



BANGABANDHU AND BANGLADESH

An Epic of a Nation's
Emergence and Emancipation



Bangabandhu and Bangladesh

An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation

Chief Editor

Md Emdad Ul Bari

Editors

**Sheikh Masud Ahmed
Mahfuz Kabir**

Associate Editors

**Segufta Hossain
Abu Salah Md Yousuf
Mohammad Jasim Uddin
Sufia Khanom**

Assistant Editors

**M Ashique Rahman
Mahbubur Rashid Bhuiyan
A S M Tarek Hassan Semul
Sajid Karim
Rubel Molla
Syeda Tanzia Sultana
Ayesha Binte Towhid
Nahian Reza Sabriet**





A PATHAK SHAMABESH BOOK

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh

An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation

Copyright 2021 © BIIS
All Rights Reserved
First Published: August 2021

Published in Bangladesh by
Shahidul Islam Bizu
PATHAK SHAMABESH
17 Aziz Market (G.F.), Shahbag, Dhaka 1000
204/B Tejgaon Link Road (3rd Floor), Gulshan, Dhaka 1208
Phone: 88-02-222261003, 9662766, 9669555; 01713034440 or 01841234611
E-mail: pathak@bol-online.com
Website: www.pathakshamabesh.com

In association with
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS)
1/46, Old Elephant Road, Ramna, Dhaka-1000

Cover Design: Anisuzzaman Sohel

Layout Design & Typesetting: Pathak Shamabesh Design Studio
Printed & Bound by Culture Press, Dhaka

*No part of this book may be reprinted, photographed, photocopied, recorded or reproduced
in any form without the written consent of the editor and the publisher.*

*The views expressed in the volume are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily
reflect the views of the organization with which the authors are affiliated*

ISBN 978-984-95495-7-4

Outlet 1: PATHAK SHAMABESH, 17 Aziz Market, Shahbag, Dhaka 1000 Tel: 9662766
Outlet 2: PATHAK SHAMABESH, 204/B Tejgaon Link Road, 2nd Floor
Gulshan, Dhaka 1209 Tel: 222261003
Outlet 3: PATHAK SHAMABESH Centre, Building-4A, Bangladesh National Museum
1st Floor, Shahbag, Dhaka 1000 Tel: 9669555
Outlet 4: PATHAK SHAMABESH Centre Uttara, Plot 67, 3rd Floor, Gausul Azam Avenue
Sector 14, Uttara, Dhaka 1230 Tel: 01841234607
India Outlet: PATHAK SHAMABESH Centre, Kolkata, Platinum Publisher, 3/1 College Row
Kolkata 700009, Tel: +91 8697127988, +91 7001684647

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Unrivalled Leader of the Oppressed <i>Smruti S Pattanaik</i>	86
Bangabandhu in the Global Context <i>Md Rafiqul Islam</i>	103
Empowering Nation through Empowering Women: Reflections from Bangabandhu's Thoughts <i>Sufia Khanom</i>	128
Chapter 4: Foreign Policy	151-257
Bangabandhu: The Architect of the Bangladesh Foreign Policy <i>Md Shahriar Alam</i>	153
Bangabandhu and the Roots of Bangladesh Foreign Policy <i>M Ashique Rahman</i>	159
Balancing Divergent Global Powers: Reflections on Bangabandhu's Foreign Policy <i>A S M Ali Ashraf</i>	177
Bangladesh Foreign Policy: Regional Politics and Policies under the Bangabandhu Regime between 1971 and 1975 <i>Shahab Enam Khan</i>	196
Enduring Policy Ideals and Practices: Bangabandhu's Speech at the United Nations and Bangladesh's Voting Records at the Assembly, 2001-2017 <i>Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan</i>	233

Enduring Policy Ideals and Practices: Bangabandhu's Speech at the United Nations and Bangladesh's Voting Records at the Assembly, 2001-2017

Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan

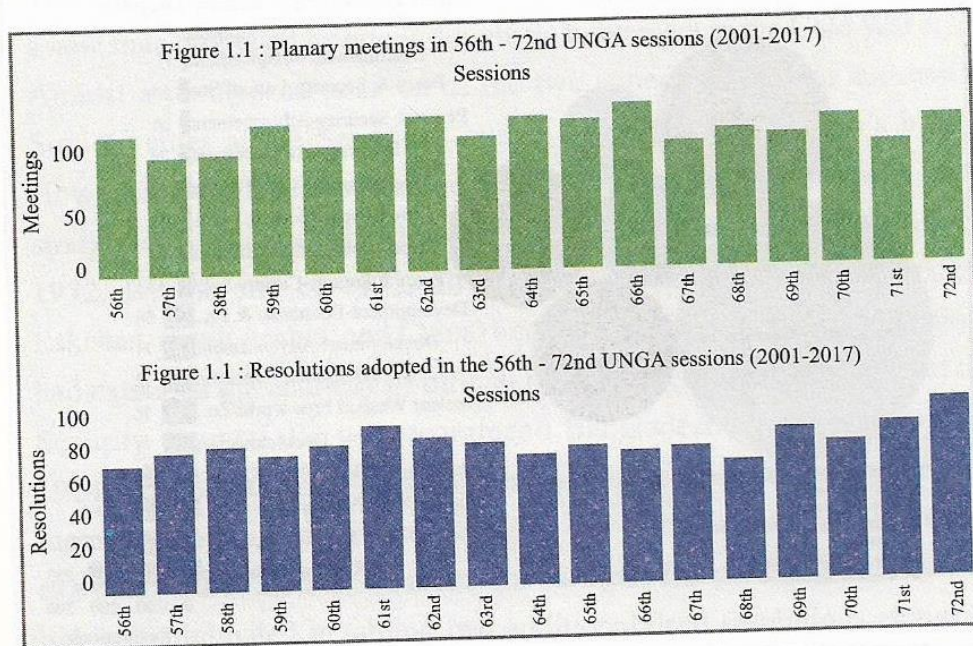
1. Introduction

On 25 September 1974, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman¹ delivered a historic speech at the 29th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This was the first "strategic communication"² by the Father of the Nation at the Assembly following the newly born country's admission to the United Nations. Apart from the well-known and much-to-be-proud of fact that the speech was delivered in Bangla, the content of this speech stands out as a key document, begging to be studied and analyzed from an international relations (IR) perspective and the enduring ideals it contained.³ The speech, hailed as the "Magna Carta" of Bangladesh's multilateral diplomatic principles, stands on the pillars of international peace and security based upon justice and economic emancipation. The chequered historical context and the importance attached to this widely quoted

document demand a systematic and evidence-based comparative analysis of the ideals outlined by Bangabandhu with Bangladesh's practice of supporting global agendas. Thus, this paper seeks to answer: to what extent has Bangladesh remained seized in supporting the enduring ideals on key global issues enunciated by Bangabandhu in his speech at the United Nations in 1974? Answering this question entails : (i) content analysis to identify the key global issues and the enduring ideals outlined by Bangabandhu and; (ii) employing a benchmark to assess Bangladesh's support to those ideals at the United Nations. The primary evidence to answer the research question is from Bangabandhu's speech and Bangladesh's contemporary voting records of 1,284 UNGA resolutions that were put to vote between 2001-2017 at the UNGA. The use of the UNGA voting records as a benchmark to compare the ideals begs justification. While a detail discussion on the relevance and suitability of the UNGA voting records is beyond the scope of this paper and can be found elsewhere,⁴ a brief mention of its nature could be useful.

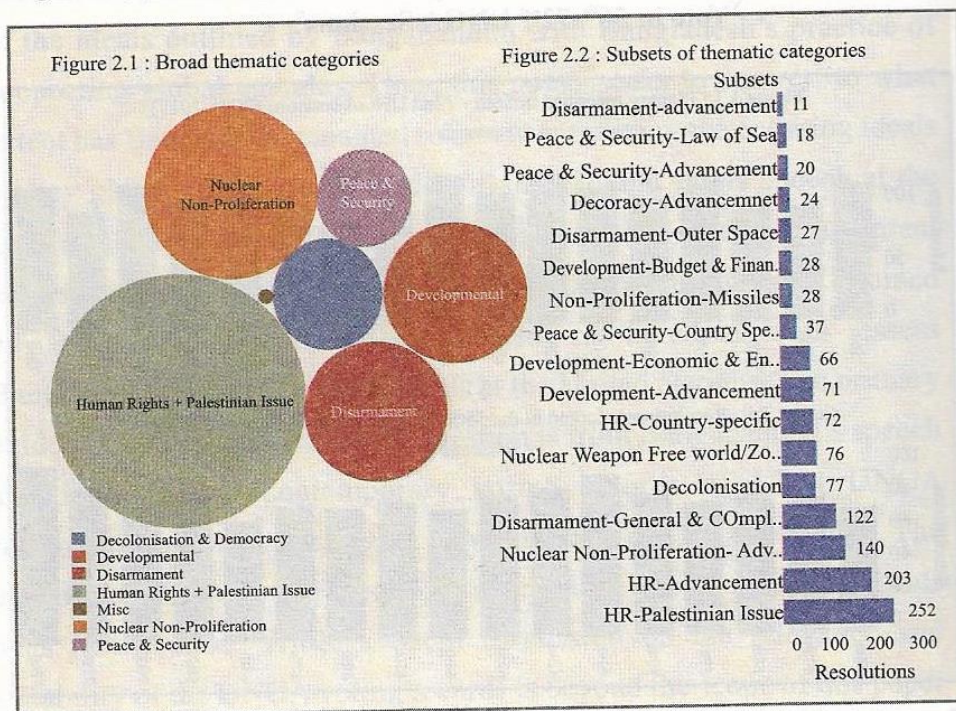
The UNGA voting record is a product of the epistemic community.⁵ A majority vote on a resolution reflects a consensus on global norms at the Assembly. Nevertheless, the resolutions are also non-binding, hence regarded as "inconsequential" compared to the resolutions adopted in the Security Council. The voting preferences reflect member states' choices on a global issue, at a point of time, on which the member state may or may not take actions.⁶ Most of the resolutions adopted at the UNGA are without a vote. Many that are put to vote are also routine and recurring in nature. The voting data of the 1,284 resolutions, used in this paper, were adopted in 1,873 plenary meetings between 2001-2017 (figure 1). The range of issues discussed at the plenary meetings, and the fact that the voting is a formal expression of member states' opinion, makes the data meaningful, and the platform, a key source for global policy innovation, diffusion and norm socialization, albeit in a non-binding manner.

