it utilizes tools like Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) to boost empowerment, accountability, and climate resilience (USAID, 2015).

Storage and governance are major threats to food security in Bangladesh. Inadequate storage, especially cold facilities, leads to price volatility and discourages crop diversification, affecting market efficiency. Weak functioning of the NCSA hampers coordination and monitoring, increasing vulnerability to climate-related hazards and deepening food insecurity.

Additionally, 11.4% of the population is undernourished, with high childhood stunting and widespread malnutrition requiring integrated interventions. External factors, including India's dominance in food imports and global price fluctuations, further exacerbate food insecurity in Bangladesh.

## **THE DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis explored food and national security dynamics in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka through quantitative and qualitative findings that aided in the answer to main research questions. The analysis compared farming practices, economic stability, social relations, and political reality to uncover weaknesses in the two nations. Furthermore, the analysis analyzed the implications of the Sri Lankan ban on fertilizer and mapped ways for enhancing food and national security.

## **SRI LANKAN CONTEXT**

Sri Lanka's ban on chemical fertilizers had a significant impact on food security, resulting in rising prices and lower availability of the products. Even though measuring the impact was rendered challenging by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, statistics showed significant impacts. For instance, 77% of shoppers reported that they had noticed higher prices and lower availability, while primary producers reported little change. This decline in paddy production necessitated increased rice imports, further increasing inflation and reducing food availability. Despite all these, the majority of households demonstrated resilience through a broad array of adaptation strategies to mitigate the impacts of the crisis. A consumer survey of the impact of the fertilizer ban revealed that 79% of consumers indicated increased food prices, reflecting the strain on costs of basic commodities and consumers' purchasing power.

Additionally, 77% reported increased prices and reduced food availability, which were attributed to declining paddy production, increased rice imports, inflation, and a declining food supply. Despite these issues, households showed resilience through adaptive mechanisms. When queried regarding social unrest and food security, 62% (14% strongly, 48% somewhat) agreed that the ban led to social unrest, yet 30% disagreed and 6% did not know, indicating there was a complex relationship between food security and societal stability that was well worth investigating further. Mr. Shantha Hewage, who works as a Research Officer in HARTI Colombo, noted the acute impact of the fertilizer import prohibition on the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka, where drastic decreases occurred in the output of crops.

Yield in paddy production declined on average by 53%, as 62% of the producers suffered more than a 50% loss due to the absence of timely and sufficient chemical

fertilizers. Other Field Crops (OFC) and potatoes were also impacted, with maize experiencing a 68% decline and chili the lowest at 43%. Vegetable production in up-country and low-country areas suffered yield losses of more than 57% per acre during the 2021/22 Maha season. The rise in food prices due to the ban also affected household affordability, though it was hard to measure the impact due to post-COVID factors. Encouragement by the government to switch to organic alternatives was affected by issues of supply and quality. Organic use by farmers grew enormously despite that. Phased switching to organic agriculture, using regional soil testing, low-priced fertilizers, technical guidance, policy stability, and gradual subsidy reduction on chemicals, was proposed by Mr. Hewage as a way of closing yield gaps sustainably. Document analysis of Sri Lanka’s Central Bank, Department of Agriculture, and other primary sources’ reports revealed a steep decline in agricultural output after the fertilizer ban. The Volume Index of Agricultural Production (VIAP) declined by 19.4% in 2022, compared to a 2.1% increase in 2021. FGDs and interviews with farmers like Mr. Shantha Hewage of HARTI confirmed the severe yield declines, particularly in paddy and vegetable farming.

**Table 4:** *Volume of Agricultural Production Index*

Item	2021	2022 (b)	Growth Rate (%)	
			2020/21	2021/22 (b)
<b>Overall Index</b>	<b>199.1</b>	<b>160.4</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>-19.4</b>
Tea	96.6	81.1	7.5	-16.0
Rubber	84.9	78.3	-1.7	-7.8
Coconut	126.9	137.9	1.1	8.7
Paddy	180.1	118.6	0.6	-34.1
Coarse Grain	1,473.9	838.1	50.1	-43.1
Other Food Crops	179.7	162.1	17.2	-9.8
Vegetables	200.4	185.5	-7.2	-7.4
Fruits	180.0	322.4	-15.5	79.1
Livestock & Livestock Products	180.1	175.2	3.5	-2.7
Minor Export Crops	193.0	188.5	4.7	-2.3

*Source: Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) Sri Lanka (<https://www.statistics.gov.lk/>)*

Paddy production fell by 34.1% to a record low since 2017, primarily as a result of fertilizer shortages and the inconsistency of organic fertilizers. The decline resulted in lower supplies of rice, which were only sufficient to cover household demand for 11 months in 2022. To mitigate shortages, the government imported 783,420 metric tons of rice, well above 147,091 metric tons in the prior year.

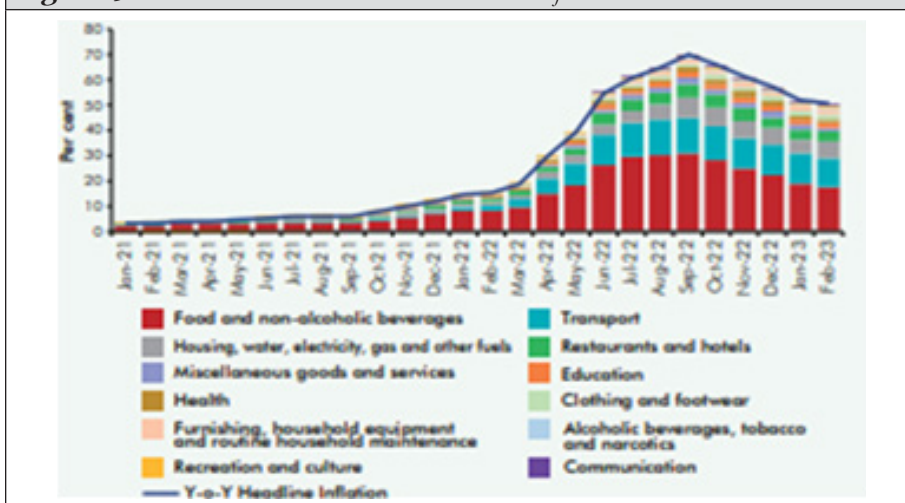
**Table: 5: Paddy Sector Statistics**

Item	Unit	2021 (a)			2022 (b)		
		Maha	Yala	Total	Maha	Yala	Total
Gross Extent Sown	hectares '000	770	501	1,272	776	482	1,258
Gross Extent Harvested	hectares '000	762	497	1,259	766	480	1,246
Net Extent Harvested	hectares '000	682	445	1,127	685	429	1,114
Production	mt '000	3,061	2,088	5,150	1,931	1,462	3,393
	bushels '000	146,720	100,079	246,799	92,555	70,050	162,605
Yield per Hectare (c)	kg/ hectare	4,492	4,692	4,571	2,819	3,407	3,045
Credit Granted by the Banking Sector (d)	Rs. mn	8,603	4,449	13,052	-	-	12,454
Rice Imports (e)	mt '000	-	-	147	-	-	783
Paddy Equivalent of Imported Rice (e)	mt '000	-	-	216	-	-	1,152

Source: DCS Sri Lanka (<https://www.statistics.gov.lk/>)

Inflation quickened due to rising food prices and supply chain losses. The highest Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) reading was in September 2022 at 69.8%, food inflation at 94.9%, and transport price up by 150.4%. Consumer surveys indicated that 77% of consumers found foods to be higher in price and lower in quantity, and therefore, the ban significantly affected the food affordability and availability.

**Figure 5: Contribution to CCPI Based Headline Inflation**



Source: DCS Sri Lanka (<https://www.statistics.gov.lk/>)

Nonetheless, a study of 254 top military officers in Sri Lanka reported that food insecurity exerted a significant impact on national security, with 86.17% linking it to increased social unrest and 68.38% citing political instability.

Lower rates cited potential mass migration (22.53%) and reduced military readiness (17.79%). Majority (78.60%) emphasized the core relevance of food security to the guarantee of social stability, cohesion, and reduction of exposure to disturbances, while 37.21% saw it as crucial to guaranteeing resilience to threats on national sovereignty. As far as the “Aragalaya” disturbances are concerned, 59.69% saw a moderate nexus between food insecurity and the disturbances, while only 2.09% saw it as a primary driver. Dr. Rohan Gunaratne emphasized the abrupt prohibition of fertilizer as a catalyst of social unrest, pointing out the strategic importance of food security in maintaining social harmony and political stability.

Dr. Rohan Gunaratne warned that economic vulnerabilities can be exploited by competitors to destabilize countries and called for pre-emptive steps in guaranteeing food security. Gunaratne’s suggestions were strong inter-ministerial coordination, strategic reserves, and fortification of the National Security Council (NSC) with specialized staff, analysts, and scenario planning capabilities to underpin well-informed decision-making. He emphasized ongoing risk analysis and multilateral coordination, especially through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The importance of the NSC was reinforced by the 2019 Easter bombings, and its constitutional establishment was endorsed by a bill in January 2024. The SSI survey and the survey of senior military officers with Dr. Gunaratne reaffirmed a firm consensus regarding the negative impact of Sri Lanka’s abrupt fertilizer ban on national security and social stability. Both stressed food security as a fundamental pillar for national stability, and this eradicated vulnerabilities and prevented social instability.

They advocated an overall security policy which had food security in mind and requested pro-active leadership and collaborative, inter-ministerial initiative to maintain national stability. They both identified a connection between food insecurity and “Aragalaya” protest but with contrasting assessments of impact degree. In sum, the findings emphasized prudent agriculture policy to advance social peace, maintain military morale, and safeguard overall national security in Sri Lanka.

## **BANGLADESH CONTEXT**

A survey conducted among 53 senior Bangladesh military officers examined vulnerabilities in the country's food security and their implications for national security, drawing comparisons with Sri Lanka's experience. The findings revealed that climate change (85%), soil erosion, and inadequate infrastructure (58%) were among the most pressing concerns.

Other significant threats included lack of transparency in agricultural activities, frequent flooding, limited cultivable land, and water scarcity (50%). Additionally, reliance on food imports (45%) and socio-economic factors such as malnutrition and poverty (28%) were identified as contributors to food insecurity. Respondents emphasized the need for agricultural modernization, infrastructure development, and improved resource management to address these challenges.

Regarding military readiness, 90% of the officers believed that food insecurity negatively affected soldiers' health and morale, underscoring the critical importance of integrating food security into military logistics planning. While 4% reported no impact and 6% were uncertain, these areas suggest the need for further investigation. On a broader scale, 92% warned that ongoing food insecurity could trigger social unrest and violence, reinforcing its significance as a national security concern.

Furthermore, 72% of respondents anticipated a decline in public trust in institutions, while 68% warned of potential political instability or insurgency. Over half (52%) feared mass migration driven by hunger and food scarcity, and 44% linked food insecurity to reduced military readiness and effectiveness. These findings reflect strong concern among respondents about the nexus between food security and national stability-particularly its impact on social cohesion, military morale, and broader security dynamics.

Drawing lessons from Sri Lanka's experience, the study recommends that Bangladesh prioritize investment in drought-resistant crops, diversify agricultural practices, improve irrigation systems, strengthen regional partnerships, expand food stockpiling, and promote sustainable agriculture. The irregular functioning of the NCSA, the country's top policy-making body, has created strategic gaps in national security coordination, highlighting the urgent need for institutional reform and more consistent interagency collaboration.

KIIs and SSIs also emphasized the necessity of effective government policies, subsidies, and improved infrastructure to address food security challenges. Mr. Mostafa Khan Raihan, Deputy Director, Department of Agriculture Extension, referred to the widespread use of fertilizers such as urea, Triple Superphosphate (TSP), Muriate of Potash (MoP) and Diammonium Phosphate (DAP), and growing interest in organic substitutes such as compost and manure. Government programs to promote a balanced fertilizer mix through subsidies, soil testing, and technology like the KHAMARI app. However, overuse of urea had led to soil degradation, nutrient imbalance, and soil erosion.

Agricultural productivity in Bangladesh is hindered by water management issues such as waterlogging, salinity, and erratic weather patterns. Additional challenges include poor farmer education, financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to modern technologies. Repeated inundations have led to crop destruction, soil degradation, and pest proliferation, complicating post-flood recovery and impacting food availability and economic stability. Former Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr. Atiur Rahman warned that while production appears stable, weak policy implementation, inflation, and rural-to-urban migration may trigger social unrest unless food storage systems are strengthened.

Although subsidies have historically supported agriculture, recent dollar shortages and financial crises have cut fertilizer subsidies, raising input costs and lowering yields. Insufficient storage infrastructure has also led to crop losses and depressed prices, calling for urgent investment in storage and local fertilizer production to boost farmer independence. The National Adaptation Plan (2023–2050) outlines progress in water and soil conservation and salinity, flood, and drought mitigation. However, the conversion of 1.47 million acres of agricultural land for non-agricultural use since 1973 (GOB, 2022; Bangladesh National Conservation Strategy, 2011) has exacerbated food system pressures. Rising living costs and inflation continue to threaten food security, with significant national security implications, including potential social unrest, erosion of public trust, and reduced military readiness.

The focus of the military on morale also emphasized the need for a coordinated strategy integrating agricultural, economic, and military policy to enhance food security and national stability.

The 2021 Sri Lankan fertilizer ban was a lesson about the unforeseen impact of policy decision on national stability and food security. This example pointed

to the extreme impact of agricultural policies on food security and production as well as the need for evidence-based decisions in order to avoid adverse consequences. The Sri Lankan experience served as evidence that the fertilizer ban increased food insecurity and caused national instability, hence establishing an irrefutable linkage between national and food security.

Lessons may be taken from Sri Lanka's 2022 food insecurity crisis to offer practical recommendations for Bangladesh and similar contexts. Mainstreaming food security in national security policies is essential to respond to vulnerabilities holistically. The recommendations highlight the necessity of inclusive planning, multi-stakeholder efforts, and learning from successful farming practices elsewhere to mitigate food security threats and enhance national stability.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SRI LANKA**

To enhance national security and resilience, Sri Lanka should establish an NSC Secretariat focused on food security, agriculture, climate change, and economic stability. This body should coordinate with a dedicated Food Security Task Force under the NSC to ensure strategic, inter-ministerial collaboration. Regular institutionalized NSC meetings are essential for timely reviews and interventions on critical issues. Strengthening civil–military coordination is also vital to managing strategic food reserves and humanitarian relief during crises. Scenario planning should guide the military's role in procurement and distribution of essential supplies in emergencies.

Regionally, Sri Lanka should step up cooperation with the neighboring countries and international organizations such as SAARC and BRRI and forge alliances and exchange technological solutions and best practices in reacting to food security and climate dangers. It is crucial that Sri Lanka's alliances be strengthened through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) for promoting such cooperative efforts.

Sri Lanka needs to provide top priority for the adoption of climate-resilient crop systems, such as high-yielding, climate-tolerant rice, in coordination with institutions like BRRI. Investment in improved agriculture infrastructure, such as cold storage and transportation networks, will reduce post-harvest losses and enhance food distribution efficiency. Specific R&D efforts need to be directed towards the cultivation of flood, drought, and salt-resistant crops and imparting climate-smart training to farmers to enhance adaptation to different climatic conditions.

To enhance disaster resilience, Sri Lanka must invest in the development of disaster preparedness systems, including early warning systems and flood protection, by learning from the model successes of Bangladesh. Mainstreaming food security into broader national climate adaptation strategies is required, learning from the success of initiatives like the ‘Nobojatra’ project in Bangladesh to strengthen local resilience and food systems.

Phased conversion to sustainable agriculture must be accorded top priority through phasing out the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This may be facilitated through intensive farmer training, the supply of organic fertilizers, and economic incentives to offset losses in productivity. This will facilitate long-term agriculture sustainability and enhance the food systems’ resilience in Sri Lanka, which will enhance national security and conservation of the environment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BANGLADESH**

To strengthen national security and food security, Bangladesh must institutionalize and strengthen the NCSA through regular meetings with set agendas and periodic review. Reorganization of the NCSA as a NSC model will improve the strategic coordination and management of security matters, including food security issues.

Establishing formal communication lines between the NCSA and other national security organizations is necessary to support coordinated responses. The integration of performance standards and routine audits will ensure operational effectiveness, connecting strategic recommendations to broader government policy.

Food security should be a core element of the national security strategy, addressing its importance for social stability, military readiness, and overall national resilience. The establishment of a dedicated task force which is responsible for food security, disaster response, and military coordination will make military supply chains and logistic systems more robust in the event of crises.

To ensure food security, Bangladesh must promote domestic farm production by increasing state support for research and development (R&D) and building robust food stocks that will protect against supply chain disruption. These stocks will stabilize markets and insulate against the impact of climate shocks and economic volatility on food supplies.

In terms of agricultural policy, Bangladesh must enact changes to optimize utilization of fertilizers, promote organic alternatives, and control land use prioritizing agricultural conservation and food security. Targeted social protection programs have to be introduced in order to reduce poverty, improve nutrition, and ensure health and safety for farmers, particularly those in disaster-affected regions.

Bangladesh should actively foster regional collaboration by learning from the experiences of neighboring countries, including Sri Lanka's agricultural policy challenges, and working towards joint strategies that build food security resilience. Sharing knowledge and combining efforts with regional partners will help Bangladesh address climate-related risks and economic challenges more effectively, ensuring a collective response to food security threats.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research highlights the long-term consequences of Sri Lanka's chemical fertilizer ban on agricultural activities, food production, and national security—demonstrating how reduced productivity, food shortages, and inflation triggered public dissatisfaction and political unrest. The study critically examines the ban's severe impact on food systems and socio-economic stability, ultimately contributing to regime change and underscoring food insecurity as a national security threat. By extending the analysis to Bangladesh, the research identifies parallel vulnerabilities—such as climate change, land pressure, and rising living costs—and recommends proactive measures, including reactivating the NCSA for enhanced inter-agency coordination. Integrating food security into Bangladesh's national security strategy is essential to strengthen agricultural resilience and ensure long-term national stability.

## **REFERENCES**

- ADB (2023). Structural changes in Bangladesh's economy and food security. Available at: <https://www.adb.org> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2024].
- Azad, L.C. Md A.K. (2014). 'Effects of unplanned rapid urbanization on food security in Bangladesh and ways ahead'. NDC E-Journal, 13(1), pp. 135-156. Available at: <https://ndcjournal.ndc.gov.bd/ndcj/index.php/ndcj/article/view/116> [Accessed 12 August 2024].

Azad, M.A.K. (2018). The effect of decreasing trend of arable land on food security in Bangladesh. Individual Research Paper, National Defence College, Bangladesh, October 2018.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2011). Population & Housing Census 2011. Available at: <https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/PreliminaryReport.pdf> [Accessed 25 June 2024].

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2021). Agricultural production data. Available at: <http://www.bbs.gov.bd> [Accessed 22 September 2024].

Barrett, C.B. (2010). 'Food security and food insecurity'. *Food Security*, 2(1), pp. 1-20. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41424901\\_Measuring\\_Food\\_Security](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41424901_Measuring_Food_Security) [Accessed 10 August 2024].

Bokhtiar, S.M. and Samsuzzaman, S. (2023). A Development Trajectory of Bangladesh Agriculture: From Food Deficit to Surplus. Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Bangladesh. <https://www.barc.portal.gov.bd>

CBSL (2020). Annual report 2020. Available at: <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/publications/economic-and-financial-reports/annual-reports/annual-report-2020> [Accessed 09 August 2024].

CBSL (2022). Annual report 2022. Available at: <https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/publications/economic-and-financial-reports/annual-reports/annual-report-2022> [Accessed 12 August 2024].

Chowdhury, A.A.M. (2016). Need for national security strategy: relevant concept and paradigm in the context of Bangladesh. National Defence Course - 2016 Individual Research Paper.

Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, n.d. Homepage. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/#gsc.tab> [Accessed 21 June 2024].

Dev, D.S. and Kabir, K.H. (2020). COVID-19 and Food Security in Bangladesh: A Chance to Look Back at What Is Done and What Can Be Done. *Journal of Agriculture Food Systems and Community Development*. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342572397> [Accessed 28 May 2024].

Economist Intelligence Unit (2023). Global Food Security Index 2023. Available at: <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/explore-countries> [Accessed 14 May 2024].

FAO (2018). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f5019ab4-0f6a-47e8-85b9-15473c012d6a/content> [Accessed 23 May 2024].

FAO (2023). Urbanization and Food Security in Bangladesh. Available at: <https://www.fao.org> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2024].

Fertilizer Import Bans, Agricultural Exports, and Welfare: Evidence from Sri Lanka (2023). Devaki Ghose, Eduardo Fraga, Ana Fernandes. Policy Research Working Paper.

HARTI (2022). Import ban on chemical fertilizers and other agrochemicals: Short-term impacts on selected PFCS and potato crop. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/sri-lanka/import-ban-chemical-fertilizers-and-other-agrochemicals-short-term-impacts-selected-pfcs-and-potato-crop-december-2022> [Accessed 12 April 2024].

Haque, M.A., Choudhury, N., Ahmed, S.M.T., Farzana, F.D., Ali, M., Naz, F., Khan, A., Wahid, B.Z., Siddiqua, T.J., Akter, R., Rahman, S.S., Faruque, A.S.G. and Ahmed, T. (2022). Food security status of Suchana-participating households in north-eastern rural Bangladesh. National Center for Biotechnology Information. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/> [Accessed 22 August 2024].

Hassan, K.K. (2008). 'National security council for Bangladesh: Debates and issues', National Defence College, Bangladesh. Available at: <https://ndcjournal.ndc.gov.bd/article/download> [Accessed 18 August 2024].

IPC (2024). Bangladesh: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for February - March 2024 and Projection for April - October 2024. Available at: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156935/> [Accessed 24 March 2024].

Jayasinghe, D. (2023). Weaknesses, gaps & loopholes in Sri Lankan national security. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370636263> [Accessed 14 March 2024].

Kumari, P.H.N. and Malkanthi, S.H.P. n.d. Impact of the sudden ban on chemical fertilizers and other agrochemicals on smallholder tea production in the Ratnapura District, Sri Lanka. Contagri. Available at: <https://www.contagri.info> [Accessed 29 July 2024].

Manullang, A. J. (2022). Food Security in Shambles: An Impact from Sri Lanka National Economic Crisis. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, 3(1), pp. 89–94. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.30993>

Murshed, R. and Uddin, M.R. (2020). ‘Organic farming in Bangladesh: To pursue or not to pursue? An exploratory study based on consumer perception’. *Organic Farming*, 6(1), pp. 1-15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13363-020-00202-y> [Published: 28 April].

Niwarthana, S., Dissanayake, N., Thibbotuwawa, M. and Rosairo, H.S.R. (2023). The impact of chemical fertilizer ban on the paddy sector: Propensity score matching and value chain analysis. Available at: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/prci/publications/SJAE\\_Sachini\\_2023\\_final\\_sept\\_20%20edited%202.pdf](https://www.canr.msu.edu/prci/publications/SJAE_Sachini_2023_final_sept_20%20edited%202.pdf) [Accessed 20 July 2024].

Niwarthana, S., Thibbotuwawa, M. and Rosairo, H.S.R. (2022). Impacts of Chemical Fertilizer Ban and Adoption of Organic Fertilizer for Paddy Farming: Propensity Score Matching and Value Chain Analysis. *Sri Lankan Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 22(2), pp. 13-37. [Accessed 09 July 2024].

Paranamana, G.P. and Sarath, H.K. (2024). ‘Promoting organic farming in Sri Lanka: relevance, benefits, and challenges’. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384143017> [Accessed 18 April 2024].

Rabbi, F. (2021). ‘Role of organic fertilizers in achieving food security: A study of Bangladesh’. *International Journal of Environment and Sustainability*, 10(1), pp. 1-10. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349203452> [Accessed 12 January 2024].

Rahman, S. (2023). Bangladesh National Food Security Policy Review: Are We There Yet? Available at: <https://www.fao.org> [Accessed 22 September 2024].

Rathnayake, K.M.M. (2024). ‘Chemical fertilizer ban and its impact on Sri Lankan agriculture’. *Sri Lanka Journal of Food Science and Agriculture*, 6(2), pp. 23-30. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372488656> [Accessed 14 March 2024].

Saha, M.B. (2022). Food Security and its Effect on Health in Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward. Unpublished dissertation, University of Dhaka. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357485093> [Accessed 09 June 2024].

Siddique, M.A. (2023). 'Food Security in Bangladesh: Overview and future challenges'. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development*, 10(1), pp. 24-35. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367458020> [Accessed 12 July 2024].

UN (2023). *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*. Available at: <https://www.un.org> [Accessed 24 July 2024].

WFP (2022). 'Bangladesh Food Security Analysis'. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org> [Accessed 29 August 2024].

World Bank (2023). *World Development Indicators*. Available at: <https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext> [Accessed 22 September 2024].

Zaman, S.A. (2019). 'Impact of climate change on food security in Bangladesh: A case study of climate vulnerable districts'. *Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council*. Available at: <https://www.barc.gov.bd> [Accessed 15 July 2024].

## AUTHOR

**Air Commodore SPVK Senadheera, RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc** born in 1973, joined the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) through Intake XI of the Kotelawala Defence University in 1993 and was commissioned in 1995, earning a Bachelor of Arts (Defence) Degree. Throughout his distinguished career, he has held key positions, including command roles at various SLAF field squadrons, bases, and stations, as well as serving as an officer instructor. He led the SLAF contingent deployed in Haiti for UN peacekeeping operations, demonstrating leadership and international service. A scholar and accomplished officer, Air Commodore Senadheera earned three Masters degrees in Defence Studies, Human Resource Management, and Conflict & Peace Studies. He was awarded the "Golden Pen" and "Golden Owl" awards in 2011 at the Defence Services Command and Staff College for his exceptional academic contributions. Additionally, he has authored two journal articles for the *Defence & Security Journal* of the Defence Services Command and Staff College in 2016 and 2021. Promoted to Air Commodore in 2022, his career is marked by a strong commitment to leadership, education, and strategic development. He exemplifies a dedication to professional excellence within the SLAF, reflecting both operational proficiency and a focus on educational advancement.

*Email: vajira.slaf@gmail.com*



---

## ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY FOR TRADE AND ECONOMY: POLICY MEASURES FOR EFFECTIVE MARITIME SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

**Commodore Ziaur Rahman, (TAS), NGP, ndc, afwc, psc, BN**

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*(Received: 30th March 2025; Accepted: 02nd June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)*

---

**Abstract:** Security assures prosperity. This is equally applicable in securing maritime environment in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) in deriving much desired benefits from maritime trade and economy. However, Non-Traditional Maritime Security (NTMS) threats e.g. smuggling, piracy and armed robbery/ petty thefts, human trafficking etc. and maritime safety issue e.g. maritime accidents etc. remain as impediment in ensuring secured environment in the BoB. Although 28 or more number of ministries, government/ non-government organisations, private stakeholders are involved in management of these threats/ issues, lack of maritime security governance is hindering optimum outcome. In this backdrop, the research has focused on devising policy measures to address the NTMS threats and safety issue taking the maritime community of Bangladesh in cognisance. Due to pattern of subject, cross-sectional descriptive research has been conducted under non-experimental research. Primarily qualitative analysis based upon content analysis, Key Informant Interview (KII), field survey, Focused Group Discussion (FGD), case study has been conducted. Research derivative outlines that policy of designating lead ministry and lead stakeholder for each of the NTMS threats/ safety issues are expected to enhance maritime security in harnessing better output for maritime trade and economy.

**Keywords:** *Maritime Security, Non-Traditional Maritime Security (NTMS) Threats, Maritime Trade and Economy, Lead Stakeholder.*

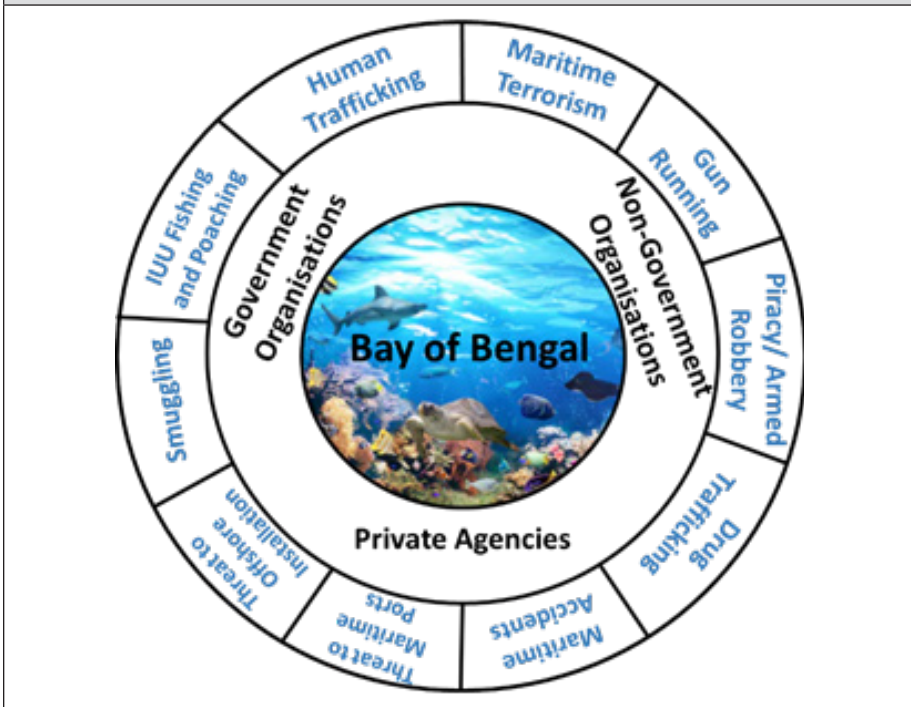
---

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

Security assures prosperity. This is also true in maritime arena. With glorious maritime history of Bangladesh, the maritime sector offers glaring hopes of opportunities to this population burdened country with limited land resources. Establishment of jurisdiction over a sea area of 1,18,813 sq km with extended Continental Shelf in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) have raised the aspirations of the people which is also echoed in adaptation of the 'Blue Economy' by the Government of Bangladesh (Iqbal, 2019). Maritime resources are an important source of nutrition for population of Bangladesh. The BoB is considered to be rich in deposits of hydro-carbon energy. Maritime flows, representing 90% of the external trade, are the lifeblood of Bangladesh's trade and is crucial for future economic well-being (Alam, 2019). The magnitude of maritime economic activities has increased in manifold and is expected to rise exponentially with economic development of the country.

**Figure 1:** NTMS Threats/Safety Issues Involving Various Maritime Stakeholders in the BoB



Source: Author Generated

There are number of Non-Traditional Maritime Threats (NTMS) threats like maritime terrorism and robbery/ petty thefts, smuggling etc. which may destabilize the maritime security in the BoB. Besides, maritime safety issue e.g. maritime accident also needs to be addressed effectively. The NTMS threats and safety issues are outcome of non-state actors primarily. There are different ministries, government departments, organization e.g. Ministry of Defence (MOD), Ministry of Shipping (MoS), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJ&PA), Bangladesh Navy (BN), Bangladesh Coastguard (BCG), Department of Shipping (DoS), Customs, maritime ports, etc. who deal above NTMS threats and safety issues. However, overlapping responsibility of stakeholders are found while vacuum of responsible agency are prevalent in case of other threats/ safety issues. These affects the good order at sea which, in turn, will remain as an obstacle in attaining much desired maritime trade and economic development.

The GoB has adopted Blue Economy to exploit the maritime resources in the BoB focusing on 26 thrust sectors in maritime trade, maritime ports, exploration of living and non-living resources, maritime tourism etc. (MOFA, 2018). It is needless to say that the sustainable economic activities in attaining vision of the 'Blue Economy' can only take place sustainably in a secured maritime environment. The much desired opening of coastal shipping routes, increase in volume of maritime trade, planned exploitation of seabed resources amidst growing dominance of NTMS threats demands proactive and coordinated approach. Maritime protection mechanism for marine fisheries, offshore installations, smuggling and maritime safety, maritime accidents needs coordinated management by the concerned stakeholders.

Since the maritime security threats and safety issues take place at sea, away from the eyes of general mass, adequate attention is yet to be paid at national level. In order to ensure unhindered economic development, the security and safety at the BoB needs to be ensured as sea is gateway of economy of Bangladesh. An effective maritime governance structure is yet to be made functional in Bangladesh to deal with the non-traditional maritime security threats and safety issues in the BoB. In this backdrop, a research has been carried out with primary objective on working out suitable maritime governance in Bangladesh perspective. The outcome of the research is expected to enhance non-traditional maritime security in the BoB which will facilitate maritime trade and economy for Bangladesh.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The nature, extent and effects of NTMS threats and safety issues of Bangladesh Maritime area as element of maritime security<sup>1</sup> have been analysed in various researches (Beuger, 2015). While trans-border connections are evident in few of the NTMS threats, most of other NTMS threats and safety issues which affect the good order at sea<sup>2</sup> have domestic origin and links. For transnational linked NTMS threats, cooperative engagements have been recommended. Designation of Lead agency and organisational structures have been envisaged for few of the NTMS threats on piecemeal basis while number of NTMS threats and safety issues were not discussed. In addition, creation of an apex body to coordinate the maritime threats e.g. National Maritime Division (NMD) and formulation of Maritime Policy have been discussed as part of development of better maritime security governance<sup>3</sup> in Bangladesh. However, the NMD or the Policy has not seen light of publication in history of Bangladesh in last five decades. Regional cooperative forums e.g. the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) have developed framework to address the non-traditional maritime security threats like piracy, maritime terrorism, smuggling, and human trafficking in respective area. For example, BIMSTEC has established initiatives like the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Human Trafficking (BIMSTEC, 2023). IORA also focus on NTMS threats like piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing. However, not much effects of these regional initiatives can be felt in Bangladeshi maritime domain. Thus, the challenges posed by NTMS security threats and safety issues may undermine the good order at sea. Same will increase as maritime activities is expected to have exponential growth in future.

**Research Gap.** Effective maritime governance for Bangladesh to enhance maritime security in the BoB in mitigating the NTMS threats and safety issues to facilitate maritime trade and economy is yet to be worked out.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh faces many maritime security challenges that have both traditional and non-traditional characteristics such as great power rivalry; piracy and armed robbery/petty theft; trafficking of arms, drugs and people; illegal fishing and poaching; marine accidents; and finally, resource management (Islam, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Good order at sea ensures safety and security of shipping and permits countries pursue their maritime interests and develop their maritime resources. Threats to good order at sea includes piracy and armed robbery, maritime terrorism, illicit trafficking in arms and drugs, people smuggling, illegal fishing, natural hazards, pollution etc. (Bateman, Ho & Chan, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Maritime security governance refers to the management and administration of relevant stakeholders of maritime security, including the development of policies and procedures, allocation of resources, and oversight of operations. The goal of maritime security governance is to ensure that the stakeholders operate in a safe, secure, efficient, and sustainable manner, while also contributing to the economic development of the region.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

**Broad Objective.** The broad objective of the research is to identify effective maritime governance for Bangladesh to enhance maritime security in the BoB in mitigating the NTMS threats and safety issues for maritime trade and economy.

**Specific Objectives.** The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- To study the nature and extent of NTMS threats and safety issues in the BoB.
- To analyse the existing maritime security governance structure in dealing the NTMS threats and safety issues.
- To ascertain the policy measures to develop effective maritime governance in enhancing secure maritime environment in the BoB in mitigating NTMS threats and safety issues.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Primary Question.** What are the policy measures to develop effective maritime governance in Bangladesh to enhance maritime security in the BoB in mitigating the NTMS threats and safety issues for maritime trade and economy?

**Secondary Questions.** The Secondary Questions of the research are as follows:

- What is the nature and extent of NTMS threats and safety issues in the BoB?
- How is existing maritime security governance structure dealing the NTMS threats and safety issues?
- What are the policy measures to develop effective maritime governance in enhancing secure maritime environment in the BoB in mitigating NTMS threats and safety issues?

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Designation of lead agencies for each NTMS threats and safety issues will improve effectiveness of maritime governance in Bangladesh to enhance maritime security in the BoB.

## METHODOLOGY

Due to pattern of subject, cross-sectional descriptive research has been conducted under non-experimental research. Both primary and secondary source materials are used. Case study on the NTMS threat has also been carried out. Statistical data on the NTMS threats and safety issues has been collected from various government organizations, websites to analyse current trends and effects on maritime environment.

**Content Analysis.** Available books, journals, periodicals, research papers on related subjects from various sources has been extensively analysed. Relevant Government and Non-governmental documents have been consulted.

**Interviews and Lectures.** Ten relevant government officials, organisational heads/ officials who were working at maritime security policy making and execution level had been consulted/ interviewed as Key Informant Interview (KII). Information from various lectures, seminar, and symposiums on subject has been used as sources.

**Field Survey.** Opinion of 79 maritime professionals and security practitioners who were working on ground in BN, BCG, marine fisheries and had been studying maritime security issues at mid-level e.g. Armed Forces War Course (AFWC), Staff course has been taken following Stratified Sampling under Probability Sampling Method. The sample size has been calculated following formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{\epsilon^2} \times d.e$$

Where, n = Sample size

z = z score at 95% is the confidence level = 1.96

p = Proportion of respondents who have adequate knowledge of port operations and have the urge to respond to the survey = 0.5 (Since this information is not available, the study considers the proportion to be 0.5 which will give the maximum sample size requirement)

q = 1 – p = 0.5

€ = Maximum error consideration = 10% = 0.1

d.e = Design Effect = 0.82 (Since the interclass correlation coefficient value is not available; the study considers a moderate effect 1.71)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.1^2} \times 0.82 = 78.7528 \approx 79$$

n = 79 (Sample size for this research)

**Focused Group Discussion (FGD).** FGD has been conducted through semi-structured questionnaire. The sample group was nominated from security experts/ enforcement practitioners/ planners, BN/BCG staff officers and member of the Armed forces who are studying NTMS threats. The BN survey group consisted of planners and senior staff at NHQ who participates in policy discussion, decision making process and planning. In addition, Commanding Officers (CO) of BN fleet and BCG has been included as they are the stakeholders on ground.

**Case Study.** Causal analysis of rise of piracy off the Horn of Africa is presented in short. Case study on 2008 Mumbai Attacks and subsequent measures taken by Indian authorities to develop maritime security mechanism has been carried out in this regard. Thus, development of maritime security governance structure in regional level has been studied to analyse what is being done in similar background of socio-politico-economic- security situation.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations e.g. voluntary participation, non-disclosure commitment, informed consent, privacy, objectivity and research integrity has been followed in conducting the research.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Reliable data on the NTMS threats and safety issues in the BoB perspective have conflicting interpretations as data and definitions accepted by few of the international organisation e.g. ReCAAP is not accepted in Bangladesh parlance. Besides, assessing the efficacy of recommended policy measures are also limitations of the research as the issues are related to security and not every aspect can be quantified by numerical figures.

## **NTMS THREATS AND SAFETY ISSUES IN THE BOB**

Non Traditional Security (NTS) threats are the challenges to existence and well-being of citizen and states that arise from non military sources e.g. Non-State Actors due ideological variations, limited enforcement, resource paucity, human rights violation, climate change, and transnational crime. These NTS issues on land frequently transgress into the maritime domain. Such transgressions have facilitated widespread proliferation of NTS threats across the BoB. These include maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery/ petty thefts, smuggling, gun running, drugs trafficking, illegal immigration/ human trafficking, poaching, threats to offshore installations, maritime assets and port security etc. (Yasmin, 2021). Besides, various maritime safety issues e.g. maritime accidental also challenges the survival and well-being of the population.

### **NATURE AND EXTENT OF NTMS THREATS AND SAFETY ISSUES IN THE BOB**

**Maritime Terrorism.** Although there is no record of incident related to maritime terrorism in Bangladesh waters, such incidents at global and regional sphere indicate that the merchant ships and offshore installations of the BoB may fall prey to maritime terrorism. An attack on such soft targets is likely to cause widespread casualties, undermine the national maritime security governance structure, and may increase the insurance of shipping. A case study on 2008 Mumbai Attacks demonstrates severe implications of maritime terrorism on security at land.

*Figure 2: Route of LeT Attackers from Pakistan to Mumbai*



*Source: Marinebuzz, 2018*

**Case Study on 2008 Mumbai Attacks.** According to the sole attacker captured alive after the Mumbai attacks 2008, Ajmal Kasab, the attackers started from Karachi onboard ship AL HUSSEINI, and then seized an Indian fishing trawler named KUBER in the Indian waters to take cover to reach Indian coast in Mumbai (D'Souza, 2018). The attacker informed that KUBER had been noticed by an Indian Navy or Coast Guard vessel, but was not stopped. The sighting of KUBER by law enforcing agencies prompted the attackers to leave the trawler and begin their final movement to land of approximately 6 km distance on small inflatable boat. Local police/ intelligence agencies did not notice the incursion.

