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BANGLADESH FOREIGN POLICY: CONSTRAINTS, COMPULSIONS AND CHOICES

Abstract

Bangladesh foreign policy has undergone different transition and phases for the last 40 years. The first phase could be considered as the *diplomacy of recognition* as the country had to struggle to build relationship with those countries which were against the Liberation War of Bangladesh with Pakistan. The first phase, however, ended in 1974 especially after Pakistan's recognition to Bangladesh and this paved the way for a new phase referred to as the *economic diplomacy*. During this period, cementing the relationship with the West to ensure aid and assistance was the cornerstone of Bangladesh foreign policy. Although the thrust for *economic diplomacy* gained further momentum and brought newer dynamics due to building the good relationship with the Western countries, globalisation, open market economy as well as struggling to catch the international market have made the situation susceptible for Bangladesh. Besides, choices in foreign policy of the country are often limited by constraints and compulsion traced from energy insecurity and climate change. Against this backdrop, the main intention of the paper is to argue that Bangladesh must embark a new phase pursuing its *energy and climate diplomacy*. Moreover, there has to be a substantial investment on the *cultural* front or 'soft power' to minimise the foreign policy compulsions and materialise the choices.

1. Introduction

Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535 – c. 475 BCE) is on the record of saying that “No man ever steps in the same river twice” and that “Everything flows, everything changes.” Although the statement faced no change and continued to remain the same, the message remains true not only with respect to the materiality of the world but also with respect to ideas, institutions, perspectives and policies. Foreign policy of Bangladesh, with 40 years of experience now, is no exception and is, indeed, an interesting case to reflect, particularly on the issue of change. But then, policies do not unfold in a vacuum, neither do changes take place on its own. Rather, compulsions, disciplinary training, social motives, elite

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perspectives, class compositions, possible choices, even ingenuity, all tend to work towards framing policies. A closer look at Bangladesh foreign policy, having gone through several phases since the time of its independence, would make this clear.

Against the preceding setting, the objective of this paper is to take a brief stock of the Bangladesh foreign policy that has undergone different transition and phases for the last 40 years and to argue that Bangladesh must embark a new phase pursuing its *energy and climate diplomacy*. The paper has been divided into five sections including the introductory one. Section Two talks about the *diplomacy of recognition* phase which ended within few years of Bangladesh's independence while Section Three focuses on a phase in foreign policy, which could be best, referred to as *economic diplomacy*. In Section Four attempt has been made to elaborately discuss the issues of *energy, climate and cultural diplomacy*. In Section Five concluding remarks have been made

2. Diplomacy of Recognition

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The first phase of Bangladesh foreign policy could be referred to as the *diplomacy of recognition*, which included the policy of bringing back the Bangladeshis stranded in Pakistan resulting from the break-up of the latter. Since Bangladesh emerged out of a Liberation War against Pakistan, with Bangladesh being aided by India, there were several countries that did not recognise Bangladesh at the initial stage of its independence in December 1971. Moreover, the United States, China and some Arab countries tilted towards Pakistan during the liberation struggle of Bangladesh (March-December 1971) and more particularly during the Indo-Pakistan War in December 1971. One of the first foreign policy challenges that Bangladesh faced was to change the position of those who had tilted towards Pakistan and have them recognise and support the newly independent country. This was also the time of the 'Cold War,' which complicated further Bangladesh's position internationally, as it meant that 'if you are not with us, then you are against us.' But this Bangladesh could ill-afford, as much of its economy was tied to the United States, and it was desperate to reconcile its relationship with the latter. It may be mentioned that during Bangladesh's liberation struggle, the then Soviet Union and East European countries supported Bangladesh, but when it came to economic relationship not much was there between the former and the latter. Rather, some trading relationship was there with China. But then the business elite, bureaucracy, even the intellectual class, all were familiar with the West, and so there was an element of hyper-activism in trying to avail the recognition of the United States, including the pro-US Arab countries and more significantly Pakistan. The United States' recognition came in April 1972, but Bangladesh had to wait to get the recognition from the rest of those who had sided with Pakistan.