Figure 4(5).1 Total Plenary Meetings and Resolution Adopted by Vote in 56th-72nd UNGA Sessions⁷



Source: Author's compilation from UNGA Index of Proceeding 2001-2017

The Assembly is the hub for the proliferation and advancement of global norms on human rights, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, decolonization, democracy and developmental issues. Figure 2 depicts the broad categories and the subsets of the thematic issues of the 1,284 resolutions. Researchers have used the UNGA voting data to investigate dynamic state preferences, systemic polarity in the international system, foreign aid effectiveness, alliance building, probability of conflicts, “third world” solidarity and so on.⁸ The salience attached to different agendas and the member states’ position on those issues, make the voting records a useful prism reflecting the “mind” of a member state. Thus, Bangladesh’s voting records could be a useful prism to investigate the extent at which the country remained seized in supporting the ideals on key global issues enunciated by Bangabandhu in his speech at the United Nations.

Figure 4(5).2 Thematic Categories of UNGA Resolutions: 2001-2017 (N=1284)

Source: Author's compilation from UNGA Index of Proceeding 2001-2017

The paper fills the void in extant literature by offering a systemic and evidence-based analysis, contrasting the practice of descriptive and impressionistic account of this historic speech.⁹ The paper is organized as follows. *First*, a brief context of Bangladesh's birth and entry to the United Nations, highlighting the diplomatic wrangling in the Security Council regarding country's membership bid followed by the global and domestic situation, is discussed. It helps us to better connect and comprehend the speech. *Second*, the content of the speech (the official record in English) is analyzed using an inductive method, to identify the policy guidance on key global issues and norms. It helps us to establish where Bangabandhu wanted the country to stand, supporting and advancing which global agendas. Following this, Bangladesh's adherence to these ideals, such as, international peace and justice, human rights (HR), disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, economic emancipation, regional cooperation and so on, is traced by taking the country's voting records on 1,284 UNGA resolutions. The later discussion is preceded by outlining the data sources and methodology used in this paper.

2. Bangladesh's Entry to the United Nations

The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 is the *only example* of forcibly creating a *new* state propelled by ethnic-linguistic movement in the Cold War era.¹⁰ Amidst a juxtaposed position of the two superpowers, two successive Soviet vetoes at the Security Council facilitated Bangladesh's birth.¹¹ However, Bangladesh's membership in the United Nations was not a straightforward issue. The country applied for the membership in August 1972. By the end of 1972, all global political powerhouses (except Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China) and several international organizations had extended the courtesy of official recognition to Bangladesh;¹² yet the Security Council did not recommend Bangladesh's membership until 1974. This was the only exception in the Council's history of processing membership applications between 1972-74.¹³ The lengthy discussions led to a vote on the "attitude" of members¹⁴ towards Bangladesh's membership bid and culminated in tabling two additional draft resolutions alongside the "three-Power draft resolution" tabled by the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, India and Yugoslavia for Bangladesh's immediate entry to the United Nations (see Table 1).

China (presumably on Pakistan's behest) suggested to "postpone" Bangladesh's membership. Citing the Council resolution 307 (1971), Assembly resolution 3793 (XXVI), and the Charter, China tabled a draft resolution to defer Bangladesh's membership bid until the withdrawal of the Indian troops from Bangladesh and the release and repatriation of the prisoners of war.¹⁵ Although the Chinese draft resolution failed to obtain the required vote, China's veto against three-Power draft resolution (S/10771) resulted in deferring Bangladesh's entry to the United Nation. Interestingly, this was the *first* veto by China in the Security Council.¹⁶ In 1974, Bangladesh applied for "renewed consideration" of her membership. The 1776th Meeting of the Security Council recommended Bangladesh's application and the country became the 136th member of the United Nation on 17 September 1974—paving the way for Bangabandhu's historic speech at the Assembly later in the same month.¹⁷

Table 4(5).1 Security Council Voting Record on the Question of Bangladesh's Admission to the UN in 1972

Draft Resolution	In favour	Against	Abstention	Outcome
<i>1660th Meeting of the Security Council on 25 August 1972</i>				
S/10768 & Corr. 1 (China) for postponement	China, Guinea, Sudan	India, USSR, Yugoslavia	Argentina, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, Panama, Somalia, UK, U.S.A.	Not adopted. (failed to obtain nine affirmative votes).
S/10775 (Guinea, Somalia & Sudan) for amendment	Guinea, Somalia, Sudan, U.S.A.	India, USSR, UK, Yugoslavia	Argentina, Belgium, China, France, Italy, Japan, Panama.	Not adopted. (failed to obtain nine affirmative votes).
S/10771 (India, USSR, UK, Yugoslavia) for immediate membership	Argentina, Belgium, France, India, Italy, Japan, Panama, USSR, UK, U.S.A., Yugoslavia	China	Guinea, Somalia, Sudan.	Not adopted. (negative vote being that of a permanent member).