They divided into small teams and moved for their own targets on reaching shore. At least 174 people died, including 20 security force personnel, 26 foreign nationals and 9 attackers, and more than 300 were injured in next 04 days mayhem caused by them (Britannica, 2025). This maritime terrorism incident exposed the lacuna in surveillance gaps in maritime security agencies, lack of intelligence coverage and coordination gaps in dealing the incident by the related stakeholders ashore.

**Gun Running.** Although there is no incident of gun running in recent days, there were reports of links between the traffickers and several crime quarters in the coastal areas for inland transportation of the illegally trafficked arms. These reports suggested that the port city of Chattogram and its adjoining areas, mainly the hill districts of Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Cox's Bazar are used by the underworld criminals as the major shipment point of illegal arms trade and smuggling (Independent, 2019).

**Piracy and Armed Robbery/Petty Thefts.** The Merchantmen and artisan Bangladeshi fishermen fall prey to occasional robbery and dacoity in Bangladesh water. There are debates whether this type of armed robbery or dacoity at sea are to be recorded as 'Piracy' as per definitions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and International Maritime Bureau (IMB) (Azad, 2009). Statistics on Piracy and Armed Robbery as per BN and BCG indicates declining trend. However, the artisan fishermen of Bangladesh are facing grave consequences off coastal area. A risk assessment by Enodoglobal.inc reported that over 2000 piracy incidents took place in Bangladeshi waters with pirates attacking over 1,000 fishing boats, kidnapping more than 3,000 fishermen, murdering over 45 of them and collecting more than \$1.28 million in ransoms between 2012-14 (Enodoglobal, 2019).

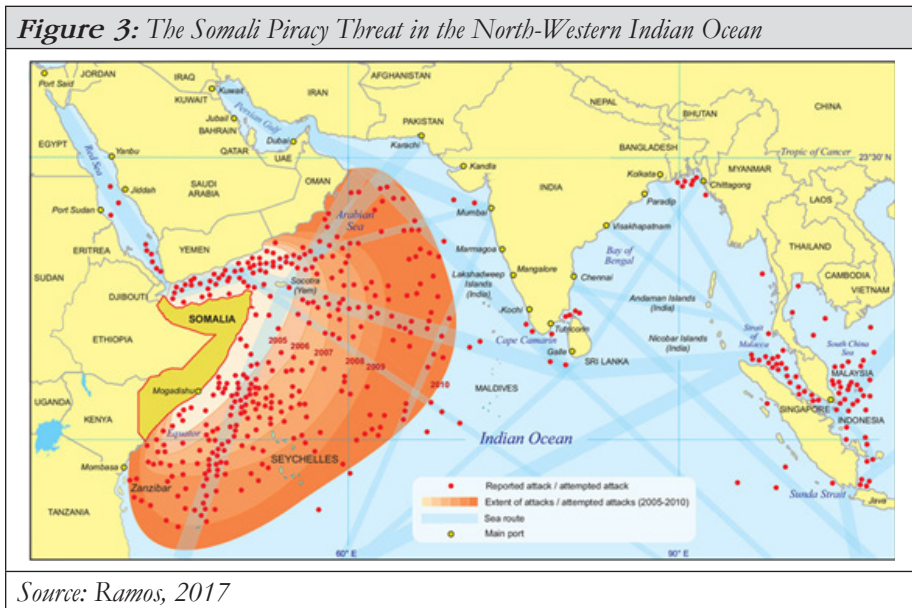
**Drug Trafficking.** Different literature indicates that proximity of Bangladesh to opiate producing centres like the 'Golden Triangle', 'Golden Crescent' makes the country a viable transit place. Besides, reports of drug addiction by the Bangladeshi youths indicate the ingress of Yaba, Phensedyl etc. from the neighbouring countries over the sea and the rivers in the confluence (Business Standard, 2024).

**Human Trafficking.** According to the office of the UNHCR, human trafficking business worth around Tk 800 crore is run through the BoB (Daily Star, 2015). In addition to poverty and unemployment, racial violence against the Rohingyas in Rakhine state in Myanmar are root causes of increased rate of human trafficking

in the BoB (Benson, 2020). Prevention of human trafficking has become a multi-sectoral, multi-national affairs as causes of trafficking lies in migration, social-economic-political structure in country of origin, law enforcement at land-sea and various issues.

**Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Poaching<sup>4</sup>.** Traditional artisan boats (non-mechanized and mechanized) as well as the trawlers affect marine eco-system as they illegally use bottom trawling extensively damaging the habitats of marine ecology in coastal and offshore waters in the BoB. Poaching activities also takes place in south-western, south and south-eastern boundaries of Bangladesh maritime area by fishermen from few of the neighbouring countries (banglanews24.com, 2014). IUU fishing and poaching cause irrevocable socio-economic damage to concerned coastal communities and their states.

**Figure 3: The Somali Piracy Threat in the North-Western Indian Ocean**



Source: Ramos, 2017

**Case Study on IUU Fishing and Impact on NTMS.** A case in point is the beginning of piracy in Somalian waters due to damage of local coastal subsistence economy based on traditional fishing practices by large scale unregulated commercial fishing in fish rich Somalian waters after the collapse of Somali central government in 1995 (Mahmood, 2024 and Business Standard, 2024). Thus, it

<sup>4</sup> Poaching has been defined as the illegal hunting or capturing of wild animals, usually associated with land use rights. However, poaching at sea means the illegal fishing by fishermen from other country.

demands that the fishing regulations on overfishing, marine activities affecting fish habitat and spawning grounds, poaching etc. need close cooperation between marine fisheries researchers, concerned ministries, fishing population and the Law Enforcing Agencies (LEAs).

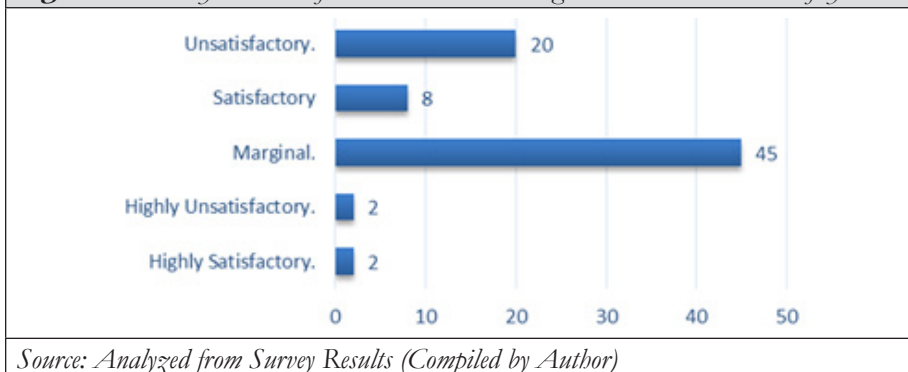
**Smuggling.** There is large scale confiscation of smuggled goods by the BN and BCG in the BoB (BN & BCG, 2025). It can be assumed that number of items also go unnoticed in the BoB considering limited resources and capacity of the LEAs at vast space of the sea. There are limitations in information gathering and sharing.

**Security of Offshore Installations and Maritime Ports.** Bangladesh has installed two Floating Storage and Re-gasification Unit (FSRU) at sea at about 7 km off Moheshkhali for supplying 1000 MMSCFD (Million Standard Cubic Feet Per Day) of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Three more FSRUs are expected to be installed at Kutubdia, Moheshkhali and Payra port in future depending upon requirement (Petrobangla, 2021). Once completed, these offshore installations will be vital to the energy security of nation and will require protection. These will necessitate new security mechanism demanding designation of competent Law Enforcing Agency and other necessary measures. Besides, security of existing 03 maritime ports has to be also planned within framework of National Maritime Security.

**Maritime Accidents.** IMO has allocated Search and Rescue Region (SRR) of Bangladesh in 1996, which include the whole of Bangladesh Land area, its EEZ and a portion of Myanmar waters. Since the unveiling of Global Maritime Distress Signaling System (GMDSS), establishment of a national SAR organization has become essential. In case of failure to attain adequate capacity to ensure maritime search and rescue, re-allocation of SRR to another state may take place. This will permit the warships of other states to enter Bangladesh waters without prior notice either on real or on synthetic calls for rescue, both, during war and peace. Such a situation will have serious implications on national security. Apart from this, the coastal and inland vessels fall victim to maritime accidents frequently due to various reasons. Thus, SAR issues needs to be coordinated at national level to address maritime accidents and SAR in Bangladesh waters.

**Result on Survey on State of Governance in Maritime Area.** A Survey had been carried out among the maritime professionals and security practitioners on their opinion on present state of maritime security governance in dealing the NTMS threats and safety issues in the BoB. It is evident that maximum is in opinion that the measures are inadequate and more needs to be done.

**Figure 4:** Survey on State of Governance in Dealing NTMS Threats and Safety Issues



## MARITIME SECURITY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH

Although the maritime area seems to be vast area of water body with no tangible appearance of anything to general mass, it is, indeed, workplace of many stakeholders who contribute to the maritime domain. Many of these stakeholders have specific responsibilities although they may not have sea going capacity to perform their responsibilities at sea. Responsibilities of different Government organisations are specified in “Rules of Business - 1996” of Government which has been updated in 2017. Moreover, the role and implied tasks have also been assigned to different stakeholders by the Government time to time.

**Maritime Security Governance Structure.** There are approximately 28 different ministries, department/organisations working in the maritime sector in Bangladesh. Ministry of Shipping (MoS), Armed Forces Division (AFD), Ministry of Defence (MoD), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources (MoPEMR), Ministry of Fisheries & Livestock (MoFL), Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) are operating at the ministerial level. While the Department of Shipping (DoS), Directorate of Fisheries (DoF), Mercantile Marine Department (MMD), Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC), Chattogram Port Authority (CPA), Mongla Port Authority (MPA), Payra Port Authority (PPA) etc. are the regulating departments at different sectors; BN, BCG, BGB, Nou Police, RAB, Department of Fire Service & Civil Defence (FS&CD), Ansar and VDP, Customs etc. are the Law Enforcing Agencies (LEAs) and working bodies on ground in the maritime arena.

**Analysis of Maritime Security Governance Structure.** Study of the Rules of Business and responsibilities of different Ministries and other stakeholders show that their focus remains primarily on administrative and economic issues. The security factors do not receive due level of attention and resource allocation by the concerned, primarily due to lack of security awareness at maritime sector. A few of the NTMS threats and safety issues are dealt by concerned ministry/ stakeholders, mostly, on individual basis. Thus, the NTMS threats and safety issues are not coordinated by any apex maritime regulatory body at higher level. However, the maritime issues, as the nature is different from land based issues and takes place beyond presence of the general mass, demands a different approach to deal them in coordinated manner. Overall, it is evident that vacuum in maritime security governance persists in the BoB.

**Maritime Security Policy Framework.** Sustainable Blue Economy and blue growth for sustainable development can not be ensured without ensuring maritime security, protection and preservation of marine environment, conservation of marine living resources and prevention of marine pollution. A national level policy framework on maritime issues encompassing maritime security; preservation and protection of marine environment etc. can provide necessary guideline to all concerned stakeholders. However, there is no such national maritime security policy in vogue in Bangladesh. Number of South-east Asian countries e.g. the Philippines, Indonesia are working to develop policies to improve upon the maritime security at national and regional level (Clerc & et al., 2023). These Maritime policies mostly focus on sustainable use of the resources of the sea and coastal areas with a holistic approach to involve and encourage the participation of relevant stakeholders through cooperation. Survey conducted among the maritime professionals indicate that requirement of National Maritime Policy for Bangladesh is also felt. Such Policy is required to be developed at national level which had been echoed by the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh during the workshop titled “Blue Economy National Coordination” held in June 2018 (Dhaka Tribune, 2018).

**Responsibilities of Concerned Stakeholders as per ‘Rules of Business’/ Functions/Role in dealing NTMS Threats and Safety Issues.** The Foregoing discussion has shown that vacuum of maritime security governance structure exists at present in maritime arena in Bangladesh. At this juncture, study is required on responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders to find out whether adequate responsibility is allotted to stakeholder to address the NTMS threat/maritime safety issues and whether any of the stakeholders are taking ‘lead’ to coordinate among themselves. In addition, it is important to identify whether duplication of

efforts or vacuum of responsibility persists in addressing any particular threat/safety issues. Reference for this Study are ‘Rules of Business’ of the Government of Bangladesh 2017, Charter of Duties of stakeholders as per websites/other authentic references etc. Outcome of the Study has been described in sequence of the NTMS threats and safety issues in subsequent paragraphs.

**Maritime Terrorism, Piracy and armed robbery/petty thefts and Gun Running.**

Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders in dealing these NTMS threats are:

***Table 1: Responsibilities in Curbing Maritime Terrorism, Piracy and Gun Running***

Serial	Departments	Responsibilities
1.	MOHA	Anti-smuggling and related matters.
2.	MoD	Nothing mentioned.
3.	MOFA	Piracies and crimes committed on the high seas.
4.	BCG	1. Piracy control. 2. Prevent trafficking of illegal arms. 3. Operation against armed robbery at sea. 4. Prevention and suppression of subversive and extremist activities. Support other concerned authorities in this regard.
5.	BGB	1. Piracy control. 2. Counter Terrorism operation.
6.	Police	Crisis management against terrorist attacks
7.	RAB	Conduct Counter-Terrorism Operation.
8.	BN	1. Conduct Anti-piracy operations. 2. Conduct counter gun running operations.
9.	Customs	Nothing mentioned.
10.	DoS	Focal point in Bangladesh for ReCCAP agreement (Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia).
10.	Sea Port Authorities e.g CPA, MPA, PPA	To protect the interest of maritime shipping and port facilities against security threat and incident in light of ISPS code.
11.	NSI, DGFI	Collect, collate, evaluate and disseminate intelligence to concerned stakeholders to counter terrorism.

*Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/ Websites*

**Analysis.** Number of stakeholders are given with function to act against maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery/ petty thefts and gun running. Some of these stakeholders have been assigned with responsibilities without possessing necessary resources and capabilities. On ground, high intensity anti-piracy drives are conducted by BN and BCG patrol teams. However, specific intelligence on maritime terrorism and gun running are required to conduct effective drive against these threats in vast sea area. More coordination amongst the stakeholders will enable enforcing the ‘zero tolerance policy’ of Government against terrorism.

**Drug Trafficking.** Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders in dealing drug trafficking are:

<i>Table 2: Responsibilities in Curbing Drug Trafficking</i>		
<b>Serial</b>	<b>Departments</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
1.	MOHA	Prevention of trafficking of Narcotics and Drugs.
2.	MoD	Nothing mentioned.
3.	AFD	Nothing mentioned.
4.	Department of Narcotics Control	1. Intelligence gathering, conducting raids and search, seizure, arrest. 2. Trial of drug offences.
5.	BCG	Operation against drug trafficking.
6.	BGB	Counter drug trafficking operation across International Boundary (IB).
7.	Police	Nothing mentioned. However, Police conducts Anti-drugs trafficking drive on regular basis.
8.	RAB	1. Intelligence collection on Drug trafficking. 2. Conducts Operations to counter drug trafficking.
9.	BN	Conducts Operations to counter drug trafficking.
<i>Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/Websites</i>		

**Analysis.** Good number of stakeholders are assigned with responsibility to conduct counter drug trafficking operations in land and in maritime area. However, the propensity of the problem of drug addiction at national level indicates that the drives cannot fulfill desired goal. Information gathering and coordinated operations by the stakeholders is expected to bring better output.

**Human Trafficking.** Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders in dealing Human Trafficking are:

<i>Table 3: Responsibilities in Curbing Human Trafficking</i>		
Serial	Departments	Responsibilities
1.	MOHA	1. Immigration, 2. Passports, visa, permits, etc.
2.	Ministry of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment	Welfare of Bangladeshi expatriates and protection of their rights.
3.	BCG	Prevention of illegal immigration through the sea and human trafficking.
4.	BGB	Check human trafficking including women and children and other cross border crimes.
5.	Police	Combating human trafficking, especially women and children.
6.	BN	Interception of illegal immigrants at sea.
7.	Ansar and VDP	Mass awareness to counter human trafficking.
8.	RAB	Counter human trafficking operations.
9.	NSI, DGFI	Nothing mentioned specifically. However, the agencies remain concerned with the issue.
<i>Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/ Websites</i>		

**Analysis.** Different LEAs work on respective domain e.g. Police/ RAB on land, BCG/ BN at sea, although the human traffickers traverse over each of the domain having strong network. Close coordination between the LEAs working at land and sea are required. Close monitoring of vicious circle of traffickers at land is missing at present as Human Trafficking originates at land. Besides, intelligence gathering and sharing of information on the traffickers with BCG/ BN are required to receive pinpoint information of location and time of human trafficking.

**Poaching and Fisheries Protection.** Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders are:

**Table 4: Responsibilities to Counter Poaching and Fisheries Protection**

Serial	Departments	Responsibilities
1.	MoFL including Marine Fisheries Department (BMFD)	Fishing and fisheries beyond territorial waters (including deep sea fishing), fish harbour, fish quality-testing, laboratories and other ancillary organizations.
2.	MOFA	Questions of fishery rights in the high seas.
3.	BCG	Fisheries protection.
4.	BN	Protection of the Bangladesh fishing fleet and prevention of illegal fishing.
5.	Bangladesh Fishing Trawlers Association	Nothing mentioned.

*Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/Websites*

**Analysis.** BN and BCG are given with specific responsibility for fisheries protection as LEAs. BMFD has also responsibility to monitor operations of fishing vessels as Regulatory Body. Necessary coordination between the Regulatory Body and the LEAs need to be done through concerted effort to prevent poaching.

**Smuggling.** Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders are:

**Table 5: Responsibilities in Curbing Smuggling**

Serial	Departments	Responsibilities
1.	MOHA	Anti-Smuggling and related matters.
2.	BCG	Prevention of smuggling.
3.	BGB	Prevent smuggling and other trans-border crimes.
4.	Police	Conduct anti-smuggling operations.
5.	BN	Counter-contraband operations mounted to combat smuggling of a wide range of illicit goods.
6.	Customs	Prevention of smuggling of any goods within the territorial waters of Bangladesh.
7.	NSI, DGFI	Collect, collate, evaluate and disseminate intelligence to concerned stakeholders.
8.	Sea Ports	Nothing mentioned.

*Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/Websites*

**Analysis.** Different LEAs work on respective spheres e.g. Police/ RAB, BGB on land and BN, BCG at sea, although the smugglers have roots at land which traverse to coast and to the sea. Thus, close coordination between the LEAs are required. Intelligence gathering and sharing of information among concerned stakeholders is necessary on the anti-smuggling effort to pinpoint the location and time.

**Threats to Offshore Installations and Maritime Ports.** Responsibilities of the concerned stakeholders are:

***Table 6: Responsibilities for Threats to Offshore Installations and Port Security***

Serial	Departments	Responsibilities
1.	BCG	Security assistance to sea ports and offshore installations.
2.	DoS	1. Coordinate maritime security. 2. Ensure safety of offshore fixed or mobile oil/ gas exploration installations. 3. Ship and port facility security matters under ISPS Code.
3.	MPA, PPA and CPA	To safeguard port facility against security threat and incident under ISPS code.
4.	BN	Sea ports of Bangladesh to be kept open for shipping during war.
5.	MoEPMR	Nothing mentioned.
<i>Source: Generated by Author from Concerned Organisation/Websites</i>		

**Analysis.** CG and DoS is given with responsibility to provide security of offshore installations while BN is not having task of providing the same. Considering potential threat of maritime terrorism having trans-border connections, the protection mechanism should also include BN.

**Maritime Accident.** Assessment on allocation of responsibility of maritime accident indicates that BIWTA and DoS of MoS are designated as the regulatory bodies for ensuring safety of vessels plying in inland and in maritime waters respectively. Accidents in inland water and at sea indicate requirement of better professional training and rigorous enforcement of law in this aspect. Multiple stakeholders/ agencies have the responsibilities of providing SAR in the Bangladesh waters simultaneously. Except BN, no other stakeholders

have adequate resources to conduct maritime SAR in entire maritime area of Bangladesh. As such, area wise delineation of such responsibilities need to be worked out based on capacity of stakeholder's reach at sea.

## **POLICY MEASURES TO DEVELOP BETTER MARITIME SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN MITIGATING NTMS AND SAFETY ISSUES**

Analysis of the maritime security governance threats structure in maritime environment in the BoB has shown that different maritime regulatory bodies function in isolation in respective fields of NTMS threats and safety issues. Vacuum in maritime security governance exists in Bangladesh. Besides, absence of Maritime Policy is also contributing to the overall vacuum. Thus, study on finding policy measure to develop better maritime security governance in mitigating NTMS threats and safety issues needs to be carried out. The policy measures are:

**Policy Measure 1.** Developing a prudent National Maritime Policy.

**Policy Measure 2.** Designating a National Maritime Regulatory Body who will coordinate relevant maritime issues including those of NTMS threats and safety issues.

**Policy Measure 3.** Designating a lead stakeholder for each of the NTMS threat/safety issues so that the particular issue is coordinated.

### **Concept and Analysis of the Policy Measures**

The Concepts of different policy measures will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs. Analysis for suitability of the policy measures will also be carried out.

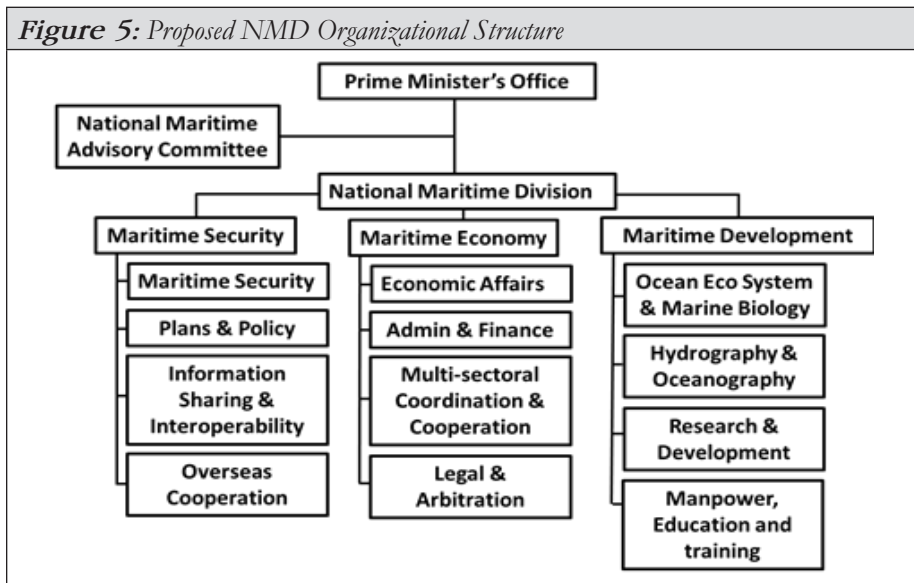
**Policy Measure 1 - Developing National Maritime Policy.** Sustainable development can only take place when it is driven by a well conceptualised Policy which is yet to be accepted in Bangladesh. A comprehensive Maritime Policy needs to be formulated which should be inclusive of all maritime stakeholders. The policy should encompass the prospects and challenges in maritime commerce and trade, maritime security, maritime development primarily. Marine pollution, conservation and preservation of marine resources, marine scientific research, technology transfer, marine environmental protection, global climate change etc. should also be encompassed in the policy.

**Suitability and Acceptability of Policy Measure 1.** Bangladesh Navy had formulated a National Maritime Policy (Alam, 2014) which is yet to be recognized by the other maritime authorities. It is needless to explain the requirement of a national level strategic guideline for holistic development and management of any sector. However, lack of awareness results in such vacuum of a policy guidance. The National Maritime Policy needs to be developed as mid-term measure (within 05 years) taking all concerned stakeholders onboard for better cooperation and coordination among all the stakeholders.

**Policy Measure 2 - Designation of National Maritime Regulatory Body.** Such Regulatory Body is contemplated to function in ensuring effective, participatory, well-coordinated maritime security governance by the stakeholders. All efforts and resources should be channeled to achieve synergy.

**Designation of National Maritime Regulatory Body.** Bangladesh Navy had proposed such National Maritime Regulatory Body in form of ‘National Maritime Division (NMD)’ in 2014 (Alam, 2014). This body should be central to every action initiated, promulgated, implemented and monitored with respect to governance of maritime domain in Bangladesh. The NMD was contemplated to have three broad aspects, namely: security, economics and development to take care of different maritime areas of interest/ importance.

*Figure 5: Proposed NMD Organizational Structure*



*Source: Alam, 2014*

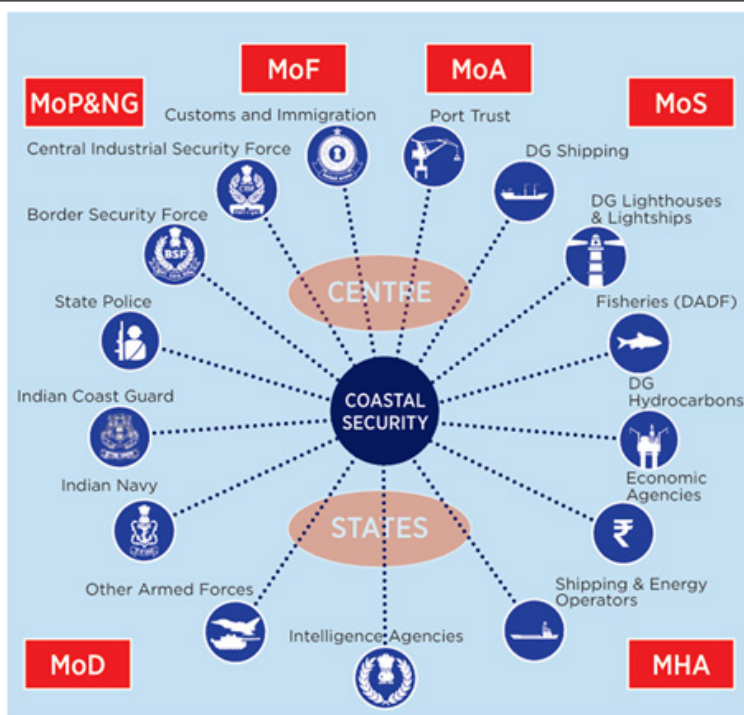
**Suitability and Acceptability of National Maritime Regulatory Body in Bangladesh Perspective.** Prior to BN proposal for NMD, the Government of Bangladesh had constituted the 'Bangladesh National Maritime Council (NMC)' to coordinate and to implement the various international regulations (Bangladesh Gazette, 2006). This Council was supposed to be the National Maritime Regulatory Body in Bangladesh perspective. However, NMC did not come into being due to absence of dedicated structure and authority. In Bangladesh, maritime affairs have traditionally been dealt with by a number of separate sectoral policies which had been discussed earlier. Such compartmentalisation of maritime governance remains to dominate pragmatic wishes to change the situation. Almost 19 years and 11 years have elapsed since supposed NMC should have been formed and proposal for NMD had been sent respectively. Both of these have not seen light of materialization. Given state of bureaucratic practice and departmentalized approaches of prime stakeholders in Bangladesh, it can be assumed that no effective apex Maritime Regulatory Organisation can be formed in near future. It can be easily presumed that sectoral maritime governance is not conducive for sustainable growth where different decision makers may adopt differing approaches. Thus, considering obvious requirement of such apex maritime regulatory body, NMD or such body may be formed as long term measures e.g. within 07 years, provided this is supported by the Maritime Policy.

**Policy Measure 3 - Designation of a Lead Stakeholder for each of NTMS Threat/ Safety Issues.** As formation of Maritime Regulatory Body appears to be bleak in near future, coordination among the stakeholders working in same NTMS threat or safety issues under overall guidance of one designated stakeholder can be a suitable option to overcome vacuum in maritime leadership. This entails that for every NTMS threat and safety issues, there will be a single ministry and a stakeholder under that ministry will be responsible, termed as "Lead Ministry/ Department". The other relevant ministries/ departments will assist the lead ministry/ department in that field as 'Participatory Ministry/ Department'. The relation between the lead and participatory ministries will be a coordination relation.

**Suitability of Concept of Lead Stakeholder for each of NTMS Threat/ Safety Issues.** Such concept of lead stakeholder is being practiced by different ministries/ departments in Bangladesh Government for number of other issues. For example, National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDMD) 2021-2025 has notified that the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) will be the lead ministry to deal with the disaster management with other stakeholders

(GoB, 2020). Similarly, this concept of Lead Stakeholder for each of NTMS threat/ safety issues is expected to develop working solution to existing maritime security vacuum in maritime governance as immediate measure till a Maritime Regulatory Body comes into being. In regional perspective, India had embarked upon such lead stakeholder policy option where Indian Navy (IN) had been made responsible to ensure coastal security and to coordinate with all other stakeholders e.g. government organisations, civil bodies etc. as lead stakeholder after the Mumbai Attack, 2008.

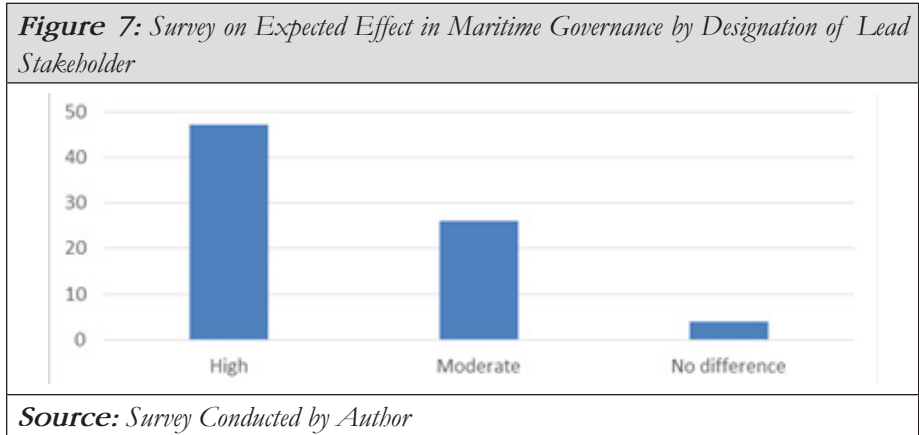
**Figure 6:** Agencies Involved in Coastal Security in India



Source: Indian Navy, 2015

**Designation of Lead Stakeholders in Addressing each of NTMS Threats and Safety Issues.** Assignment of IN as lead stakeholder in ensuring coastal security in India by Indian Government aftermath of 2008 Mumbai Attacks demonstrates the practical viability of this concept. Survey conducted among the maritime professionals indicate overwhelming requirement of designation of lead stakeholders as this is expected to bring considerable improvement in maritime governance. As such, proposal to designate capable stakeholder as lead

stakeholder for each of the NTMS threat and safety issue is made considering the GoB assigned responsibility, intelligence gathering capacity, patrolling coverage in the BoB, capacity to enforce law and capacity of apprehension etc. This can be enacted in short term (03 years).



**Table 7: Proposed Lead Ministry and Lead Stakeholder**

Serial	NTMS Threat/ Safety Issue	Lead Ministry	Lead Stakeholder/ Agency
1.	Maritime Terrorism	AFD	BN
2.	Gun Running, Piracy and armed robbery/ petty thefts	MOHA	BCG
3.	Drug Trafficking	MOHA	DoNC
4.	Human Trafficking	MOHA	Bangladesh Police
5.	Poaching and Fisheries Protection	MoFL	DoF (Marine)
6.	Smuggling	Ministry of Finance	Bangladesh Customs
7.	Threats to Offshore Installations	AFD	BN
8.	Threats to Maritime Port Installations	MoS	CPA, MPA PPA
9.	Maritime Accidents	MoS	DoS

**Source:** Developed by Author

**Example of Coordination Mechanism of Lead Stakeholder in Combating Maritime Terrorism.** In order to bring synergy among the various maritime

stakeholders, coordination between concerned are of vital importance. Accordingly, coordination relationship between various stakeholders is suggested keeping BN as the main coordinating organization in dealing maritime terrorism (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Suggested Coordination Relationship for Combating Maritime Terrorism*



*Source: Developed by Author*

## CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is a population burdened country with limited resources at land. The establishment of maritime rights over a sea area on 1,18,813 sq km in recent years has offered new hopes of additional resources from sea for the resource starved economy. The GoB has undertaken 'Blue Economy' to rip benefits out of living and non-living resources of the BoB. This also includes sea transportations, maritime trade, marine tourism etc. The projected rise of economy of Bangladesh and soaring requirement of use of Bangladeshi maritime ports by land locked countries like Nepal, Bhutan, 07 Indian North-eastern states indicate that activities at sea will have exponential growth in future. Such economic activities can only take place in a secure maritime environment in the BoB.

Existence of number of NTMS threats e.g. maritime terrorism, piracy and armed robbery/ petty theft, smuggling, drug trafficking, poaching etc. in the BoB pose challenges to establish secured maritime environment. In addition, maritime safety issue like maritime accidents, also affect the secure environment in the BoB. Although number of land based and maritime stakeholders/ agency have responsibility in mitigating these security and safety challenges, both overlying of responsibility and vacuum of responsibility has been found in subjective analysis. It is also evident that more coordination is required between the stakeholders. This state of maritime security governance affects the good order in maritime environment which, in turn, will remain as an obstacle in attaining much desired national economic development.

Different policy measures have been discussed and analysed in details to weigh out overall suitability to enhance maritime security in the BoB amidst existing level of vacuum of maritime security governance in the BoB, specially, in respect of NTMS threats and safety issues. Policy Measure 1 and research outcome specifies that National Maritime Policy is a call of time which needs to be formulated as midterm basis (05 years) keeping different maritime stakeholders onboard. The Policy should encompass much longed Blue Economy aiming for maritime secured environment for sustainable development in maritime sector while balance of conservation of resources and maritime ecology is given due importance in backdrop of effects of climate change. The Policy Measure 2 envisaged for establishment of an effective maritime regulatory body to usher all stakeholders in developing coordinated mechanism to work in maritime sectors to address NTMS threats and safety issues. At present, there is no singular maritime regulatory body who addresses all NTMS threats and safety issues. Different bodies e.g. MoS, MOHA, MOFL, Ministry of Finance etc. focus on respective sectors and are rigid in maintaining respective departmental interests. Previous proposals for establishing of an all-encompassing maritime regulatory body has not seen light of implementation in compartmentalized system of Bangladesh. Thus, it is less likely that an effective singular maritime regulatory body can be established in Bangladesh perspective at present, but will be required on long term basis (07 years). Policy Measure 3 prophesies for designation of lead stakeholder for each of NTMS threats and safety issues who will coordinate with rest of stakeholders for achieving an effective and working level of maritime security governance. Study of recent Indian approach to solve maritime security issues has also demonstrated that such lead organization is contributing effectively and can be made functional in existing bureaucratic parlance. Thus, designation of lead ministry and lead stakeholder is proven to be the optimum solution to the

NTMS threats and safety issues under existing scenario in Bangladesh. Different ministries and stakeholders have been worked out as the Lead Ministries and Lead Stakeholders for each of NTMS threats and safety issues considering government assigned responsibility, respective capacity etc. This was also substantiated by survey report of maritime professionals and security practitioners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings and discussion done so far, followings are recommended to enhance maritime security in the BoB for maritime trade and economy in addressing the NTMS threats and safety issues.

- Concerned Ministry and Stakeholder may be designated as lead ministry/ agency as proposed in this research to deal each of the NTMS threats and safety issues as short term measure (03 years). Functional responsibilities of each of the lead stakeholder may also be specified.
- Information gathering and sharing regarding NTMS threats and safety issues may be enhanced between the intelligence agencies and the LEAs.
- Coordination may be enhanced amongst different LEAs in NTMS threats for economy of efforts and better output.
- National Maritime Policy may be formulated as mid-term measure (within 05 years) in coordination with all concerned maritime stakeholders to address the maritime issues including the NTMS threats and safety issues holistically.
- NMD or similar national maritime regulatory body may be formed to address the maritime issues including the NTMS threats and safety issues as long-term measure (07 years).

## REFERENCES

Alam, M. K. (2004), Bangladesh's Maritime Challenges in the 21st Century, Pathak Shamabesh, Dhaka.

Alam, M. K. (2014) Maritime Affairs Unit: Ocean/ Blue Economy for Bangladesh, In Proceedings of International, Available at: [https://mofl.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mofl.portal.gov.bd/page/d1b6c714\\_aee6\\_499f\\_a473\\_c0081e81d7dc/Blue%20Economy.pdf](https://mofl.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mofl.portal.gov.bd/page/d1b6c714_aee6_499f_a473_c0081e81d7dc/Blue%20Economy.pdf)(Accessed: February 13, 2025)

Alam, M.K. (2019), *Blue Economy –Development of Sea Resources for Bangladesh*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh.

Alam, S. (2014), ‘Need for A Comprehensive Maritime Policy and Maritime Regulatory Body for Bangladesh – A Suggested Framework’, Seminar on “Safeguarding and Harnessing Maritime Resources of Bangladesh – A Strategic Roadmap for Economic Security”, December 04, Chattogram, Bangladesh.

Azad, A.K. (2009) *Maritime Security of Bangladesh: Facing the Challenges of Non-Traditional Threats*. BISS Journal, Vol. 30, No. 2.

Bangladesh Gazette, 2006. Gazette notification on Bangladesh National Maritime Council (NMC).

Bateman, S. Ho, J. & Chan, J., (2009) *Good order at Sea in South-east Asia*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Benson, J. (2020), *Stable Seas: Bay of Bengal*, pp 52.

BIMSTEC. (2023). Available at:<https://bimstec.org/sub-group-on-human-trafficking/>(Accessed: May 13, 2025).

BRAC University. (2017), *Situation analysis of human trafficking and irregular migration*, [Online]. Available at:<http://www.brac.net/latest-news/item/1070-situation-analysis-of-human-trafficking-and-irregular-migration>(Accessed: January 10, 2025).

Britannica.(2025), *Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008*, [Online]. Available at:<https://www.britannica.com/event/Mumbai-terrorist-attacks-of-2008> (Accessed: April 03, 2025).

Bueger, C. (2015), *What is maritime security?* *Marine Policy*, Vol. 53, pp. 159-164.

Centro de Estudos Internacionais do Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318380370\\_Fluid\\_Networks\\_and\\_Hegemonic\\_Powers\\_in\\_the\\_Western\\_Indian\\_Ocean](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318380370_Fluid_Networks_and_Hegemonic_Powers_in_the_Western_Indian_Ocean). (Accessed: May 12, 2025).

Clerc, S.K., Su-Yen, S. K., Edwards, S., Kembara, G., Salleh, A. and Tarriela, J. T., (2023), *Maritime Security Sector Governance and Reform in Southeast Asia*, DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Switzerland.

D'Souza, S.M. (2018), Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008, viewed on 10 May 19, [Online]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Mumbai-terrorist-attacks>(Accessed: March 10, 2025).

Endoglobal. (2019). Bay of Bengal Piracy Threats Initial Report [Online]. Available at:<https://www.enodoglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Bangladesh-Piracy-Threats-Initial-Investigation.pdf> (Accessed: January 03, 2025).

GoB, 2020. Action for Disaster Risk Management Towards Resilient Nation, National Plan for Disaster Management (2021-2025), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

Haq, M.A. (2019) key Informant Interview, DG BCG, BCG HQ.

Indian Navy. (2015) Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2. pp. 104-123.

Iqbal, M.K. (2019), Future of UNCLOS – BD Perspective, Bangladesh.

Islam, M. (2019) Maritime Security Challenges for Bangladesh: Response Options, BIIS Journal, Volume 40, Issue 3. pp. 269-290.

Islam, S. A. (2019) Key Informant Interview, DG Shipping, DoS Office.

Mahmood, O. (2024) The Roots of Somalia's Slow Piracy Resurgence, International Crisis Group, Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/roots-somalias-slow-piracy-resurgence>. (Accessed: May 12, 2025).

Marinebuzz. (2018). [Online]. Available at:<http://www.marinebuzz.com/2008/11/27/terrorists-used-sea-route-to-launch-attacks-in-mumbai/> 2018 (Accessed: April 03, 2025).