This came about in 1974 when Pakistan was hosting the Organization of Islamic Countries Conference (OIC) in Lahore in February 1974. In fact, it was becoming extremely difficult for the OIC not to invite Bangladesh, which was then the second largest Muslim populated country in the world after Indonesia. Several key leaders of the OIC came to Dhaka and impressed upon Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to join the Conference, which he gladly did. By virtue of this, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman not only got the recognition of the Arab countries but also managed to get Pakistan's recognition before reaching Lahore for the Conference. Critics point out that India did not take this development in good spirit, and soon after this relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan, India began to falter. The issue of enclaves, for instance, may be cited as a case in point.

Bangladesh and India have as many as 225 enclaves. Out of this, 119 are exchangeable Indian enclaves in Bangladesh (totalling 17,157.72 acres) and 11 non-exchangeable enclaves (totalling 3,799.35 acres) - *non-exchangeable* because India has no control over or access to these. Bangladeshi enclaves in India total 95, out of which 72 (totalling 7,160.85 acres) are exchangeable and some 5,128.52 acres are non-exchangeable. In May 1974, both the countries agreed to exchange the enclaves and also agreed to allow the people residing in the enclaves to either stay where they are or move to their parent country. While Bangladesh enacted a legislation to actualise the May 1974 Agreement in November of the same year, India is yet to do the same even after a lapse of over 35 years! Critics, such as Sumanta Banerjee, maintain that "there is a feeling in Dhaka that India is reluctant to exchange the enclaves because it would lose around 10 lakh acres of land to Bangladesh."¹ By delaying the process of ratification and implementation why is India contributing to such suspicions? Moreover, why did India request for a change of the text of the May 1974 Agreement after Bangladesh had ratified the Agreement in the Parliament and that again barely five days before the deadline (31 December 1974) for the signing of the relevant maps in respect of 'areas already demarcated' and interestingly with a plea to do away with a firm deadline and have it postponed until the Agreement 'has been ratified by the two Governments'?² This in fact had the effect of postponing the exchange of 'territories in adverse possession in areas already demarcated in respect of which boundary strip maps are already prepared' for an indefinite period, which in turn contributed to suspicions in the minds of the Bangladeshis. It may be mentioned that the May 1974 Agreement clearly distinguished between the 'already demarcated' and 'still to be demarcated' areas and made it clear that the latter would not pose an obstacle to

¹ Sumanta Banerjee, "Indo-Bangladesh Border: Radcliffe's Ghost," *EPW Commentary*, 5-11 May 2001.

² For a closer exposition, see, Avtar Singh Bhasin, ed., *India-Bangladesh Relations: Documents – 1971-2002*, Volume IV, New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 2003, pp.1889-1901.

the exchange of enclaves ‘in areas already demarcated.’ What made India revise the original text then? With no official explanation as such, it now looks that forfeiting 10 lakh areas, as critics pointed out, may indeed be the reason. But this request for an amendment to the May 1974 Agreement by India at the last minute and that again after Bangladesh had ratified it in its Parliament did not go well with Sheikh Mujib. In fact, sources close to him opined that Mujib lost interest in developing further Bangladesh’s relationship with India following this incident. This issue, however, got ‘resolved’ following the recent visit of India’s Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, to Dhaka and the signing of the border agreement between Bangladesh and India in September 2011. Critics, however, point out that apart from the opposition in Assam with respect to the exchange of enclaves the very change in the wording with regard to the Tin Bigha Corridor from the original ‘lease in perpetuity’ to ‘24-hour access to Bangladeshis’ would continue to be a source of contention and vex the relationship between the two countries.