Source: Security Council, Official Record, S/PV-1660, pp. 7-10

From a global perspective, the United States and China the two P-5 members, insofar as their governments were concerned, had overtly opposed Bangladesh's war of liberation. The post-World War II bipolar world system was a significant determinant of member state's behaviour and political proximity in the global forum. The politics of the Cold War had a distinctive impact in South Asia. China viewed that the "Soviet socialist-imperialism" was playing the "most insidious role in South Asia" to further "control India and Bangladesh" and increase its "sphere of influence" in the Indian Ocean region.¹⁸ China viewed the Indo-Soviet treaty of peace, friendship and co-operation signed in August 1971 as an "aggressive military alliance", that had stripped off India's "cloak of non-alliance."

Amidst the constant flux of the bipolar world, the non-aligned movement portended a change in the United Nation's emphasis and approach to the world issues. The expansion of the non-aligned presence in the Assembly allowed space for the small states to operate as an active, independent agent, perhaps foreshadowing the displacement of balance-of-power politics by the Security Council and to cast off the role thrust upon them as a "pawn" of the two superpowers.¹⁹

The fight for self-determination was ongoing in many parts of the world, most notably in the Middle East and Africa. The period also witnessed the recurrence of global economic crises, triggered by the oil crisis and high inflations, culminating in the skyrocketing prices of food items and manufactured goods. The natural disasters and famine had exacerbated the plight of millions of people in many countries including Bangladesh. The war-ravaged Bangladesh was faced with the worst famine in decades that begun in March 1974 and ended in December of the same year and massive flooding along the Brahmaputra river resulting in high mortality.

In sum, the events leading to Bangabandhu's speech at the Assembly in 1974 was quite chequered. The geopolitical context implied that the country's "strategic communication" in the United Nations platform should be pragmatic, measured and at the same time bold against extant global injustice, discrimination and inequality. It needed to set out an inclusive and enduring diplomatic principle for the newly independent country that would facilitate translating the growing recognition of Bangladesh into pledge for material assistance by the global community to rebuild the country. As a pragmatists and astute statesman, Bangabandhu skilfully balanced all these aspects in his speech. His enduring policy guidance for charting Bangladesh's engagements in the international arena is removed from the pretences and duplicity. It reflects his profound political acumen and wisdom to place the newly independent country as worthy equal amidst the power dynamics of a bipolar world system. Indeed, the speech stands out as the "Magna Carta" of Bangladesh's multilateral diplomatic principles.²⁰

3. Data and Methodology

The mainstay of the data used in this paper is from the official records of relevant Security Council and General Assembly meetings, statements, speeches, voting records and resolutions. The data is retrieved from the

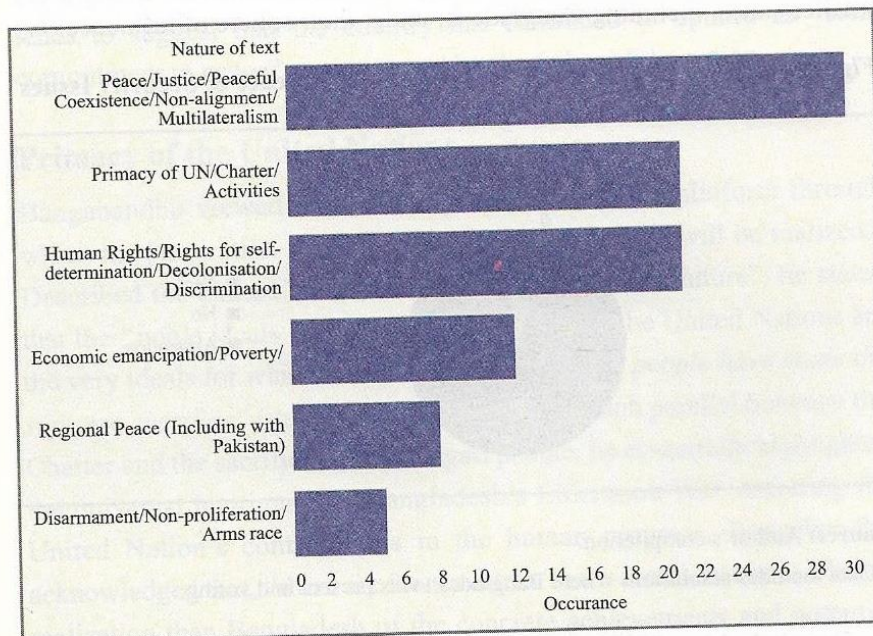
United Nations based websites, such as the Dag Hammarskjold Library and United Nations Digital library. Chapter VII of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*²¹ contains the deliberations on and references to the question of membership by a newly independent country. The voting record on resolutions is obtained from *The Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly*, published each year by UN, Department of Public Information (UN DPI). The Index also provides the list of resolutions adopted by recorded or roll-call vote at the Assembly. The vote by each member state is recorded in the textual form such as Y (for "yes"), N (for "no"), A (for abstention) and "blank" indicating absence. Bangladesh's voting data from 1975 is available. However, this paper uses Bangladesh's voting record from the fifty-sixth session through the seventy-second session (2001-2017). Three interrelated factors support this period selection of the voting records for analysis. First, from an IR perspective, the events of 11 September, 2001 in the United States have ushered a new understanding and alignments of the member states, influencing their voting positions, most notably on terrorism and security related agendas.²² The period covered allows us to account for these changes, if any. Second, the member states' voting preference is often influenced by the "regime in power, pressure and capacity". During this selected period, the country was ruled by two major political parties and a caretaker government, allowing us to capture the variations, if any. Third, the sample voting record must be varied in nature to include different agendas allowing us to compare the policy ideals. The period (2001-2017) satisfies this condition as it is large enough to include country's voting preferences on wide-ranging resolutions.