MOFA.(2018) Maritime Affairs Unit: Inputs for the Blue Economy Strategy of Bangladesh, [Online]. Available at: [https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mofa.portal.gov.bd/page/8846c44d\\_cbe6\\_4d2d\\_ac1b\\_ae05db4926f6/Inputs%20for%20the%20Blue%20Economy%20Strategy%20of%20Bangladesh%20v9.Final.pdf.pdf](https://mofa.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mofa.portal.gov.bd/page/8846c44d_cbe6_4d2d_ac1b_ae05db4926f6/Inputs%20for%20the%20Blue%20Economy%20Strategy%20of%20Bangladesh%20v9.Final.pdf.pdf) (Accessed: Apr 03, 2025)

Petrobangla. (2021), Annual Report 2020-21, [Online]. Available at:[https://petrobangla.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/petrobangla.portal.gov.bd/annual\\_reports/3b3b53fd\\_e70e\\_48b8\\_92af\\_5be5175204b2/2022-10-14-11-22-ca7de68e2252061b00da3dea1375ad9b.pdf](https://petrobangla.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/petrobangla.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/3b3b53fd_e70e_48b8_92af_5be5175204b2/2022-10-14-11-22-ca7de68e2252061b00da3dea1375ad9b.pdf)(Accessed: January 19, 2025).

Ramos, M. J., (2017) Fluid Networks and Hegemonic Powers in the Western Indian Ocean,

Rules of Business. (2017), Cabinet Division, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The BanglaNews24. (2014), Poaching spree in Bay, Available at:<https://www.banglanews24.com/english/national/news/bd/30395.details>, (Accessed: March 28, 2025).

The Business Standard (2024-1) Why Somalia's fishermen, unemployed youth turned to piracy, [Online]. Available at:<https://www.tbsnews.net/world/understanding-root-cause-maritime-piracy-somali-waters-808398>, (Accessed: April 01, 2025).

The Daily Star. (2015), Implementation of Law can prevent human trafficking Available at:<https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/law-interview/implementation-law-can-prevent-human-trafficking-108745>, (Accessed: March 28, 2025).

The Dhaka Tribune. (2018) Article" One more FSRU to be installed by 2019, [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/162657/one-more-fsru-to-be-installed-by-2019> (Accessed: March 31. 2025).

The Dhaka Tribune. (2018) Foreign Secretary: Time for Bangladesh to formulate Ocean Policy, [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/06/30/foreign-secretary-time-for-bangladesh-to-formulate-ocean-policy> (Accessed: March 30. 2025).

The Dhaka Tribune. (2019) Smugglers are now using unprotected rivers to transport yaba consignments, [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2019/02/20/smugglers-are-now-using-unprotected-rivers-to-transport-yaba-consignments> (Accessed: March 13, 2025).

The Independent Bangladesh. (2019) [Online]. Available at: <http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/sep/09/09092003ts.htm#A1>(Accessed: March 31. 2025).

The Business Standard. (2024-2) Yaba smuggled from Myanmar; phensedyl, heroin from India: Home minister, [Online]. Available at:<https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/yaba-smuggled-myanmar-phensedyl-heroin-india-home-minister-875721> (Accessed: March 28, 2025).

US State Department. (2024), 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh[Online]. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/> (Accessed: April 03, 2025).

Yasmin, L. (2021) Non-Traditional Security Threats in the Bay of Bengal: We Are All in the Same Boat, Brother! BIMRAD Journal, Volume 2, Issue 1. pp. 23-34.

## **AUTHOR**

**Commodore Ziaur Rahman, (TAS), NGP, ndc, afwc, psc, BN** was commissioned in German Naval Academy in July 1993. He completed specialization in Anti-Submarine Operations and Anti-Submarine Warfare from Dalian Naval Academy, China and Underwater Warfare School of PNS BAHADUR, Pakistan. He has obtained Masters in Defense Studies (MDS), Masters in Military Science and Masters in Philosophy from the National University Bangladesh, Royal Saudi Staff College and Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) respectively. He took part in Regional Maritime Security Course (RMSC) in Naval War College, India. The officer can speak in German and Arabic. Commodore Zia has fine blend of instructional, staff and command appointments both at sea and ashore. He has served in UN as Staff Officer in Force HQ in United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and as Military Observer in United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI). He received Nou Gourab Padak (NGP) as recognition of outstanding service rendered to Bangladesh Navy.

*Email: zia3202003@gmail.com*



---

## REDISCOVERING THE POWER OF PURPOSE: HOW TIPPING POINTS MOTIVATE TO FIGHT

**Brigadier General Kazi Anisuzzaman, nswc, afwc, psc**

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*(Received: 07th April 2025; Accepted: 05th June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)*

---

**Abstract:** This paper explores the crucial role of “purpose” as a primary motivator for commoners and the military to engage in conflict, especially during tipping points that compel action beyond conventional military reasoning. Although the concepts of “mission” and “purpose” are well established in military doctrines, the significance of purpose, a moral and existential justification, is frequently overlooked or given lower priority. Drawing from qualitative methodologies, including literature reviews, interviews, and historical case studies, the exploratory research unravels that national resilience and conflict success hinge on the alignment of civilian will and military commitment. By examining historical lessons and current conflict outcomes, it becomes evident that achieving the desired success is contingent upon aligning the will of the people and the will of the defending forces. The paper further examines the threshold model and critical mass theory, showing how these tipping points mobilise citizens to become active defenders. In small nations like Bangladesh, with limited military capacity, the power of purpose becomes even more pivotal, serving as the moral domain that binds people’s collective action. The findings emphasise that in contemporary security environments, the interplay between moral clarity and strategic communication defines the resilience of societies and their capacity to prevail despite asymmetric challenges.

**Keywords:** *Tipping points; attrition; balkanization; critical mass; human terrain; moral domain; strategic communication; strategic corporal; threshold model and transformational leadership;*

---

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

“The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him”

- G K Chesterton (Illustrated in London News, 14 January 1911)

There is a proclivity to think of the world in terms of winners and losers, success and failure. Battles and campaigns have different consequences, but victory has no significance in the strategist’s scheme. Wars are won and lost from the strategic, tactical, and operational planner’s perspective, and the difference is obvious. Failure is an end state, whereas success is quantifiable. From a historical perspective, it has been noted that in every aspect possible compared to the worldwide dominance of Great Britain, the rebels were no match and out-resourced during the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution (1778-1781), but they still prevailed against the mighty British Empire. The rebels employed their tools of national power more effectively than the British. Although the British had stronger national power in terms of the economy and military, they were unable to use that strength to defeat the Americans. This is because the Americans were able to make use of their diplomatic, geographic, psychological, and informational advantages, which led to liberty and the emergence of a new nation (Farlin, 2014). Along with the precedence of the American Civil War, there are numerous examples (the Bangladesh Liberation War 1971, Vietnam War, July Revolution, Arab Spring, etc.) where the victors of war or conflict were weaker belligerent groups in terms of traditional military capacity.

Hence, this argument leads us to ponder the significance of purpose, which serves as a profound psychological motivator, propelling individuals, whether civilian or military, toward national resilience or involvement in conflict, transcending traditional military reasoning. Every response to an event has one or more tipping points—instances or insights that catalyse an internal purpose and incite action.

Considering the idea in the context of armed forces, “mission” and “purpose” are two of the most fundamental concepts. However, it often appears that although mission duties are typically clearly stated, purposes are sometimes given second or even last-place consideration. However, the purposes provide every military response a moral basis, and as a result, they are vital to victory. This emphasises that, beyond physical and technological superiority, the driving will and clarity of

purpose are critical in shaping conflict outcomes, highlighting the importance of the moral domain in strategic success.

The power of purpose in war is well documented in military doctrines and theories of strategic thinkers. Let us consider the cerebral Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz's intriguing remark in light of totalitarian attempts to make war eternal, where he postulates that power comes from the people, their passions, and moral impulses. According to Clausewitz, war emerges from social forces in the minds of individuals in society and inevitably turns into an endless war against the will of the people (Smith, 2012). With this Clausewitzian insight that a war or conflict's outcome can never be attained against the will of people, which we can witness in the civil wars in Ukraine, Myanmar, Vietnam, the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971, the Arab Spring, and the July Revolution in Bangladesh.

Johan Galtung, esteemed as the father of peace studies, stated that violence is present when the actual somatic and mental realisations of human beings are lower than their potential realisations due to external influences upon them. The differences between these two psychological conditions can serve as a tipping point to strengthen the power of purpose (Galtung, 1969). The potential realisation can depend on all the instruments of national power, including diplomacy, economy, and military, which may become the principal means to project 'power'. Hitherto, the real power lies with the people. Thus, the ultimate victory depends on the power of purpose, where traditional forces often fall short of effectiveness when people rise with moral intent, and the military lacks it. For example, both superpowers, the US and Russia, fought to preserve the idea of triumph against weak adversaries throughout their respective wars in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Most tactical victories came from sophisticated airstrikes and long-range missiles. However, when it came to ground dominance, it was frequently challenged by determined opposition and the soldiers' unwavering fighting spirit.

However, it should not be unexpected if military personnel fail to combat effectively if they are never taught what is respectable about the cause for which they fight. This is certainly salient for a country like Bangladesh, with such a strong history of national aims (Bibb, 2022). A strong sense of national and political purpose is more important than weaponry, technology, or numbers in the case of small countries like Bangladesh. For those who protect their country, there is only one thing to fight for: their own lives, their children's futures, their

families, and, most importantly, their country. However, the attacker is more concerned with winning wars. Enhancing training methods and utilising cutting-edge equipment alone would not be sufficient to address the challenge of combat tenacity. For example, driven by a strong belief in their cause, guerrillas became successful when their sense of purpose exceeded that of conventional troops, enabling them to deploy asymmetrical tactics and leverage local support to overcome formidable military forces. This was a salient feature of Bangladesh's guerrilla tactics during the Liberation War in 1971.

In academia and the knowledge paradigm, there has been a dearth of research with a specific focus on purpose (deals with why) in comparison to mission (deals with how). Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by examining the significance of purpose in combat or during any conflict rather than just focusing on the mission. This study underscores the importance of a well-crafted strategy for a militarily inferior nation to not only articulate its purpose when confronted with a stronger adversary but also to construct a compelling narrative, as evidenced by the manner in which national resolve and legitimacy were shaped during World Wars, the Liberation War of Bangladesh, and the Vietnam War. Following the current trend, prospective concepts and ongoing issues are briefly covered. This research examines how defenders can utilise their strengths against a more powerful attacker and shows how, in the face of overwhelming odds, defenders stand and fight to preserve the national interest when motivated people unite to fight for an underlying purpose. Hence, the study of the power of purpose, along with related case studies, will be especially beneficial for future generations of leaders.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

I know that I shall meet my fate  
Somewhere among the clouds above;  
Those that I fight I do not hate,  
Those that I guard I do not love;  
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,  
by William Butler Yeats

“An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” is a poem written by William Butler Yeats. Published in 1919, this piece offers a thoughtful reflection on the personal tales and experiences of an Irish pilot during World War I. This poem does not focus

on heroism or patriotic enthusiasm, although it could have. The speaker, a World War I fighter pilot, is courageous but not driven by patriotism or a sense of duty. Thus, it appears that his conduct stems from individual aspiration rather than patriotic loyalty, and engaging in warfare without a definite objective is futile — valour devoid of purpose. True strength originates from within rather than solely from a banner. This detachment from conventional patriotic objectives reveals a more profound theme: the influence of individual motivation or purpose as the true catalyst for personal involvement in conflict.

### **Concept of War**

War is a violent conflict between two or more parties resulting from irreconcilable differences. According to the Greek philosopher and military strategist Thucydides, war occurs due to a conflict over the acquisition of power, assets, resources, pride, or control over an entity. In contrast to other forms of conflict, war is inherently more violent because of the extensive use of diverse weaponry and large-scale deployment of military personnel. Clausewitz introduced the idea of moral forces in defining war. This aligns with the idea of a ‘just war’, which ethically justifies the use of force in warfare by outlining the criteria for both declaring and conducting war (Roxborough, 1994). Morally, war should always be the last resort, a concept primarily developed in the just war theory by St. Augustine (4th–5th century) and later expanded by St. Thomas Aquinas (13th century). In his magnum opus *Leviathan* (1651), cerebral English philosopher Thomas Hobbes stated that war is not merely a physical conflict but a psychological state of hostility and readiness for violence (Bejan, 2010). Like Clausewitz, Michel Foucault and Van Creveld conceptualised war as the continuation of politics by other means (Foucault, 2003) and added that war is not just a political act, it is also a social institution (Van Creveld, 2009). Hence, war intensity gets influenced by the purpose and mission, by unifying military and civilian will. Without this alignment, the legitimacy and resilience necessary for sustained conflict are weakened.

### **Concept of Security**

National security is defined as the protection and preservation of each nation’s fundamental core values: political autonomy and territorial sovereignty (Maniruzzaman, 1982, p. 15). In the traditional security approach, a state’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence from external military threats are the

primary concerns. The security challenges faced by small countries like Bangladesh can be deduced from Barry Buzan's notion of security, which asserts that domestic threats to a vulnerable state are difficult to separate from the impact of external powers (Saadi, 2019, pp. 8–9). Buzan asserts that the dominance of geography is the primary determinant of the defensive susceptibility of small states. The security of small states has always been a prime concern for policy planners.

However, with the tide of social progress, globalisation, economic integration, and technological advancement, the concept of contemporary security has largely changed. Renowned modern strategist Colin S. Gray defined strategic realism and holistic security stating that security is not merely military defence but a comprehensive concept involving political, economic, and cultural dimensions (Gray, 2014). Former US national security adviser Henry Kissinger focused on pragmatic security rooted in maintaining an equilibrium between great powers. (Starr, 1980). Harvard Professor and scholar Graham Allison shows that security outcomes often depend on internal processes, not just rational strategy (Allison and Zelikow, 1971).

Today, activities and actions which disturb social harmony hamper development, slow economic progress, and lead to instability are considered internal security threats to a country, whereas external security threats are multidimensional and can ruin the social fabric, stir unrest, chaos, and disintegration of the country. Thus, security is no longer just about borders and armies-it is about groups, people, products, identities, and purpose which are the cornerstones of the Non-Traditional Security (NTS) approach. In such cases, physical defence remains the last option for ensuring the state's physical security. The security of small states depends on their relationships with other states, particularly in terms of size, geographical location, population, political stability, resources, economic development, and, above all, the strength of their markets in the era of globalisation. As state institutions, media, and technology work together to build and strengthen national purpose and resilience, state security is increasingly connected to these pillars. From a non-traditional security perspective, this triad affects society's ability to stay together, national cohesion, and the flow of information, all of which are important for contemporary security dynamics. In the modern world, security policy must encompass both traditional and non-traditional security perspectives, as it acknowledges that the tipping point of personal or mass motivation, especially among citizens, can either encourage peace or fuel wars.

## **Geopolitics to Human Terrain**

Conventional geography is not given much consideration in modern theory and philosophy. For instance, the terms “Geography” and “terrain” are virtually rarely used in Joint Publications 1 (the U.S. Armed Forces Doctrine), 3-0 (Joint Operations), and 5-0 (Joint Planning), with “geographic” often serving as a qualifier before “combatant command.” The efforts to map the so-called “human terrain” are the finest example of how most military strategy theories and doctrines have shifted in recent decades to place a strong emphasis on people and cultures. The conventional notion of geopolitics, which originally associated geographical attributes with notions of political, military, and naval superiority during times of peace, has shifted its focus away from physical characteristics and has instead become a broad term encompassing realist approaches to international relations theory. However, experts also consider the geographical aspects of the atmosphere, outer space, and cyberspace (Bruscino, 2020a). The change from traditional to modern geopolitics encompasses human terrain as a core component, focusing on studying national cohesion, people’s culture, identity, and religion as the most important aspects of conflict. Therefore, not only the physical terrain but also people’s motivations shape the modern battlefield.

## **Concepts of Actors**

In International Relations, “actors” are defined as organisations, individuals, or groups that significantly influence the dynamics of relationships. Actors are twofold: state and non-state actors. Although state actors are the primary actor units, the role of non-state actors is ever-expanding, affecting, organising, or participating in conflict. These actors serve as advocates for ideas and interests in policymaking processes. Non-state actors deal with power hierarchies, institutions, ideologies, and strategic cultures that influence battlefield results. These actors have a significant influence on how conflicts start, how they are fought, and how they end.

## **Critical Mass Theory**

Critical mass theory pertains to the idea that a minimal number of persons is required to have substantial influence and bring about important policy changes rather than only having symbolic representation. This hypothesis posits that for collective action to take place (referred to as the ‘Collective Action Concept’), there must be a sufficient number of individuals who can modify group behaviours

and decision-making processes. Empirical observations of rapid changes in social customs have shown that seemingly unchanging societal norms can be successfully reversed by the efforts of small but dedicated minority groups. This hypothesis posits that when a dedicated minority attains a crucial group size, sometimes known as a “critical mass” (Centola et al., 2018, p. 1), the social structure surpasses a tipping point. Once a tipping point is achieved, the activities of a minority group initiate a series of behavioural changes that quickly enhance the acceptability of the minority perspective.

Critical Mass Theory explains how a small number of early contributors can sometimes lead to many other people joining in on collective initiatives, such as protests, rebellions, or wars. This shows how a dedicated group with a clear goal can involve more people in society. This is especially important when looking at non-state actors, resistance groups, or citizen uprisings, when purpose-moral, intellectual, or existential-comes before the organisational hierarchy or financial rewards. In the Syrian Civil War, small groups of rebels with a purpose caused many civilians and militia to join the fight once a moral tipping point was achieved. When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the first civilian volunteers who defended their communities, motivated by a sense of national duty, sparked further public involvement and turned non-combatants into defenders. The July Revolution in Bangladesh is another example in this regard.

### **Concept of Purpose and Tipping Point**

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), safeguarding, avenging, or asserting the dignity of a community gives people a sense of purpose. Khosrokhavar says that the purpose is often more than just political; it is often existential. (Khosrokhavar, 2005). Different people have different ideas about the “tipping point”, which is when political anger turns into organised violence. For some, like Augustine, it is a moral necessity; for others, like Machiavelli and Gray, it is a strategic inevitability. Niccolò Machiavelli stated that the goals of a society should be Civic Virtue and National Survival. Graham Allison said that people need goals to stay alive. He remarked that the goal is not short-term but rather the survival of civilisation, frequently phrased in terms of historical inevitability. Henry Kissinger called the purpose “Strategic Order and Balance”. Gray states in ‘Modern Strategy and Fighting Talk’ that every strategy is based on political goals and cultural context.

### **Threshold Model in Social Science: Tipping Point**

Threshold models in social science are analytical frameworks that elucidate the emergence of collective behaviours, norms, or choices, contingent upon individuals or groups acting only after a critical mass has been reached. These models underscore nonlinear dynamics, whereby small alterations may precipitate abrupt, extensive transformations if a tipping point is exceeded. The term “threshold models” was first used by Mark Granovetter in his 1978 paper “Threshold Models of Collective Behaviour”, which explained (Macy and Evtushenko, 2020, p. 630) how collective actions such as riots, strikes, or the spread of innovations can occur. It showed how individual decisions based on other people’s behaviour can add up to large-scale collective outcomes, in which people only participate when a certain number of other people do so.

### **Just War Theory and the Purpose: Principle of Reciprocity**

The foundational basis of traditional Just War Theory lies in Christian theology. Saint Augustine is often considered the pioneer in the formulation of a doctrine on war and justice. Saint Thomas Aquinas’ revision of Augustine’s version included three conditions for an ethical war: the war must be conducted by an authorised entity, have a reasonable cause, and be motivated by the correct purposes. The ethical grounds for war are articulated in the principle of *jus ad bellum*, whereas ethical behaviour during conflict is determined by the principle of *jus in bello*. Undoubtedly, it is evident from this concise explanation that there is a significant range of interpretations for the implementation of both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* principles (Freiberger, 2013, p. 2). These principles should be regarded as points of ethical contemplation rather than absolute laws. Indeed, most of these rules are derived from the intuitive concept of reciprocal behaviour, which asserts that one should treat others in the same manner that one desires to be treated. The concept is characterised by a comprehensive saturation of moral justification language, which is fundamental to the notions of justice and ethics. The underlying driving force lies in the true purpose of people joining the war.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Objectives

#### Broad Objective

To assess the significance of purpose as the main motivator for actors (i.e. military, civilian, mass, or groups) to fight.

#### Specific Objectives

- To examine the impact of purpose in war and strategic studies.
- To identify the tipping point when common people opt for fighting.
- To examine the impact of purpose vis-à-vis the assigned mission.
- To explore contemporary trends in conflicts where ordinary people voluntarily participate.

### Research Questions

**Primary Question.** What is the significance of purpose in determining the motivations of commoners and the military to get involved in armed conflict?

#### Secondary Questions

- At what point in time do the general populace choose to engage in combat?
- What is the effect of purpose on the designated mission?
- What elements facilitate the voluntary engagement of ordinary individuals in contemporary conflicts?

### Research Hypothesis and Variables

When commoners choose to involve themselves (tipping point) in a conflict, their driving force to fight is contingent upon the true purpose. Here, the purpose is the independent variable, where the time of participation (tipping point) is the intervening variable and the will to fight (driving force) is the dependent variable.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted using a qualitative research methodology. The nature of this research is exploratory, as it aims to examine research questions in depth without necessarily coming up with clear answers to existing problems. This approach helps us gain a deep and complex understanding of people's attitudes, motives, and experiences. The study mainly uses secondary data, such as historical documents, memoirs, media reports, and interview transcripts, to examine the link between perceived purpose, the tipping point of engagement, and the will to fight.

## **Data Collection and Data Analysis Methods**

This study used qualitative methodological tools to collect data. These included observations, in-person interviews, KIIs, FGDs, and phone and email interviews. Key Informant Interviews provided us with more information by talking to experts or people with unique points of view on the research issue. Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, historical documents, government papers, media pieces, and other relevant publications.

## **Sampling**

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich, relevant insights through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), e-mail, and telephone interviews. This approach ensured diverse perspectives from key informants and stakeholders, enhancing the depth and validity of the primary data.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using the triangulation method to cross-verify findings from multiple sources and methods to increase reliability. Content Analysis was applied to systematically interpret textual data from interviews and literature to identify patterns, themes, and key insights relevant to the research.

## **Limitations**

This qualitative exploratory research does not have a quantitative foundation, which makes it difficult to validate the data statistically. The lack of rigorous data

analysis methods may make the results even less generalisable. This study largely focuses on the perspectives of Bangladesh, considering its demographics and national culture. Nevertheless, modern conflicts have also been considered.

### **Ethical Safeguards**

The research adhered to strict ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and respecting the participants' right to withdraw at any stage. Data handling and reporting were conducted with transparency and sensitivity to protect the respondents' privacy and integrity.

## **DOTS ON THE HORIZON: ENVISIONED CHALLENGES**

“There are no facts, only interpretations”

-Friedrich Nietzsche

### **Attrition as a Double Edge Sword**

It is possible to measure material attrition by considering the financial harm done at the local or national level, as well as the number of lives lost throughout the battle. The most typical symptom of psychological attrition is a profound sense of uneasiness (Kober, 2005, p. 235). Attrition is the opposite of guerrilla warfare, which is unorganised, fractured, and relies on tactics rather than force. In the Vietnam War, mines and booby traps, as well as sniper fire and ambushes, were frequently used by the Vietnamese revolutionary forces, who were utterly outmanoeuvred by their enemies (Street, 2017). Therefore, as witnessed in Ukraine, the more the invader punishes the population and commits crimes, the more inspired people will be to fight back. Fundamentally, attrition in warfare is a reciprocal idea in which both sides inflict and bear losses in an attempt to progressively sap the opponent's will to fight. However, its success mostly relies on the power of purpose-a side with higher morale and a clearer purpose may sustain attrition longer, transforming what seems like mutual depletion into a final victory, exposing that a simple loss exchange is inadequate without psychological resilience.

### **Balkanization as a Means of Targeting**

Balkanization is the process of breaking up a territory or state into smaller, often hostile groups based on ethnic, religious, or cultural differences. The term

originates from the historical disintegration of the Balkans. (Brubaker, 1996) It seems that Balkanization, or geopolitical fragmentation, is taking on a more widespread form in a world where nations, states, towns, and regions increasingly desire independence from the country or union to which they belong. The UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU) is a recent example of the trend toward Balkanization (Bobic, 2020, p. 1).

Numerous studies and essays have obliquely discussed Myanmar's potential "Balkanization", which would result from the dissolution or disintegration of the state itself. Although complete state disintegration is an unusual occurrence in the world, under military dictatorship in Myanmar, governmental establishments have often collapsed, and the state has struggled to carry out its fundamental duties. In other words, fragmentation remains a persistent concern in Myanmar's politics, even if complete Balkanization is improbable. This demonstrates the need for rapprochement between ethnic minority leaders and the Bamar majority (Williams, 2022). Similarly, the Balkanisation of the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) may be used to target Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh has a large Muslim population, Bengali people are often asked whether they are Bengali or Muslim. When asked about their religion and ethnicity, they invariably identify themselves as Muslims and Bengalis (Rajagopalan, 2021). Bengali people are likely to remain unified as long as their national identity is ingrained. As a result, even Bangladesh is targeted for Balkanization, although it is less likely to succeed because of its distinct identity.

### **Looking into the Future: The Tech World & Diffusion of Purpose**

Typically, social media algorithms work invisibly, but they can influence the flow of information during events such as demonstrations or elections. Although they cannot make decisions for themselves, autonomous weapon systems have the potential to alter warfare strategies if they are widely used. Similar to hacker groups, cyber actors can have little impact alone. However, as technology reliance approaches a critical level, cyber-attacks may unexpectedly cause havoc with national security and the economy, forcing governments to review their digital policies and international cybersecurity agreements.

In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia, and a video of the incident spread online. This event became a symbolic complaint that spread throughout the Arab world, known as the Arab Spring. In July, the administration tried to make the demonstrators appear aggressive or be used for political gains. However, videos on the internet showed the opposite, which made people even

angrier. This was a turning point that provided people with a strong sense of purpose. Ukraine has successfully built a media narrative that has helped it gain support worldwide. While technology speeds up and diffuses the power of purpose, it may also break apart movements by refusing power because of a lack of precise information flow, increased surveillance, and counter-repression. This explains how technology can change the power of goals to reach a tipping point, which can either motivate people or weaken their incentives, leading to a significant change in the way non-traditional security is implemented. Core Values of a Nation Throughout history, nations have risen and fallen, yet fundamental values have endured. The majority of Asia's small countries, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Nepal, South Korea, North Korea, and Singapore, were either imperialist powers' colonies or too poor to be colonised. These countries have always looked toward external sources for their political and economic security. They had neither military strength nor strong allies to fight against the forceful occupation of their country. These small states could not escape their colonial legacy. The region continues to be one of the most poverty-stricken parts of the world. The secret lies in the historical context. Anti-imperialist legacies and political culture can unite purpose; nevertheless, emotional polarisation and family-based power structures (family-crazy) can corrode the collective identity from the nation's essential ideals. When these ideals clash, the tipping point could cause not cohesion but rather conflicting loyalties, thereby rendering the individual's goal a two-edged factor in national stability or fragmentation.

### **Lessons from the Contemporary War and Conflicts**

One of the main objectives of moral conflict is to shatter the enemy's will before the battle; however, there are no definitive formulas for achieving this. In moral conflict, the "Centre of Gravity" lies with the purpose based on which common people fight back (Gourley, 2022). Today, the absence of successful combined operations and the lack of coordination across Russia's numerous agencies and departments can only be characterised as inept. For example, it has consistently struggled to configure its air and air defence units to prevent friendly fire or effectively support its ground troops with air support. The poor quality of Russia's conscript forces is another problem that has added to its military challenges. In its media warfare, Ukraine has even made use of pictures of Russian Prisoner conscripts being permitted to phone their mothers. Russia has failed to find enough motivated volunteers to replace its 12-month conscription system, despite the plethora of hyper-masculine recruitment movies (Corbett et al., 2022).

The essence of manoeuvre warfare is the strategic use of information, ambiguity, deception, innovation, and brutality to elicit surprise and shock. Firepower and mobility are used in tandem. From Ukraine to Gaza, Myanmar to Sudan, and Syria, modern conflicts highlight a fundamental lesson: military capability alone cannot guarantee persistence or success. The deciding element is often the force of both group and personal goals. Whether protecting homeland, identity, or justice, it is the internal tipping point when personal conviction lines up with the national cause that maintains resistance or drives the ongoing battle.

### **The Protests that Toppled the Ruling Government of Bangladesh**

University students began peaceful protests at the beginning of July 2024, demanding the abolition of public sector job quotas, of which one-third are held by the relatives of war veterans of the 1971 war. Protesters insisted that the existing system required reform due to its discriminatory nature. Despite meeting many of their demands, the protests soon grew into a more widespread anti-government uprising (Ethirajan and Ritchie, 2024). Death and devastation were hallmarks of Hasina's dramatic descent from grace on 5 August 2024.

Looking back at the current situation in modern-day Bangladesh, it becomes evident that, similar to the tales of Sohrab and Rostam, we are murdering our children by neglecting their education, restricting employment prospects, ignoring mental health, and letting corruption and violence compromise their future, all of which contribute to this. Thus, society damages the very generation it ought to safeguard and empower. The majority of the 200 students and employees who died in July were less than 30 years old (Islam, 2024a).

The students may have deposed Hasina's omnipotent administration in only five weeks, but the revolution had simmered for years. People who died and those who took part in this year's student demonstrations both saw their nation thrive under an increasingly tyrannical and cruel regime. This movement's triumph is the most compelling evidence that the people of Bangladesh are sick and tired of seeing democracy, free expression, and human rights sacrificed for economic growth (Chowdhury, 2024). People clearly wanted democracy, freedom of expression, and respect for human rights-not compromises of these ideals in the name of economic development. They demand a system that prioritises their voice, dignity, and justice over mere numbers in development. Similar to the plethora of examples (i.e., Bangladesh Liberation War 1971, Vietnam War, Ukraine War, Arab Spring etc.) where the victors of war or conflict were weaker belligerent groups in

terms of traditional military capacity, the July Revolution is also conceptualized as a battle between just and unjust where the weaker groups sustained and toppled the Hasina regime, thanks to strong sense of moral purpose and national cohesion that transcends traditional military calculus.

## **STRATEGIC PATHWAYS: TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF PURPOSE IN CONFLICT AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE**

“Don’t tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.”

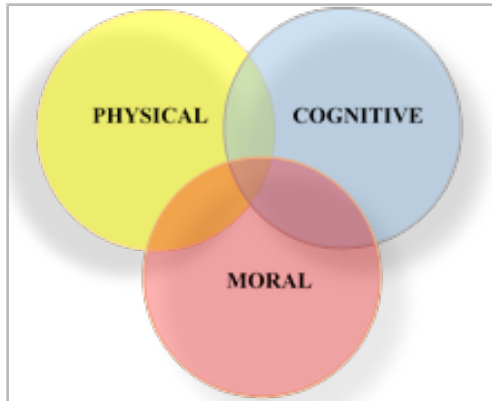
-George S Patton

The purpose entails a systematic procedure in which actors (i.e. military, groups, or individuals) assess their objectives, principles, and ambitions. This phenomenon may be activated by significant life experiences, introspection, or external factors that prompt individuals to pursue a more profound understanding of purpose and satisfaction. Within this framework, a tipping point denotes a pivotal juncture at which an individual commits to undertaking resolute measures. It often represents a critical juncture when the choice to engage in a struggle for one’s goal becomes decisive. This entails intentional decision-making to face difficulties, surmount hurdles, and persevere in pursuing one’s objectives. It denotes a dedication to not only discovering but also actively striving towards a significant objective despite challenges.

A meticulous framework for analysing war was developed by General J F C Fuller. He built his war theory on the physical, moral, and cognitive realms (illustrated in Figure 1). The physical realm comprises equipment or weapons of war. The cognitive domain encompasses intellectual pursuits that explicitly aim to outsmart a foe. In this area, a country creates its war plans based on presumptions drawn from data that shape its understanding of reality. The moral realm contains the driving force and other components that allow military groups to engage in combat. In this area, the combination of capacity and will leads to action. Therefore, the moral domain enables the physical and cognitive domains to produce the intended effects. The importance of the moral realm to a great leader is shown by Napoleon’s claim that morality exerts a power three times as effective as physical force (Grady, 1993, pp. 7–8). Similarly, Clausewitz (1832) emphasised the role of moral forces in warfare, and contemporary thinkers such

as Joseph Nye (2004) have highlighted that soft power and strategic narratives that align with moral values inspire militaries, groups, or individuals to take action (Erikson, 1968; Nye, 2004).

**Figure 1: The Domains of War**



*Source: Grady, 1993, pp. 7–8*

The tipping point is usually reached when individuals perceive a cause as personally relevant, regardless of whether it pertains to identity, justice, or survival. This congruence of belief and behaviour, regardless of physical strength, unleashes the power of purpose, transforms citizens into defenders, and helps fractured societies become resilient. This has been the case in the July Revolution saga.

**Figure 2: The Accumulated Anger of the Students**



*Source: Islam, 2024b*

A significant number of young individuals residing in slums who participated in the recent conflict experienced a prolonged period of food insecurity and rising commodity prices. In addition, commoners encounter numerous additional challenges, including the relinquishment of a significant portion of their hard-earned wages to political cadres and law enforcement officials. Failure to comprehend the challenges faced by students and the working poor necessitates contemplation of the future safety of Bangladesh (Figure 2). The issue at hand is whether the administration would duly consider the accumulated complaints of students and citizenry (Islam, 2024b) or resign from their posts.

### **Defender's Panorama-1: Threshold Models in Social Science**

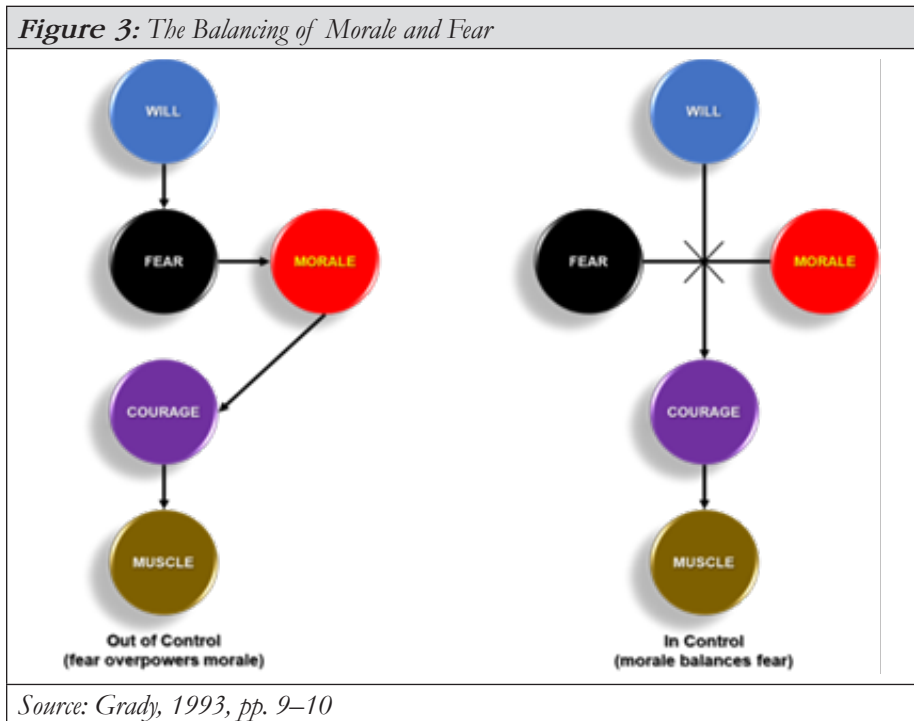
When and at what moment do commoners choose to fight? In international relations, actors may remain on the margins and only impact decisions when a tipping point is reached. They are like dormant seeds buried underground, ignored until the appropriate circumstances allow them to germinate and change the terrain. For example, consider Bangladesh's current social movements. The years of student protests in Bangladesh had little effect. However, as social pressures grew - economic inequity, political upheaval, and cultural changes—they have become strong forces altering national policy. In the Arab Spring, a set of turning events turned personal frustrations into a group wave covering several countries. Following the murder of George Floyd (2020), a turning event that heightened calls for racial justice and drove governments and businesses to act, the #BlackLivesMatter campaign gained worldwide relevance.

Theoretical frameworks underpinning this include complexity theory which examines systems that attain critical thresholds. Constructivist theory in International Relations highlights the process by which ideas and standards acquire influence after reaching a critical threshold. The crucial difference is between the marginal influence and the substantial effect beyond the tipping point. However, assessing such tipping moments may be subjective and contingent on circumstances.

This concept aligns with threshold models in social sciences, where change is not always gradual but abrupt once certain thresholds are crossed. This challenges the traditional focus by highlighting how latent actors can become pivotal under the right circumstances. Once moral purpose aligns with the social momentum of the critical mass, it propels people beyond their personal thresholds and transforms passive observers into active agents of change.

## Defender's Panorama-2: Moral Domain

Fear is necessary for combatants to adequately regulate their behaviour. Fearless soldiers behave recklessly. His impulsive actions in the future will undoubtedly defeat the military mission and harm his peers. The accomplishment of the mission is also jeopardised by a soldier who displays cowardice by refusing to actively confront and eliminate the enemy as instructed. Therefore, a warrior must possess an inner spirit to overcome fear and facilitate intentional and courageous behaviour. Positive activities are possible when fear and bravery coexist and when fear and morale are in harmony (Grady, 1993, pp. 9–10). When these components are out of proportion, the soldier loses direction as shown in Figure 3. In 1971, the Pakistani Army failed to fight the brave Bengali freedom fighters because of a lack of moral courage.



In Myanmar, the military junta ought to have destroyed the resistance movement solely based on the criteria of relative power. The so-called “people’s defence forces,” or armed resistance groups, are mostly scattered, without a strategic organisational structure, and only possess a limited quantity of weaponry,

knife-wielding weapons, and improvised explosive devices. Nevertheless, the essence, regional connections, and capacity to revive resistance factions, a significant number of which support the National Unity Government (Williams, 2022).

Abu Sayeed, a key figure in the current student movement advocating for quota reform in government jobs at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, tragically lost his life due to an internal haemorrhage sustained during a clash with police (Hossain, 2024). Given the current unemployment rate of 18 million young people in Bangladesh, Sayed was determined not to contribute to this alarming figure after he completed his studies. Thus, he assumed the role of principal organiser in a nationwide campaign aimed at overhauling the quota system, which eventually gained recognition as “Students Against Discrimination”. Consequently, his profound feeling of being deprived and his strong attachment to the community compelled him to confront live bullets and accept impending death (illustrated in Figure 4). Within the moral domain, this transgression of ethical limits inspired once apathetic citizens to demonstrate how moral purpose can propel mass action and social change when people perceive fundamental ideals such as justice and dignity as under attack.

**Figure 4:** *A Photo of Abu Sayeed Taken before he was Shot by Police*



*Source: Hossain, 2024*

### **Defender's Panorama-3: Visionary Leadership**

The conversion of individual aspirations into a unified national objective relies significantly on visionary leadership. Leaders such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln transformed hesitant individuals into patriots and soldiers by articulating national objectives not merely as political necessities but also as moral imperatives, employing their rhetorical prowess and ethical clarity. The ethical frameworks established by such commanders frequently affect soldiers' commitment to "absolutes", profound moral rationalisations for warfare. Visionary leaders foster the psychological foundation of national resilience by articulating virtuous and restorative missions. Toner (2014) emphasizes that this moral commitment engenders self-assured dignity, hence empowering actors to act courageously despite formidable challenges. This demonstrates that moral vision is as crucial as military strategy, as it imparts a purpose so profound that it converts pacifists into nationalists and cowards into combatants.