3. Economic Diplomacy

Practically, the *diplomacy of recognition* ended in 1974, particularly following Pakistan’s recognition of Bangladesh. This gave way to a newer phase in foreign policy, which could be best referred to as *economic diplomacy*. There were good reasons for this. Apart from the slow pace of the post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction, mainly for the want of resources and misgovernance, Bangladesh faced two massive floods in consecutive years – 1973 and 1974, which not only led to famine at home but also created conditions for seeking a larger amount of foreign aid. Although the lack of entitlement, to follow Amartya Sen, is blamed for the famine, there was also the issue of ‘bureaucratic muddle’ contributing to it. This refers to the exporting of some 60,000 bales of jute to Cuba, which violated the conditions of the US food aid under PL 480 Title I. Receiving food under the latter disallows the receiving country from trading with the US ‘enemies,’ which then included Cuba. But food was desperately required following the unprecedented floods. Since the US stopped the flow it took some time for the required food to reach Bangladesh, which interestingly came via Russia. In the meantime, thousands died for the lack of food. The ensuing economic crisis made it clear that Bangladesh cannot do without the support of the West, and so catering to the interests of the West with the hope of receiving food and non-food aid from the West became a cornerstone of Bangladesh foreign policy. Following the changeover of the government in 1975 the thrust on *economic diplomacy*, particularly in cementing relationship with the Western economies, gained further momentum.

Globalisation, however, brought newer dynamics to Bangladesh foreign policy. Bangladesh’s garment industry, for instance, has progressed well by adding value to the commodity, which the industry could pursue to the envy of many, including big players like China and India, mainly because of the

relatively cheap labour and the ingenuity of some of the local manufacturers. This has contributed to a situation where our capitalists and workers are structurally tied up with the economies of the developed West and therefore ought to be more attentive about developments there, including the growth of the economy or lack of it or even who is in charge of the government. Now since the meltdown in the US economy there are regular discussions as to what impact it would have on Bangladesh economy. There is actually a possibility of gaining from the crisis. The reasons are not farfetched. Traditionally, products from Bangladesh abroad have catered to middle and low-income groups and since the US government is pledged to support the people of the 'Main Street' in contradistinction to the bosses of the 'Wall Street,' there is now a possibility that the middle class in the United States would directly benefit from such a policy and therefore would be able to afford goods imported from Bangladesh. This certainly would range from textile goods to pharmaceutical products. Now the challenge lies with Bangladesh whether it would be able to deliver the goods and broaden its market. In fact, in garment export alone the turnover this year could cross US\$ 15 billion mark, which is no mean achievement on the part of Bangladesh. After all, Bangladesh has emerged as the third garment producer in the world in 2011 after China and the European Union collectively.

4. Energy and Climate Diplomacy

Energy Diplomacy

Taking economic potential further would require resolving the deficit in the energy sector. Or, to put it differently, Bangladesh must embark upon a newer phase in its foreign policy, that is, start pursuing *energy diplomacy* creatively. Noteworthy is the fact that in addition to the economic meltdown the developed economies are facing global energy crisis, particularly in the backdrop of the US and West's military involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan and more recently Libya. This is bound to have a short if not a long-term impact on both developed and less developed economies,³ including Bangladesh, unless creative policy initiatives are undertaken to overcome them.

The skyrocketing of oil price from US\$ 3 per barrel in 1970 to a record high of US\$ 147.27 in mid-July 2008 and then scaling down now to US\$ 105.60 with possibilities of rising again in the backdrop of another war in the Middle East region only indicates that the energy crisis is far from over and will not go unless and until alternative energy resources come to feed our lifestyle.⁴ If Bangladesh is to go beyond its current economic growth of over 6 per cent and reach not so

³ Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*, London: Penguin Books, 2008.