As mentioned in the introduction, the research question entails a qualitative content analysis followed by employing a benchmark to compare the policy ideals with the practices. An inductive method is used to analyze the content of the speech, focussing on the language intensity and similarity to classify the texts into an efficient number of thematic categories that represent similar ideas and meanings.²³ Subsequently, the data on Bangladesh's voting preference on UNGA Resolutions (2001-2017) is used to compare the country's support to the specific ideals and thematic issues as derived by the inductive method.

4. Thematic Issues of Bangabandhu's Speech

The speech contains overlapping themes, articulated in 95 sentences grouped under 23 paragraphs. A subjective interpretation of the sentences (excluding the pleasantries) through a systematic process of classification and quantification of similar themes results in identifying six key thematic issues and their number of occurrences (see Figure 3). The views on these issues help us to draw inference about where Bangabandhu wanted Bangladesh to stand, supporting which agendas and for what purpose and subsequently compare that with country's voting records at the UNGA.

Figure 4(5).3 Content Analysis of Bangabandhu's Historic Speech at the 29th Session of the UNGA, 1974 (Occurrences of Key Themes)



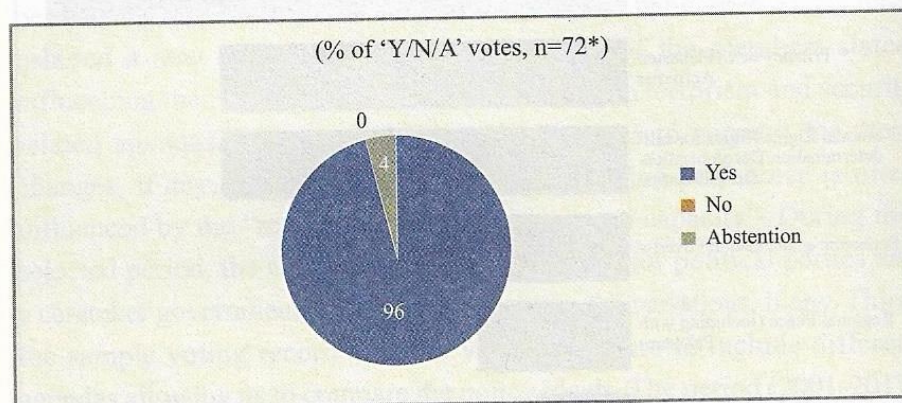
Source: Author's compilation from Official Document, A/PV.2243, 25 September 1974.

International Peace, Justice and Foreign Policy Alignment

The speech captures Bangabandhu's profound wisdom and support for world peace. He viewed peace as the "deepest aspirations" of mankind, an "imperative for the survival" which must be based on "justice" to endure and sustain. He believed in the principles of peaceful coexistence and of

friendship to all and malice towards none—a core thinking that remains the hallmark of Bangladesh's foreign policy. Bangabandhu stressed that, only an environment of peace would enable Bangladesh (and other developing countries alike) to mobilize and concentrate national energies and resources in “combating the scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment.” His strong support for the non-aligned movement stemmed from his conviction that the movement is a powerful “forces of peace and progress.”²⁴ Accordingly, he wanted Bangladesh to avoid being the object in a political tug of war in the bipolar system. He envisioned a position for Bangladesh in which the country will stand along all nations of the world as worthy equals. His vision remains relevant in South Asia where two key regional powers are vying for keeping the smaller states, including Bangladesh, under their sphere of influence.²⁵

Figure 4(5).4 Bangladesh's Voting Record in Peace & Security Issues



Source: Author's compilation.

* Data includes resolutions where Bangladesh was present and voting.

Bangladesh's adherence to the Father of the Nation's pragmatism on global peace and justice can be traced in country's voting records in the peace and security related resolutions at the UNGA (see figure 4). These resolutions propose the establishment of the zone for peace and cooperation, adherence to the law of the sea, territorial integrity of the member states, use of science and technology for international security and disarmament, etc. Out of the 72 such resolutions in which Bangladesh was present and voting, the country supported 69 resolutions (96 per cent)