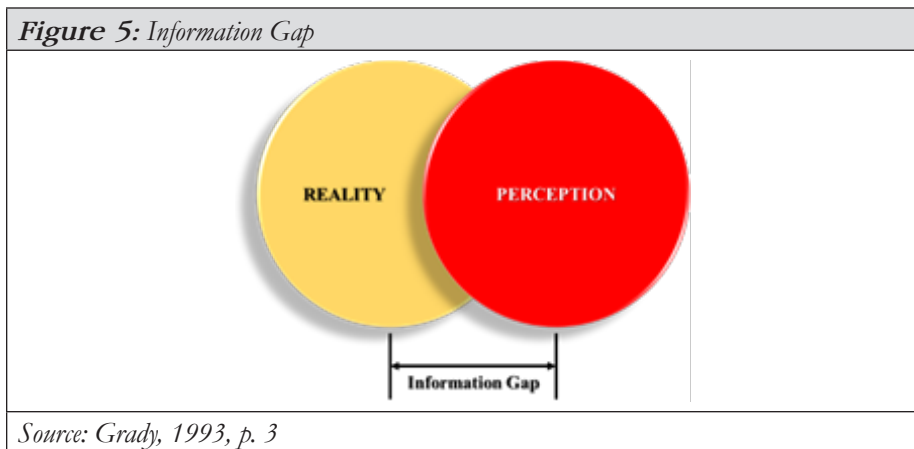
### **Defender's Panorama-4: Selecting the Right Strategy**

According to Clausewitz, a sound strategy must consider factors such as dominance in strength, surprise, force concentration in space, force unification in time, strategic reserves, economy of force, pauses, courses and orientations, and others. Clausewitz presents all of the components, and this is the most significant aspect concerning him, in the framework of "Moral Factors," which he believes to be far more crucial to military strategy. He refers to "the competence of the commander, the experience and valour of the troops, and their nationalistic spirit" as the main factors for military strategists to consider (Bruscino, 2020b). Thus, the moral dimension is likely to lead to the development of an appropriate defence strategy.

Highlighting that "the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting", strategists like Sun Tzu emphasised that success hinges on understanding the moral and psychological landscape of conflict rather than solely relying on brute force. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya advocated for adaptable strategies based on ethical considerations and enduring stability-diplomatic, covert, or military. Therefore, when grounded in a clear purpose, strategy becomes significantly more effective. A morally oriented approach lends legitimacy and emotional depth to the struggle, rallying not only soldiers but entire populations. Numerous liberation movements demonstrate that moral clarity, rather than mere tactical superiority, transforms war into a pathway for societal justice and national resilience.

## Defender's Panorama-5: Strategic Communication

In the current Ukraine War, Russia has been unable to control the media landscape. Russia never made its long-anticipated attempt to take down the Ukrainian communications infrastructure because of a blend of excessively optimistic assumptions about its adversary's political vulnerability and logistical dependence on its target's communications networks. Instead, the Zelenskyy government defeated Russia by winning the media battle in the West and Ukraine. In addition to mobilising crucial military assistance and unprecedented economic sanctions from a wider network of international partners, the Ukrainian government's skilful messaging and a motivated civilian population produced a new feeling of internal unity (Corbett et al., 2022). Similar to the US war in Afghanistan, despite information supremacy, US troops were unable to influence the intended result on the battlefield. As a result, even with this emphasis on technology, it is crucial to depend on what truly exists rather than what is believed to exist in the metaverse. A country cannot have perfect knowledge because of uncertainties, and there lies a knowledge gap between reality and perception (Grady, 1993, p. 3) as illustrated in Figure 5.



Thus, strategic communication creates strong stories that align with both individual and group goals, thereby influencing society's perception and approach to conflict. Digital media sharpens this struggle over perception and stimulates the purpose of defending and changing society (Nye, 2004).

## **Defender's Panorama-6: Strategic Corporals**

Young officers are taught to lead by example, express the commander's intent, and then allow under-commands the discretion to act in circumstances where they may not be able to ask for further instruction. They are frequently required to make choices that have strategic consequences. These effects could be serious if they make bad decisions, which could lead to an "unforgiving moment" (Barcott, 2010). On a comparable note, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark A Milley warned the 2022 US Military Academy graduates to be ready to make the ideal moral and ethical decisions, even in the most emotionally intense situation. Under the stressful situations of real war, they need to nurture leaders of extraordinary virtue (Cronk, 2022).

For instance, Abu Sayed, a 25-year-old from a humble farming background, emerged as a highly accomplished scholar at one of Bangladesh's prestigious universities. During a protest, he positioned himself approximately 15 m (50 ft) away from the Bangladesh police, defiantly extending his arms. The individual was fatally shot by the police. The online dissemination of the explicit extrajudicial killing video sparked widespread outrage, prompting a significant number of students nationwide to take to the streets in protest. Various individuals from different professions and backgrounds came together in unity, expressing their anger and grief over the tragic loss of Sayed and over 200 other protesters who lost their lives due to the actions of government-aligned student activists and security forces. Their diligent efforts, combined with the substantial risks they undertook, yielded fruitful results (Chowdhury, 2024). The savage execution of Abu Sayed triggered an 'unforgiving moment' that resulted in widespread demonstrations (Figure 6).

**Figure 6:** On 5 August 2024, Demonstrators in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Climbed a Public Monument to Celebrate the Resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina



Source: Chowdhury, 2024

## Defender's Panorama-7: Transformational Leadership

Following the early phases of the Korean War, when the Eighth US Army was pushed south, Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway assumed command of the UN forces. Ridgway needed to immediately change the situation after encountering demoralised troops. In January 1951, he wrote a note titled “Why We Are Here”, which served as a message to the soldiers regarding the issue. The note demonstrates his unwavering faith in the soldiers’ mental resilience and his unwavering commitment to the mission (Crane, 2017). According to Lieutenant General Matthew, transformational leaders must take responsibility. This archaic notion might win him the respect and trust of his subordinates. Similarly, Abraham Lincoln’s leadership during the American Civil War shaped the struggle as a moral crusade to save the Union and eradicate slavery, offering a strong ethical basis that inspired popular support and kept the country through great difficulty (Toner, 2014). Transformative leaders show how moral purpose helps reluctant followers become dedicated agents and send messages to subordinates that their commander is on their front and ready to take whatever risks are necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings of this study:

- Periodic research and training should be conducted on contemporary conflicts and current challenges to showcase the continuous significance of the purpose and principles of war at the operational level for future leaders and generations.
- Efforts may be made by both civilian and military sectors to enhance professional learning materials to build robust national resilience.
- Academic institutions and defense think tanks should collaborate to create strategic programs that encourage leaders to formulate policies with a clear strategic purpose and pragmatic vision.
- Developing peace-oriented moral leadership in national policy can promote unity and resilience and reduce conflict through ethical clarity and inclusive, strategic narratives.
- National strategies should evaluate Clausewitzian ideas, by which moral forces, identity, and public will can be distinguished to positively shape actions and intentions.

## **CONCLUSION**

“Do not press a desperate enemy”

-Sun Tzu

In the context of national security, there has recently been substantial debate about strategy. A strategy is a combination of objectives, conceptions, and resources within permissible risk parameters to achieve a more desirable outcome. Additionally, strategy is the art and science of establishing and using a nation’s political, economic, social-psychological, and military resources under policy instructions to generate results that protect or promote national interests. In this case, the driving force was the national leaders. They show the path to victory, define the purpose of the fight, and the will to fight. Legendary leaders like Washington and Lincoln defined the national mission and created the moral foundations for war. It helped the freedom fighters develop a feeling that their responsibilities extended beyond their own and their families’ existence to include the spirit of the nation. Such a sense of purpose always provided a clear and noble reason for the freedom fighters to battle, suffer, and even perish. As a result, the

moral sphere of future generations is established through a well-articulated and interpreted national purpose.

History teaches us that the outcome of any war is never definitive. Ultimately, the conqueror has to live with the people it may have vanquished, and keeping them in perpetual servitude will be much costlier in the long run. For an invader, it would almost definitely be futile to keep trying to crush the opposition and hold the vanquished under control (Smith, 2012). The weaker Nation's approach of threatening significant political costs to discourage an invasion is also inspired by its perception of leadership's risk aversion and desire for long-term planning. The costs and benefits of battling a small but persistent and adaptive opponent have recently been painfully clear, as shown by the United States' experience in Afghanistan and, most recently, by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is quite likely to be a contributing element in the eventual triumph when the will of the people and the will of the defending forces coincide.

Conversely, Putin's underperformance was caused by the demoralised Russian army. The Afghan war, which was led by the US, had a similar outcome. The question of who and when to fight would be the turning moment. Robots, drones, and UAVs could eventually replace humans in combat. Thus, the Principles of War and Strands of War are relevant to today's warfare. Additionally, this will ease the pressure of the ethical dilemmas imposed on leaders. Media control may affect how citizens perceive things. However, unlike the Vietnam War, the political challenge posed by "body counts" will never put the decision-making body in jeopardy. To demonstrate the continued relevance of the principle of war, accountability in combat is advocated.

In the last letter to his wife, Major Sullivan Ballou, a Union officer slain at the First Battle of Bull Run, displayed such insights:

"My Very Dear Wife:

.... I feel impelled to write a few lines, that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for any country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter....and I am willing...to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt (Ballou, 1861)"

- Major Sullivan Ballou,  
Headquarters, Camp Clark, Washington DC, 14 July 1861

## REFERENCES

Allen, G.J.R., Husain, A., 2017. On Hyperwar [WWW Document]. US Nav. Inst. URL <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017/july/hyperwar> (accessed 9.29.22).

Allison, G.T., Zelikow, P., 1971. *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Little, Brown Boston.

Aron, R., 2017. *Peace and war: a theory of international relations*. Routledge.

Ballou, S., 1861. Sullivan Ballou Letter [WWW Document]. Am. Battlefield. Trust. URL <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/sullivan-ballou-letter> (accessed 10.14.22).

Barcott, R., 2010. The Strategic Corporal. *Harvard Business Review*.

Bejan, T.M., 2010. Teaching the Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Education. *Oxf. Rev. Educ.* 36, 607–626.

Bobic, N., 2020. *Balkanization and Global Politics: Remaking Cities and Architecture*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Brubaker, R., 1996. *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Cartledge, P., 2004. Alexander the Great: hunting for a new past? Paul Cartledge goes in search of the elusive personality of the world's greatest hero. *Hist. Today* 54, 10–17.

Centola, D., Becker, J., Brackbill, D., Baronchelli, A., 2018. Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention. *Science* 360, 1116–1119. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aas8827>

Chowdhury, J., 2024. The victory of Bangladesh's student movement should not surprise anyone [WWW Document]. Al Jazeera. URL <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/8/5/the-victory-of-bangladeshs-student-movement-should-not-surprise-anyone> (accessed 9.9.24).

Corbett, T., Xiu, M., Singer, P.W., 2022. What is China Learning from the Ukraine War? [WWW Document]. *Def. One*. URL <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/04/what-lessons-china-taking-ukraine-war/363915/> (accessed 10.31.22).

Crane, C., 2017. Ridgway's Memo: "Why We Are Here" (Dusty Shelves). War Room - US Army War Coll. URL <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/podcasts/ridgways-memo-dusty-shelves-1/> (accessed 10.13.22).

Erikson, E.H., 1968. Identity youth and crisis. WW Norton & company.

Ethirajan, A., Ritchie, H., 2024. Bangladesh Protests: What Sparked the Anger that Toppled Sheikh Hasina? [WWW Document]. BBC News. URL <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq5xye1d285o> (accessed 9.9.24).

Farlin, C.J., 2014. Instruments of National Power: How America Earned Independence 38.

Fearon, J.D., Laitin, D.D., 2003. Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 97, 75–90.

Foucault, M., 2003. "Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976. Macmillan.

Freiberger, E., 2013. Just War Theory and the Ethics of Drone Warfare. *E-Int. Relat.* URL <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/07/18/just-war-theory-and-the-ethics-of-drone-warfare/> (accessed 9.10.24).

Galtung, Johan. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191.

Grady, W.A., 1993. The Moral Domain of War-A View from the Cockpit. *Sch. Adv. Airpower Stud.* 90.

Gray, C.S., 2014. Why strategy is difficult, in: *Strategic Studies*. Routledge, pp. 40–47.

Hallin, D.C., 1989. The uncensored war: The media and Vietnam. Univ of California Press.

Hossain, Z., 2024. Bullet-hit Abu Sayeed dies of internal haemorrhage: RMCH doctor [WWW Document]. *New Age*. URL <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/240421/bullet-hit-abu-sayeed-dies-of-internal-haemorrhage-rmch-doctor-> (accessed 9.9.24).

Islam, M.M., 2024. ছাত্র-জনতার পুঞ্জীভূত ক্ষোভ সরকার কি আমলে নেবে [WWW Document]. *Somokal*. URL <https://samakal.com/editorial/article/247780/> (accessed 9.10.24).

Islam, M.M., 2024. সোহরাব-রোস্তুমের লড়াই এবং রাষ্ট্রের বলপ্রয়োগ নীতি [WWW Document]. Somokal. URL <https://samakal.com/opinion/article/249207/> (accessed 9.10.24).

Jahan, R., 1972. Pakistan: Failure in national integration. No Title.

Kaplan, M.A., 2005. System and process in international politics. ecpr Press.

Kaufman, S.J., 2015. Modern hatreds: The symbolic politics of ethnic war. Cornell University Press.

Kober, A., 2005. From Blitzkrieg To Attrition: Israel's Attrition Strategy and Staying Power. *Small Wars Insur.* 16, 216–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310500080005>

Lindley-French, J., Boyer, Y., 2012. The Oxford Handbook of War. OUP Oxford.

Macy, M., Evtushenko, A., 2020. Threshold Models of Collective Behavior II: The Predictability Paradox and Spontaneous Instigation. *Sociol. Sci.* 7, 628–648. <https://doi.org/10.15195/v7.a26>

Maurer, J.D., 2022. Airpower and Interdiction: Overcoming Defender Advantages [WWW Document]. War Rocks. URL <https://warontherocks.com/2022/09/airpower-and-interdiction-overcoming-defender-advantages/> (accessed 9.28.22).

Nye, J.S., 2004. Soft power: The means to success in world politics. Public affairs.

Quotations of G. K. Chesterton – Store | Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, n.d. URL <https://www.chesterton.org/store/quotations-of-g-k-chesterton/> (accessed 2.8.24).

Relat. URL <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/07/18/just-war-theory-and-the-ethics-of-drone-warfare/> (accessed 9.10.24).

Roxborough, I., 1994. Clausewitz and the Sociology of War. *Br. J. Sociol.* 45, 619–636.

Shay, J., 2010. Achilles in Vietnam: Combat trauma and the undoing of character. Simon and Schuster.

Starr, H., 1980. The Kissinger years: Studying individuals and foreign policy. *Int. Stud. Q.* 24, 465–496.

Street, F., 2017. Attrition Warfare: When Even Winners Lose [WWW Document]. Farnam Str. URL <https://fs.blog/attrition-warfare/> (accessed 9.21.22).

The Operational Environment (2021-2030): Great Power Competition, Crisis, and Conflict [WWW Document], n.d. APAN Community. URL <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/mad-scientist/m/articles-of-interest/391380> (accessed 10.12.22).

Toner, J.H., 2014. *Morals under the gun: The cardinal virtues, military ethics, and American society*. University Press of Kentucky.

Van Creveld, M., 2009. *Transformation of war*. Simon and Schuster.

Williams, N., 2022. *Achieving the Best Outcome in Myanmar's Civil War* [WWW Document]. War Rocks. URL <https://warontherocks.com/2022/10/achieving-the-best-outcome-in-myanmars-civil-war/> (accessed 10.27.22).

Zakir Hossain, 2024. *Bullet-hit Abu Sayeed dies of internal haemorrhage: RMCH doctor* [WWW Document]. New Age. URL <https://www.newagebd.net/post/country/240421/bullet-hit-abu-sayeed-dies-of-internal-haemorrhage-rmch-doctor-> (accessed 9.9.24).

## AUTHOR

**Brigadier General Kazi Anisuzzaman, nswc, afwc, psc** was commissioned in the Corps of Infantry in December 1994 with 31 BMA Long Course. He served in five Infantry Regiments, commanded an Infantry Regiment and an Infantry Brigade. He served as a staff officer in the Infantry Brigade Headquarters, East Bengal Regimental Centre, Director General of Forces Intelligence, Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training and last of all Military Secretary's Branch in Army Headquarters. He served as the Principal of Barisal Cadet College. He has also served as the Directing Staff of the Armed Forces War Course (AFWC) Wing at the National Defence College (NDC). He is a graduate of the Defence Services Command and Staff College and National Defence College. He has obtained an MBA from the Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) under Dhaka University and a Masters in Defence Studies from BUP. He has completed the National Security and War Course from the National Defence University (NDU), Pakistan, and obtained a Masters in National Security Management & War Studies. He has served in the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Presently he is serving as the Director of National Security Intelligence. He has a keen interest in travelling, music and reading. He is married and father of a daughter and a son.

*E-mail: anis4887@gmail.com*



---

## ESTABLISHING AN INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE (IFC) AS A STRATEGIC ENABLER FOR MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS (MDA) IN BANGLADESH: A FUNCTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

Commodore Mustaque Ahmed, (G), NPP, ndc, psc, BN

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*(Received: 01st March 2025; Accepted: 11th June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)*

---

**Abstract:** Maritime security underwent a paradigm shift in the post-9/11 scenario, revolutionising the term ‘MDA’ to ensure maritime safety, security, economy, and environmental preservation from emerging non-traditional security (NTS) threats. This triggered the global adoption of information technology (IT), such as the IFC, to know what is happening in real-time, utilising artificial intelligence (AI), Satellites, and fusing various sensor inputs. MDA is crucial for Bangladesh’s trade, livelihood, blue economy (BE), environment, and national interests. Bangladesh’s Constitution and the maritime legislations vividly stressed the responsibility to safeguard the Maritime Domain (MD). Despite pioneering the Maritime Zones Act in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Bangladesh’s MDA falls short in real-time technological vigilance. Besides, nearly 25 organisations including maritime ministries, government agencies, security forces, and ancillary organisations operate in Bangladesh’s MD, but in isolation without any integrated Common Operating Picture (COP). Hence, developing a real-time functional maritime picture for a safe and secure MD is essential. With a vast, complex, yet aspiring MD, it is now the need of the hour for Bangladesh to formulate a ‘whole-of-government’ approach to enhance its MDA. This research aims to establish an integrated IFC with a COP for all the maritime agencies to ensure a comprehensive MDA. It adopted a mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative methods). Besides analysing secondary sources and policy papers, a primary survey of boat operator communities from coastal areas as well as seagoing Navy and Coast Guard Officers was conducted to identify bottom-up needs assessments. Key Informant Interviews (KII) of maritime experts, policy makers, and think-tanks were carried out to link the functional and governance perspectives.

---

---

Finally, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of IT experts was conducted to examine the feasibility of IFC in Bangladesh. Some IFC models of SE Asian countries and IOR have also been studied. The findings of this exploratory research may help the government to plan and establish an integrated IFC at the national level for all the maritime agencies to enhance the MDA of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** *Maritime Domain Awareness, Information Fusion Centre, Maritime Security, Non-Traditional Security.*

---

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh's extensive maritime domain (MD) in the Bay of Bengal (BoB), long perceived as a relatively stable zone, now faces growing challenges. Maritime security amidst the non-traditional security (NTS) threats, viz maritime crime, transboundary drug and human trafficking, forced sea migration, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, dumping, pollution, and natural calamities, is crucial for Bangladesh. Besides, its coastal security cannot ignore the vulnerability of maritime terrorism. Furthermore, Search and Rescue (SAR) and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) are frequently challenged by marine accidents and natural disasters in Bangladesh. The vast sea, the extensive coast, and complex maritime activities require a robust security monitoring structure. However, Bangladesh's maritime security has shortfalls in real-time vigilance as the maritime forces and agencies depend on physical surveillance and conventional practices. Meanwhile, maritime security had a paradigm shift in the post-9/11 scenario, revolutionising Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) for the littorals to know 'what is happening in real-time' in the MD (Goward, 2010). This has triggered the global adoption of IT using the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) to detect real-time anomalies utilising artificial intelligence (AI), Satellites, Automatic Identification System (AIS), Long Range Identification Tracking (LRIT), and fusing vigilance inputs from multiple sensors and platforms. MDA is crucial for Bangladesh's trade, livelihood, blue economy (BE), environment, and national security. Besides, Bangladesh's Constitution and the maritime legislations vividly stress the responsibility to safeguard the MD. Despite pioneering the enactment of the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act in 1974, Bangladesh falls short of developing an integrated Common Operating Picture (COP) for the maritime agencies to vigil and respond. Some fragmentary efforts to incorporate

IT into maritime security are in the pipeline, but not integrated into any central network. So, developing the real-time maritime COP is essential to create a robust and comprehensive maritime security. It requires a ‘whole-of-government’ approach at the functional and strategic level. This research aims to assess the feasibility of establishing an integrated IFC as a strategic mechanism to enhance the MDA in Bangladesh.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

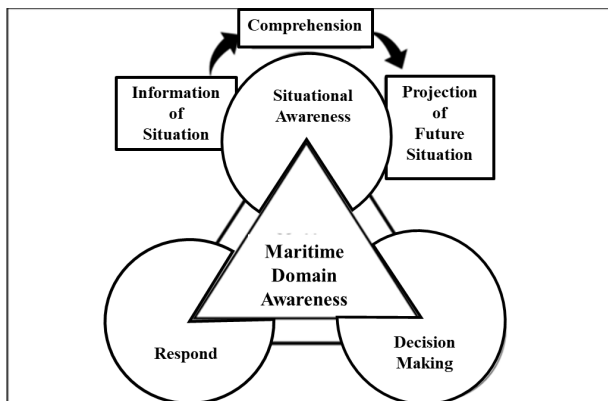
This research focuses on improving MDA. Bangladesh’s MDA can be susceptible to volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) situations without real-time detection and information sharing. The research directly impacts maritime security, the safety of the maritime community, the economy, and the marine environment. Hence, it explores the feasibility of IFC utilising IT. This research is crucial for national security, and the outcome can be a ‘game changer’ for Bangladesh’s MD. The findings can also contribute to humanitarian assistance, maintaining good order at sea, and regional stability in the IOR.

## **OPERATIONALISATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

**MD.** Bangladesh’s MD is demarcated by the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974 (Amended 2021), which includes the internal waters, territorial waters, the Contiguous Zone (CZ), the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and the Continental Shelf (CS). The High Sea lies beyond the EEZ.

**MDA and IFC - The Connection.** “MDA is the effective understanding of anything associated with the MD that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment” (IMO, 2024). It refers to collecting, fusing, and analysing maritime data of any happenings (Situational Awareness) in ‘time’ and ‘space’ for actions (Response) (Figure 1). The MDA covers the entire maritime security matrix (Bueger, 2015), where, for information fusion, IFC is pivotal. IFC can collect borderless vigilance of multiple real-time data through Satellites, AIS, LRIT, sensors, and platforms to produce a COP (KII, Secretary, MOFA). It uses AI algorithms and data sharing software for evaluating and sharing accurate and actionable intelligence and solutions for response by enforcing agencies.

**Figure 1: MDA and IFC Connection**



*Source: Endley's Situational Awareness Model, 1995*

## SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

MDA enables the littorals to know ‘what is happening in real-time’ (U.S. National MDA Plan, SI/2004). It is the cornerstone of national security (Boraz, 2009). The MD remains vulnerable if ungoverned and unpoliced without real-time vigilance (Goward & Nimmich, 2009), which is pertinent for Bangladesh. The United Nations Convention for Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982 has further inspired the small littorals to vigil beyond their national waters (Doorey, 2016). If not responded timely, transboundary NTS threats can jeopardise the coastal, maritime, and national security (Pushpita, 2013). In the IT era, AIS, LRIT and Satellite applications have strengthened the traditional maritime vigilance (Metrick & Hicks, 2018). The MDA is the process to gather, fuse, and analyse data to share actionable information for response (Goward, 2009). Successfully, the IFC could develop real-time COP (Guerrero et al., 2008). In the post 9/11 scenario, various regional security initiatives, maritime conventions, and commercial applications have emerged (Yanze, 2015). Most of the reviewed literature related to MDA focused on the western, SE Asian, Mediterranean, and IO, but the BoB remained unaddressed. Meanwhile, the evolving Indo-Pacific MDA (IPMDA), Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Chinese Belt Road Initiative (BRI), and Indian White Shipping Agreement (WSA) are eyeing the IOR (Singh, 2022). However, a comprehensive, implementable information sharing mechanism for Bangladesh has not been researched adequately. Although Bangladesh’s Constitution and

maritime legislations vividly stressed the responsibility to safeguard the MD, the integrated mechanism and governance have not been duly structured. Even the national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plan ignored the IFC in Bangladesh (a2i, 2023), and there remains a notable research gap on the quest for establishing an integrated IFC for Bangladesh's MD. The MDA with IT is now Bangladesh's need of the hour (Alam, 2019).

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The primary objective is to assess the feasibility of establishing an integrated IFC as a strategic mechanism to enhance MDA in Bangladesh. It analyses the MDA gaps for addressing the NTS threats, explores IFC potentials to improve technological vigilance and information sharing, and recognises the challenges and opportunities of establishing an IFC in Bangladesh.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Primary Research Question**

What is the implication of IFC for Bangladesh in enhancing MDA?

### **Secondary Research Questions**

- What are Bangladesh's MDA's existing challenges and concerns?
- What mechanisms and practices are available for Bangladesh to ensure comprehensive MDA?
- What are the institutional and technological gaps of real-time MDA in Bangladesh?
- How can an IFC address the challenges posed by NTS?
- What models best suit a tailored IFC in the BoB?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative). The KII, FGD, literature, data from the primary survey, and secondary sources were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to establish the research objectives.

## DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

In this survey, 565 respondents participated (Table 1). Purposive sampling was used to select the experienced maritime professionals and the typical maritime population. The thematic interpretation of secondary sources, viz policy papers, international studies, websites, online journals, and books/e-books is done for qualitative analysis. Visits to Secretariates, Ministries, and various maritime projects facilitated the data collection. KII of senior government officials, operational commanders, and think-tank academia generated the policy insights of the MDA framework and regulatory mechanisms. Interviews of Subject Matter Experts (SME), e.g., cloud apps companies, Defence Attaches, and officers of countries having IFC, were made through open questionnaires. The FGD with software specialists and IT experts on cyber, satellite, and data fusion was pivotal in examining the technological feasibility of IFC. A primary survey of 171 boatmen, mainly selected from the coastal belt of Chattogram, Bhola, Patuakhali and Khulna, was conducted through a structured questionnaire to ascertain the NTS threats they encounter. Another purposive survey of 352 seagoing Navy and Coast Guard Officers was made to determine the difficulties of vigilance and response without a real-time maritime picture. In addition, seven Case Studies of recurring NTS threats in national and international waters were examined to identify the evolving vulnerabilities. Finally, Model Studies of four IFCs of SE Asia and India have been done to understand the IFC mechanism. All participants during the survey, KII, and FGD have given their informed consent.

<i>Table 1: Respondents Participated in Survey</i>		
Type of Respondents	Study Sample	Instrumentation
Senior Officials, Heads of Agencies, Think Tanks	<b>16</b>	<b>KII</b>
Project Directors, IFC Observers, Security Experts	<b>17</b>	<b>SME Interview</b>
Technology experts, Directors of IT, Cyber, Software	<b>9</b>	<b>FGD</b>
Enforcing Agencies (BN/BCG seagoing Officers)	<b>352</b>	<b>Survey 1</b>
Boatmen Operators (Chattogram, Bhola, Patuakhali, Khulna)	<b>171</b>	<b>Survey 2</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>565</b>	

*Source: Survey by Researcher*

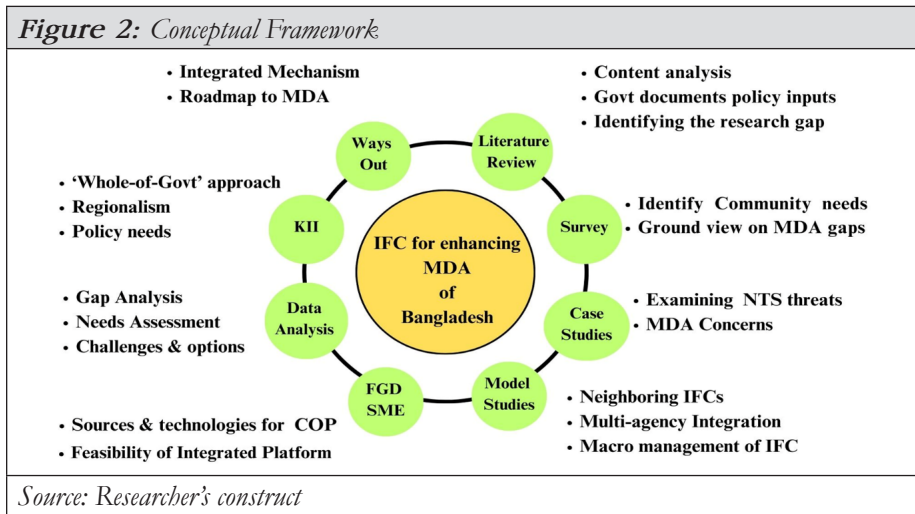
## SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The research focused on Bangladesh’s MD, particularly the BoB, and the coastal areas. Narrowing the information spectrum of the vast MD was difficult, and

limited statistical data could be collected due to time constraints. The insufficiency of the national maritime database is also felt. The survey respondents' lack of understanding of satellite apps and data fusion generated initial difficulties. Lastly, during KII, the question of why Bangladesh has not yet established an integrated IFC, even after 50 years of independence, unveiled a grey area of lead responsibility, as 25 ministries, security agencies, regulatory organs, seaports, and ancillary organisations are operating in the same MD but in isolation.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research pursued the following framework to select the respondents and progress with the findings related to the research objectives (Figure 2):



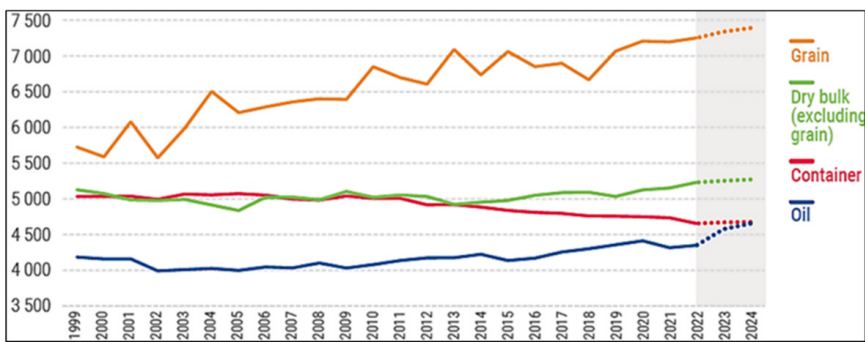
## MDA IN BANGLADESH’S CONTEXT

### MDA-THE IDEA

**Safe Use of the Sea.** The Latin concept ‘Mare Liberum’ of 1609, i.e., ‘freedom of the seas’, led to the ‘common heritage of mankind’ (Schrijver, 2016) for the seafaring trade by all. However, throughout history, the sea remained conducive for littorals aware of its maritime happenings for security. The oceans today are gradually becoming more complex due to the multiplication of marine traffic and evolving NTS threats. For example, the trade diversion due to the ongoing

Ukraine war, Houthi and Somali attacks has added 6,000 extra detouring miles (Table 2), thereby increasing trade costs by 35% (Duggal & Haddad, 2024), and container trade has spiked by 250% (Gruet & Josephs, 2024). The chain effect has caused port congestion and increased freight charges between Bangladesh and China from 1000 to 2500 USD (Shahadat, 2024). The disruption of Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) ultimately affects the maritime good order and negatively impacts trade and the economy.

**Table 2:** Distance Travelled per ton of Maritime Cargo, 1999-2024



Source: UNCTAD, Clarkson, Shipping Intelligence Network (July 2023)

**MDA-Global Adoption.** Traditional ‘navy-centric’ maritime security now also involves NTS threats to the economy, society, and the global commons. Besides, UNCLOS triggered the small littorals to vigil their Area of Interest (AOI) within and beyond EEZ for resources, trade, and SLOC (Guilfoyle, 2019). Accordingly, several information-sharing regimes emerged globally to enhance MDA (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Information Sharing Regimes Emerged Globally

Information Regime	Member Countries	Region/Focus
Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE)	300 EU countries	Global sharing
Global Maritime Environment Security (GMES)	EU and Licensed African countries	Global sharing of Earth observation Satellites
Clean Sea Net	23 EU countries and trade partners	EU-centric oil spill monitoring using Polar Satellites

**Table 3: Information Sharing Regimes Emerged Globally**

Information Regime	Member Countries	Region/Focus
Regional Agreement for Combating Armed Robbery and Piracy (ReCAAP)	ASEAN, Bangladesh, Japan, Korea, China, India, Sri Lanka, USA, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Australia, Denmark	South East Asia-centric maritime information sharing
Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC)	Djibouti, Comoros, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia, Mauritius	West IO and East Africa-centric maritime information sharing
IFC-IOR	India, Australia, France, Italy, Japan, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, UK, USA, South Africa	IOR-centric. Bangladesh has an Observer in the IFC IOR.

*Source: Researcher's findings from Websites [Online]*

## CHALLENGES OF BANGLADESH'S MD

**IUU Fishing.** Rudimentarily, 9 million tons of fish are caught by IUU yearly (Alam, 2021). Navy Commander Flotilla West states that BN and BCG ships are frequently driving away IUU boats, but without Satellite surveillance guarding IUU entries, by mere patrolling is difficult (KII, COMFLOT West). Bangladesh ranks 59th out of 152 countries in the Global IUU Index 2023. Thus, technological vigilance is essential before the IUU crisis rings an alarm. Current Statistics of IUU fishing in the BoB are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Statistics of IUU in the BoB

Year	Origin IUU	By BN		By BCG	
		Apprehended	Driven Away	Apprehended	Driven Away
2020	India	02	823	03	-
	Myanmar	04	16	-	-
	Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-
2021	India	-	628	04	37
	Myanmar	-	46	-	-
	Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-
2022	India	-	273	37	10
	Myanmar	-	02	-	-
	Sri Lanka	-	03	-	-
2023	India	-	315	-	220
	Myanmar	-	-	-	-
	Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-
Total		06	2106	44	267

*Source: BN and BCG Headquarters, 2024*

Bangladesh's NTS threats, viz armed robbery, smuggling, pollution, marine crimes, accidents, and casualties, are recurring and pose significant challenges. Frequent news appears in dailies, and many remain undetected. A few case studies of recurring maritime incidents requiring real-time monitoring are highlighted in Table 5.

**Table 5: Case Study - Recurring Maritime Incidents in Bangladesh’s MD**

Maritime Incidents	Findings
Case Study 1: Distress. 15 fishermen from a disabled trawler rescued by a BN ship after 10 days drifting (bdnews24.com, 15 Jan 2024).	Locating distress without AIS tracking is time-consuming.
Case Study 2: Armed Robbery. 10 dead bodies of boatmen found, killed at sea and kept in a trawler off Cox’s Bazar (Dhaka Tribune, 23 Apr 2024).	Criminals exploit the absence of real-time detection in the unregulated sea.
Case Study 3: Marine Casualty. 39 were killed and 100 injured after a defective ferry caught fire mid-river at Jhalkathi (BBC News, 24 Dec 2021).	Unfit vessels cannot be tracked, and rescue is delayed without live monitoring.
Case Study 4: Drug Smuggling. BN seized significant drug haul U\$ 10 million - smugglers rampant at sea (Vice News, 12 Feb 2015).	Tracking sea smugglers without a database and pattern analysis is difficult.
Case Study 5: Oil Spillage. Sagar Nandini-2 sank with 1.1 million litres of furnace oil polluting the river Meghna; not mitigated even after 80 hours (Dhaka Tribune, 28 Dec 2022)	Pollution mitigation without spillage tracing is challenging.
<i>Source: National Newspapers [Online]</i>	

**SAR and HADR.** Every year, casualties at sea are high (Statistics of SAR in Table 6). The Department of Shipping (DoS) is responsible for SAR in the BoB with meagre resources (Iqbal, 2019), for which BN established Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) and Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) (AFD Website). The absence of AIS for detecting immediate distress location and information sharing delays the SAR. Department of Fisheries (DoF) has planned to install AIS in artisan boats, but without integrating it with the COP of MRCC, the purpose may not be optimally served, as opined by Commander MRSC (KII, Azim).

**Table 6: Statistics of SAR in the BoB**

Year	BN		BCG	
	Rescued (Alive)	Recovered (Dead)	Rescued (Alive)	Recovered (Dead)
2020	104	29	231	59
2021	23	47	533	80
2022	36	28	76	98
2023	89	16	557	54
2024	00	04	47	10
Total	252	124	1444	301

*Source: BN and BCG Headquarters 2024*

**Maritime Crime and Terrorism.** Real-time vigilance is difficult at sea than on land. In Bangladesh, many fishermen had been hostages, attacked, or even killed offshore; nearly 411 fishermen were killed and 1000 grievously injured between 2010-2014 in Cox’s Bazar (Saara, 2024). BN fleet Commander, responsible for deploying ships at sea, opines that unless the maritime information from various agencies is integrated and instantly shared, it would be challenging to combat maritime crimes (KII, BN Fleet Commander).

**Drug Trafficking.** Yaba and Methamphetamine smuggling from Myanmar through coastal waters is alarming. Former Ambassador Shameem Ahsan expressed his anxiety on the proximity of the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle, funnelling drugs into South Asia (NDC Maritime Seminar, 2024). “Almost 95% Yaba from Myanmar comes by the river Naaf. In 2023 alone 14,73,4774 Yaba and 142,95 kilo Crystal Meth alone were apprehended based on human intelligence (HUMINT) not technological surveillance” (SME, Sector Commander Border Guard).

**Protection of SLOC in Evolving Vulnerability.** SLOC security is not only a wartime challenge but also a peacetime concern. The government vested BN with the safety of merchant trade in the high seas (MOD Gazette, 1975). Recently, the Somalian and Houthi pirates displayed lethality and vulnerability in the westbound SLOC, for which a regional response is crucial (see Case Study 6). During the piracy of Bangladeshi MV JAHAN and the 33 hostage days of MV ABDULLAH, the SLOC vulnerability in the high sea and Bangladesh’s absolute dependency on regional IFCs were evident (bdnews24.com).

*Case Study 6-Evolving Vulnerabilities along SLOCs*

**Evolving Piracy & Terrorism in High Seas (Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, West IO)**

**Trade Implications:** Disruption in SLOC, spike in freight charges, shrinking trade.

**Weaponry & Attack Pattern:** Somalian piracy onboard Bangladeshi MV Abdullah 600 miles East of Somalia for 33 days. Before that MV Jahan Moni was hijacked. Bangladesh was dependent on regional response. Houthis carried out 43 subsequent armed attacks and 22 missile strikes, sank one UK Ship Rubymar, and also launched ballistic missiles at USS Dwight Eisenhower (US Carrier)

**Regional Response:** UNSCR 2722/2024 accredited European Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Operation ASPIDES. India launched Operation Prosperity Guardian.

**Role of IFC:** Regional Maritime IFC Madagascar (RMIFC), IFC-IOR, IFCs of UKMTO and EUNAVFOR are utilizing Satellite cloud apps, Electronic Intelligence (ELINT), Signal Intelligence (SIGINT), and Network Centric C5ISR (Pandit, 2024).

**Lessons for Bangladesh:** The Ministry of Defence mandates BN to protect merchant trade in the high seas. It demands real-time anomaly detection and regional information sharing on evolving vulnerabilities. Bangladesh needs its own IFC to share and cooperate with regional IFCs.

**Source:** (Landale & Gardner, 2024, BBC), (Scarr et al, 2024), (alawaba, 2024), MOD Gazette 1975.

## MDA-NEED ANALYSIS FOR BANGLADESH

**Securing Trade Dependency.** A conducive SLOC and MD are prerequisites for Bangladesh's trade, economy, and security as it aims for 9.9% GDP growth by 2041. Nearly 3000 foreign ships visit Bangladesh's ports yearly, and the projected freight value will be 435 billion USD in the next ten years (Alam, 2021). These offshore economic ventures require MDA with proactive maritime vigilance in Bangladesh's vast MD.

**Developing BE.** Bangladesh was chosen as a pilot country for BE development by UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) - 14 in 2014, which the former Principal SDG Coordinator emphasised, saying, "SDG requires inter-agency monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Delta Plan (Azad, NDC Lecture 2024). BE implications have explicit environmental, safety, and security requirements against maritime crimes, armed robbery, etc. (Iqbal & Kutubuddin, 2020).

**Monitoring Coastal Security.** Bangladesh's coast meets Myanmar and Indian waters. The former President of the IORA<sup>1</sup> Business Forum aptly commented,

<sup>1</sup>*Indian Ocean Rim Association*

“Transboundary NTS threats due to closed littoral proximity can pose challenges to economic, maritime, and national security” (Fahim, 2024). The porous coastal feature is also susceptible to IUU, smuggling, maritime crimes, and terrorism. As such, “traditional monitoring to combat NTS will require real-time detection, sharing, and a central regulatory framework” (KII, DG BCG). Additionally, for seamless vigilance, “coastal radar chain and ‘crowd-sourcing’ apps<sup>2</sup> would be essential for Bangladesh” (KII, ACNS Materiel).