⁴ Associated Press (AP), "Economic fears drive oil below \$54: Price of crude down over 60 percent in four months," 19 November 2008. See also, "Oil – near \$106 and rising", Available at: <http://money.cnn.com/data/commodities/>, accessed on 25 March 2011.

implausible growth of 10 per cent in less than a decade's time then it needs to resolve its energy requirements on a priority basis. Here Bangladesh needs to think beyond oil and coal and keep all options, including civilian nuclear, open. This would require investment in knowledge creation, language competence, sophisticated dialoguing and expertise in drafting agreements at both bilateral and international levels. Any lethargy or slippage in what would be protracted external manoeuvrings is bound to cost Bangladesh heavily. There have been some policy initiatives in this sector. Noteworthy is the signing of an agreement with India where the latter would supply 250 MW of electricity to Bangladesh from the Indian grid. Secondly, on the issue of maritime boundary, which has energy security implications, Bangladesh has taken its claims against India and Myanmar to the international arbitration court. And thirdly, Bangladesh has signed an MOU with Russia to build a civilian nuclear reactor. But globalisation is inviting policy initiatives in other areas as well.

There has been some realisation in India that if development in the North East region is to be expedited and made meaningful then it would require active support from Bangladesh. In this regard, the two countries, following Sheikh Hasina's visit to Delhi in January 2010, signed a 50 clause agreement, which included a wide range of things, like India providing US\$1 billion loan to Bangladesh for infrastructural development, removing tariff and non-tariff barriers and bringing down the 'negative list' from 260 items to 47 items, resolving the border disputes in the light of 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, operationalising connectivity between Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan, sharing of rivers, and many more. The goal has been mainly to foster a win-win relationship; indeed, with the objective of having Bangladesh at India's side in the latter's quest to develop the North East. And there are good reasons for this.

Few will deny the fact that globalisation has made a difference to China, indeed, to a point that it had contributed to a 10 per cent GDP growth for many years, and even with the global economic meltdown, China is expecting a 9.8 per cent GDP growth and a 3.7 per cent rise of its Consumer Price Index for the year 2011.⁵ But more importantly, when it comes to South Asia, China has emerged as the largest trading partner of not only Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka but also India, although the political relationship between India and China remains far from being cordial. China, for instance, took its territorial dispute with India to Asia Development Bank where it blocked an application by India for a loan that included development projects in India's North East state of Arunachal Pradesh. China, in fact, claims the latter as part of its own territory

⁵ Jia Xu, "China predicts 9.8% GDP growth in 2011," *China Daily*, 24 January 2011, Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-01/24/content_11905853.htm, accessed on 26 March 2011.

and refers to it as ‘Southern Tibet.’⁶ What is worrying for India is the marginalisation and alienation of the North East and the impact that China’s development could have on the region, as one critic pointed out, “The development of infrastructure by China in its border regions with India has been so rapid and effective and the Indian response so lackadaisical that the Indian Member of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh was forced to suggest, in sheer exasperation, that the government should allow Arunachal to get a rail link from China as, even sixty years after independence, India has failed to connect this state to the nation’s mainland.”⁷ In fact, before work began in September 2010 to extend the world’s highest railway line onwards from the Tibetan capital Lhasa west to the second-largest city, Xigaze, near the Nepalese border, China had already announced another rail extension east to Nyingchi, less than 50 km from the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh.⁸ India could respond only by deploying two additional army divisions, heavy tanks and ramping up its air power in the region,⁹ a far cry from the kind of development that is required to assuage the sub-nationalist aspirations amongst the people of North East India. This is where globalisation and Bangladesh comes. If China could end up as the largest trading partner of both Bangladesh and India then there is no reason for the three countries not to join hands and work for a win-win outcome in the region. At this stage, however, India is keen to solicit a newer positive relationship with Bangladesh that would come to its aid in developing the North East, indeed, with an eye of offsetting China’s influence there. But this hopefully would change soon and policymakers in both Delhi and Beijing would see merit in the three countries working together.