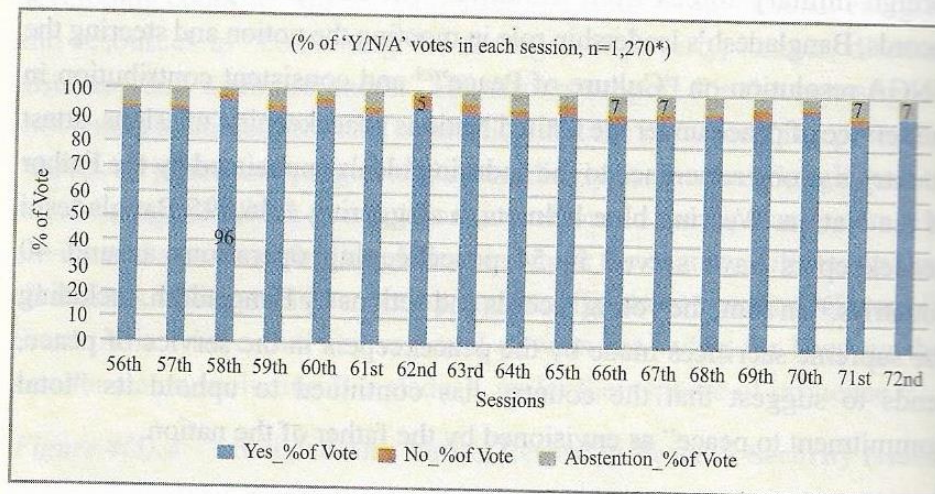
with no opposition. The three abstention votes by Bangladesh relates to question of the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo²⁶ (in 2008), territorial integrity of Ukraine²⁷ (in 2013) and the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Moldova²⁸ (in 2017). Beyond the voting records, Bangladesh's leadership role in mooted the notion and steering the UNGA resolution on "Culture of Peace"²⁹ and consistent contribution in the service of peace under the United Nations peacekeeping missions, attest country's strong adherence to the enduring ideals enunciated by the Father of the Nation. Wearing blue helmets, a staggering 1,46,095 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have served in 54 peacekeeping operations around 40 countries.³⁰ In sum, the voting records and actions by Bangladesh, including the supreme sacrifices made by the peacekeepers in the service of peace, tends to suggest that the country has continued to uphold its "total commitment to peace" as envisioned by the father of the nation.

Primacy of the United Nations

Bangabandhu viewed the United Nations as a noble platform through which the "aspiration of all men for peace and justice will be realized." Described the United Nations as "man's hope for the future", he stated that the "noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of *our [Bengali] people have made the supreme sacrifice*" (italics added). By drawing such parallel between the Charter and the sacrifice of the Bengali people, he essentially highlighted the universal legitimacy of Bangladesh's Liberation War. Attesting the United Nation's contributions in the human progress, Bangabandhu acknowledged that, "there are few countries in the world that have a better realization than Bangladesh of the concrete achievements and potential for good of the Organization [i.e., UN]." Thus, it is not surprising to see that Bangladesh's Constitution (Art 25) states, "the State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter..." In sum, the speech attests Bangabandhu's staunch support for the United

Nations and its Charter. But how strongly has Bangladesh demonstrated her support towards the United Nations in recent years?

Figure 4(5).5 UNGA Voting Record of Bangladesh: 2001-2017



Source: Author's compilation.

* Data includes resolutions where Bangladesh was present and voting.

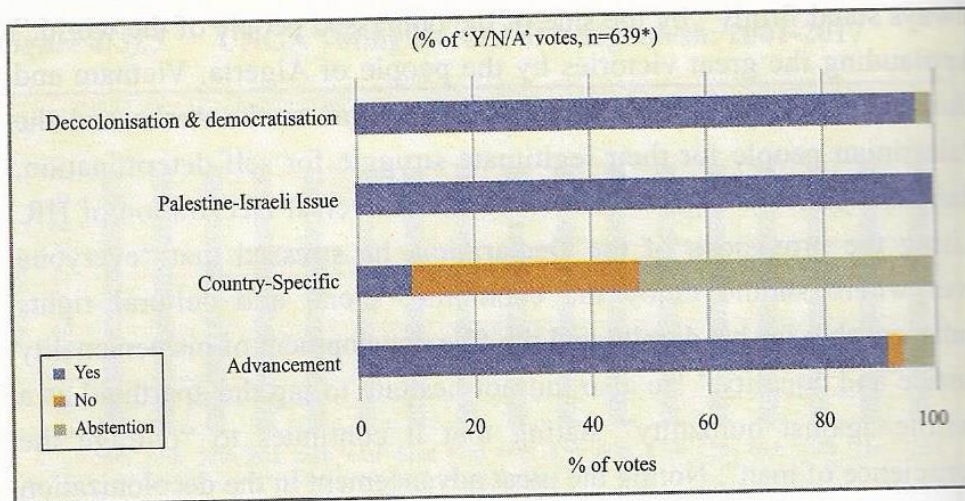
Bangladesh's practice of supporting or opposing the UNGA resolutions can provide a practical insight in this regard. During the period of Bangladesh voted in 1,270 resolutions 2001-17 out of the total 1,284 resolutions that were tabled in the Assembly sessions. Figure 5 shows the session wise record of the Y/N/A votes by Bangladesh on these resolutions. Overall, Bangladesh agreed to 92 per cent of the resolutions, disagreed to only 2.75 per cent and abstained from voting in 5.19 per cent resolutions. The highest agreement (96 per cent) was in the 58th session while the maximum number of "no" votes (total 4) by Bangladesh was casted in the 62nd session. Be that as it may, the session-wise voting record clearly demonstrates Bangladesh's high degree of support and confidence on the United Nations, attesting to the fact that Bangladesh has continued to view the platform as "man's hope for the future", envisioned by Bangabandhu.