**Regulating Shipping and Fishing.** Nearly 16,078 registered ships, tankers, containers, passenger ferries, and other vessels operate in the coastal waters and adjacent seas (DOS Statistics, 2023). According to the Chattogram Marine Fisheries Office, besides the 12,190 registered artisan boats, the unregistered 32,896 mechanised boats are VUCA to MDA (The Business Standard, 2023). Survey finds 77% of such coastal boats have no AIS, remaining ‘unknown’ to coastal vigilance.

**Seeking Geostrategic Balance.** IO is the ‘centre stage’ of the world with two central enclosed bays—the BoB and Arabian Sea; one leads through Andaman choke points and the other through the Gulf (Kaplan, 2010). Emphasising the significance of the BoB in IOR, the Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori commented, “Bangladesh’s Indo-Pacific outlook should focus more on technological vigilance to ensure maritime security” (Keynote Speech NDC, 2024). SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA, IPMDA, QUAD, BRI, and WSA have the scope of regional maritime information sharing, but the geostrategic balance is vital. However, “amidst the contesting geostrategic canvas, Bangladesh needs a pragmatic policy to participate in regional initiatives to meet its interests” (Khan, 2024).

## MDA IN POLICY AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

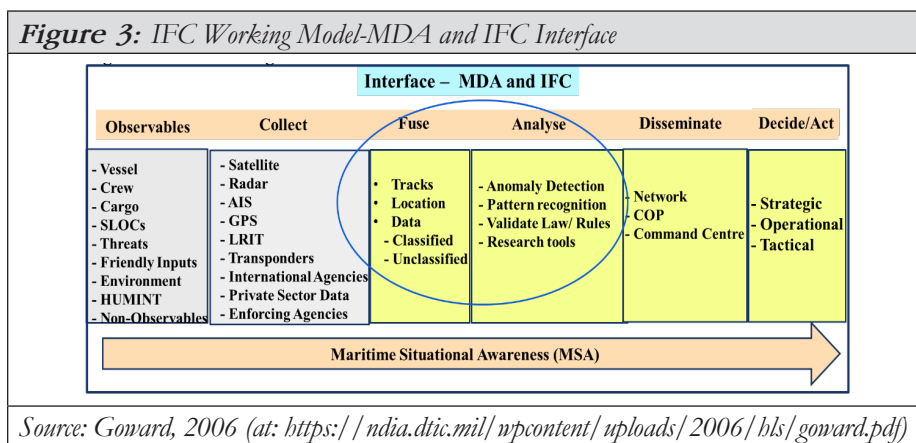
**Constitutional Obligation.** Bangladesh’s Constitution mandates the protection of the MD. Accordingly, the maritime ministries regulate through sectoral policies without any central regulating body (Iqbal, 2019). Article 143 (1) and (2) of the Constitution specifies “all minerals and things of value underlying the ocean within the territorial waters, or ocean over the continental shelf, territorial waters and continental shelf as the property of the Republic” and it requires safeguard. This is a colossal responsibility, as safeguarding is related to the capacity.

<sup>2</sup>*Sea-watch (Crowd sourcing apps) enables Filipino fishermen to report suspicious incident/ crime from sea using mobile via Satellite relay (Brenster, 2023).*

**Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974 (Amendment 2021).** Maritime Zones Act has specified directives relating to sovereignty, territorial integrity, threats to maritime installations (Section 15), dumping, pollution, noxious/nuclear discharge (Section 5, 8, 17), rescue of shipwrecked vessel and personnel up to high seas (Section 4, 10) and suppression of piracy, armed robbery, terrorism, illegal fishing (Section 9). It also advised Ocean Governance, BE, and regional cooperation (Section 7). It entrusted BN and BCG to board, investigate, and arrest (Sections 11 and 28) and keep electronic evidentiary proofs (Section 29) for legal proceedings. HADR and military surveys have also been authorised in Sections 7 (G) and 7 (H).

### IFC IN BANGLADESH’S MDA FRAMEWORK

**MDA and IFC Interface.** Professor Goward’s MDA Model 2006 (Jacinevicius & Petrauskas, 2008) simplifies the interface between MDA and IFC. It illustrates that information comes from different observables, vessels, SLOCs, threats, and ‘non-observables’ like HUMINT. IFC gathers information using Satellites, Radar, AIS, LRIT, and other sensors and platforms. A Geographic Information System (GIS) fuses multiple data and information. Fusion is complex because the correlation is not standardised (Yanze, 2015). However, the IFC collects, evaluates, correlates, and classifies threats using AI software algorithm (Soldi, 2021). The networked COP is shared in real-time with decision-making layers for response (Figure 3).



## **BENEFITS OF IFC FOR BANGLADESH'S MDA**

**Real-Time Vigilance.** Satellite cloud apps can monitor massive maritime traffic, identify anomalies, and generate automated responses for security enforcers.

**SAR and HADR.** IFC can pinpoint distress from AIS, Emergency Position Indicating Beacon (EPIRB), Distress Alert Transponder (DAT), to rescue (FGD).

**Anomaly Tracking.** During the SME interview, the maritime law specialist working in BN stated that maritime crime would require legal follow-up where digital anomaly tracking by IFC is pivotal, as 'electronic evidence of maritime crime can be presented in the International Court' (SME, Maritime Law Specialist, BN).

**Dumping and Pollution Control.** Dumping and pollution cannot always be detected by physical surveillance. "Detection of toxic dumping, oil spill, deliberate/ accidental pollution through Cloud apps like Hawkeye, NORBAT, Sea Vision is possible" (SME, Director Hawkeye360).

**Proactive Deployment.** AI correlates patterns and behavioral analysis of suspicious vessel movements and anomalies for proactive and cost-effective surveillance deployment, avoiding duplication of operational efforts.

**Coastal Security Layer.** The IFC strengthens layered coastal security, predicting early suspicious movement. Taking the lesson of the Mumbai terror attack in 2008, where terrorists had maritime access, "Indian IFC is integrating their large fishing community by registering AIS/DAT/mobile network to strengthen coastal security" (SME, BN Observer in IFC-IOR).

## **INFORMATION FUSION-CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN BANGLADESH**

**Challenges in Inter-agency Integration.** Inter-agency integration of information is challenging. The Chairman BIWTA, responsible for internal water transportation in Bangladesh, opines that no single maritime agency can have all the information. However, each has something to share (KII, Chairman BIWTA). On the contrary, not every agency requires all but relevant information. However, "we need to decide what information we want in IFC and with whom to share" (KII, COMFLOT West). Fusing inter-agency information on a central GIS and

sharing it with concerned agencies requires a protocol. However, the scope of bridging information of various zones, the challenges involved, and probable inputs are shown below (Table 7).

**Table 7: Bridging Information for COP in Bangladesh**

Zone	NTS Focus	Common Challenges	Agency Inputs
Inshore	IUU fishing, maritime crime, SAR, HADR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High vessel density</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BN with sensor inputs (all zones)</li> </ul>
Territorial Sea & Contiguous Zone	Armed robbery, smuggling, pollution, maritime crime, marine accidents, illegal migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of real-time detection</li> <li>Difficulties of monitoring/ tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCG with sensor inputs (coastal)</li> <li>River Police with criminal data (inshore waters)</li> </ul>
Exclusive Economic Zone	IUU, piracy, arms & drug smuggling, illegal migration, marine accident, dumping, SAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overlapping sectoral jurisdiction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ports with VTMS (up to CZ)</li> <li>DoS on traffic information (BOB)</li> </ul>
High Seas	Piracy, dumping, illegal migration, marine accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of Inter-ministerial/Inter-agency integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DoF on fishing community information (coastal)</li> <li>BIWTA on vessel movements (inshore)</li> </ul>

*Source: Researcher's Findings from KII*

**Opportunities from Existing Practices and Initiatives.** Bangladesh has nearly 25 maritime ministries, security agencies, regulatory organs, seaports, and ancillary organisations. Some of the ongoing IT-related initiatives/projects are:

**DoF.** DoF has taken up the Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project (SCMFP) to monitor fisheries, including IUU activities, and equip AIS in artisan boats (SME, Project Officer SCMFP). However, a comprehensive response must integrate BN and BCG.

**DoS.** With Korean technical support, DoS has launched the Establishment of GMDSS and Integrated Maritime Navigation System (EGIMNS) to track AIS and LRIT in the BoB. It can get distress location from Air Traffic Control (ATC) Dhaka via ATC Delhi through COSPAS-SARSAT.<sup>3</sup> However, EGIMNS is not yet integrated with the response agencies.

**BIWTA.** Ongoing BIWTA's 'Riverine Transport Project-1', financed by the World Bank, will monitor inshore vessels in 'Chattogram-Dhaka-Ashuganj'. However, the Chairman BIWTA agrees that inshore information must be shared with BN and BCG to handle marine casualties, SAR, and HADR" (KII, Chairman BIWTA).

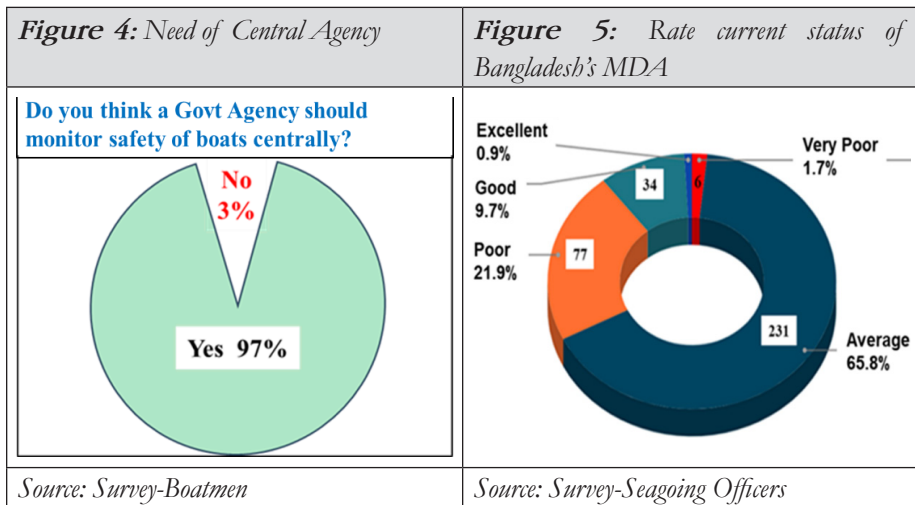
<sup>3</sup>COSPAS-SARSAT-Joint Russian-American programme having Observation and Geostationary Satellites. India incorporated COSPAS-SARSAT with IFC-IOR.

**Ports.** Bangladeshi seaports have a Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) to monitor live traffic up to the fiscal limit of the port (Rahman, S., 2016). “VTMIS can trigger early warning for coastal and harbour security, if integrated” (KII, Chairman Mongla Port).

**BN and BCG.** BN and BCG deploy ships, patrol aircraft, and helicopters for vigilance. Incorporating subscribed apps like IORIS, SENTINEL, C-MAP, and others is essential for real-time vigilance. Bangladesh recently signed the CRIMARIO.<sup>4</sup> project to use IORIS for ‘white-shipping’<sup>5</sup> monitoring (Director Naval Operations during FGD). More such apps will ease surveillance time lag as Bangladesh has no observation Satellite. Besides, the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff emphasised on coastal radar network, Drone, UAV, UUV, and cyber directorate for action-centric MDA (KII, ACNS Operations).

## SURVEY FINDINGS

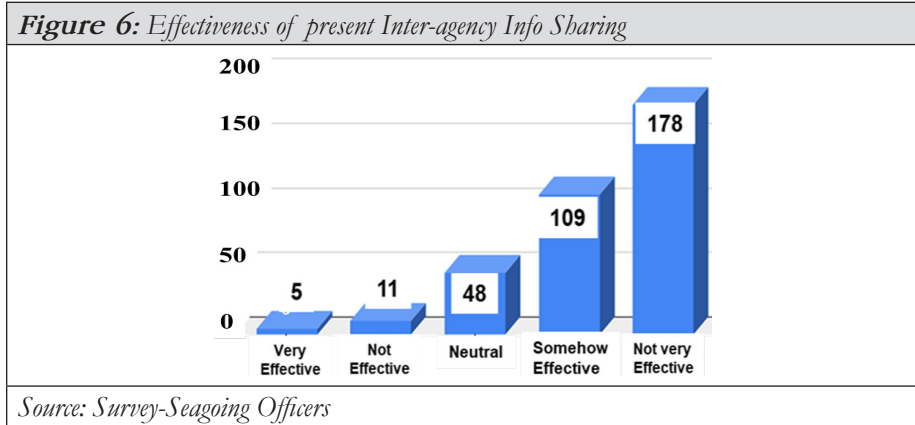
In a survey, 117 of the 171 boats were found to have a Communication Set, but the rest 54 respondents did not. Alarming, 131 (77%) without AIS/Distress equipment are exposed to the risk of life at sea. (46 out of 171) cannot inform the casualty to response authorities. More than 50% complain about the delay in SAR. Finally, 97% of boatmen opined that a central agency must constantly monitor boats at sea (Figure 4).



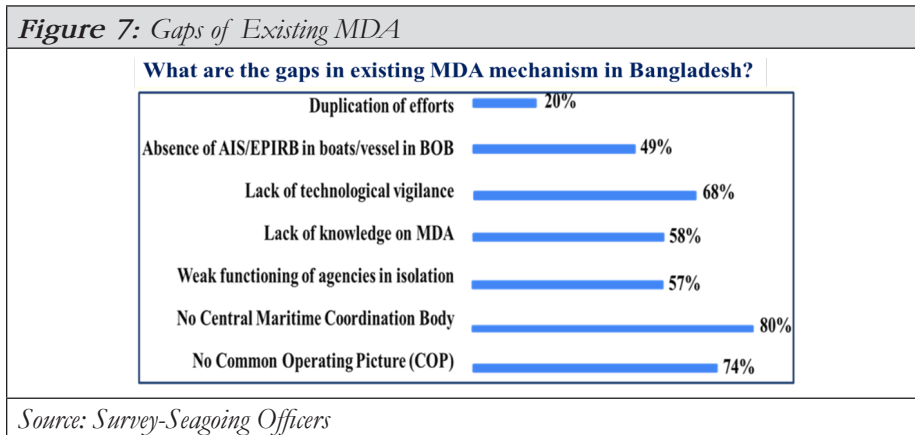
<sup>4</sup>CRIMARIO-Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific.

<sup>5</sup>'White-shipping' - Non-military commercial shipping

In another survey of 352 seagoing BN and BCG officers, 89.4% identified the present MDA as average or below (Figure 5) because in 50% of cases, anomalies remain undetected/unreported due to inefficient information sharing. 84.6% think Bangladesh’s inter-agency information sharing is not/not very effective (Figure 6).

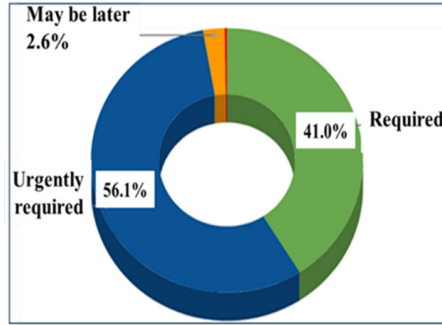


During the survey, the absence of a COP, central coordinating body, and meagre technological vigilance was recognized as gaps in the MDA mechanism (Figure 7).



Rationally, 93.7% demand integrated COP for gapless vigilance, 85.8% feel physical patrolling needs technological augmentation, and 97.1% endorse IFC as urgently required for maritime safety and security (Figure 8). Most respondents think COP will be effective/highly effective for protecting lives, the economy, and the environment, combating NTS, and maintaining good order (Figure 9). The need for IFC under a national framework is evident from the survey.

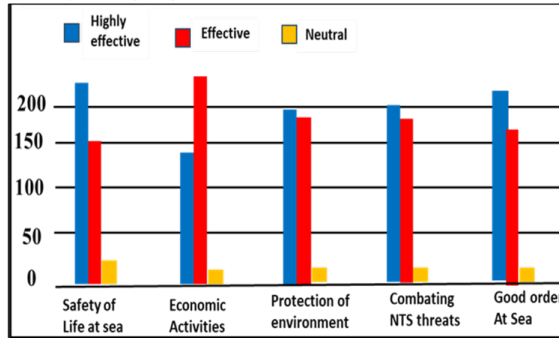
**Figure 8: Need of Integrated IFC in Bangladesh**



Source: Survey-Seagoing Officers

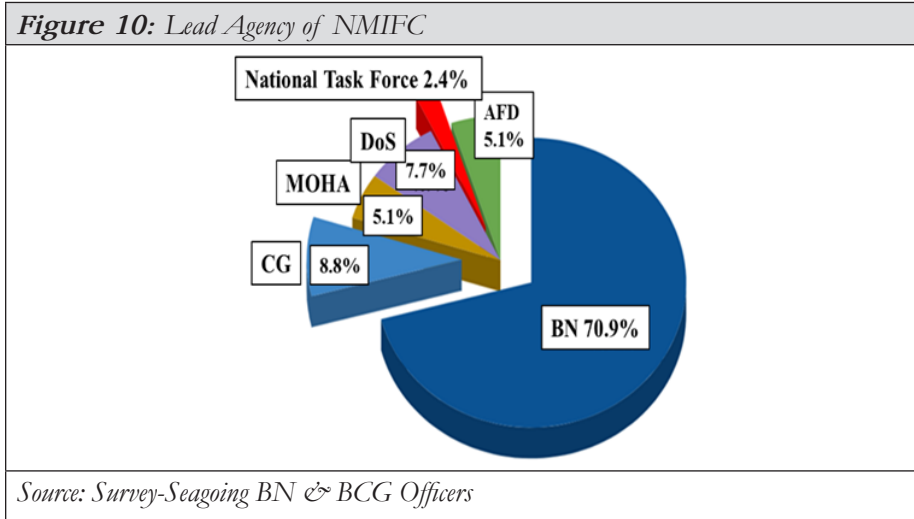
**Figure 9: Effectiveness of integrated IFC for maritime security**

**Figure 9: Effectiveness of integrated IFC for maritime security (Survey – Seagoing Officers)**



Source: Survey-Seagoing Officers

There were mixed opinions regarding the lead agency. Few broad frameworks: National Maritime Information Fusion Centre (NMIFC) and National Maritime Security Centre (NMSC) at the functional level, and National Maritime Domain Awareness Authority (NMDA) at the apex could be sorted out from the open-ended survey (Table 8). During KII, some referred examples of other littorals where NMIFC deals with White Shipping and NTS threat information could be led by BCG, and NMSC for confidential and cyber networking should be led by BN. However, in general, 70.9% opined that BN should lead the integrated IFC for expertise and its security nature (Figure 10). At the apex, NMDA should be advised by the appropriate Cabinet under the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO).



**Table 8: Proposals of IFC vis-à-vis MDA Authority**

National Maritime Council (NMC) under PMO	National Maritime Division (NMD) under the MOFA/MOHA/ Shipping Ministry	NMDA under PMO
National Task Force (NTF)	Separate Maritime Ministry	NMSC under BN
Integrated NMIFC in Naval HQ, Chattogram, and Mongla under BN	NMIFC under DoS	National Maritime Security Division under AFD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMIFC-70.9% opined that BN should lead NMIFC.</li> <li>• NMSC-For confidential/Cyber networking under BN.</li> <li>• NMDA-97.7% suggested National MDA Authority under PMO.</li> </ul>		
<i>Source: Survey-Seagoing BN &amp; BCG Officers</i>		

## WAY FORWARD

### Model Study-Neighbouring Countries' IFC

**South East Asian IFC (Model Study 1).** The Singapore, The IFC, Maritime Crisis Centre (SMCC), and Multinational Operations & Exercise Centre (MOEC) are '3 in 1 block' (Bueger, 2015). Singapore uses OASIS, SMART, and ReMIX software for information analysis and sharing with stakeholders. Filipino IFC (MRIC) is connected with Singapore IFC and USINDOPACOM, and Indonesian IFC (IMIC) is associated with Singapore portal information (see Model Study 1).

#### *Model Study 1: IFCs in SE Asia (Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia)*

##### **IFCs in SE Asia (Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia)**

##### **Singapore : Navy is the lead agency.**

- IFC, Singapore, Maritime Crisis Centre (SMCC), and Multinational Operations & Exercise Centre (MOEC) – **3 in 1 Block.**
- IFC for international sharing, SMCC for state agencies and MOEC for multilateral SAR.
- Uses Open & Analyzed Shipping Info System (**OASIS**) for info gathering, Sense-Making Analysis & Research Tool (**SMART**) to detect anomalies and Regional Maritime Info Exchange (**ReMIX**) for sharing with ReCAAP, IFC of India, Japan, EU & AU countries, Malacca Straits Patrol Info System (MSP-IS) with ASEAN littorals.

(Source: Bueger, 2015)

##### **Philippines : Navy is the lead agency.**

- Maritime Research Information Center (MRIC) uses U.S. Sea Vision & Marine Traffic.
- MRIC interfaced with Singapore, USINDOPACOM and coastal radars via Tactical Data Link (TDL). Fishermen uses 'crowd sourcing' apps for live sharing info from the sea via Satellites mobile network.

(Source: Cabigon, 2020, pp32-45)

##### **Indonesia : Coast Guard (Bakamla) lead agency.**

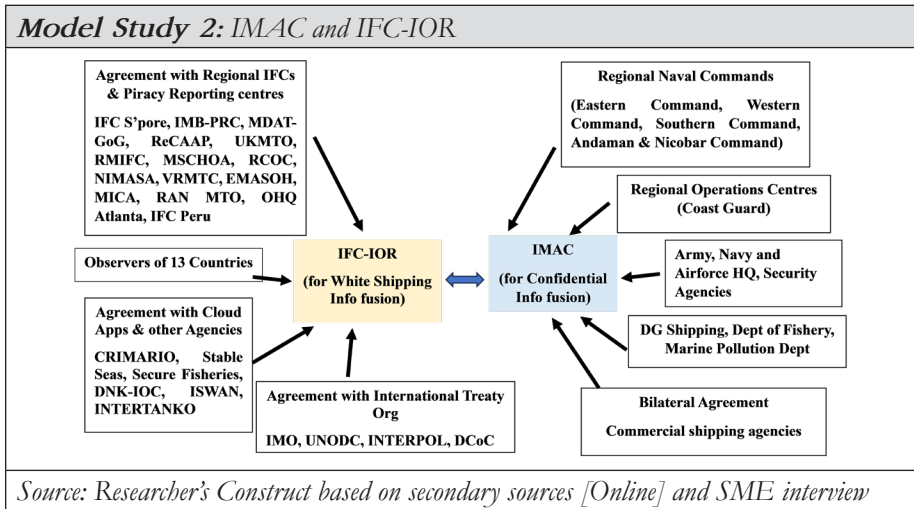
- Indonesian Maritime Information Centre (IMIC).
- IMIC Portal information sharing is not real-time and is not yet fully satisfactory.
- Indonesian IMIC depends on IFC Singapore for multilateral maritime info-sharing.

(Source: Setyawati et al, 2021)

*Source: Secondary sources [Online], SME interview of Attaches and IFC Observers*

**Indian IFC (Model Study 2).** Navy-led Indian Maritime Analysis Centre (IMAC) integrates 51 coastal stations, naval Signal and Electronic Intelligence (SIGINT and ELINT), and Satellite apps. Later, IFC-IOR was established in 2018 in the same IMAC building for sharing White Shipping information with other regional IFCs, IMO, Interpol, and various treaty-bound organizations (see Model Study). "IFC-IOR and IMAC are interfaced but channeled separately for white-shipping and national security monitoring, respectively" (SME, Observer IFC-IOR). It uses NISHAR (Network for Information Sharing) software. Besides,

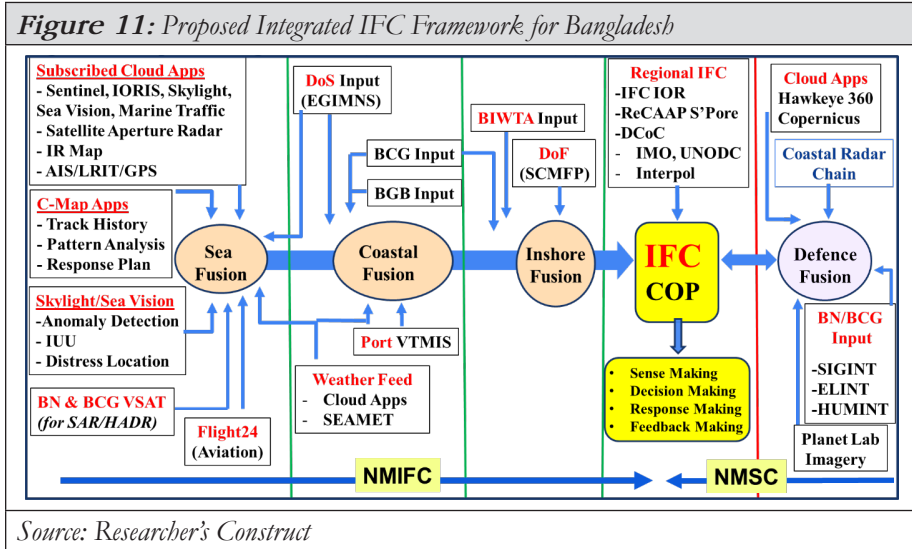
“India has revamped its traditional maritime governance by integrating 22 maritime ministries, agencies, and establishing a National Maritime Coordinator (NMC) for harmonizing the information protocol between IMAC and IFC-IOR” (SME, Shankar).



## PROPOSED IFC FRAMEWORK FOR BANGLADESH

Taking the perceptions and ideas of other regional IFCs into account, Bangladesh can have an IFC with tailored options. It could have two blocks: the NMIFC for national and regional sharing of white-shipping information and the NMSC for sharing amongst national security agencies. After FGD, an integrated IFC for Bangladesh with Sea, Coastal, and Inshore segments integrated into the central COP is proposed (Figure 11). The Defence segment NMSC can be stand-alone but interfaced with NMIFC, like the Indian IMAC and Singaporean SMCC.

**Figure 11: Proposed Integrated IFC Framework for Bangladesh**



Source: Researcher's Construct

**Sea Fusion.** The Sea Fusion segment can cover the BoB and the high seas of AOI. “Cloud apps like IORIS, Skylight, Sentinel, Sea Vision on C-Map are experimentally fused in BN IFC Pilot project” (KII, COMFLOT WEST). With the signing of the CRIMARIO project, apps like IORIS, Skylight, and Sentinel can be used (FGD). Using ENIGMS, the distress information, transmitted through Digital Service Calling (DSC) via coastal stations and Very Small Aperture (VSAT) used by BN/BCG may be integrated with MRSC for SAR (SME, EGIMNS Project Officer).

**Coastal Fusion.** “Port VTMISS can augment COP” (SME, VSAT Project Officer). “SCMFP of DOF can monitor AIS and GPS of artisan and IUU boats, which can be integrated with IFC by mobile digital selective calling (DSC)” (SME, SCMFP Project Officer). However, integrating the maritime community is crucial as nearly 60k artisan boats depend on the security response by maritime forces. HUMINT with a criminal database is also essential for coastal intelligence that needs to be connected.

**Inshore Fusion.** “Ongoing monitoring potential of the BIWTA project using GPS and AIS can offer a live inshore picture” (KII Chairman BIWTA). SPARSO and BMD can add weather data as a ‘stand-alone’ system in IFC. As maritime weather warning is crucial, establishing the Sea Meteorological (SEAMET) Centre with NMIFC may be considered in the future.

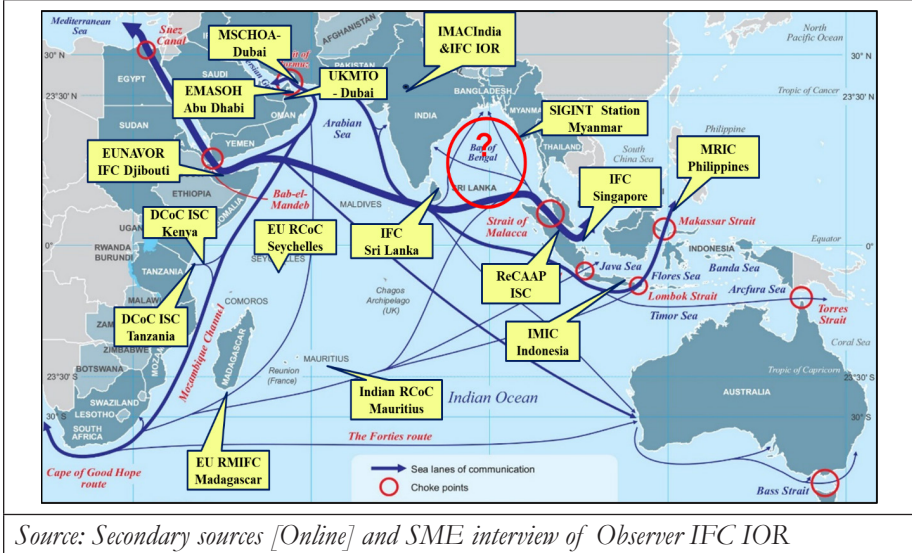
**Defence Fusion.** BN and BCG can use SIGINT and ELINT for constabulary vigilance (FGD). Hawkeye360 can make Radio Frequency triangulation of suspicious vessels (SME, Director Hawkeye). Planet Lab can offer sub-daily pictures of the coasts (FGD). Besides, cloud apps like Unseen Lab, Copernicus, and Airbus have defence intelligence options. However, these apps should be stand-alone in NMSC for confidential use by the maritime forces and intelligence agencies. BGB border vigilance can also facilitate monitoring illegal migration, drug/arms cartels in coastal areas.

**Futuristic Thoughts.** Deep-ocean Assessment & Reporting of Tsunami (DART), coastal radar chain, UAV, UUV, Satellite with Synthetic Radar, Visible IR Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) may be considered (FGD). Some local software experts affirm, “developing indigenous fusion and sharing software locally is possible, although the hardware dependency cannot be ignored” (SME, Software Engineer, Dhaka). Ministries may fund R&D for self-reliance. Bangladesh Ocean Research Institute (BORI), Bangladesh Institute for Maritime Research & Development (BIMRAD), Bangladesh Maritime University, and Bangladesh Institute for International Studies (BIIS) may be incorporated to formulate MDA policies. Finally, the boatmen community of the coastal belt of Bangladesh should come under a registered network gradually.

## REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING

Safety of merchant trade in SLOC, choke points, and piracy-prone areas cannot be ensured by any littoral state singly. The DG BSC concurs that information sharing by other regional IFCs during MV ABDULLAH piracy was appreciable (KII, DG BSC). A bilateral/ multilateral MoU/agreement is needed for information sharing with other IFCs. Regional naval cooperation, like the Malacca patrol of Southeast Asia, European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) operations, and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), can ensure SLOC safety in the high seas through cooperative engagement utilizing IFCs. Littorals need to maximize regional cooperation. The research also identifies the significant IFCs, Maritime Security Centres (MSC), and Reporting Coordination of Operations Centers (RCOC) in Bangladesh’s AOI (Figure 12). Although QUAD versus BRI friction in IOR is unavoidable, Bangladesh’s IFC may be tailored to suit its foreign policy, striking the regional balance for economic prosperity, free SLOC, and the global commons (KII, ACNS Operations).

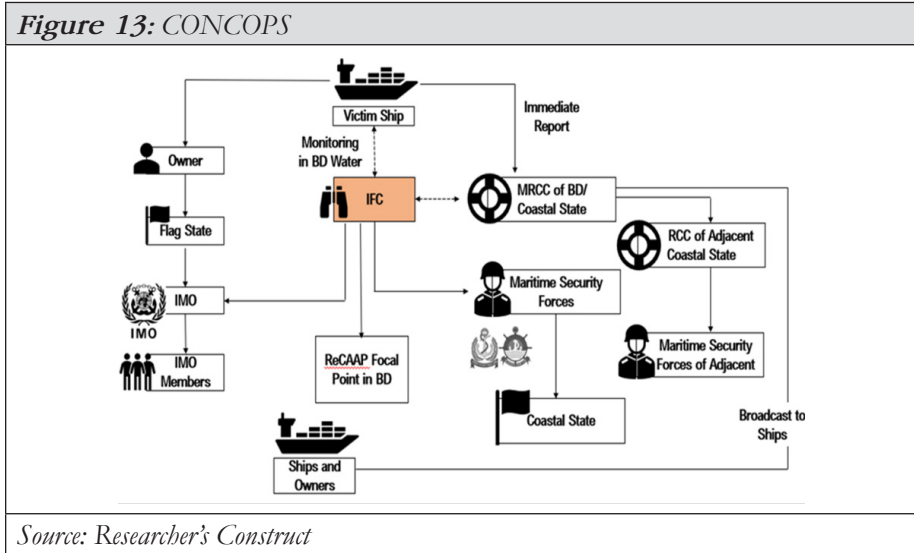
**Figure 12: Regional IFCs/ MSCs/ RCOCs in SLOCs of Bangladesh's AOI**



Source: Secondary sources [Online] and SME interview of Observer IFC IOR

## INTEROPERABILITY - CONCEPT OF COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS (CONCOPS)

CONCOPS is essential for the interoperability, communication, operational, and legal procedures. The DG BCG candidly suggests, “CONCOPS may include ‘victim-agency-military’ interface to meet multi-agency protocols in adherence to domestic and international laws” (KII, DG BCG). NMIFC may link the flag state, vessel owner, regional IFCs, IMO, and treaty organisations, and host state response forces by CONCOPS depicted below (Figure 13). In crisp, IFC can act as the link to regulate and foster the ‘victim-agency-military’ interface by detecting the anomalies at sea, sharing the information with concerned regional IFCs, the flag state, the owner agency as appropriate, and directing responsible maritime forces to act accordingly.



## MDA AND IFC - PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL AND APEX FRAMEWORK

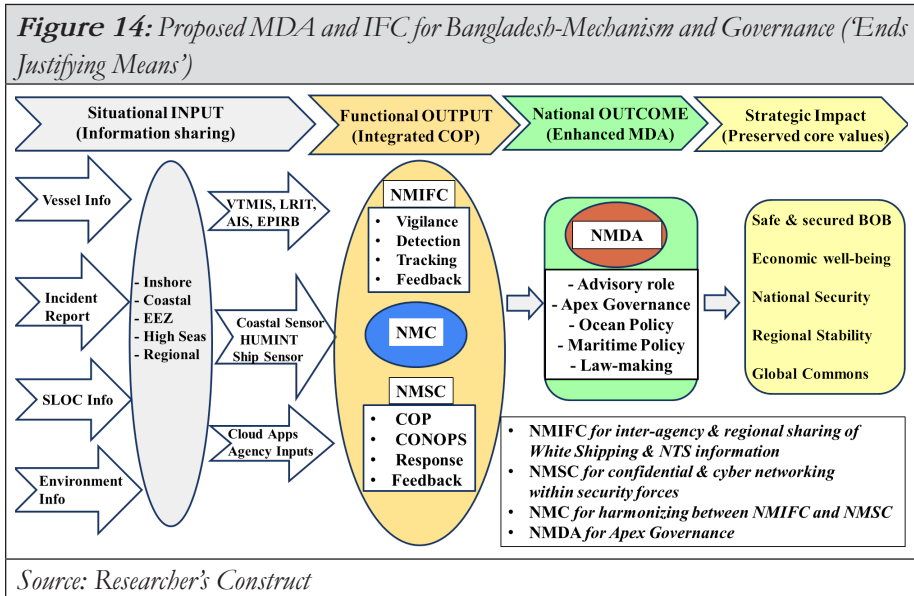
**‘Ends Justifying Means’.** While translating national interests into inter-ministerial strategies, the state has to synergise the national responsibilities (Gemma, 2020). In Bangladesh, the means of the MDA mechanism should meet the strategic ends. The maritime ministries through NMIFC and NMSC may integrate different maritime agencies to develop the COP. There has to be a regulating and functional layer of mechanisms to monitor, coordinate, and direct the IFC activities. At the apex under PMO, the National Maritime Domain Awareness Authority (NMDA) may govern the maritime ministries and liaise with international instruments. However, a separate maritime ministry is yet to earn currency in Bangladesh. The research did not venture into what hurdles it but it could sense that ‘who leads the integrated maritime authority’ is a dilemma. The bureaucratic procedures for real-time inter-agency information sharing may streamline jurisdictional responsibilities and protocols that trigger superfluous prohibitions. Genuinely, “collective security entails integration and Bangladesh may revamp its MDA as so-called ‘analogous’ information sharing will not suit the 4IR era” (KII, DG DoS). So, Bangladesh’s MDA vis-à-vis IFC mechanism may ponder an integrated functional and national framework to meet the strategic ends. (Figure 14).

**The Functional Mechanism.** In India, IMAC and IFC-IOR monitor national security and white-shipping information separately but are integrated, led by the Navy at the functional level (see Model study 2). The same pattern exists in Singapore for inter-agency, multi-national, and regional information sharing (see Model Study 1 - Singaporean IFC '3 in 1 block'). Bangladesh can integrate NMIFC and NMSC in the '2 in 1 block'. NMIFC can be led by BCG under the Shipping Ministry and manned by concerned agencies. BN may lead NMSC for sharing within the security agencies, viz AFD, BCG, RAB, narcotics, and intelligence agencies. It will demand an appropriate information sharing and security protocol in this regard. However, "data secrecy in the Satellite era should not be enigmatic to information sharing, instead protect cyber breaches" (FGD).

**The Apex Authority.** In 2006, the Government established a National Maritime Council in Bangladesh, but its composition was neither full-fledged nor functionalised. This research proposes NMDA for future study. However, the Cabinet Secretary, Chief of Navy, AFD, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Shipping, and concerned ministries can form the NMDA. Meaningfully, it is crucial for Bangladesh as "IMSAS<sup>6</sup> 2015 reported the absence of a national regulatory maritime governance in Bangladesh. It's non-compliance by next audit of 2025 may downgrade Bangladesh's IMO category detrimental to our trade" (KII, Chief Examiner DoS). As such, NMDA can be a solution to it. However, for that, "we need an approved Ocean and Maritime Policy upon which the roadmap to NMDA and its functionality will be shaped up" (KII, Secretary MOFA, Maritime Affairs Unit). Meanwhile, a designated National Maritime Coordinator (NMC) with professional expertise may harmonise the inter-ministerial integration of NMIFC, NMSC, and the macro-management of MDA.

---

<sup>6</sup>IMSAS - IMO Member State Audit Scheme. Presently, Bangladesh is in IMO Category C out of 175 countries.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research recommends the followings:

- Inter-ministerial evaluation of the MDA framework, information sharing protocol of various maritime agencies, and funding to establish the NMIFC and NMSC with appropriate lead agencies may be considered.
- The Government may develop a national ICT plan to boost technological capabilities in the maritime sector and build software for information fusion, incorporating cloud apps, inputs from various agencies and sensors.
- The Government may consider strengthening partnerships for regional information sharing with international organizations, suitable cloud apps companies, and regional IFCs of its Area of Interest (AOI) along the SLOCs.
- The Government may consider installing a coastal radar chain and equipping BN and BCG with UAV, UUV, and MPAs with electronic surveillance and data linking facilities.
- At the inter-ministerial level, streamlining jurisdictional charters of information sharing responsibility, information security protocol, and

protection against cyber threats, hacking, and illegitimate information sharing may be devised.

- The Department of Shipping and Fisheries may jointly register the boatmen and fishing communities in NMIFC and gradually equip AIS/EPIRB in seagoing boats.
- The Department of Shipping may develop the National Maritime Data Centre through NMIFC. The incorporation of BIMRAD, BORI, BIIS, and Maritime University in the doctrinal formulation of MDA may be considered.
- BN and BCG may consider developing a Cyber Directorate at their headquarters and appointing Observers in suitable regional IFCs.

#### **Future Research on:**

- Developing a National Ocean and Maritime Policy to enhance Bangladesh's MDA to implement the framework of NMDA as the Apex Maritime Governing Body may be considered.
- Setting the necessary criteria for a future Bangladeshi Observation Satellite with Synthetic Radar, Visible IR Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), SIGINT, and ELINT option may be considered.
- Establishing the SEAMET centre with Deep-Ocean Assessment & Reporting of Tsunami (DART) may be considered.