But globalisation ought not to be measured in statist terms alone. In contemporary times, amongst the many ironies that have found acceptance in our lives, the most outrageous is the simultaneity of war and rehabilitation. Apart from highlighting the futility of both it constitutes a sheer drainage of resources. But then contradictions of this kind also create opportunities for many. If the private US army, *Blackwater*, is super-profiting from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan¹⁰ then there is money to be made from rehabilitation work as well, and this is precisely what BRAC, a Bangladeshi NGO, is engaged in, albeit on a modest scale, in war-torn Afghanistan. But skill in rehabilitation work and disaster management does not come naturally, it is an outcome of years of

⁶ Harsh V. Pant, “China Rising,” in Ira Pande, (ed.), *India China: Neighbours Strangers*, Noida: HarperCollins, 2010, pp.95-96.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.98.

⁸ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2011*, London: IISS, March 2011, p.212.

⁹ Harsh Pant, *op.cit.*, p.99.

¹⁰ Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, London: Serpent’s Tail, 2008.

experience, and BRAC is a proven institution for that matter. Despite such proven record on BRAC's part, *non-governmental foreign policy initiatives*, particularly for want of state sponsorship and regulations, are susceptible to hazards and limitations. Killing and several kidnapping of BRAC officials in Afghanistan are cases in point. Not that this should provide reasons for postponement of such ventures but it is a clear indication that *non-governmental foreign policy initiatives* are no less vital than governmental initiatives and therefore demands constitution of newer structures and space for manoeuvrability. Take the case of Grameen Bank, for instance. That Professor Yunus has become Bangladesh's global Ambassador can easily be judged from the number of foreign dignitaries he meets and international awards he receives every year. Sadly there is no mechanism to honour such persons on a regular basis and put them into use for the service of the state in the like of the United Nations or some developed countries. Indeed, much to his credit micro-credit is now a global product for which Bangladesh can surely be proud of, and there is no reason why this expertise cannot be made into an exportable item for the benefit of Bangladesh and the world.

Climate Diplomacy

Choices in foreign policy are often limited by constraints and compulsions. One area that could be highlighted in this regard is the issue of environment and the dire condition of the marginalised people. Bangladesh is already on the top of the Global Climate Risk Index. International NGO, Germanwatch, prepared the index of 170 countries and Bangladesh tops the list with a death toll of 4,729 in 2007 due to natural calamities with an additional absolute loss of property worth more than 10 billion US\$.¹¹ But amongst the population it is the marginalised lot that suffer the most from global warming, floods, cyclones, droughts and now tsunamis. This would be a challenge that could only be met with regional and global efforts and therefore *climate diplomacy* is bound to emerge in the priority list of Bangladesh foreign policy agenda. Bangladesh did end up playing an active role at the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Summit, particularly in bringing about a compromise amongst the key global actors. It may be mentioned that although China and India are at loggerheads when it comes to territorial claims the two countries have no problem in working together on climate change, often to the detriment of disaster-prone countries of the region, including Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives. A creative effort, therefore, is required for Bangladesh to reap benefits from *climate diplomacy*. How much the policymakers are currently equipped in the environmental discourse is something that would be worth reflecting on and what should be done to overcome the weakness if there is any.

¹¹ *The Daily Star*, 5 December 2008.

Cultural Diplomacy

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have referred to the process of post-territoriality or deterritorialisation as giving rise to a simultaneous process of *reterritorialisation*, although the latter remains substantially different from the previous territoriality.¹² Indeed, a territorial meaning of Bangladesh has become less relevant and the meaning that is now having greater appeal is more demographic and cultural, which is inclusive of Bangladeshis living abroad. Indeed, given its civilizational and social links, Bangladesh is readily taken to be sympathizing or even supporting the Islamic cause in the Arab countries and elsewhere, which at times creates the notion that it is ‘soft’ on the so-called ‘Muslim militants’ or ‘Islamic terrorists.’ This has particularly been the case with the United States in the post-9/11 period, the latter even categorizing Bangladesh as ‘high risk’ in its global war on terrorism. If globalisation has deterritorialized Bangladesh, it has certainly also re-territorialized Bangladesh, albeit on a different plane mixed with anguish and apprehension.