Human Rights and Self-Determination

The speech registers Bangabandhu's strong endorsement for the universal human rights and the rights for self-determination. As the iconic leader of a nation that has just come out of the shackle of oppression after a nine-

month long Liberation War, Bangabandhu strongly believed in the “powerful tides of self-determination” and pledged that his country should always stand firmly “by the side of the oppressed people of the world.” Applauding the great victories by the people of Algeria, Vietnam and Guinea-Bissau, he boldly extended his support to the Arabs and the Palestinian people for their legitimate struggle for self-determination. Bangabandhu was a great believer in the Universal Declaration of HR. Citing the provisions of the Declaration, he stressed that “everyone everywhere should enjoy the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality justice and equality.” He also did not hesitate to tag the apartheid as a “crime against humanity” stating that it continues to “outrage the conscience of man”. Noting the great advancement in the decolonization process, he applauded the “heroic people” of Zimbabwe and Namibia, engaged in their struggle for national liberation. Thus, it is expected that Bangladesh’s voting preferences at the UNGA would reflect the enduring ideals of advancing the global human rights situation, the Palestinian cause, decolonization and democracy, as articulated by the Father of the Nation in his historic speech.

The HR, self-determination, decolonization, democratization and the Palestinian issues constitute around 50 per cent of the total resolutions that were put to vote at the Assembly between 2001-2017. The resolutions on Palestinian questions, and country-specific human rights situation dominates the HR category. These resolutions generally condemn the HR violation, discriminations and persecution by the member states and the non-state actors within those countries. The resolutions on advancing decolonization, democratization and human rights norms call for enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of self-determination, periodic and genuine elections and the rights of the women and children. Figure 6 depicts Bangladesh’s voting record on these resolutions. Bangladesh supported all resolutions on the Palestinian rights—a clear testimony of adhering to the ideals set out by Bangabandhu.³¹ Bangladesh’s opposition (i.e., no vote) regarding the advancement of HR resolutions relates to the provision of a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, an issue that the country is yet to reconcile like many other member states.

Figure 4(5).6 Bangladesh's Voting Record on HR (subset) Related Resolutions: 2001-17

Source: Author's compilation.

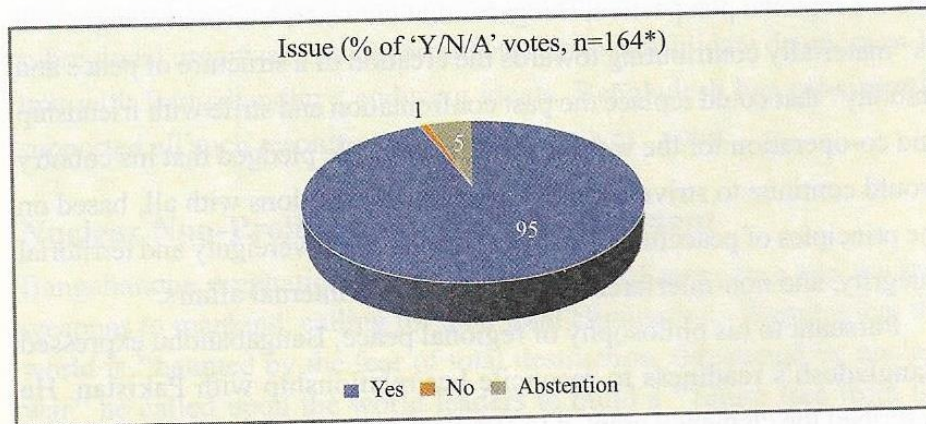
* Data includes resolutions where Bangladesh was present and voting.

Bangladesh's opposition (in 39 per cent resolutions) and abstention (in 51 per cent resolutions) in case of the country-specific HR resolutions tends to suggest that the country is strongly aligned with the ideals of "non-interference" while remaining shy to condemn several country-specific HR violations. However, such alignment needs to be viewed with two caveats. First, most freedom struggles in the 1970s were against the colonial/occupying powers and the HR abuse were by external powers or their sympathizers. Condemning the HR abuse by such colonial/occupying powers was an accepted global norm. In contrast, the contemporary HR abuses as recorded in the country-specific reports are often by the coercive apparatus of the state itself or the non-state actors within the state. Second, voting choice in resolutions on country-specific HR situations is politically sensitive as it risks being viewed as disrespecting the sovereignty and interfering into the internal affairs of a member state—particularly in case of a neighbour. The centrality of "non-interference" principle in regional politics and the "near-unanimous consensus" on this principle has become the corner stone of many Asian countries to maintain peace and stability³². Thus, it is not surprising to see that Bangladesh is strongly aligned with the ideals of "non-interference".

Economic and Developmental Issues

Bangabandhu envisioned a “just international economic order.” In his speech, he talked about ensuring the most basic economic right for all—“the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family” and viewed this as a universal responsibility. He repeatedly emphasized the urgent need for the economic emancipation of the developing world. Being mindful of the fact that the world was facing great economic upheavals, he suggested the need for “marshalling the forces of reason, establishing a framework of international co-operation, ensuring the sovereignty of each State over its natural resources.” To tackle the recurring natural disaster, Bangabandhu suggested “an institutional arrangement by which the international community can move effectively to meet and prevent such calamities.” He suggested to strengthen the newly established Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), realized later in 1992 by the United Nations.³³

Figure 4(5).7 Bangladesh’s Voting Record in Economic & Developmental Issues



Source: Author’s compilation.