## **CONCLUSION**

Real-time vigilance and information sharing of 'what is happening' in the MD is crucial for maritime safety, security, economy, and the marine environment. Accordingly, global littorals are now duly focusing on IFC as a part of their action strategy to enhance MDA in the evolving security scenario. IT has facilitated the MDA by fusing huge maritime data for 'action-centric' and timely response. However, Bangladesh falls short in MDA in utilizing such technologies. Its maritime security mainly depends on physical vigilance in the vast MD, where nearly 25 maritime agencies operate in isolation without a COP. Despite the geostrategic and maritime significance, Bangladesh lacks an integrated approach to combat the NTS threats. Bangladesh's MDA amidst the Indo-Pacific contest remains dependent on other regional information regimes. Bangladesh needs

an IFC of its own as the BoB connects the maritime super highway of IO. As the Constitution obligates, it is essential to safeguard the safety of lives and properties in Bangladesh's MD. Considering the present MDA status and growing NTS challenges, this research has judiciously established the requirement and feasibility of IFC in Bangladesh. The research survey depicts the needs assessment. The proposed IFC will serve as a central hub for the maritime agencies by networking situational information from various maritime agencies. A 'whole of government' approach and regulatory framework will be required to integrate the existing and ongoing technology initiatives and further incorporate AI, cloud apps, data fusion, and sharing software. Once implemented following a roadmap of 5 years, Bangladesh's MDA through NMIFC and NMSC is expected to contribute positive functional output (integrated COP), envisaged national outcome (enhanced MDA), and strategic impact (preserved core values) in the national and regional maritime canvas.

## REFERENCES

- Armed Forces Division. (n.d.). Maritime search and rescue. Retrieved July 9, 2025, from <https://afd.gov.bd/Maritime-Search-and-Rescue>
- Alam, M. K. (2019). Maritime safety and security in the Bay of Bengal. *Bangladesh Maritime Journal*, 3(1), pp. 25-31. <http://bsmrmu.edu.bd/public/files/econtents/5eb7aaa6b0958bmj-03-01-02.pdf>
- Alam, M. K. (2021). *The Boundless Sea: Maritime Development and Its Impacts on Bangladesh*. Graphosman Publication, pp. 150, 406.
- Alam, M. K., Rear Admiral (retd), Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit, MOFA. (2024, May 16). KII by author.
- Alam, N., Lieutenant Commander, VSAT Project Officer. (2024, 24 April). SME Interview by author.
- Ali, O. (2024, June 22). Houthis announce successful attack on US aircraft carrier and cargo ship. Al Bawaba. <https://www.albawaba.com/news/houthis-announce-successful-attack-us-1573476>
- Amirul, I., Commander, Maritime Law Specialist. (2024, June 5). SME interview by author.

Azad, A. K. (2024, June 6). Lecture on MDG and SDG. National Defence College, Mirpur. Unpublished lecture.

a2i. (2023). ICT Master Plan 2023. Government of Bangladesh.

Azim, K. M., Rear Admiral, Commander Maritime Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC) and Chattogram Naval Area. (2024, June 22). KII by author.

Bashir, O., Chief Examiner (DOS). (2024, June 26). SME Interview by author.

BBC News. (2021, December 21). Ferry fire: Dozens killed near Jhalakathi. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59777784>

Belal, H., Software Engineer, SEMAC Technology Ltd, Dhaka. (2024, July 4). SME Interview by author.

bdnews24.com. (2024, January 15). 15 stranded fishermen rescued 10 days after their trawler suffers engine failure. <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/xqyovxgvji>

bdnews24.com. (2024, March 14). Hijacked Bangladeshi ship reaches Somali coast, shadowed by EU maritime force. <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/bk4vpcw02b>

Boraz, S. C. (2009). Maritime domain awareness: myths and realities. *Naval War College Review*, 62(3), 137-146. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26397039>

Brewster, D. (2023, August 6). New Tech Makes Maritime Domain Awareness Affordable for Small Nations. <https://maritime-executive.com/editorials/new-tech-makes-maritime-domain-awareness-affordable-for-small-nations>

Bueger, C. (2015, March 10). A role model for information sharing? Visiting the Singapore IFC. <https://bueger.info/a-role-model-for-information-sharing-visiting-the-singapore-ifc/>

Cabigon, J. V. (2020). Philippine navy maritime situational awareness system: current situation, gaps, and potential of maritime special operations forces. *Naval Postgraduate School*, 7-15. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/trecms/pdf/AD1126784.pdf>

Das, P. (2013). Coastal security: the Indian experience. *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, 63–65. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275027984>

Delwar, H., EGIMNS Project Officer (DOS). (2024, April 26). SME Interview by author.

Dhaka Tribune. 10 bodies found from fishing trawler in Cox's Bazar. (2024, April 23). <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/309601/10-bodies-found-from-fishing-trawler-in-cox-s>

Doorey, T. J., (2016) (ed. in Shemella, P.) (2016). Global responses to maritime violence: Cooperation and collective action. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 124–128.

Doorey, T. J. (2016). Maritime Domain Awareness. In P. Shemella (Ed.), Global responses to maritime violence: cooperation and collective action, 124-128. Stanford University Press.

Duggal, H. and Haddad, M. (2024, February 22). Mapping the Red Sea attacks. Aljazeera. <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2024/mapping-red-sea-shipping-attacks/>

Ershad, M. A., Rear Admiral, DG Coast Guard. (2024, August 1). KII by author.

Fahim, F. (2024). Keynote speech: Maritime seminar. National Defence College, Dhaka. Unpublished speech.

Gemma, C. C. (2024). RCDS UK policy strategy formulation package. National Defence College, Dhaka. Unpublished presentation.

IUU fishing risk index. (2023). Score maps. <https://iuufishingindex.net>

Goward, D. A. (2006, March 30). Maritime domain awareness: the missing piece of the security puzzle. (Lecture slides). US Coast Guard. <https://ndia.dtic.mil/wp-content/uploads/2006/hls/goward.pdf>

Goward, D. A. and Nimmich, J. I. (2007). Maritime domain awareness: the key to maritime security. *International Law Studies*, 94, 3-5. US Naval War College. <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1160&context=ils>

Goward, D. A. (2010). Maritime domain awareness: building a better picture. *U.S. Coast Guard Security*, 67(2), 4.

Gruet, S. and Josephs, J. (2024). Red Sea attacks: our shipping costs have jumped 250%. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-67865064>

Guerriero, M., Stefano, P., Carthel, C. & Willet, P. (2008, December 26). Radar/ AIS data fusion and SAR tasking for maritime surveillance, 1-5. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Radar-AIS-data-fusion-and-SAR-tasking-for-Maritime-Guerriero-Willett/c0a5a35b432bcfb1439c7d79b934d6222be74ceb>

Guerriero, M., Willett, P.K., Coraluppi, S.P., & Carthel, C.A. (2008). Radar/ AIS data fusion and SAR tasking for Maritime Surveillance. 11th International Conference on Information Fusion, 1-5. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Radar-AIS-data-fusion-and-SAR-tasking-for-Maritime-Guerriero-Willett/c0a5a35b432bcfb1439c7d79b934d6222be74ceb>

Guilfoyle, D. (2019). Paving the way for regional maritime domain awareness: Legal aspects of information sharing in the maritime domain. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 48-54. <https://www.ifc.org.sg/ifc2web/Publications/Professional%20Reading/Regional%20MDA/Chapter%207.pdf>

Hossain, M. A., Rear Admiral, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Operations). (2024, August 2). KII by author.

Hossain, K. A., Rear Admiral, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Material). (2024, August 2). KII by author.

Hussain, M. R., Lieutenant Commander, BN Observer in IFC IOR. (2024, April 12). SME interview by author.

International Maritime Organisation (2024). Maritime domain awareness. <https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/security/pages/maritime-domain-awareness.aspx>

Iqbal, M. K., (2019). Ocean policy for Bangladesh: a comprehensive roadmap. Bangladesh Maritime Journal, 3(1), 11-23. <https://bsmrmu.edu.bd/public/files/categories/5eb7af8f0a479bmj-vol-3-issue-1-full.pdf>

Iqbal, M. K. and Kutubuddin, W. H. (2020). Bangladesh delta plan 2100: Charting a course for sustainable ocean governance and maritime development. Bangladesh Maritime Journal, 68-72. <https://bsmrmu.edu.bd/public/files/econtents/619097f07d644MS%20-%204%20A.pdf>

Jacinevicius, D. and Petrauskas, R. (2008). Maritime domain awareness: architecture for the Lithuanian maritime domain. Naval War College Review, 62(4), 62-74.

- Kaplan, R. D. (2010). Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the future of American power. Random House Inc., 5 & 135. <https://www.defence.lk/upload/ebooks/Monsoon-.pdf>.
- Khairul, K., Brigadier, Former Sector Commander BGB (2024, July 5). KII by author.
- Khan, A. R. (2024). Security of small/island/land landlocked states. (Lecture slides). National Defence College, Dhaka. Unpublished lecture.
- Kiminori I. (2024). Contemporary Japan: its foreign and Bangladesh-Japan relations. (Lecture slides). National Defence College, Dhaka.
- Landale, J., and Gardner, F. (2024, January 4). Houthis Defiant after Warning over Red Sea Attacks. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67878906>
- Maksud, A., Commodore, DG Department of Shipping. (2024, June 26). KII by author.
- Malek, M., Commodore, DG Bangladesh Shipping Corporation. (2024, August 3). KII by author.
- Hicks, K. H., Metrick, A. (2018). Contested seas: maritime domain awareness in Northern Europe. Rowman & Littlefield, 15-20. [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180328\\_MetricHicks\\_ContestedSeas\\_Web.pdf?AaSGbCYstp\\_dVE22M\\_UODVujvVS0\\_mkM](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180328_MetricHicks_ContestedSeas_Web.pdf?AaSGbCYstp_dVE22M_UODVujvVS0_mkM)
- McAden, J., Director Hawkeye. (2024, April 19). SME Interview [email].
- Ministry of Defence (MOD) Gazette. (1975). Bangladesh Vision Document 2041 (Article 0308). Government of Bangladesh.
- Moniruzzaman, S M., Rear Admiral, Commander BN Fleet. (2024, May 24). KII by author.
- Monish, Project Director SCMP Department of Fishery (DOF). (2024, May 15). SME Interview by author.
- Mustapha, A. A., Commodore, Chairman Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA). (2024, June 3). KII by author.

Pandit, R. (2022, February 17). 14 years after 26/11, India gets maritime security coordinator. *The Times of India*. [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-gets-its-first-national-maritime-security-coordinator/\\_articleshow/89622219.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-gets-its-first-national-maritime-security-coordinator/_articleshow/89622219.cms)

Saara, T. H. (2024, May 9). Maritime piracy in Bangladesh, a ticking bomb already. *The Business Standard*. <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/maritime-piracy-bangladesh-ticking-bomb-already-846946?amp>

Samdany, J A., Commodore, Commander Flotilla West (COMFLOT). (2024, May 17). KII by author.

Scarr, S., Arranz, A., Saul J., Huang H., Chowdhury J., Kawoosa, M. V. (2024, February 2). Red sea attacks: how houthi militants in Yemen are attacking ships in one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS/SHIPPING-ARMS/lgvdnngeyvo/>

Schrijver, N. (2016). Managing the global commons: common good or common sink? *Third World Quarterly*, 37(7), 1252–1267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1154441>

Setyawati, L. R., Marsetio, Said, B. D., Avhanti, A.S. (2021). Implementation of sea power and maritime domain awareness (MDA) in Indonesia to strengthen national vigilance in the south China sea. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 119. <https://ijisrt.com/assets/upload/files/IJISRT21NOV035.pdf>

Shahadat H. C. (2024, June 9). Ctg-China freight costs double amid Red Sea conflicts; external trade suffers. *The Business Standard*. <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/ctg-china-freight-costs-double-amid-red-sea-conflicts-external-trade-suffers-872461?amp>

Shameem A. (2024). Keynote Speech: Maritime Seminar. National Defence College, Dhaka. Unpublished Lecture.

Shankar, P., Commodore, Indian Navy (Course Member of NDC). (2024, June 2). KII by author.

Singh, R. (2022, July 14). Understanding Indo-Pacific maritime domain awareness initiative. *Cescube*. <https://www.cescube.com/vp-understanding-indo-pacific-maritime-domain-awareness-initiative>

Soldi, G., Gaglione, D., Forti, N., Di Simone, A., Daffinà, F. C., Bottini, G., Quattrociochi, D., Millefiori, L. M., Braca, P., Carniel, S., Willett, P., Iodice, A., Riccio, D., & Farina, A. (2021). Space-based global maritime surveillance . Part II: artificial intelligence and data fusion techniques. *IEEE Aerospace and Electronic Systems Magazine*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2011.11338>

Rahman S., Rear Admiral, Chairman Mongla Port. (2024, July 9). KII by author.

The Business Standard. (2023, July 23). Govt to register 65,000 artisanal fishing vessels to control activities. <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/govt-register-65000-artisanal-fishing-vessels-control-activities-669842?amp>

Tuhin, M. A. A. C. (2022, December 28). Rescue operation of Sagar Nandini-2 starts after 80 hours. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/301513/rescue-operation-of-sagar-nandini-2-starts-after>

United Nations Security Council. (2024, January 10). Resolution 2722: maintenance of international peace and security. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2722>

Chowdhury, S. T. (2015, February 11). Yaba, the ‘madness drug, is finding new routes into Bangladesh. *Vice.com*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/yaba-the-madness-drug-is-finding-new-routes-into-bangladesh/>

Yanze, S. (2015). Research on Chinese MDA (Master’s thesis, World Maritime University). *World Maritime University Dissertations*. [https://commons.wmu.se/msem\\_dissertations/86/](https://commons.wmu.se/msem_dissertations/86/)

## **AUTHOR**

**Commodore Mustaque Ahmed, (G), NPP, ndc, psc, BN** joined Bangladesh Navy in 1989. After the basic training in Royal Malaysian Navy, he served in various ships and establishments. He is a Gunnery specialist and has vivid experience of Command, Instructional and Staff appointments. He had training on Missile in China. He commanded Missile Boat, Fast Attack Craft, Offshore Patrol Vessel and a Frigate. He also commanded a naval base BNS HAJI MOHSIN. Commodore Mustaque served as the Training Commander of Bangladesh Naval Academy, Staff Officer (Training) of NHQ and Secretary to Chief of Naval Staff. He is a graduate of DSCSC, Mirpur and Pakistan Navy War College. He also served as a Defence Advisor to Malaysia and his last appointment was Commander Flotilla (West).

*Email: mus811bd2002@gmail.com.*



## CONCEPTUALISING INFORMATION WARFARE: A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES

Brigadier General Sufi Mohammad Moinuddin, SUP, afwc, psc

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

(Received: 06th April 2025; Accepted: 08th June 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)

**Abstract:** In the contemporary security environment, Information Warfare (IW) has emerged as a distinct and decisive domain, fundamentally reshaping the dynamics of modern conflict. This article posits that for the Bangladesh Armed Forces, effectively conceptualising and integrating IW is a strategic imperative. Beginning with a nuanced distinction between “War” and “Conflict,” the paper analyses various modern conflict taxonomies, including 4th Generation, Grey Zone, Hybrid, Unrestricted, and Non-Linear Warfare, to illustrate how information has become central to achieving objectives in an increasingly ambiguous and non-kinetic environment. It argues that information itself constitutes a critical battle space, influencing the cognitive, informational, and physical dimensions of conflict, and details core Information Warfare (IW) elements, including Electronic Warfare, Cyber Operations, Psychological Operations, Military Deception, and Operational Security. Drawing insights from case studies, such as the Crimean annexation, the paper demonstrates the potent capability of IW to achieve strategic aims without direct kinetic engagement. It underscores the vital role of integrated planning and leadership. Furthermore, by examining Bangladesh’s significant digital penetration and existing cyber vulnerabilities, the article highlights the nation’s acute exposure to information threats while simultaneously identifying opportunities for strategic leveraging. Conclusively, it advocates for a comprehensive action plan for the Bangladesh Armed Forces, emphasising the development of a robust national IW doctrine, integrated capabilities, extensive human resource development, and seamless inter-agency coordination to navigate and dominate the information domain effectively. The paper was developed as part of a descriptive research study, during which a substantial number of literature reviews and contexts were examined.

**Keywords:** *Information Warfare, Electronic Operation, Psychological Warfare, Military Deception, Operational Security.*

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary security, Information Warfare (IW) has emerged as a cornerstone of modern military strategy, transcending its historical roots as a mere adjunct to kinetic operations. While the manipulation and exploitation of information for strategic advantage are deeply embedded in the annals of conflict—from Sun Tzu’s emphasis on deception to Machiavelli’s insights into public perception—the advent of advanced digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the speed, scale, and pervasive influence of information in warfare. Today, the information domain is not merely a supporting element but a distinct battlespace where information must be rigorously exploited against, or meticulously protected from, adversarial interference. This complex and ubiquitous nature of modern conflicts, increasingly characterized by hybrid threats and cognitive manipulation, therefore, necessitates the development of robust, well-structured protocols, sophisticated procedures, and an advanced blend of technological and human intelligence capabilities.

The global strategic community has increasingly recognised information as a vital and distinct domain of modern warfare, moving beyond the traditional perception of it as a supplementary tool for kinetic engagements. This paradigm shift is unequivocally demonstrated by the establishment of dedicated high-level commands, such as the United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) and the People’s Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) in China, as well as Russia’s demonstrated sophistication in leveraging the information sphere to achieve strategic objectives. These developments highlight a fundamental doctrinal evolution where information superiority is sought as a prerequisite for, and often an alternative to, kinetic dominance, influencing everything from national cohesion to battlefield outcomes. The theoretical discourse surrounding hybrid warfare and “grey zone” conflicts further posits that IW is often the primary vector for coercion and destabilisation, operating below the threshold of conventional armed conflict.

In this global context, the Bangladesh Armed Forces stand at a crucial juncture. While Bangladesh has a notable legacy of utilising the information domain since its inception, particularly in psychological operations and intelligence gathering during its Liberation War, the contemporary security environment demands a more formalised and integrated approach. The vulnerabilities inherent in a digitised society, along with regional geopolitical complexities and the potential

for sophisticated influence operations, underscore the necessity of formalising Information Warfare (IW) as a strategic imperative in the context of non-kinetic warfare efforts. This necessitates not only robust cyber defence capabilities but also the development of offensive information operations, cognitive countermeasures, and precise target analysis to establish coherent linkages across strategic, operational, and tactical levels, thereby directly impacting kinetic operations and contributing to national security.

This paper endeavours to contribute to the growing body of war literature by identifying the commonalities among emerging warfare concepts, such as hybrid warfare, cyber warfare, and cognitive warfare, and subsequently determining plausible, context-specific options for the Bangladesh Armed Forces within the broader framework of Information Warfare. Furthermore, it suggests that the conceptualisation and development of information as a distinct domain within Bangladesh's defence architecture must be thoroughly addressed, grounded in historical evidence, and informed by contemporary theoretical and policy discourse. This work uncovers opportunities and vulnerabilities for the Bangladesh Armed Forces through research and content analysis, maximising the nation's potential in the information domain and strengthening its strategic deterrence posture.

## **TAXONOMY OF MODERN CONFLICT**

Understanding the changing classification of modern conflict is not just an academic pursuit; it is essential for recognising the expansive and crucial role of Information Warfare (IW). In an era when traditional boundaries between war and peace, combatants and civilians, as well as kinetic and non-kinetic methods, are increasingly becoming blurred, a thorough understanding of this type of conflict sheds light on the various contexts in which information operations occur. Collectively, these patterns of modern conflict underscore a profound shift toward non-kinetic, asymmetric, and information-centric approaches, making a comprehensive understanding of this taxonomy essential for navigating the domain of IW. IW inherently thrives in these ambiguous environments, often serving as the primary tool for achieving strategic objectives without resorting to conventional warfare.

The taxonomy provides a foundational understanding of contemporary warfare. By distinguishing between “War” and “Conflict,” which encompasses a spectrum

from psychological manipulation to overt military actions, we can better contextualise IW's applicability. Concepts such as Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), Grey Zone Conflicts, Hybrid Warfare, Unrestricted Warfare, and Non-Linear Warfare are particularly pertinent. These typologies emphasise non-kinetic approaches that exploit vulnerabilities in cognitive domains, societal cohesion, and national narratives-the targets and tools of IW.

For the Bangladesh Armed Forces, recognising these modern conflict paradigms is vital. It underscores the necessity of developing robust IW capabilities, not only to defend against sophisticated, multifaceted threats that frequently operate below the threshold of conventional warfare, but also to proactively shape the information environment in line with national strategic interests. This detailed taxonomy thus serves as a crucial lens through which the strategic implications of IW for Bangladesh can be thoroughly assessed and addressed.

The terms 'war' and 'conflict' are often used interchangeably. Before delving into contemporary trends in warfare, it is essential to clarify the distinction between these two concepts (Lebow, 2018). According to Merriam-Webster, "war is a state of usually open and declared armed hostile conflict between states or nations". The same dictionary defines conflict as "competitive or opposing actions of incompatibles; antagonistic state or action; a conflict of principles". Thus, understanding the distinction between "war" and "conflict" involves recognising differences in scale, intensity, and formality. Conflict encompasses a wide range of competition, from verbal disputes to acts of violence. Therefore, all wars are conflicts, but not all conflicts are wars. "Conflict" is a broader term, whereas "War" refers to a specific, highly violent type of conflict. The term 'conflict' is the most suitable in the contemporary, complex nature of warfare and conflicts across a spectrum of coercion. Clausewitz said, "War is a continuation of politics by other means". Modern conflicts, therefore, are not confined to conventional wars; rather, they have expanded in both length and breadth, exhibiting various ups and downs. War has a definitive connection between strategic and operational levels, influencing tactical success.

War and conflict may evolve with many names, but the common element is 'Violence'. According to WHO, violence is "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation". The hierarchy of war or conflict ultimately targets the cognitive domain of the individual through

destruction or psychological paralysis to cripple the effective thinking process through 'Fear of the Unknown'. Some of the crucial patterns of warfare with nature apart from the conventional ones (Deshpande, 2018) are explained below:

- **Irregular Warfare.** Irregular warfare is a conflict in which one or more parties employ unconventional methods. Irregular troops are combatants not formally enlisted in the armed forces or legally constituted entities. The actions of Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, Carlos Marighela, and Vo Nguyen Giap are classic examples of irregular warfare that altered the outcome of the conflict.
- **Insurgency.** Gen Sir Frank Kitson, Commander in Chief of UK Land Forces, defined insurgency as “The use of armed force by a section of people against the govt to overthrow those governing the country at the time or to force them to do things which they do not want to do”. An insurgent group typically aims to instigate political change through subversion, propaganda, and both political and military pressure.
- **Civil War.** The British Defence Doctrine defines a civil war as a conflict occurring within a state’s borders, where a considerable segment of the population supports opposing factions. This struggle involves competing for power, regional self-governance, or the quest for independence. One or both sides may receive backing from external entities.
- **4th Generation Warfare (4GW).** Present-day conflicts align with 4th Generation Warfare (4GW) more than earlier ones. 4GW is characterized by decentralized operations, blurring the lines between warfare and politics and between combatants and civilians. Nation-states are slowly losing their once-unquestioned control over the use of military force.
- **Grey Zone Conflict.** Grey Zone refers to a conflict between conventional and sub-conventional conflicts (Deshpande, 2018). According to the US Special Forces Command white paper, the Grey Zone challenges are defined as interactions among and within state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality. They are characterised by ambiguity about the nature of the conflict, the opacity of the parties involved or uncertainty about the relevant policy and legal framework (Carvent L. Webb II, 2020).

**Table 1: Grey Zone Conflict**

Source: Dobbs, 2020

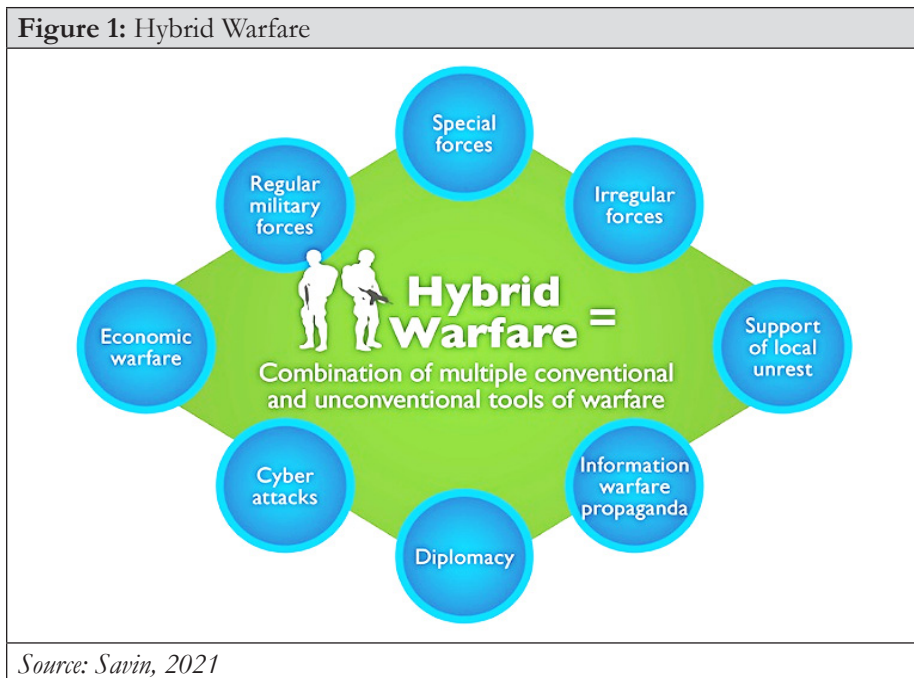
The decision to pursue grey-zone operations stems from a basic strategic calculation: we desire behavioural change in other states but lack the military strength to achieve this through war. Thus, we aim for change without provoking war or encouraging adversaries to resist. This aligns with asymmetric warfare reasoning but extends further. Asymmetric warfare involves the weaker side seeking advantages with terrain, tactics, or weapons against a more substantial power, as seen in guerrilla warfare and insurgency. Similarly, grey-zone operations focus on technique advantages rather than resource scale, rooted in ‘winning without fighting’ (Dobbs, 2020).

- **Low Intensity Conflict (LIC).** According to US Department of Defence (DoD) LIC is defined by a political-military confrontation between contending states or groups, below the intensity of conventional war but above routine, peaceful competition, often involving protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. An LIC necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates political, economic, and military strategies while incorporating psychological, social, and diplomatic support (Deshpande, 2018). The US emphasizes the importance of being prepared for LIC by examining its military interventions in the Balkans during the late 1990s, as well as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. LIC presents a complicated situation in the post-conflict stability phase of upcoming wars (Proctor, 2017).
- **Hybrid Conflict.** United States Secretary of Defence Robert M. Gates articulated that “the categories of warfare are blurring and no longer fit into

neat, tidy boxes. One can expect to see more tools and tactics of destruction – from the sophisticated to the simple – being employed simultaneously in hybrid and more complex forms of warfare.” These remarks signify a comprehensive spectrum of conflict that encompasses both physical and conceptual dimensions. The former pertains to a confrontation with an armed adversary, whereas the latter alludes to a more extensive struggle for the control and support of the indigenous population within the combat zone, the backing of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the endorsement of the international community

The strategies employed by Hezbollah during the 2006 Lebanon conflict and the actions executed by the ISIS militia in Iraq and Syria exemplify the multifaceted nature of hybrid warfare. Political, social, diplomatic, and informational dimensions served as force multipliers, significantly enhancing the efficacy of both Hezbollah and ISIS beyond their mere military capacities and strength.

**Figure 1: Hybrid Warfare**



Source: Savin, 2021

- **Unrestricted Warfare.** The concept of Unrestricted Warfare was introduced by two Chinese senior colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, exploring strategies for developing countries to compensate for military inferiority. The book on Unrestricted Warfare advocates the application of multimodal

military and non-military approaches like cyber-attacks, the use of media, and conducting urban warfare, along with diplomatic, financial, trade, intelligence, psychological, economic aid, and many more. In the Zhongguo Qingnian Bao interview, Qiao was quoted as stating that “the first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden” (Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, 1999). The Sikh militancy in Punjab in the early 1980s, led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, in its efforts to establish an independent state of Khalistan, is a classic example of Unrestricted Warfare, which encompasses politics, militancy, proxy, and social unrest.

- **Non-Linear Warfare.** In contrast to hybrid warfare, the Russian concept of non-linear warfare incorporates conventional and irregular military forces alongside diplomatic, economic, cyber, and psychological tactics, intensifying feelings of insecurity among the population. The Gerasimov Doctrine emphasizes the importance of controlling the information space and the real-time coordination of all aspects of a campaign, in addition to targeted strikes deep in enemy territory and the destruction of critical civilian and military infrastructure. The doctrine also proposes to cloak regular military units in the disguise of peacekeepers or crisis-management forces (Murphy, 2016). This action can best be understood by the Russian action in Crimea, Estonia and Ukraine. However, a dichotomy appears to persist regarding cyber, electronic, and information warfare, whether these are considered acts of war under international law or not.

## CONCEPTUAL EPISTEMOLOGY: COMPARISON WITH CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTUAL CONCEPTS

Conflicts in the early twenty-first century often manifest within states, driven by socio-economic and ethno-religious tensions that transcend borders rather than inter-state issues. A combination of conventional and unconventional methods employing all elements of power and political influence is not entirely new. Political destabilisation, support for proxies and militias, economic influence, statecraft, and information campaigns have been the staples of a state since the Peloponnesian War (Deshpande, 2018). The historical instance of the Battle of Troy (12th-13th Century BCE) demonstrates the utilisation of the Trojan Horse as a strategy of surprise and deception, a combination of a non-kinetic approach to support the kinetic end state.

The ancient Chinese general and military strategist Sun Tzu states in his *Art of War*, “To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting” (Sun Tzu, 6th Century B.C). Therefore, based on these two examples, the conceptual clarity converges between Oriental political and military sciences and those of Occidental theorists (Armistead, 2010). Moreover, it appears that the trend in contemporary warfare has historical connections to the theories and examples of ancient theologies.

Modern conflicts blur the lines between peace and conflict, utilising national power in resolution. The mix of covert and overt actions, kinetic and non-kinetic methods, policy and strategy, enemy and population dynamics, and virtual versus actual battle space makes the operational environment increasingly complex. The age of information plays a critical role in effectively merging or diffusing these distinctions between physical and logical environments. In brief, the above illustrations can be simplified by the statement given by Colonel John Boyd, USAF (proponent of OODA Loop), “Machines don’t fight wars. Terrain doesn’t fight wars. Humans fight wars. You must get into the mind of humans. That’s where the battles are won” (Raymond J. Curts and Douglas E. Campbell, 2004). The following paragraphs will further elucidate the concepts through comprehensive theories and factual evidence. According to the Powell Doctrine, the US should only fight it if it is going to use overwhelming force, win a massive victory and then leave immediately (Deshpande, 2018). Conversely, the United States was profoundly and nearly inextricably engaged in an extended sub-conventional conflict in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The actions of Hezbollah in 2006 in Lebanon and ISIS in Syria and Iraq exemplify how the application of political, informational, social, and diplomatic instruments act as force multipliers for these non-state actors to establish credibility as potent military powers.

## **INFORMATION AS A BATTLE SPACE**

Examining the evolving taxonomy of modern conflict reveals that the traditional concept of “battle space” has expanded significantly beyond land, sea, air, and even pure cyber domains. Information has become a distinct, pervasive, and ultimately decisive battlespace, where strategic objectives are pursued, vulnerabilities are exploited, and the very fabric of national will and narrative is shaped. This paradigm shift mandates that information is not merely a tool or a byproduct of military operations but a central arena where threats originate, engagements

occur, and where the ultimate outcomes of conflict, whether kinetic or non-kinetic, are increasingly determined. Former US Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates observed that the blurring categories of warfare require a comprehensive understanding of diverse tools and tactics used in complex conflicts, often involving information at their core.

For the Bangladesh Armed Forces, integrating the information domain as a primary battle space is a strategic imperative. Given Bangladesh's digitised society, complex regional dynamics, and non-state actors with sophisticated influence operations, the nation is vulnerable to threats in this domain. These threats include cyber intrusions on critical infrastructure and disinformation campaigns that undermine social cohesion and public trust. The success of future operations will hinge on maintaining information superiority and resilience. This section will explore the characteristics and strategic implications of information as a battle space, emphasising its critical role in modern warfare and establishing a strategic framework for the Bangladesh Armed Forces.

The information environment encompasses the cognitive dimension (human-centric), informational dimension (data-centric), and physical dimension (tangible, real-world) (JP 3-13, 2014). This environment is distinct in its characteristics and independent of the other battle space occurrences. Firepower, manoeuvre, control, and agility can be utilised within the information space independently of other battle spaces. Information shapes the outcome of the battle and achieves the strategic objectives in coherence with other battlefield environments. Like other kinetic domains, information also possesses a defensive or offensive posture in shaping the outcome of the war in one's favour (Libicki, 1995), (JP 3-13, 2014).

Information Warfare (IW) is a complex and multifaceted concept, often linked to a blind man's effort to discover the nature of an elephant, as highlighted by Martin C. Libicki. Libicki, a former Professor at the National Defence University of the US and a graduate of MIT, emphasised that variable perceptions lead to differences in articulating Information Warfare. However, the fundamental concepts ultimately converge on underscoring analogies. To clarify this intricate concept, a few definitions are illustrated below.

The British Army's IO doctrine JWP 3-80, published in June 2002, defines Information Warfare as "coordinated action undertaken to influence an adversary or potential adversary in support of political and military objectives, by undermining his will, cohesion, and decision-making ability, by acting on his information and his procedures and systems of information, while protecting

one's own decision-makers and decision-making process.” Complementing this, Professor Dr. Milan Vego offers a more concise definition, stating that IW is an “action aimed at achieving information superiority by denying, exploiting, corrupting, or destroying the enemy’s information and information functions while protecting one’s information and information functions against enemy attack” (Vego, 2009).

Before drawing an executive summary, it is crucial to consider a potent explanation from Professor George Stein of the US Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. Professor Stein provides a deeper understanding, stating: “IW is about the way humans think and, more importantly, the way humans make decisions ..... it is fundamentally not about satellites, wires and computers ..... It would be a strategic mistake of historic proportions to focus narrowly on the technologies..... There must be no confusion of the battle space with the battle” (J.Stein, 1995). This emphasises that at its core, Information Warfare is a cognitive battle, centred on influencing human thought and decision-making, rather than merely technological superiority.

IW does not only possess the fundamental norms of battling an operation; rather, it will have a linkage with strategic parlance like diplomacy, politics, information, economy, etc. to attain the strategic objective during peace and conflict. However, consulting the various doctrines, a few of the fundamental aspects may be considered as enumerated below (JP 3-13, 2014) (Dwivedi, 2019):

- IW and its affiliated domains, such as EW, Cyber, and Psychological Warfare, are akin to preparatory bombing, which aims to destabilise the enemy before kinetic forces are deployed.
- IW, by themselves, can achieve strategic objectives without relying on armed conflict.
- IW encompasses both military and civilian domains, with significant overlap in cyber warfare, psychological warfare, and deception operations.
- EW typically plays a role during wars or counter-insurgency efforts and primarily remains a military-focused area of activity, with significantly less application in the civilian domain (Deshpande, 2018).
- IW applies to peace and conflict. However, it would not be prudent to consider that the military IW effort should remain dormant during peacetime.

There are several distinct forms of IW. For instance, the US Doctrine, Russian Doctrine, Chinese Doctrine, and Indian Doctrine have defined the elements under IW according to their respective strategic assessments (Panwar, 2020). The distinctions of IW may vary according to the strategic need assessment and operational relevance. IW may be regarded as an integration of Electronic Warfare (EW), Cyber, Psychological Operations (PsyOps), Military Deception (MILDEC), and Operational Security (OPSEC) (JP 3-13, 2014). Cyber is essentially a synonym for information, and it is also closely related to information systems, such as the Internet. Thus, a Cyber Attack or Defence may refer to efforts connected to information security, whereas a Cyber Attack on a system pertains to compromising the system's vulnerability.

Media plays a significant role in the contemporary trend of psychological operations (PsyOps). However, literature rarely suggests that the media is a separate entity under IW. Predominantly, the media (traditional print and electronic) is nurtured by civilian reporting agencies. Therefore, the military requires a strong understanding of effective media management to mitigate any negative consequences during periods of peace and conflict. Social media and its variants make strong platforms for PsyOps, whether in favour of or against. Therefore, a comprehensive articulation, monitoring and positive institutional practice of media management and media handling protocol would turn media into a force multiplier for attaining strategic objectives.

The various elements of IW are enumerated briefly with examples (Vego, 2009) (JP 3-13, 2014):

- **Cyber.** Cyber warfare encompasses acts by one side to penetrate the opponent's network, damaging or disrupting its functions while safeguarding its similar network. Cyber vulnerability is difficult to overrule, even if the network is air-gapped. The attack on Iranian nuclear facilities by Stuxnet in 2010 alarmed security agencies about the need to be cautious of any system's loopholes.
- **EW.** To disrupt or neutralise electromagnetic transmission, including Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) and jamming techniques, to impact military communications and weapon guidance systems. The advent of modern digitised network systems (civilian infrastructures also included) is prone to EW attacks even during peacetime.

- **PsyOps.** PsyOps focus on undermining the morale and welfare of both soldiers and civilians. They comprise various actions in social, political, and economic domains aimed at swaying the views, feelings, and actions of the target audience. Key aspects of PsyOps include disseminating rumours, creating fake news, developing counter-narratives, and managing perceptions via social media.
- **MILDEC.** This process is executed in both peacetime and periods of conflict. The primary aim of Military Deception (MILDEC) is to ensure that the intended audience holds the beliefs that are strategically designed for them. Effective MILDEC requires a credible narrative complemented by robust Operations Security (OPSEC).
- **OPSEC.** OPSEC encompasses a variety of passive and active strategies designed to obscure the threat awareness of own operational disposition, capabilities, and intentions. This approach emphasises the identification and protection of those components of an operational plan deemed essential to its success.

Today, the Armed Forces strive to achieve information dominance against potential adversaries. Armies will be judged more on how effectively they can protect data and sensitive information against potential cyberattacks or espionage. This section will further underscore the importance of information in modern warfare with a statement from a former British CGS, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, who predicted, “It might not be too far into the future before armies are no longer distinguished by the volume of their hardware—the number of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles—but much more accurately by the sophistication and integration of their software and associated artificial intelligence?”. As a result of the establishment of the US Cyber Command in 2010, alongside the Chinese Strategic Support Force (SSF) and Russian supremacy in information warfare, the significance of achieving expertise in this domain with appropriate priority is emphasised (Chandha, 2020).

The Bangladesh Armed Forces are increasingly recognising the criticality of Information Warfare (IW) in modern conflict, although their capabilities are still developing. They face coordinated disinformation campaigns, highlighting vulnerabilities in civil-military stability and strategic autonomy. Although there is increasing awareness and efforts regarding cybersecurity and the integration of AI into military applications, a comprehensive, well-resourced information

warfare (IW) framework appears to be in its early stages of development. Besides, Bangladesh needs a comprehensive IW doctrine, the absence of which would have severe and far-reaching consequences, leaving the nation vulnerable in the increasingly complex global security landscape

Consequently, the Bangladesh Armed Forces may encompass a multi-pronged and integrated approach to mastering this battlespace. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Developing a Robust National Information Security Doctrine.** Establishing clear policies and frameworks for protecting critical information infrastructure and national data.
- **Cultivating Integrated Information Operations Capabilities.** Unifying efforts across Electronic Warfare (EW), Cyber Operations, Psychological Operations (PsyOps), Military Deception (MILDEC), and Operational Security (OPSEC) to achieve synergistic effects in both defensive and offensive postures, even during peacetime.
- **Comprehensive Training and Education.** Ensuring that personnel across all levels of command are adept in information warfare concepts, tactics, and the psychological dimensions of influencing adversaries and protecting friendly forces.
- **Fostering Inter-Agency and Civil-Military Cooperation.** Building strong linkages with civilian media, intelligence agencies, and other relevant stakeholders to create a unified and resilient national ecosystem for information defence and offence, including effective media management.
- **Investing in Advanced Technologies and AI.** As General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith suggests, future military distinctions will rely on software expertise and artificial intelligence, vital for navigating and dominating the information environment.

## CASE STUDY

**Analysing the Crimean Annexation.** Innumerable examples can be synthesized to comprehensively understand the importance of IW and its opportunities for Bangladesh. The example of the Crimean Annexation is briefly highlighted to develop a model of IW that may raise awareness in this domain.