This brings us to the issue of Bangladesh requiring a foreign policy initiative best referred to as *cultural diplomacy*. The Arab countries host around 6 million Bangladeshi expatriates accounting for 75 per cent of the country’s migrant workers. In 2009-2010 fiscal year, Bangladesh earned a remittance of US\$ 10.99 billion, of which US\$ 7.22 billion was sent by workers in the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Libya and Iran.¹³ But this is also the region catering to a precise Islamic *mazhab* (school of thought), namely Hanbali or Salafi or, as some now prefer to call, Wahhabism, which is relatively more rigid or inversely less tolerant than the Hanafi *mazhab* or the Sufi tradition found in South Asia and Bangladesh. There is no denying the fact that the power of petro-dollars and the empowered status of some of the Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, made the confluence between Bangladesh diaspora and Wahhabism all the more easy if not deadly.¹⁴ It may be mentioned that there is a substantial difference between Wahhabism and what Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab wrote and preached in his lifetime. In fact, the orthodox *ulama* of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have succeeded in reproducing and even exporting their own brand of Islam, often, as it seems to be the case, in the garb of Wahhabism. Only now, following 9/11 and the terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, there is a serious realization that things have gone out of hand. As King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia remarked: “Terrorism and criminality would not have appeared...except for the absence of the principle

¹²Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London: Continuum, 2004, pp.210-217.

¹³*The Daily Star*, 26 March 2011.

¹⁴ Imtiaz Ahmed, ed., *Terrorism in the 21st Century: Perspectives from Bangladesh*, Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2009, pp.4-7.

of tolerance.”¹⁵ And since the bulk of the Bangladesh diaspora are either unskilled or semi-skilled with few having profound knowledge of Islam there is a tendency among them to fall for the intolerant version found in the Arab countries and have them exported and reproduced at home. This is why there has to be a substantial investment in matters of culture or what Joseph Nye called the use of ‘soft power.’¹⁶

Our strength, in fact, lies not in our being as *homo politicus* (political being) or *homo economicus* (economic being) but in our being, if I may use the word, as *homo culturicus* (cultural being). To provide a regional example, we have not fared well politically, our ‘democratic culture’ has been marred by violence and divisiveness but when it comes to ‘cultural democracy’ we have fared much better than many of the developed democratic societies of the world. Ghalib and Tagore are living testimonies, so are Lata Mangeshkar, Monisha Koirala and Muttiah Muralitharan. More specifically, Bangladesh culture, rooted as it is in the Hanafi, Sufi, Bhakti and Baul traditions, not to mention reproduced in the literary voices of Tagore, Nazrul, Jinbananda Das, Shamsur Rahman and countless more, can certainly be channelized for spreading tolerance not only at home but also regionally and globally. This, of course, would require mainstreaming *cultural diplomacy* in Bangladesh foreign policy.

A beginning could be made by sponsoring *Bangladesh Parishod* or Bangladesh Cultural Centre in different cities of the world; albeit managed and run by a pool of officially-sanctioned, well-qualified members of the Bangladesh diaspora. The post-globalisation diaspora, in fact, is qualitatively different from the old diaspora. The former is passionately attentive to whatever is taking place in the motherland, from a game of cricket to the making of *futchka* and *roshgollas*, from political rumours to the price of petrol. At the same time, however, they are well-versed in the country of their residence, knowing well in many cases the personalities closed to the government, opinion-making agencies and business houses. If managed efficiently, such Councils can become information-gathering/delivering bodies and informal lobbies, helping Bangladesh in getting access to people and things, indeed, far more creatively than possible on the part of the formalized diplomatic missions. This would also

¹⁵ Cited in Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia*, New York: Viking, 2009, p.271.