- The annexation of Crimea serves as a classic example of Information Warfare (IW), accomplished without bloodshed. However, it is a blend of peace and conflict time information movement to bring home a conducive outcome for Russia. The annexation culminated through exploiting geopolitical, socio-cultural and ethnoreligious interests, which facilitated the entire gamut of annexation in Russian favour.
- Crimea is an important peninsula in Eastern Europe, which contains ethnic Russians as the vast majority, with significant Ukrainian and Tatar minorities. In 1783, Crimea became part of the Russian Empire, while after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Crimea came under the USSR as an autonomous body. In the post-WW II era, Crimea was downgraded to Crimean Oblast from an Autonomous body, and in 1954 it was again transferred to Ukraine. Finally, with the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine became an independent country, and Crimea became an autonomous republic under Ukraine. Khrushchev handed over Crimea to Ukraine for support of the Ukrainian communist party during the Cold War Era. Therefore, there was a lack of sense of belonging among the Russian-origin population in Crimea (Deshpande, 2018).
- Geostrategically, one of Russia's essential features was Sevastopol, an erstwhile Soviet Fleet Headquarters in the Black Sea. In the post-February 2014 revolution, which led to the removal of President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, there was widespread support following a referendum for secession from Ukraine. Sevastopol voted for a parallel government, while the pro-Russian supporters hoisted flags of Russia and called Putin their President. Pro-Russian protestors blockaded the Crimean Parliament, and Russian troops secured the routes to Sevastopol. On 27 February 2014, Russian incognito special forces known as the Little Green Man seized the buildings of the Crimean Parliament. The Crimean parliament held emergency sessions and ousted incumbent Prime Minister Anatoli Mohylov and replaced him with new Premier Sergey Aksyonov. On 01 March, Aksyonov asked for Russian support in Crimea. Alongside, cyber lines of effort were activated to support the annexation process with the desired narratives. Russia thus annexed Crimea through this classic exposition of IW (Richard Sakwa, 2016).

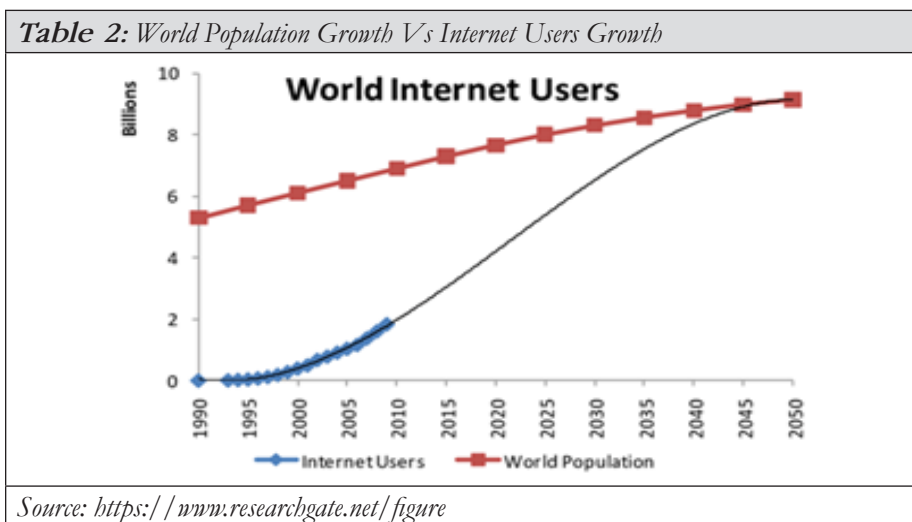
Based on the narratives presented, the following insights can be derived regarding the intricacies of IW:

- IW has been a complete merger of opportunities arising from geopolitics, culture, ethnoreligious backgrounds, proxies, etc.

- It requires a well-articulated plan to make the narrative believable.
- The IW plan must include multi-layered arrangements to ensure that adequate contingencies support the effective execution of Deception, PSYOPS, OPSEC, etc.
- A strategic or operational deception plan is crucial; therefore, it requires the involvement of strategic leadership to ensure all relevant agencies operate effectively and coherently.
- IW can have decisive implications for the defeat mechanism at the operational level. Breaking the enemy’s will to fight can rapidly impact the coherence of its systems and ability to conduct operations. Well-orchestrated IW platforms can compromise situational awareness, intelligence, and surveillance by injecting disinformation and misinformation, and corrupting or disrupting C2 platforms.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

A total of 5.16 billion people worldwide used the internet at the start of 2023, which is equal to 64.4% of the world’s total population. Facebook remains the most popular social media platform globally, with over 2.9 billion active users as of 2023. YouTube is the second most popular social media platform globally, with over 2 billion active users. WhatsApp is the third most popular social media platform, with over 2 billion active users (Kemp, 2023).



Recent estimates suggest that there are approximately 7.21 billion smartphone users globally, representing about 90% of the world's population. Smartphones have become an integral part of modern life, significantly changing how we communicate, access information, and interact with our surroundings. In 2025, 7.21 billion people worldwide use smartphones. 97% of users between 18 to 49 years old use smartphones. Smartphones account for 70% of digital media time in the United States. M-commerce accounted for 73% of e-commerce. Mobile devices drive 65% of e-commerce traffic. Smartphone users touch their phones an average of 2617 times daily in the United States (Kumar, 2025).

According to BTRC, Bangladeshi users prefer Facebook as their top social media platform, with YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Instagram following closely. Research by the Cybercrime Awareness Foundation revealed a 13% rise in social media-related crimes during the 2020 pandemic, with 79.17% of the victims being students and 4.13% being government job holders. As of January 2024, 68.4 percent of Bangladesh's total internet user base, regardless of age, used at least one social media platform. Meta's advertising data reveals that Facebook had 52.90 million users in Bangladesh at the start of 2024, equivalent to 30.4% of the total population. These figures underscore the role of social media as a central element of internet use in the country (Tech & Startup Desk, 2025)

According to the National Cyber Security Index, Bangladesh ranked 39 in 2023 with a score of 58.33, while the Czech Republic held the 1st position with 98.33 (e-Governance Academy Foundation, 2025). Therefore, drawing an analogy between the global trend of information usage and Bangladesh can create a paradoxical understanding of whether it is a blessing or something else. Big data analytics pose potential threats to the information domain of any country; however, with the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, discarding such options will hinder Bangladesh's progress in the competitive world. Consequently, perception, urgency, and practice must be enhanced at the strategic, military-strategic, and operational levels for Information Security and a coherent offensive information strategy as appropriate.

Bangladesh has structured strong pillars at strategic platforms like the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division under the Government of Bangladesh, the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) and the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) etc. A strong and well-defined vertical and lateral command, control, and coordination mechanism

among strategic, military-strategic, and operational levels will further enhance Bangladesh's capability and capacity in the information domain.

## **TAKEAWAYS FOR THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES ON INFORMATION WARFARE**

- **IW as a Decisive Strategic Tool (Non-Kinetic).** The Crimean annexation demonstrates that strategic objectives can be achieved through Information Warfare without direct bloodshed. Bangladesh must recognise IW's potential as a primary tool for achieving national interests in a non-kinetic manner, thereby expanding its strategic options beyond traditional military force.
- **Leveraging Societal and Geopolitical Factors.** Successful IW campaigns exploit deep-seated geopolitical, socio-cultural, and ethno-religious interests (as seen in Crimea). Bangladesh needs to understand and strategically leverage its own unique societal fabric and regional dynamics to defend against and effectively conduct information operations.
- **Meticulous Planning and Multi-Layered Execution.** The critical need for well-articulated, believable narratives supported by multi-layered arrangements across Military Deception (MILDEC), Psychological Operations (PsyOps), and Operational Security (OPSEC) is undeniable in IW. Bangladesh must develop robust planning capabilities and ensure contingencies for complex information campaigns.
- **Crucial Role of Strategic Leadership and Inter-Agency Cohesion.** Effective strategic or operational deception as well as broader IW efforts demands the direct involvement of strategic leadership. Bangladesh requires a unified command, control, and coordination mechanism across all relevant agencies (military, intelligence, civilian) to ensure coherent and synergistic IW operations.
- **Direct Impact on Adversary Command and Control (C2).** IW can decisively impact an adversary's operational effectiveness by corrupting or disrupting C2 platforms, reducing situational awareness, and breaking their will to fight. Bangladesh must prioritise protecting its own C2 nodes while developing capabilities to target those of potential adversaries.
- **Ubiquitous Digital Vulnerability and Opportunity.** Bangladesh's high internet and social media penetration create a vast and pervasive attack surface for disinformation, cybercrime, and influence operations. Simultaneously, this

digital ubiquity presents a powerful opportunity for strategic communication and the dissemination of counter-narratives.

- **Urgent Need for Enhanced Information Security.** The significant rise in social media-related crimes and Bangladesh's current ranking on the National Cyber Security Index underscores an urgent imperative to enhance national information security posture, resilience, and practice across all strategic, military-strategic, and operational levels.
- **Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms.** While foundational strategic platforms like BTRC, ICT Division, NTMC, and NCSA exist, establishing a strong, well-defined vertical and lateral command, control, and coordination mechanism among these bodies is crucial for a cohesive and effective national IW strategy.
- **Embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution.** The insights from RAND suggest that in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, information superiority (knowing more, dispersing the fog of war for oneself while enshrouding the adversary) is the decisive advantage. Bangladesh must strategically invest in technologies like AI and sophisticated software to gain and maintain this edge.
- **Continuous Engagement in Peace and Conflict.** IW is not limited to wartime. As highlighted by the Crimean annexation and the nature of modern conflict, IW efforts are continuously applicable during peacetime to shape perceptions, counter adversarial narratives, and prepare the information battlespace, requiring constant vigilance and proactive engagement.
- **C2 Structure and Cyber Command.** A unified Command and Control (C2) framework minimises confusion, prevents duplication of efforts, and ensures seamless coordination among various branches (Army, Navy, Air Force) and units, particularly in complex joint or multi-domain operations. This optimisation facilitates resource allocation and mission execution. The Bangladesh Armed Forces should prioritise the establishment of a structured command, control, and coordination mechanism to augment the effectiveness of Information Warfare (IW). This initiative must align with strategic tiers to ensure coherence in actions and achieve overall efficacy. The units or groups must functionally and effectively operate; for instance, the establishment of the Army Cyber Group signifies a prudent initiative; however, it necessitates further development to enhance its capacity and effectiveness. After developing

a certain standard of capability, consideration may be given to establishing a Cyber Command, which would serve as an umbrella organisation to address Cyber, Electronic Warfare (EW), and Information domains.

## CONCLUSION

The evolution of warfare, from ancient deception to 21st-century multi-domain conflicts, shows that IW is now a strategic imperative. This article argues that while information has always influenced conflict, the digital age has transformed it into a decisive battlespace, significantly impacting national security. The exploration of modern conflict taxonomy revealed a landscape where war and peace are increasingly blurred, leading to 4th Generation Warfare, Grey Zone conflicts, Hybrid Warfare, and Unrestricted Warfare. In these paradigms, the primary focus often transitions from physical destruction to affecting the cognitive domain, weakening an adversary's will, unity, and decision-making capabilities. This intellectual shift underscores why Information Warfare, encompassing components such as Electronic Warfare (EW), Cyber Operations, Psychological Operations (PsyOps), Military Deception (MILDEC), and Operational Security (OPSEC), has evolved into a fundamental war-fighting tool capable of achieving strategic objectives independently of conventional military forces.

The insights garnered from the Crimean annexation vividly illustrate how IW can achieve significant geopolitical objectives without bloodshed, utilising socio-cultural dynamics and a well-orchestrated narrative. Operation Bodyguard demonstrates the power of deception, requiring meticulous planning and strategic involvement of leadership. For the Bangladesh Armed Forces, this reality presents vulnerabilities and opportunities. A rapidly digitizing society with high internet and social media usage exposes Bangladesh to influence operations, cyber threats, and disinformation campaigns that can destabilize cohesion and erode public trust. Yet, this same digital landscape offers unparalleled avenues for strategic communication, counter-narrative development, and fostering national resilience. Consequently, conceptualising and integrating Information Warfare as a central pillar of Bangladesh's defence doctrine is not merely an option but a strategic imperative.

In order to effectively navigate this complex information environment, the Bangladesh Armed Forces must adopt a multifaceted approach. Cultivating a culture of information resilience through fostering a nationwide practice of accurate information handling, critical thinking, and media literacy would insulate against adversarial influence. Establishing robust, well-coordinated vertical and

lateral C2 mechanisms across all military echelons and civilian stakeholders, including entities such as BTRC, ICT Division, NTMC, and NCSA, would ensure coherent, rapid, and decisive responses to information threats and opportunities. Developing a highly skilled group of military and non-military specialists in cybersecurity, psychological operations, data analytics, and strategic communication would foster cross-functional expertise crucial for effective IW. Lastly, the Bangladesh Armed Forces must maintain an active, adaptive stance during peacetime to shape the information environment, deter adversaries, and prepare for potential contingencies.

In essence, the future effectiveness of the Bangladesh Armed Forces will be increasingly determined not merely by the quantity of its hardware but by the sophistication and integration of its information capabilities, software, and associated artificial intelligence. By embracing this strategic imperative, Bangladesh can secure its information domain, enhance its deterrent posture, and effectively safeguard its national interests in the intricate landscape of modern conflict.

## REFERENCES

Armistead, E. L. (2010). *Information Warfare Separating Hype from Reality*. New Delhi, India: Manas Publications.

Carvent L. Webb II. (2020). Understanding the Grey Zone. *Americal Intelligence Journal*, 183-189.

Deshpande, V. (2018). *Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Nature of Conflict*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press.

Dobbs, T. (2020). Grey Zone. Retrieved from The Forge: <https://theforge.defence.gov.au/2020-perry-group-papers/grey-zone>

Dwivedi, C. A. (2019). *Modern Information Warfare*. New Delhi: Pentagon Pres LLP.

e-Governance Academy Foundation. (2025, 3 15). NCSI. Retrieved from NCSI: <https://ncsi.ega.ec/ncsi-index/>

Farquhar, S. C. (2018). Deceive, Divert, and Delay Operation FORTITUDE in Support of D-Day . In C. M. Rein, *Weaving The Tangled Web* (pp. 137-150). Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Army University Press.

- Glenn, D. R. (2025, Feb 14). Thoughts on “Hybrid” Conflict. Retrieved from [www.smallwarsjournal.com:chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://smallwarsjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/188-glenn.pdf](http://www.smallwarsjournal.com:chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://smallwarsjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/188-glenn.pdf)
- Hutcherson, L. C. (1994). *Command & Control Warfare*. Alabama: Air University Press.
- JP 3-13. (2014). *Information Operations*. USDoD. Retrieved from Fandom.
- L.N. Rangarajan. (1992). *The Arthashastra*. Haryana, India: Penguin Random House India.
- Lebow, R. N. (2018). *Avoiding War, Making Peace*. Cham, Switzerland : Springer Nature.
- Libicki, C. M. (1995). *What Is Information Warfare?* Washington, DC: National Defence University.
- Murphy, M. (2016, 09 12). *Understanding Russia’s Concept for Total War in Europe*. Retrieved from The Heritage Foundation: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/understanding-russias-concept-total-war-europe>
- Panwar, L. G. (2020). *IW Structures for the Indian Armed Forces*.
- Proctor, P. (2017). *Lessons Unlearned: Army Transformation and Low-intensity Conflict*. Pennsylvania: The US Army War College Quarterly.
- Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. (1999). *Unrestricted Warfare*. Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House.
- Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. (1999, 02 01). *Unrestricted Warfare by Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui*. Retrieved from Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/unrestricted-warfare-by-qiao-liang-and-wang-xiangsui>
- Raymond J. Curts and Douglas E. Campbell. (2004). *Command & Control as an Operational Functions of Information Warfare in the Context of “Information” - The Nature of Information and Information Transfer*. Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium (p. 3 of 26). San Diego, CA: Curts and Campbell.
- Richard Sakwa. (2016). *The Crimean Gambit*. In R. Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine, Crisis in the Borderlands* (pp. 100-119). New York: I.B. Tauris.

savin, L. (2021, 11 19). The concept of hybrid warfare: origins, application, counteraction. Retrieved from Katehon: <https://katehon.com/en/article/concept-hybrid-warfare-origins-application-counteraction>

Savin, L. (2021, 11 9). The concept of hybrid warfare: origins, application, counteraction. Retrieved from Katehon: <https://katehon.com/en/article/concept-hybrid-warfare-origins-application-counteraction>

Sun Tzu. (6th Century B.C). Art of War.

Tech & Startup Desk. (2025, 10 25). The Daily Star. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/tech-startup/news/social-media-use-bangladesh-grows-223-2024-facebook-leads-3735526>

Vego, D. M. (2009). Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice. Rhode Island: US Naval War College.

Wikipedia. (2025, March 15). List of Social Platforms with at Least 100 Million Active Users. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_social\\_platforms\\_with\\_at\\_least\\_100\\_million\\_active\\_users](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_platforms_with_at_least_100_million_active_users)

## **AUTHOR**

**Brigadier General Sufi Mohammad Moinuddin, SUP, afwc, psc** was commissioned with 34 BMA Long Course on 07 June 1996 in the Corps of Signals. He attended number of courses at home and abroad. He obtained his BSc (Hons) in Electrical, Electronics and Communication Engineering from Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST), Mirpur. He attended Defence Services Command and Staff Course - 36 and obtained Masters in Defence Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals. Besides serving in various regimental command and staff appointments, Brigadier General Moin served as Instructor in School of Signals, Jashore and Platoon Commander in Bangladesh Military Academy. He commanded 2 Signal Battalion at Cumilla, under 33 Infantry Division. He has served as Director of Spectrum Management Division, BTRC and also as a Grade - 1 Staff Officer (Procurement) at the Directorate of Signals, Army Headquarters. The officer served under the blue helmet in Sierra Leone, Syria, South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. He is a widely travelled person and visited almost all the continents around the globe for various professional and personal interests. He attended numerous seminars, workshops and training programs both at home and abroad. Before joining National Defence College (NDC), Brigadier General Moin was serving as Chief Force Communication Officer (Chief U6) in DRC under MONUSCO. Currently, the officer is serving as Directing Staff of Armed Forces War Course Wing under NDC.

*Email: moin5302@gmail.com*



## **STRANGE PAUSE AFTER A DECISIVE VICTORY: REVISITING THE GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION OF NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE DURING BANGLADESH'S LIBERATION WAR**

**Group Captain Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, acsc, psc, PhD (Retired)**

*(Research Fellow, Dept of Politics and International Relations, University of Reading, United Kingdom & Registrar, American International University-Bangladesh)*

National Defence College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh

*(Received: 06th April 2025; Accepted: 14th May 2025; Published: 30th June 2025)*

---

**Abstract:** The coordinated offensive of 21 November 1971 marked India's first overt military intervention inside the East Pakistan, in support of the ongoing Liberation War of Bangladesh. Following the November offensive, Bangladeshi forces intensified their fight against Pakistani forces; however, India took a 'strange' pause till 03 December. This article explores the geopolitical significance of the November Offensive. It explains why India took the odd pause, how Pakistan reacted to it, and how significant was the November offensive from Bangladesh's perspective. Exploring the archival records of the United Nations, Indian Lok Sabha and Bangladesh Liberation War, the article argues that India opted for the odd pause to secure international legitimacy and relegated her November offensive in the East as an insignificant prelude. Pakistan's reaction—a pre-emptive air strike on Indian airfields in the Western Sector—transformed the Liberation War into an Indo-Pak war and exposed her as an initiator and aggressor. Unlike India, the November offensive was not a 'prelude' for Bangladesh but a continuation of the war and a merger of the two Forces; it exposed the wartime government to the geopolitics of an internationalised civil war. Consequently, the first Operational Directive issued by the Commander-in-Chief of Bangladesh Forces on 22 November, placed the two Forces under a unified command and, more importantly, lending a layer of legitimacy for both Forces while retaining the political authority and ownership of the War. Bangladesh and India were guided by geopolitical considerations—exemplifying Clausewitz's maxim that war is an instrument of (geo)politics by other means.

**Keywords:** *1971 Liberation War, Armed Force Day, Geopolitics, Indo-Pak War, Internationalised Civil War, Strategic Paus, United Nations*

---

© 2025 NDC E-JOURNAL, all rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

This article explores the causes and consequences of the coordinated military offensive launched on 21 November 1971, celebrated as the Armed Forces Day in Bangladesh, through the lens of geopolitics. The November offensive marked the first overt military intervention of Indian troops crossing the international border, in support of the ongoing Liberation War of Bangladesh. Some historians maintain 21 November as the ‘D-Day’ of 1971 Indo-Pak war—a departure from the largely held view of 03 December as the ‘start date’ of the same war, overshadowing Bangladesh’s nine-month-long armed struggle that commenced on 25 March 1971. Bangladesh Liberation Forces (hereafter BLF) intensified their fight following the offensive. However, India chose to take a “strategic pause” till 03 December. The paper explores why India took the odd pause, how Pakistan reacted to it, and how significant was the November offensive from Bangladesh’s perspective through the lens of international politics. Amidst the flurry of descriptive and impressionistic narratives, this paper goes beyond the insular and nationalistic account to explore the geopolitical dimension of 1971 Liberation War by addressing three seemingly trivial but pertinent questions: (i) Why did India pause her well-coordinated November offensive and relegated her initial victory in the East as an insignificant prelude? (ii) How did Pakistan react to the November offensive and what were its geopolitical consequences? (iii) How consequential was the military offensive of 21st November—that transformed the 1971 Liberation War into an internationalized civil war—for Bangladesh’s wartime government to retain the ownership and political authority of the war?

Exploring the archival records from the United Nations, Indian Lok Sabha, and the Provisional Government of Bangladesh (hereafter PG), this research provides new insights into the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, challenging traditional views. The analysis concludes that India adopted a “strategic pause” to gain international legitimacy for its involvement, downplaying its military actions in the East as an “insignificant prelude” while waiting for a response from Pakistan (Khan, 2024). Pakistan’s pre-emptive strike on December 3 escalated the conflict into an Indo-Pak war, transforming Bangladesh’s liberation war into an internationalized Civil War. The PG’s operational directive, issued on November 22, reveals that Bangladesh was driven by a quest for political independence and ownership of the war amidst a complex and contested geopolitical ambit. Unlike India, the November offensive was not a ‘prelude’ for Bangladesh; It represented a necessary continuation of efforts toward final victory and the need to bring both Forces under a unified command, providing legitimacy of Indian involvement.

The strategies of both Bangladesh and India were shaped by geopolitical factors, exemplifying Clausewitz's idea that war is an extension of politics by other means.

## **A SEEMINGLY TRIVIAL QUESTION**

Unlike the other defining days of Bangladesh's history, 21 November gained prominence in the national narrative only after it was designated as the Armed Forces Day during the presidency of Hussain Mohammad Ershad. The day commemorates the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters (Mukti Bahini) of the 1971 Liberation War. According to the official narrative, on this day in 1971, members of Army, Navy and Air Force of BLF, along with the "supporting" Forces became "fully operational" and "launched a coordinated offensive against the Pakistani army" (Armed Forces Division, 2024; Hossain, 2018, p.345). However, as discussed later in the paper, the evidence supporting this claim is weak—particularly in the context of Air and Naval forces. Nevertheless, the November offensive rattled the Pakistani leadership evidenced by its declaration of a state of emergency. To stave off a military defeat in the East, Pakistan reached out to the United Nations Secretary-General, seeking his "personal" intervention (Security Council, S/10410, pp.10-12). Despite a belated recognition marred with some historical inaccuracies, the November offensive appears to be consequential from a geopolitical perspective to any informed reader of Bangladesh's Liberation War.

As alluded to before, some scholars maintain 21 November as the "D-Day" of the 1971 Indo-Pak war (O'Mahoney, 2017; Sisson and Rose, 1990). The global war datasets, used by the researchers of war studies, document both 21 November and 03 December 1971, as the date of open Indo-Pak hostility (see annex A for details). The variations in coding the variables such as war type, initiators, start/end dates of hostilities etc. in these datasets for the 1971 Liberation War is interesting. For example, the Harvard Data verse is perhaps the only global dataset where India appears as the 'initiator' of the war; it codes Bangladesh's Liberation War as an 'interstate' war, noting 20 November and 17 December as the 'start' and 'end' date of the war respectively (Reiter, 2020). The Correlates of War (COW)—a widely used global war dataset—projects Pakistan as the 'initiator'. Coding it as a "civil war over local issues" the COW intra-state war dataset lists 25 March 1971 and 02 December 1971 as the 'start' and 'end' date while COW's interstate war dataset notes 03 December 1971 as the 'start' date of the Indo-Pak war (Dixon and Meredith 2016). These variations in coding in global war datasets suggest that the question relating to the 21st of November, celebrated as Armed Forces Day in Bangladesh, is perhaps neither trivial nor settled.

One of the most cited military operations of Armed Forces Day is the battle of Garibpur in Boyra, fought and won by the combined forces just 12 days before the full-scale war began. The Boyra salient—a bordering village inside the then East Pakistan territory—is at an important crossroads as it gave the Indian Army access to the Dhaka-Jashore highway. The Mukti Bahini, supported by the armoured and infantry elements of the Indian Army, were, for the first time, engaged in a fierce battle with the Pakistani forces at Garibpur.<sup>1</sup> The battle also saw the first aerial fight between the Indian and Pakistani air forces in the Eastern Front.<sup>2</sup> The Pakistani side suffered significant casualties and destruction while the combined forces had a decisive win.<sup>3</sup> Recalling the events—Brigadier Balram Singh Mehta—then a Captain and the second in command (2IC) of the Indian 45 Cavalry Squadron, states: “If the [Indian] government had given us permission on that day [i.e. 22 November 1971], we would have driven up till Jessore [Bangladesh] and brought the war to an end.” (Upmanyu, 2020, italics added).

A seemingly intuitive question that follows is: why did India restrain her military from continuing the advancement to end the war at an early date? The question appears even more ineluctable if viewed from the context that the operational predicament of monsoon being a restraining factor for armoured advancement was over by then (Raghavan, 2013, p.69).<sup>4</sup> Major General Jacob—India’s military commander in the Eastern theatre—recalls adducing General Manekshaw that: “we [Indian troops in the Eastern theatre] could be ready earliest by 15 November. This would leave adequate time after the monsoon for the terrain to become passable” (Jacob, 1997, p. 20 and 119). Second, prior to the November offensive, India signed a geopolitically consequential “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation” with the Soviet Union (on 09 August 1971) securing her much-needed security guarantee in case of an open Indo-Pak war (Kapur, 1972; Peri, 2021). Third, the onset of November also meant that the snowed up Himalayan passes would block any military moves by China, another key strategic consideration

<sup>1</sup> The Indian forces, including the 14 Punjab Battalion and PT-76 tanks from the 45 Cavalry, partnered with the Mukti Bahini. In comparison, the Pakistani side comprised an infantry-sized battalion supported by the 3rd Independent Armoured Squadron with M24 Chaffee tanks and air support. (Hossain, 2018, pp. 301-302).

<sup>2</sup> The Pakistan Air Force element tasked to provide close air support was four Sabres from No 14. Squadron stationed in Dhaka. The Indian Air Force elements, tasked to intercept the PAF fighters were four Folland Gnat from No. 22 Squadron stationed at Dum Dum airfield in Calcutta. *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The casualty and destruction on the Pakistani side was reported as 100 dead, 40 injured and 11 tanks destroyed. The Allied forces lost 19 lives, 44 wounded and two PT 76s. See Hossain, 2018, p.302. The Battle of Boyra is also described by Srinath Raghavan (2013, p. 232) as a clear indication of the War reaching a “new stage” consequent to which the “Indian troops were ordered to remain inside the captured territory all along the border.”

<sup>4</sup> In a cabinet meeting on 25 April 1971, the Indian Army chief apprised the Prime Minister that monsoon in East Bengal (April-September) would restrict the troop’s movement as “the land would be marshy, and the rivers would become like oceans” suggesting launching military offensive after the monsoon.

in favour of India to continue her November offensive. Thus, the seemingly trivial question as to why there was a sudden lull in the Indian offensive following the decisive victory of 21st November appears solid and ineluctable. Answering to these questions entails exploring geopolitics of the Cold War era-inextricably linked to Bangladesh's Liberation War and emergence as an independent state.

## **THE GEOPOLITICS OF COLD WAR**

The geopolitics of the Cold War had a distinctive impact on South Asia. This (Table 1) was particularly evidenced by the Security Council debates and (in) decisions.<sup>5</sup> China and the United States - two P-5 members-insofar as their governments were concerned, had overtly opposed Bangladesh's independence. From a Cold War perspective, the United States viewed that an undivided Pakistan would better serve the developing Sino-U.S. relationship to contain the spread of communism. An open Indian intervention in Bangladesh was also not endorsed by other Western states for fear that 'it could incite similar situations,' simmering in many other parts of the world including Biafra in Nigeria (Khan, 2021; Nanda, 1972, pp. 56-57; Choudhury, 1972).

China viewed that "Soviet socialist imperialism" was playing the "most insidious role in South Asia" to further "control India and Bangla Desh" and increase its "sphere of influence" in the Indian Ocean region (S/PV. 1660, p.9). Labelling the Soviet Union as the "new tsars who stop at nothing in doing evil" the Chinese Ambassador at the United Nations reiterated his government's firm support for Pakistan "in their just struggle against foreign aggression" (S/PV 1615, p.2).

Amidst the compelling geopolitical situation in South Asia, taking side became fated for a "non-aligned" India, manifested by the defining Indo-Soviet Treaty. First, India was apprehensive about a military intervention by the extra-regional powers in the event of an open war with Pakistan and wanted to secure a security guarantee despite being an active proponent of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Second, Pakistan's membership of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1955, the shock of 1962 Chinese invasion, the 1965 Indo-Pak war over Kashmir-exposed India's vulnerability in the region within the context of Great Power politics. Third, the Indo-Soviet affinity during the Cold War was well-recognized. For

---

*5 Bi-lateral discussions on the Indo-Pak situation were also held in key capitals like Washington, Bonn, Kremlin and Beijing. Discussions were held at the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations committees and commissions (i.e. Third Committee, Economic and Social Council, Human Rights Commission, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities etc.). However, the geopolitics became most revealing at the Security Council (Nanda, 1972, pp. 49-56)-*

example, India refrained from condemning the Soviet Union when it moved to suppress the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring in 1968 at the Assembly. Thus, the Indo-Soviet Treaty, although hastened by the impending Indo-Pak war in the subcontinent, was built on years of Indo-Soviet friendship and geopolitical affinity-received coolly in Washington (Pant and Super, 2015. pp. 749-752; Kapur, 1972; Thomas 1979).

<b>Table 1: Key Security Council Meetings on Bangladesh in December 1971</b>
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No-Abs): 21 Dec (1621st Meeting)
Adopted a Resolution (S/RES/307) for a “durable cease-fire and cessation of all hostilities in all areas of conflict.” (13-0-2; Abs: Poland, USSR)
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No -Abs): 16 Dec (1616th & 1617th Meetings)
Discussed but no draft Resolution was placed for voting.
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No -Abs): 15/16 Dec (1615th Meeting)
Discussed but no draft Resolution was placed for voting.
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No -Abs): 14/15 Dec (1614th Meeting)
Discussed but no draft resolution was placed for voting.
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No -Abs): 13 Dec (1613th Meeting)
USSR vetoed the revised U.S. Draft resolution S/10446/Rev.1. (11-2-2; No: Poland, USSR. Abs: France, UK)
Meeting & outcome Vote (Yes-No -Abs): 12 Dec (1611th Meeting)
Discussed but no resolution was placed for voting.
Meeting & outcome Vote (Yes-No -Abs): 05 Dec (1607th Meeting)
Six Power (Argentina, Burundi, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Somalia) Resolution 303(1971) was adopted to refer the issue to the General Assembly. (11-0-4 (Abs: France, Poland, USSR, UK). The Assembly adopted a non-binding Resolution for an immediate ceasefire.
USSR vetoed draft Resolution (S/10423) for a ceasefire tabled by Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Somalia. (11-2-2; No: Poland, USSR. Abs: France, UK)
China vetoed the USSR draft Resolution (S/10418) calling for Political Settlement to cease the hostility. (2-1-12; No: China)
Meeting & outcome (Yes-No -Abs): 04 Dec 04 (1606th Meeting)
USSR vetoed the U.S. draft resolution (S/10416) calling for immediate ceasefire (11-2-2; No: Poland, USSR. Abs: France, UK)
<i>Source: Author's compilation of Security Council official records.</i>

China viewed the Indo-Soviet treaty as an “aggressive military alliance”, that had stripped off India’s “cloak of non-alliance.” Albania—that withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in 1968, primarily in response to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia—also described the Indo-Soviet Treaty as an “aggressive” aimed against the peace-loving countries of Asia. The Albanian ambassador at the United Nations also condemned the “warmongering policy of the imperialist Powers, a policy which seriously threatens peace and security in Asia and the world and primarily against the People’s Republic of China and Pakistan.” (A/PV. 2003, p.10). Paired with the Soviet veto power in the Security Council, the Indo-Soviet treaty accorded India the military deterrence to engage in an open war with Pakistan. Consequently, the Security Council became a ‘concerned but helpless’ observer, not just for the geopolitical power play but also for its inactions after the Pakistani massacre of the Bengalis on 25 March 1971, which continued till December (Khan, 2024).

Beyond the P-5, several other states, including some non-Security Council members also viewed an open Indo-Pak conflict as “critical” for regional peace and security.<sup>6</sup> Leveraging the expansion of the non-aligned presence in the Assembly, these states carved out a niche to operate as active, independent agents. Apart from the General Assembly, non-Security Council members like Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) also participated in the Council debates to voice their concerns.<sup>7</sup>

Exasperated by the deep divisions in the Council, the Saudi diplomat—widely regarded for his diplomatic wisdom—succinctly asserted: “Resolutions without the collective will to act will bring us to nought” because the ‘differences between the big Powers are strategic.’ He labelled the draft resolutions circulated as ‘autumn leaves being wafted in the Council’ with no effect. Advocating for an Asian solution, not a United Nations solution the ambassador suggested convening an immediate meeting of the Asian Chiefs of State to “pour oil on troubled waters: not to appeal, not to adjudicate, but to resort to Asian magnanimity to put an immediate end to the war with a solution that will be acceptable.” (S/PV. 1607, pp.8-12).

---

<sup>6</sup> *The non-permanent Security Council members included: Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Poland, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Syria.*

<sup>7</sup> *Other diplomats who attended (by invitation and without the rights to vote) several Council meetings on the Indo-Pak agenda included: Mr. Svaran Singh (India) Mr. Z. A. Bhutto/Mr. A. Shabi (Pakistan), Mr. R. Driss (Tunisia), Mr. J. M. Baroody (Saudi Arabia) and Mr. H.S. Amerasinghe (Ceylon).*

The Tunisian diplomat described the Indo-Pak situation as a “veritable war-like situation” calling for its immediate end to respect the “unity and the territorial integrity of Pakistan” (S/PV.1607, pp.7-8). The Sri Lankan (Ceylon) ambassador labeled the same as a “poignant tragedy in the history of the United Nations” leading to “imminent disintegration of a country.” At the 1615th Security Council Meeting, held on the wee hours of 15 December 1971 when the Pakistani troops were preparing to surrender at Dhaka, Mr. Amerasinghe, Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United Nation, pleaded to the Council members for a settlement that will “prevent victory from being an embarrassment, defeat from being a humiliation, and peace from being an illusion.” He also suggested that any solution should provide a sure and stable foundation for “lasting peace and harmony between those who are brothers and must always remain so” (S/PV 1615, p.3).

Be that as it may, military intervention remained unacceptable to many of the member states advocating a ceasefire. They feared military interventionism would set an unhealthy precedent undermining the concepts of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national independence enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The exceptions were the Soviet Union and Poland-aligned with India-who repeatedly stressed the need for a political settlement of the crisis. They rightly viewed that a ceasefire without correlating it with a negotiated political settlement involving the elected representatives of East Pakistan would be unrealistic, inadequate and cannot bring lasting peace.

Amidst the constant flux of a bipolar world, geopolitical consideration prevailed. Geopolitics compelled the warring states to project themselves as exercising maximum restraint and overtly using force only for defensive purposes to secure international legitimacy. Thus, India's strange pause after 21st November and designating the November offensive in the East as an “insignificant prelude” was a geopolitical necessity. Pakistan's pre-emptive air attack in the Western sector exposed her to further international obloquy and truly transformed Bangladesh's Liberation War into an Indo-Pak war.

The juxtaposed position of the two superpowers ended hope for any ‘Asian solution’ codified in a binding Security Council resolution espoused by the Saudi Ambassador. The successive Soviet vetoes at the Council gave precious little time for a swift military victory. The lack of unanimity amongst the P-5 of the Security Council finally resulted in referring the issue of ceasefire to the General Assembly-where any resolution passed was inconsequential and non-binding. India's full-scale intervention starting on 03 December 1971 expedited

the birth of Bangladesh, making it the ‘only example of forcibly creating a new state propelled by an ethnic-linguistic movement in the Cold War era’ (Khan, 2021, p.237).

## **INDIAN PERSPECTIVE: INSULAR BUT REFLECTIVE**

Although the border skirmishes and airspace violations between India and Pakistan were frequent and became more widespread over time, not all were credited with equal importance in official debates. The military offensive of 21 November 1971 is one such operations credited to have been cited and debated by the Indian and Pakistani diplomats and politicians at the parliament and the United Nations. On 23 November, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then an opposition member at Indian Lok Sabha, requested a government statement regarding the Boyra incident. Citing the media reports, Samar Guha, a West Bengal parliamentarian, also mentioned the “tank battle in Jessore” and reports of the “number of Indians captured” by the Pakistanis. In response, the defence minister confirmed the “shooting down of three intruding Pakistani aircraft near Boyra.” Downplaying the magnitude and significance of the military offensive, the Minister emphasized that India is not in a state of “undeclared war” or a “state of hostilities” with Pakistan, adding that Pakistan is trying to “internationalise the war” (Lok Sabha, 1971, 22 November, pp. 245-248, italics added.).

The Indian Prime Minister’s curated statement-delivered on 24 November-at the Lok Sabha on the “declaration of emergency in Pakistan and the situation on the India-Pakistan border,” also described the military actions of 21 November. Two days later, the same text was read out by the Indian diplomat at the 1996th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. The curated and insular statement included the reason and nature of the Indian military action at Boyra, the causality and destructions of Pakistani forces and the future course of action. India claimed that the Pakistan military had launched “an offensive” on Mukti Bahini who were protecting a Boyra-a liberated bordering village inside East Pakistan. The artillery shells fired by the Pakistan military, falling inside Indian territory had wounded a few Indian soldiers and had threatened the defensive position held by the Indian army. This prompted the ‘local military commander’ to take ‘appropriate action to repulse the Pakistani attack.’ The Prime Minister also mentioned the air battle which took place ‘inside Indian territory’ and resulted in the shooting of three Pakistani Sabre jets and capturing two pilots. Her statement included a response to the Pakistani President’s Eid message and a summary of the ‘wanton’ violation

of Indian airspace and shelling by Pakistan (Lok Sabha, November 24, 1971, pp.222-24; A/PV. 1996, pp.18-19).

The Indian Prime Minister described these incidents as 'purely local' suggesting that India does not want to 'escalate the situation,' and will remain 'unruffled'. She also informed the House that the troops have been instructed "not to cross the border except in self-defence." Unlike Pakistan's decision of declaring a state of emergency, immediately after the battle of Boyra, India opted to wait for Pakistan taking "further aggressive action." Ten days later, Pakistan's pre-emptive air strike against Indian airfields in the Western sector, prompted India to declare a state of emergency and the full-scale war ensued.

When the debate moved to the Security Council, India maintained a similar curated narrative about her military offensive of 21st November. At the 1606th Security Council meeting, Mr. Sen, the Indian Ambassador stated, "I do not deny it [i.e. going into East Pakistan territory on 21 November]." Stating India's compulsions, he added that the Pakistani military had "started shelling our civilian villages... after having killed their own people [Bengalis] they now turn their guns on us [Indians]" and "we did this because we had no option." (S/PV 1606, p.15). From a geopolitical perspective, several conclusions emerge from India's insular and curated narrative.

First, to draw international legitimacy India, on its part, remained keen to project herself as a party exercising maximum restraint to address the East Pakistan crisis. The Tashkent Agreement—signed after the Indo-Pak War of 1965—had ushered in a long spell of 'armed peace' in South Asia. Anchored in the principles of United Nations Charter, the Agreement restored the territorial status quo and stipulated against the use of force in resolving Indo-Pak disputes (Tashkent Declaration, 1966, January 10, Article I).<sup>8</sup> It also reiterated adherence to the 'principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other'—the cornerstone of the global community's muted or vocal position during the Indo-Pak crisis (Ibid, Article III; Nanda, 1972). Thus India's "strategic pause" was perhaps necessary to adduce to the international community as a party exercising maximum restraint.

Second, Pakistan's overt military intervention on 03 December served as a solid justification for India to make full use of the protection guaranteed by the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Apart from the Soviet military support to India the Treaty assured to "immediately enter into mutual consultations," in case of an attack

<sup>8</sup> Article I of the Tashkent Declaration reaffirmed India and Pakistan's commitment "not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means" aligned with the United Nations Charter.

or a threat of attack on India, to “remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures.” The Treaty also provided a safeguard against supplying any Soviet military support to Pakistan in the event of a conflict (Treaty of Peace, Friendship & Co-operation, 1971, Article IX, X). Air Marshal Koutakov’s visit to Delhi on 28 October 1971 to negotiate the defence supplies needed by India further cemented the Soviet assurance of ‘total support’ (Raghavan, 2013, p.226). Launching a full-fledged military offensive only as a response to Pakistan’s ‘further aggressive action’ ensured securing the full range of Soviet support and international legitimacy (Kamal, 2010). Thus, relegating the decisive victory at the battle of Boyra as ‘purely local’, resulting from a ‘defensive action’ and initiated by the ‘local’ military commander was insular but reflective, attesting to the primacy of geopolitics in the conduct of war.

Third, and perhaps the most enduring geopolitical lesson from an Indian perspective is how a regional actor can shape and settle a security issue in its immediate neighbourhood limiting the interference of external actors. The Soviet deterrence, paired with the vetoes in Security Council broadly insulated India from the geopolitical pressure to make her military move against Pakistan. India’s decision to relegate the November offensive in the East and wait till Pakistan’s overt military action in the Western Sector was to project herself as a ‘victim’ and not an initiator of the war. Such a position was defensible by India and her crucial allies in the Council. With firm military preparation and support by the BLF, any aggressive posturing by the external powers was almost destined to be met with a swift Allied offensive to capture Dhaka to seal the victory. Such realities perhaps explain as to why the titling and posturing of Pakistan’s key ally-the United States-appeared to be ‘picaresque’ and tilting at ‘windmills’ (Raghavan, 2013, p. 263). Trading cautiously and strategically, India was able to isolate the issue as a bi-lateral one instead of requiring multi-lateral intervention. India’s success of keeping the ‘high politics of the region on a bilateral basis’ continues to remain her foreign policy strategy even today (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, pp.102-3).

## **PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE: CAPTIVE TO MILITARY STRATEGY**

Most Pakistani historians consider 21st November as the ‘operative date’ of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. However, Pakistan’s narrative of the November offensive is also marred with insularity and propagandist tone-evidenced by the official records of the Council and Assembly meetings. On 23 November, the Pakistani president

wrote to the Secretary-General describing the military situation. Calling it as 'grave' and 'urgent', the President reported that the Indian military had mounted a 'large scale attack' on various parts of East Pakistan, penetrating several miles inside Pakistan in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Maulvi Bazaar, Burangamari, Boyra, and Belonia (S/10410, pp.10-12).

Pakistan labelled the Indian military actions of 21st November as a 'blatant act of aggression'. The Pakistani representative at the United Nation emphatically stated, "Take any definition of aggression, take any statement of the Indian position on what constitutes aggression, and by their very words they have committed aggression against Pakistan." (A/PV.1996, pp. 16-17). According to Pakistan, India's military action was aimed at establishing 'control of the territory by the 'secessionist groups' (i.e. Mukti Bahini) inside East Pakistan territory to claim that the 'rebel government now has a territory and a population' to pave the way for their recognition.

In a war-time situational briefing on 22 November 1971, Pakistan's Chief of General Staff urged the President to order the attack on India's Western front-aligned with country's military doctrine. Pakistan's military doctrine stipulated that "the defence of East Pakistan lies in West Pakistan" (Commission Report, 1972, p.69). The next day, the President declared a state of emergency and wrote a letter to the Secretary-General seeking his 'personal initiative' to avert a 'catastrophe' and convene a Security Council meeting (S/10410, p. 12). However, the Security Council did not consider that the situation was compelling to convene a meeting. Pakistan could adduce the Council about the events of 21st November only after the full-scale war broke out in the subcontinent.<sup>9</sup> Pakistan's inability to internationalise the November offensive appears to have borne out of a combination of factors.

First, at the onset of hostilities-particularly after Pakistan military's crackdown of the innocent Bengali civilians, Pakistan maintained that East Pakistan crisis was 'outside the Security Council's concern.' The Pakistani Ambassador at the United Nation repeatedly reminded the Council that the Council should be concerned with "international peace, not with the internal peace and political life" of a member state. Pakistan refused to be drawn into an Indian 'trap' suggesting that the Council should "find the means to make India desist from its war of aggression" (S/PV. 1606, p10). Pakistan's initial reticence to external involvement proved costly for her when it became necessary.

<sup>9</sup> On 4 December 1971-Pakistan adduced the Security Council that her Eastern front was under "a massive attack...since 21 November, by India's regular troops, tanks and aircraft" along with the claims of Indian land forces incursion in the Western front. (See S/PV. 1606, 1971, December 04, pp. 7-10).

As the specter of a full-scale war loomed large and became inevitable after the fiercest clash of 21st November, the Pakistani leadership started making frantic efforts to draw regional and international actors to intervene and support (Nanda, 1972, p. 65; Raghavan 2018; Bass, 2013). In one of his letters to the Secretary-General, President Yahya proposed to deploy United Nations observers on its side of East Pakistan—a shift from his previous proposal to deploy the observers on both sides of the border, rejected by the Indians (A/PV. 2003, p.40).<sup>10</sup> Pakistan's efforts to internationalise the military offensive of 21st November seeking intervention was too late and futile.

Second, the Secretary-General was frustrated by the responses of the Council members and the parties involved. On 22 November, he wrote to the Indian Prime Minister: "... much to my regret, there does not seem to be a basis for the exercise of the Secretary-General's good offices in this infinitely serious and complicated problem" (S/10410, p. 9). His frustration was also evident from his letter to the Pakistani President on 29 November, which concluded that: "I have gone, for the moment, as far as my authority under the Charter permits me, usefully and meaningfully, to go in the present circumstances (S/10410, p. 13)." The timing and texts of the Secretary-General's communications with the warring parties reflect that the United Nation's efforts were inhibited not just by the great power rivalry but also the domestic jurisdiction and the inexorable course taken by both parties leading towards a full-scale Indo-Pak war.

Third, Pakistan's reaction to the November offensive was guided by her military strategy rather than geopolitical assessment. The view that a decisive attack in the Western sector would 'bring India to its knees' prevailed over the larger question of its effect on drawing international legitimacy of the War. On the eve of launching the pre-emptive strike on Indian airfields in the Western front, the Pakistani Air Chief reportedly told his public relations officer 'Not to bother about conjuring up justification', boasting that 'success is the biggest justification' (Raghavan, 2013, p.234). Reflecting on Pakistan's conduct of the 1971 War, General Niazi noted that the "Indians would not have started an all-out war in East Pakistan if the Western front had not been opened by Pakistan [in response to the November offensive in the East]." (Commission Report, p.69, italics added).

At the regional level, Pakistan failed to secure alliance support despite being an active member of the CENTO and SEATO, two military pacts for providing

---

<sup>10</sup> Apart from the Assembly debates, India opposed the idea to station United Nations observers on their soil during Prime minister India Gandbi's visit to western capitals including West Germany to isolate the Bangladesh crisis from extra-regional involvement including the possibility of an Atlantic entente (Raghavan 2013, p. 231).

Collective Defence.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan was a key ally of the West to limit the spread of communism in South Asia. However, Pakistan's disenchantment with the alliance dates from 1965 when it failed to secure meaningful support during the Indo-Pak war on Kashmir. Consequently, Pakistan shaded her attachment with the SEATO and CENTO in 1973 and 1979 respectively as they were "no longer useful" (New York Times, 09 Nov 1972). In contrast to India, Pakistan maintained a strategy of formally entering regional alliances and strong bi-lateral relationship with key powers like the United States, China and Saudi Arabia. Although Pakistan's alliance-based strategy did not yield much meaningful support for her in 1971, it nevertheless kept India regionally tied with a Pakistan centric threat perception, feeding India's military strategy, deployment and procurement, even today.

Buoyed by their newfound role as a conduit to the budding US-China relationship, Pakistan hoped for Chinese intervention in case of a full-scale Indo-Pak war. Reference to this effect was made by the President as well as the foreign minister Bhutto, on returning from his visit to Beijing in November 1971. The likelihood of an Indo-Pak war 'within ten days' was mentioned by the President in an impromptu remark following a state banquet honouring the visiting Chinese minister on 25 November 1971 (Department of States, 1972, February 02, p.11). It is now known that the Chinese assurance to Pakistan was that of military supply and support and not of intervention. Nonetheless, most of the Council members were aligned with Pakistan's demand for an immediate ceasefire, only to be nullified by consecutive Soviet vetoes.

Hindsight now establishes that the November offensive was profoundly consequential for Pakistan but not for the international community. The fact that the Security Council did not meet until after Pakistan's pre-emptive strike, would imply that the Council did not see the November offensive as a serious threat to regional security. Pakistan's record of massacring innocent Bengali that pervaded the international media and her initial reticence to any external intervention restricted her ability to garner international support. The (ineffective) alliances with SEATO and CENTO also worked as an obstacle to garnering support from NAM, limiting Pakistan's strategic autonomy (Dhar, 2000) and finally prioritizing the military strategy over geopolitical considerations. The pre-emptive strike in the Wester sector made Pakistan the initiator and aggressor. It also transformed The Liberation War of Bangladesh into an Indo-Pak war. By placing military objectives over geopolitical considerations, Pakistan once again exposed herself

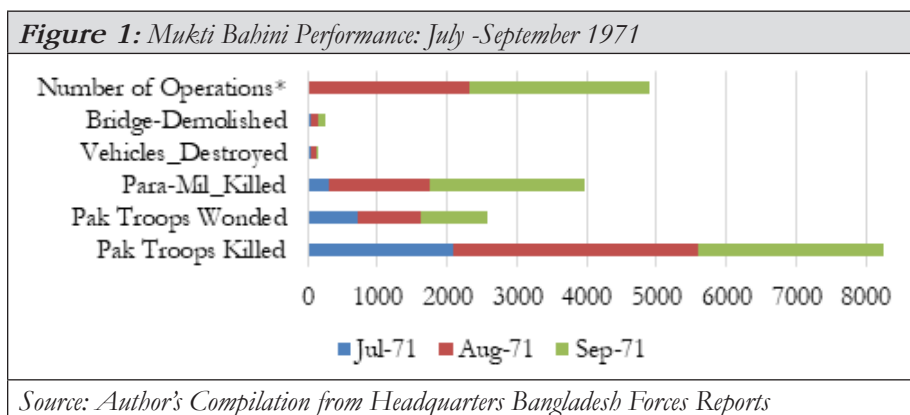
---

<sup>11</sup> The Baghdad Pact, later called CENTO, included Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the UK. SEATO comprised Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK, and the USA.

to international obloquy and allowed her counterpart to claim, ‘it was not India which declared or started war’. In other words, Pakistan helped the Indian cause at the geopolitical level.

## BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE: QUEST TO RETAIN POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND OWNERSHIP

The making of 21 November was written in the walls of 25 March 1971-the day on which the Pakistan military unleashed “Operation Searchlight” on the unarmed Bengali civilians. Overcoming the initial shock many Bengalis, with the material assistance and a sanctuary in India, took up arms to fight for independence. As early as 29 March 1971, the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) started offering ‘limited help’ to the Mukti Bahini. By April 1971 the Indian Army and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) began training and equipping the Mukti Bahini to set up the “tempo of guerrilla operation with a focus on demolition by small parties” inside East Pakistan (Bass, 2013, pp.95-96).



By July-September 1971, the guerrilla operation inside East Pakistan was well into motion. The destruction, demolition and casualties inflicted by the Mukti Bahini on the Pakistani forces (Figure 1) continue to increase, adding to the increasing size of the liberated area within East Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> The mutinied troops of East Bengal regiments helped organise the BLF and prevented the Pakistani army from securing control of large parts of East Pakistan (Raghavan, 2018, p.52). The BLF fortnightly situation report reveals that before the Indian overt involvement,

<sup>12</sup> The data is from the “on Mukti Bahini Activities and Performance, (during the period: last week of June-1st Week of October 71)” Headquarters Bangladesh Forces (Hossain, 2018, Appendix V).

Mukti Bahini had liberated or taken complete control of a vast swath of land inside East Pakistan (see Table 2).

<b>Table 2: Mukti Bahini activities between 15 Nov-30 Nov 1971</b>	
Operations/Activities	Outcome
Areas Liberated	Large areas of Sylhet, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Tangail, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong districts.
Areas under Complete Control of Mukti Bahini	Most of the northern part of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Sylhet. Almost the whole of Tangail district and Kishoreganj Sub-division. Extensive areas of Barisal and Faridpur. Western Part of Khulna and Jessore Fatik Chari, Patia, Anwara, Raojan and Hatia thana and Northeastern Part of Noakhali
Demolished/Damaged / Destroyed	40 strategic roads and railway bridges. Trains carrying enemy troops derailed in 4 different places. 28 Enemy Vehicles.
Sunk	Seven Ships, six Coasters, six Barges, Five Steamers, and a few enemy Gun boats.
Sea Ports Paralyzed	Chalna and Chittagong.
River Ports/ Ferry Ghats disrupted	Chandpur, Narayanganj, Bahadurabad Ghat, Jagannathganj Ghat.
Domestic Air Flights	Closed
<i>Source: Author's Compilation from Bangladesh Forces HQ Press Release Dated 03 Dec 1971 (Hossain, 2018, Appendix W)</i>	

By the first week of November, the Kilo Flight<sup>13</sup>-the air arm of BLF-became fully operational to launch air attacks (Alam, 2021). However, much like the dismay of the Indian troops of the 45 Cavalry in Boyra, the Kilo Flight's planned D-Day of 28 November to launch their first air attack on the Chittagong fuel refinery inside East Pakistan was postponed until 03 December 1971 by the Indian high command (Alam, 2021, p.438). The decamped Bengali naval commandoes and submariners of the Pakistan Navy conducted "Operation Jackpot" on 15 August 1971 destroying twenty-six ships carrying food and oil from different countries,

<sup>13</sup> Kilo Flight, the precursor to the Bangladesh Air Force, was established on September 28, 1971, in Dimapur, India. It included a DC-3, an Otter, and an Alouette-III helicopter. Bengali airmen who defected from the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan International Airlines, along with support from the Indian Air Force, made the flight operational during the liberation war.

including arms-laden ships from Pakistan, blocking the ports to stop Pakistan's logistics supply (Banglapedia, 2021, Mahfuz, 2023). The ceasefire proposal sent to the senior United Nations officials at Dhaka by the East Pakistan Governor on 10 November also attests to the fact that the Pakistan Army in the Eastern theatre was collapsing well before the November offensive (Raghavan 2028, p.252).

Thus, from a Bangladesh perspective, the November offensive was neither a 'precursor' of the War nor the day on which all three BLF elements became 'fully operational' to launch a coordinated offensive as held by the conventional narrative. Instead, it was a continuation and an inevitable merger of the two Forces, driven by geopolitical considerations and the urgency of a swift victory.

Nevertheless, the November offensive exposed the war-time PG to the complexities of an internationalised civil war. The PG, for the first time, was formally exposed to the challenges of retaining political authority and ownership of the War. This little-known and much less analyzed Operational Directive of 22nd November is perhaps one of the most consequential and authoritative war-time documents of Bangladesh's Liberation War. It defined, for the first time, the "Relative Roles of Bangladesh Forces in Relation to Supporting Forces [India] in the Event of War between the Host Country [Bangladesh] and the Enemy [Pakistan]" (Sarwar, 2018, Appendix Z). The Directive touched off the tocsin at the military-strategic level-capturing Bangladesh's wartime leadership's quest to retain the authority and ownership of the War and the command relationship of the two Forces.

The Directive-issued by the BLF Commander-in-Chief MAG Osmani following an agreement with the General Officer Commanding, Eastern Command-was sent to all BLF Commanders and the Indian Army Command.<sup>14</sup> It defined the command relationship, roles of "Supporting" and Bangladesh Forces, allotment of troops, boundaries, logistics, civil administration of liberated areas etc. Bangladesh Forces were placed under the Supporting Indian Forces' command, requiring the latter to "provide full logistic support" (Ibid, p.470).

The unique arrangements outlined in the Directives raise a few intuitive questions. Why did the Directive designate Bangladesh as a "host country" which was yet to be recognised by any states including India? Why were the Indian troops called "Supporting Forces"? Why were the host country's forces placed under the Supporting forces command-an unorthodox military practice? These intuitive questions can be better explained through the lens of geopolitics.

*14 A note at the end of the Directive for wireless and couriers states it was issued based on an agreement between the Commander-in-Chief of Bangladesh forces and the GOC-in-C of India's Eastern Command (Sarwar, 2018, p. 474).*

First, geopolitics can affect political authority and ownership in internationalised civil conflicts. The 22 November Directive tended to suggest that the PG was apprehensive about losing its ownership and authority of the War amidst a complex geopolitical context. A perception prevailed that if India succeeds in helping to create Bangladesh, then “East Pakistan will become a Bhutan and West Pakistan will become a Nepal. And India with Soviet help would be free to turn its energies elsewhere” (Henry Kissinger quoted in Raghavan, 2018, p. 284).

Bangladesh's first Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed realized the complex motives of external actors and the necessity to retain the ownership of the War. In one of his wartime addresses to the nation, he asserted: “Bengalis undoubtedly rely on their own power ...but there is satisfaction to be derived from the signs of support from quarters where before there was only caution.” (Ministry of Liberation War, 2004a, p.215, italics added). The necessity to retain ownership of the War, after India's military involvement became even more ineluctable.

Abdur Razzaq, a key figure of the “nucleus” of Bangladesh's freedom struggle also echoed a similar view.<sup>15</sup> Reaffirming Mukti Bahini's vow to fight a prolonged war, Razzaq however predicted that, India, boasting her direct involvement, may claim the ownership of our Liberation War in future. He viewed that the intervention by the regular Indian forces was necessary but not essential to win Bangladesh's independence (Kino-Eye Films Archive, 2021, June 28).

Ironically, Razzaq's prediction came to fruition. On 16 December 2024-54th Victory Day of Bangladesh-the Indian Prime Minister wrote: “Today we honour the courage and sacrifices of the brave soldiers who contributed to India's historic victory in 1971” in his official X handle (formerly Twitter). Bangladeshi polity including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) reacted sharply. The tweet was viewed as a distortion of history, seemingly disregarding Bangladesh's ownership of the 1971 Liberation War. Highlighting the “fact in history” from the books authored by Indian writers, Bangladesh's MoFA in its official Facebook page wrote “We celebrate our glorious Victory in 1971; we celebrate the Truth” (Khan, 2025; MoFA, Dec 18, 2024, italic added).

Major Rafiqul Islam, a decorated freedom fighter and Sector Commander, also shares an insightful account of the command dynamics between the Indian and Bangladeshi forces during the 1971 Liberation War. He recalls a conference held

---

<sup>15</sup> *Abdur Razzaq, (1942-2011) was a Bangladeshi politician and frontline organiser of the war of liberation. He was one of the three members of the core committee of Svadhin Bangla Biplabi Parishad, widely known as the 'nucleus' and the main proponent of Bangladesh's independence through armed struggle.*

at the Indian 181 Brigade Headquarters on November 20, 1971, where it was decided that Indian officers could be loaned to command Bangladeshi troops in extreme emergencies. Despite this provision, Maj Rafique notes that they did not require to 'loan' Indian officers and were able to continue their fight with the officers and Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) available to them. This arrangement of conditional offer to borrow Indian officers highlights the collaborative yet independent nature of the relationship between the two forces after the November offensive (Ministry of Liberation War, 2004, p. 66-67).

The evidence suggests that the wartime leadership in Bangladesh was careful to maintain control and ownership of the conflict while accepting India's assistance, mindful of the risks associated with "becoming Bhutan."

Second, by labeling Bangladesh as the 'host country' and the Indian troops as 'Supporting Forces,' they added a layer of legitimacy to the Allied intervention. This narrative was essential in portraying that the Indian forces were officially invited by the host nation to play a supportive role in East Pakistan. Such framing was beneficial in asserting that the Allied intervention did not violate the principle of non-aggression, as it aligned with the Bengalis' right to self-determination, addressing the concerns of an increasingly restless international community.

Once the war erupted, key allies of India within the Non-Aligned Movement, such as Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia and President Naser of Egypt, expressed strong reservation regarding India's military intervention in East Pakistan. In a surprising turn of events, both of these pivotal allies, alongside 104 member states, united in voting for an Assembly resolution that called for an immediate cease-fire and the withdrawal of troops (A/RES 2793 (XXVI) and A/PV. 2003, p. 10-11).<sup>16</sup> It was a moment of unexpected dismay for India when the operative clause of the Polish revised draft resolution presented at the Security Council on December 14—just two days prior to the surrender of Pakistani forces in Dhaka—stated:<sup>17</sup>

"...The Indian armed forces will be withdrawn from East Pakistan. Such withdrawal of troops will begin upon consultations with the newly established authorities organized as a result of the transfer of power to the lawfully elected representatives of the people." (S/10453/REV.I).

---

<sup>16</sup> India along with ten other countries including the USSR, Poland and Bhutan voted against it while the United Kingdom, France and Nepal along with seven other countries abstained from voting in this non-binding General Assembly Resolution.

<sup>17</sup> The Polish draft resolution (S/10453), first presented on 14 December, was followed by a revised version (S/10453 Rev-1) on 15 December, which notably omitted the reference to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the head of the "lawfully elected representatives of the people." However, neither resolution was brought to a vote, but reflects the shifting mood of the India's allies.

The urgency for a quick victory and immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from East Pakistan was clear in the discussions at the Council and Assembly. Concerned about escalation, Britain and France urged India through private channels to “finish the job quickly” (Raghavan 2028, p. 259) and proposed a draft resolution for an “immediate and durable cease-fire” along with “disengagement leading to withdrawal” of troops (S/10455). Geopolitical factors necessitated hastening the victory, resulting in the merging of the two forces.

Third, the 22 November Operational Directive also manifests the inevitable merger of the two kinds of battles triggered by Pakistani aggression in the West and repression in the East. Compared to the Western Sector, the BLF and Indian forces pitted against the Pakistani forces in the East were fighting a different kind of battle, tersely put by the Indian diplomat at the Assembly debate:

“...there are two kinds of battle that are going on [in the subcontinent]. There is a battle between Indian soldiers and Pakistani soldiers brought about by Pakistani aggression, and a battle between the Mukti Bahini and Pakistan soldiers brought about by Pakistani repression (A/PV. 2003, p.43, italics added).”

Notwithstanding their differences in motivation and causes, both battles were inextricably linked to liberating Bangladesh. Pakistan's effort to untangle her war of repression on the Eastern front from the war of aggression on the Western front failed due to the consistent Soviet vetoes. The PG's Directive instructed the BLF to be in the “van of the final stage of liberation” to secure cities and important towns regarded as “vital political and psychological consideration.” The BLF was explicitly tasked to set up “civil administration in the liberated area” as per the orders of the PG, attesting to Bangladesh's war-time leadership's quest to retain ownership and authority in the conduct and outcome of the Liberation War.

Fourth, the demand for “full observation” of the Geneva Conventions by all warring parties intensified once the open hostilities ensued.<sup>18</sup> But the PG-proclaimed in April 1971-was not a recognised state entity or a signatory of the Geneva Convention. The PG's request to take part in the Council discussions to adduce the members was not heeded despite strong arguments by the Soviet Union and Poland. A letter from PG's special envoy, Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, to the Security Council President was circulated to the Council members (S/10415). Leveraging that letter, the Soviet ambassador argued that it

---

*18 Almost all Security Council draft resolutions tabled by Japan and Italy, France and the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the USA (S/10451, S/10455 of 13 December 1971 and S/10457 and S/10459 of 15 December 1971) urged the observance of the Geneva Conventions.*

would be “appropriate to hear not only the representatives of India and Pakistan but also the representatives of Bangla Desh.” The Polish ambassador added that the documents received from Bangladesh contain data that the Security Council will need “to have the best picture of the situation” to reach the “best solution.” (S/PV 1606, pp.1-2). Despite such requests, the Council’s rules of procedure did not allow Bangladesh to participate in the discussions. The geopolitical reality presumably necessitated the PG placing the BLF under the “supporting” Indian forces to provide a semblance of adherence to the Geneva Conventions.

Such command arrangement was not only an operational necessity but was also a legal obligation of the warring party of a new state in the making through armed struggle. The arrangement provided a layer of legitimacy and accountability of the BLF to the eyes of the global community. Pakistan’s cautious acceptance of this command arrangement was evident from her note verbale of 13 December 1971, circulated to the Council and Assembly. Reminding India of her responsibility as the “detaining power” of the Pakistani prisoner of War (POWs) under Article 12 of the Convention, the diplomatic note read: “Lest the Government of India be tempted, at some stage, to take the plea that it cannot be held responsible for the acts of the Mukti Bahini, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan wishes to state that such an excuse will not hold as the Mukti Bahini is officially under the authority of India’s Army Commanders.” (S/10452, and A/8587, italics added).

In sum, the utility functions of the 22 November Operational Directive were underpinned by the normative commitments of a soon-to-become state, aligned with the concerns of the global community. Informed by the geopolitical situation, the PG issued the Directive, not in order to bring the two Forces under a unified command to launch a coordinated offensive, as held by the conventional wisdom, but also to lend the much-needed legitimacy for both the Forces engaged in an internationalised civil war. The tone and tenor of the Operational Directive indicate that Bangladesh’s war-time leadership was keen to retain the political authority and ownership of the War, navigating the complex geopolitical and regional dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

The strange pause after the November offensive in the 1971 Liberation War was a complex and consequential decision-contributing to a delayed victory and more human cost at the expense of garnering international legitimacy. Focusing on the geopolitics, this paper reveals that, to draw international legitimacy, the warring

parties had to be seen as exercising maximum restraint and overtly using force only for defensive purposes. Despite significant covert engagements and unofficial support to the BLF, the geopolitical constraints and international norms imposed considerable restraint and hesitation on the Indian government to be seen as an active interventionist till provoked during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Thus, India took a “strategic pause” relegating her overt military action in the East, initiated on 21 November 1971, as an “insignificant prelude” awaiting Pakistan to respond. India’s strange but strategic “pause” after the November offensive, paired with her defining alliance with the Soviet Union in August 1971, allowed her to keep the region insulated from the high politics of extra-regional powers—a strategy that continues to undergird her foreign policy strategy.

Pakistan’s pre-emptive air attack in the Western sector exposed her to further international obloquy and truly transformed Bangladesh’s Liberation War into an “Indo-Pak” war. Pakistan’s initial reticence to external involvement and the track record of massacring innocent Bengali civilians since 25 March 1971 proved costly. Consequently, Pakistan failed to internationalize the conflict after India’s November offensive to garner meaningful international support when it became necessary. While India’s overt military actions—including the pause after the November offensive—appear to have been carefully planned and guided by geopolitics, Pakistan’s conduct of the war appears to be impulsive and dictated by her military strategy, relegating the geopolitics in the sideline.

From Bangladesh’s perspective, the making of the November offensive was written on the walls of 25 March 1971. The November Offensive was not a ‘prelude’ but a continuation of Bangladesh’s Liberation War. It led to the inevitable merger of the two Forces, fighting an internationalised civil war, with renewed intensity and ferocity. The geopolitical situation dictated the PG to issue the most consequential wartime Operational Directive to bring the two Forces under a unified command. The Directive provided the much-needed layer of legitimacy to both the Forces engaged in an internationalised civil war. The Directive reflects the wartime government’s wisdom and quest to retain the political authority and ownership of the War amidst a complex and dynamic geopolitical context. While welcoming the much-needed overt military assistance from India, the wartime PG was mindful of maintaining the political and strategic autonomy of Bangladesh, not just during the conduct of the war but also in a liberated Bangladesh. Indeed, the course followed by Bangladesh and India appears to be guided by geopolitical considerations—exemplifying Clausewitz’s maxim that war is an instrument of (geo)politics by other means.

<b>Annex A: War-type, Parties, Initiators and Start/End Dates of 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh in Global War Datasets</b>							
War Data Set Name	Data Repository	Parties/Sides	Initiator	Start Date	End Date	War Name & Remarks	
Intra-State War Data (v5.1)	Correlates of War (COW)	Pakistan, Bengalis	Pakistan	25-03-1971	02-12-1971	Coded as 'Civil war over local issues (5)', transformed into Inter-state war (1)	
Inter-State War Data (v4.0)	Correlates of War (COW)	Pakistan, India	Pakistan	03-12-1971	17-12-1971	Intra-State war transformed into the Inter-State war (1)	
Interstate War Data (v1.2)	Harvard Dataverse	India, Pakistan	India	20-11-1971	17-12-1971	Listed as Bangladesh1971 war	
Major Episodes of Political Violence 1946-2019	Centre for Systemic Peace	Bangladesh, Pakistan	-	1971	1971	Coded as Ethnic war (Bengali independence); Magnitude 6 on a scale of 1-10 (Extensive Warfare)	
Major Episodes of Political Violence 1946-2019	Centre for Systemic Peace	Bangladesh, Pakistan	-	1971	1971	Coded as Interstate war; Magnitude 3 on a scale of 1-10 (Serious Political Violence).	
Armed Conflict Dataset, (v24.1)	UCDP/PRIO	Pakistan, Muktibahini	-	26-03-1971	16-12-1971	Coded as intrastate war; Intensity 2 (at least 1,000 battle-related deaths/year).	

*Sources: Author's Compilation from the Global War Datasets. See Sarkees et.al. (2010), Marshall (2020, 2020a), Davies, et. al (2024)*

## REFERENCES

- A/8587 (1971, December 13) Pakistan's Note verbale to the UN Secretary-General. Retrieved on 14 June 2024 from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>
- A/PV. 1996. (1971, November 26). General Assembly, 1996th plenary meeting. Retrieved on 14 June 2024 from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>
- A/PV. 2003. (1971, December 07). General Assembly, 2003rd plenary meeting. Retrieved on 14 June 2024 from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>
- A/RES 2793 (XXVI) (1971, December 07). General Assembly, 2003rd Plenary Meeting. Retrieved on 14 June 2024 from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>
- Alam, Shamsul. (2021). Operation Kilo Flight: Night Attack by Otter Aircraft-A First-Hand Account. *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 45, No. 6, pp. 481–484
- Armed Forces Division. (2024, August 24). Armed Forces Day, Retrieved on August 24, 2024, from <https://afd.gov.bd/media/important-occations/armed-forces-day>
- Banglapedia (2021, 17 June). Operation Jackpot. Retrieved on 12 July 2024 from [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Operation\\_Jackpot](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Operation_Jackpot)
- Bass, Gary J. (2013). *The Blood Telegram, India's Secret War in East Pakistan*, Random House, London.
- Buzan, Barry and Wæver, Ole (2023). *Regions and Powers The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York.
- Choudhury, G. (1972). Bangladesh: Why It Happened. *International Affairs*, Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-, 48(2), 242-249.
- Commission Report. (1972, July). Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report. Retrieved on 15 July 2024 from <https://insaf.pk/news/hamoodur-rahman-commission-report-english>
- Davies, Shawn, Garoun Engström, Therese Pettersson & Magnus Öberg (2024). Organized violence 1989-2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups. *Journal of Peace Research* 61(4). "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 24.1. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#armedconflict>

Department of States. (1972, February 02). Indo-Pakistan Crisis-Chronology of Key Events. Retrieved on July 15, 2024, from [https://www.cbgr1971.org/files/Recognition\\_of\\_BD\\_Files/09-023-ResearchStudyUSAcbgr1970-1971-Page-13.pdf](https://www.cbgr1971.org/files/Recognition_of_BD_Files/09-023-ResearchStudyUSAcbgr1970-1971-Page-13.pdf)

Dhar, P.N. (2000). *Indira Gandhi, The “Emergency” and Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dixon, Jeffrey S. and Meredith Reid Sarkees. (2016). *A Guide to Intra-State Wars: An Examination of Civil, Regional, and Intercommunal Wars, 1816-2014*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Retrieved on August 23, 2024, from <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/cow-war/>

Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand (2002). *Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset*. *Journal of Peace Research* 39(5).

Hossain, Sarwar, Md. (2018). *1971: Resistance, Resilience and Redemption*, Priyomukh, Dhaka.

Jacob, Lt Gen JFR. (1997). *Surrender at Dacca Birth of a Nation* Reproduced by Sani H. Panhwar (2022). Retrieved on 15 July 2024 from <https://sanipanhwar.com>

Kamal, Arup. (2010, March 15). *Indira Gandhi Interview 1971*. Retrieved on August 21, 2024, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRAfs\\_LPFI4/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRAfs_LPFI4/)

Kapur, Ashok (1972), ‘Indo-Soviet treaty and the emerging Asian balance’, *Asian Survey* 12: 6, 1972, p. 464.

Khan, M.Z. I. (2021). *Enduring Policy Ideals and Practices-Evidence from Bangabandhu’s Speech at the United Nations and Bangladesh’s Voting Records at the Assembly: 2001-2017*, in Bari et al (2021) ed, *Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation’s Emergence and Emancipation*, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, pp. 233-258.

Khan, M.Z.I. (2024). *The Geopolitical Dimension of 21st November 1971 Celebrated as the Armed Forces Day of Bangladesh*, *Journal of Governance Security and Development*. Vol 5, No 2 DOI: 10.52823/EHEE2355

Kino-Eye Films Archive. (2021, June 28). Interview of Abdur Razzak shot for Tanvir Mokammel's mega-documentary film "1971." Retrieved on 16 June 2024 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VckxhaBeiBA>

Lok Sabha (1971, November 23). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. VIII, No.7 November 23, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Lok Sabha (1971, November 24). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. IX, No. 8, November 24, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Lok Sabha. (1971, March 27). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. I, No. 7, March 27, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Lok Sabha (1971, March 29). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. I, No. 8, March 29, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Lok Sabha (1971, March 30). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. I, No. 9, March 30, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Lok Sabha (1971, March 31). Lok Sabha Debate, Fifth Series, Vol. I, No. 10, March 31, 1971. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://eparlib.nic.in/>

Mahfuz, Emran. (2023, 06 April). War in the waters: Looking back at Operation Jackpot, 1971. The Daily Star, April 6, 2023. Retrieved on 12 July 2024 from <https://www.thedailystar.net/daily-star-books/news/war-the-waters-looking-back-operation-jackpot-1971-3290041>

Meredith Reid Sarkees and Jeffrey S. Dixon (2016) Codebook for the Correlates of War (COW) Intra-State Wars Dataset v.5.1: Definitions and Variables. Retrieved from [www.correlatesofwar.org](http://www.correlatesofwar.org) on August 23, 2024.

Ministry of Liberation War (2004). Bangladesh Liberation War Documents-Vol 10 (Armed Struggle). Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Sarker Printing, Dhaka.

Ministry of Liberation War (2004a). Bangladesh Liberation War Documents-Vol 11 (Armed Struggle). Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Sarker Printing, Dhaka.

MoFA (Dec 18, 2024). Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) official Face Book Post "Facts in History" on 18 December 2024. Retrieved on 12 June 2024, from [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0285sKg5nGaLK](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid0285sKg5nGaLK)

LgZwazao9gc8ch5Ji1Yq1xUuY8GAcz67FGgr47HBpKFs7n23p2d2zl&id=100068796236896&rdid=Qizi33vn9aB8X6Qd#.

Marshall, Monty G. (2020) Center for Systemic Peace Dataset on “Major Episodes of Political Violence 1946-2019”. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warlist.htm>

Marshall, Monty G. (2020a). Centre for Systemic Peace. “Assessing the Societal and Systemic Impact of Warfare: Coding Guidelines”. Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist/warcode.htm>

Nanda, Ved P. (1972). A Critique of the United Nations Inaction in the Bangladesh Crisis, *Denver Law Review*, 49:1, pp.53-67.

O’Mahoney J. (2017). Making the Real: Rhetorical Adduction and the Bangladesh Liberation War. *International Organization*. 71(2):317-348.

Pant, Harsh V., & Super Julie M. (2015). “India’s ‘non-alignment’ conundrum: a twentieth-century policy in a changing world”. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, July 2015, Vol. 91, No. 4 (July 2015), pp. 747-764

Peri, Dinakar (2021). 1971 Indo-Soviet Pact most consequential international treaty by India since Independence: envoy. *The Hindu*, 13 August 2021

Raghavan, S. (2013). *A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London.

Reiter, Dan. (2020). Harvard Dataverse on “Interstate War Data Version 1.2”, Retrieved on 12 June 2024 from <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/CZGAO2>

RES 307(1971, December 21). Security Council Resolution demanding that a durable cease-fire be observed in the India-Pakistan question. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

Sarkees, Meredith Reid and Frank Wayman (2010). *Resort to War: 1816-2007*. Washington DC: CQ Press. *Correlates of War Dataset*. Retrieve on 12 June 2024 from <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/cow-war/>

S/10410 (1971, December 03). Report of the Secretary-General to Security Council. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/499945?ln=en&v=pdf>

S/10415. (1971, December 04). India's letter to the President of the UN Security Council. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10416 (1971, December 04). Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by the USA. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10417 (1971, December 04) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by Belgium, Italy and Japan. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10418 (1971, December 04) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by the USSR. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10419 (1971, December 04) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by Argentina, Burundi, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Somalia. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10421 (1971, December 05) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by China. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10423 (1971, December 05) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Somalia. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10425 (1971, December 05) Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by Belgium, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10426. (1971, December 06). Amendment of Draft resolution 10425 [India-Pakistan question] by the USSR. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10426 Rev 1. (1971, December 06) Revised amendment of Draft resolution 10425 [India-Pakistan question] by the USSR. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10428 (1971, December 06). Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by USSR. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10446 (1971, December 12). Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by the USA. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10446/REV.I (1971, December 12). Revised Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by the USA. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10452 (1971, December 13). Pakistan's Note verbale to the UN Secretary-General. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/10453 (1971, December 14). Draft resolution [India-Pakistan question] by Poland. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1606 (1971, December 04). 1606th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1607 (1971, December 05). 1607th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1608 (1971, December 06). 1608th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1611 (1971, December 12). 1611th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1614 (1971, December 14/15). 1614th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

S/PV 1615 (1971, December 15). 1615th Security Council Meeting. Retrieved on July 24, 2024, from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record>

Sisson, Richard, and Leo E. Rose. (1990). *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thomas, Raju. G. C. (1979). Nonalignment and Indian security: Nehru's rationale and legacy. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2(2), 153–171.

The New York Times (1972, November 09). "Pakistan Leaves SEATO Alliance", *The New York Times*, 09 Nov 1972.

Upmanyu, Kabir (2020), "Battle of Garibpur: Veterans Recall the Prelude to 1971 War", *The Quint*. Retrieved on August 20, 2024, from <https://www.thequint.com/videos/news-videos/battle-of-garibpur-a-prelude-to-india-pakistan-war-1971>

## **AUTHOR**

**Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, acsc, psc, PhD (Retired)**, Group Captain of Bangladesh Air Force (BD/8244) and Chevening scholar - is a Visiting Research Fellow of the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Reading, United Kingdom. He joined Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) on 14 Jan 1986 and was commissioned in the Air Defence Weapon Controller Branch on 29 December 1987. His last appointment in the BAF was as Dean, Faculty of Science, Social Science and Liberal Arts, at Bangladesh Aviation and Aerospace University. During his military service, spanning over 35 years, he served in many command, staff, and instructional positions in BAF, Defense Services Command & Staff College, United Nations missions, and rewarding stints as a faculty at the universities in Bangladesh and the UK. Dr Zahid is a graduate of the National University, Bangladesh, University of Dhaka, Air University, USA, University of Bradford, United Kingdom and University of Reading, United Kingdom. He currently serves as the Registrar - with a faculty portfolio - of the American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB).

*Email: zikhan@aiub.edu*