¹⁶ See, Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1990; Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, Volume 80, Fall 1990, pp.153-71; Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books Group, 2004. See also, Mingjiang Li, (ed.), *Soft Power: China’s Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010; E. Fuat Keyman, “Globalization, Modernity and Democracy: Turkish Foreign Policy 2009 and Beyond,” *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Volume XV, Number 3-4, Autumn-Winter 2010, pp.1-20.

be cost effective as many a member of the diaspora would be willing to invest both time and money for bettering the cause of the motherland and having a reputation both at home and abroad. Indeed, instances of this kind are already there. Indeed, some major political parties have over the years managed to form international wings, albeit mainly to serve partisan cause. In the age of globalisation and post-territoriality it is only prudent that the state make use of Bangladeshis, whether residing at home or abroad, with greater efficiency and a spark of creativity.

5. Conclusion

In this age of globalisation and technological connectivity if foreign policy compulsions are to be minimised and choices materialised then it is imperative that newer institutions are built. Often Bangladesh missions abroad become target of criticism for want of efficiency on the part of some officials. Once when transiting at the Dubai airport I was briefed by a host of presumably illegal migrants, jailed and deported from Saudi Arabia, on the inefficiency of some officials at the Bangladesh mission in Riyadh. In fact, several of them complained that some of the officials having getting used to waking up and coming to the office late ended up addressing their problems around 1.00 pm when it was time for them to have lunch in the prison. Charges of corruption were also raised, which included stateless refugees from Myanmar - the Rohingyas - getting passports from Bangladesh and giving a bad name to the country for their misdemeanours! And when misgovernance partners with polarized politics, where partisanship and not merit dictates key international appointments, the combination could be deadly! This is as much an issue of quality as it is an issue of institution-building. It goes without saying that the parliamentary bodies in foreign policymaking needs to be active and the standing committees if and when required must call the concerned officials and make them accountable to public expenses and country's foreign policy goals. Key foreign appointments could be made subject to parliamentary sub-committee hearings in the like of the United States, to bring more efficiency to those appointed to lead the country.

Secondly, the colonial legacy of having to run the foreign policy bureaucracy independent of the public must come to an end. Even research institutions must cease to be at the mercy of the government. Instead, it should raise its own funds, recruit scholars for particular projects and build cells for independent and quality research, which the government would then have the options to accept, modify, postpone or reject. More qualitative transformation has to come by linking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) with independent research and academic centres, both formally and informally. Since officials of MOFA are transferred every three years it is important that they are fed by a permanent pool of researchers and scholars, and the most productive and cost-effective would be to link them up on a regular basis with such existing institutions. In fact, it is the

latter, with continues interactions with foreign policy researchers, scholars and practitioners of both home and abroad can build a *culture of diplomacy* from which the government of the day could benefit readily. At the same time, to institutionalize the role of culture or 'soft power' in foreign policymaking it is important that a Director General of Public Diplomacy be appointed at the MOFA at the earliest.

Finally, a National Civil College (NCC) in the like of the country's well-reputed National Defence College needs to be built. Any promotion above Joint Secretary or, as in the case of MOFA, Director General would require passing out of the College, after having gone through an intensive certificate programme matching the respective bureaucracies and national requirements. There is also a need for engendering foreign policymaking given that women constitute more than half of the country's population. A beginning could certainly be made in this regard by making NCC a gender-sensitive institution. NCC could also run mandatory training programmes for parliamentarians and other civil functionaries, including freshly appointed ambassadors. The institute could also recruit researchers on both short and long-term basis for feeding the senior level student-bureaucrats and even the respective ministries. A Foreign Policy Archive could also be housed in the NCC, which the public, as part of Right to Information, could access regularly, while 'secret and restricted documents' could be made available to the public after a lapse of 20 years.

Bangladesh foreign policy began its journey 40 years back with the *diplomacy of recognition*, which soon after being accomplished gave way to *economic diplomacy*. To make the latter meaningful, particularly in the age of globalisation, it is now important that Bangladesh embark upon a triadic foreign policy formulation encompassing *energy*, *climate* and *culture* in the backdrop of creative institutional reforms and newer structures. This, indeed, has the potential of bringing benefits not only to Bangladesh but also to the region.