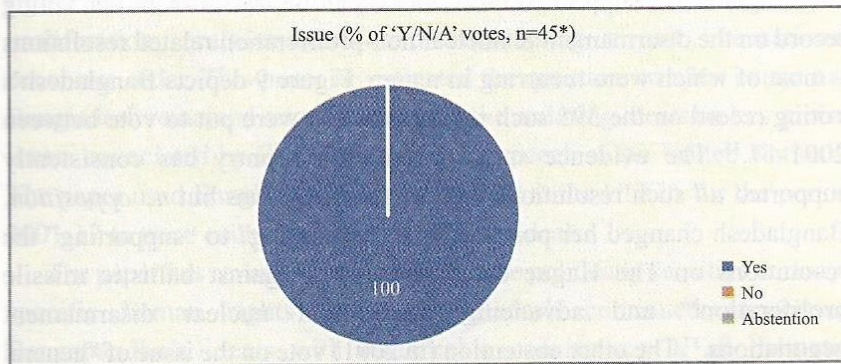
* Data includes resolutions where Bangladesh was present and voting.

He also did not hesitate to warn the world leaders that the failure to establish a just economic order would leave the world with an unparalleled legacy “of such human misery having to be endured by so many side by side with such unprecedented levels of affluence and prosperity enjoyed by so few.” His clarion call for human solidarity and brotherhood to regenerate the feeling of and an acknowledgement of interdependence transcends his time and has become much more relevant in the Covid-19 era. The voting records (Figure 7) reflect that, Bangladesh has consistently supported almost all resolutions on developmental and economic emancipation and advancement (95 per cent yes votes). Bangladesh’s position changed from opposing/abstaining (in 2012 and 2014) to supporting the resolution on “entrepreneurship for development” in 2016. The country has also changed her initial position from supporting the resolution on “agricultural technology for development” (in 2007) to “abstaining” in its subsequent occurrences.³⁴

Regional Peace and Cooperation

From a regional perspective, Bangabandhu viewed the birth of Bangladesh as “materially contributing towards the creation of a structure of peace and stability” that could replace the past confrontation and strife with friendship and co-operation for the welfare of the region. He pledged that his country would continue to strive for good neighbourly relations with all, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in one another’s internal affairs.

Pursuant to his philosophy of regional peace, Bangabandhu expressed Bangladesh’s readiness to reconcile her relationship with Pakistan. He described the clemency granted to 195 Pakistani prisoners of war—accused of war crimes and crime against humanity, as an “investment towards the opening of a new chapter [with Pakistan] and towards the building of a future of peace and stability” in the subcontinent. As a humanist and pragmatists, he also mentioned the plight of the 63,000 stranded Pakistani families who reaffirmed their allegiance to Pakistan calling for their repatriation and a just division of the assets of former Pakistan.

Figure 4(5).8 Bangladesh's Voting Record in Regional Peace & Cooperation

Source: Author's compilation.

Bangladesh's adherence to the Father of the Nation's pragmatism on regional peace and cooperation can be traced in country's voting records of the relevant resolutions at the UNGA (see Figure 8). These UNGA resolutions calls for the promotion of multilateralism, confidence-building measures, respect for the right to universal freedom of travel, conventional arms control, south-south cooperation and enhancing the role of regional, subregional organizations and arrangements to consolidate democracy. In line with Bangabandhu's enduring ideals, Bangladesh has consistently supported all such resolutions (100 per cent "yes" vote).

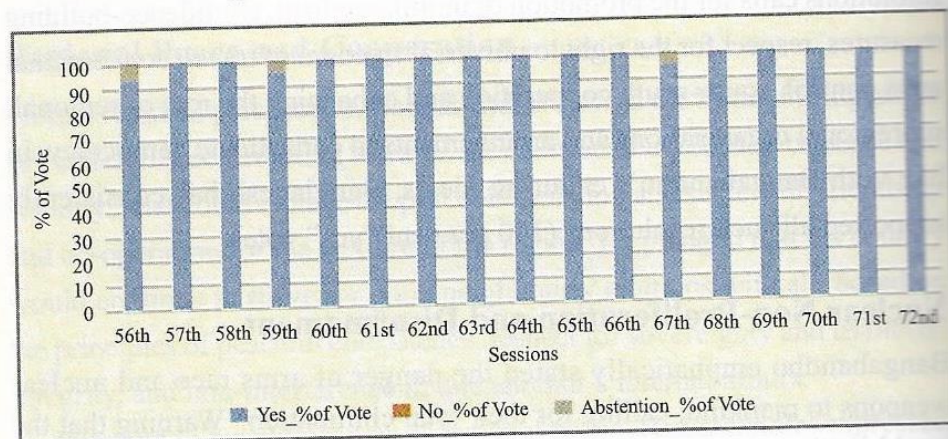
Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Bangabandhu emphatically stated the danger of arms race and nuclear weapons to mankind, calling for their total elimination. Warning that the world is "haunted by the fear of total destruction, threatened by nuclear war" he called upon the world leaders to build a "future free from the threat of nuclear war." On disarmament issues, he called for taking "urgent measures to control the present arms race" to stop the "massive resources currently being wasted on armaments." To him, the enemy of the mankind was "mass starvation", "unemployment" and the "wretchedness of deepening poverty." Instead of spending money in the arms race, Bangabandhu advocated for sharing the resources and technology on a *global scale* so that "men everywhere can begin to enjoy the minimal

conditions of a decent life” and realize the common good of mankind.

Bangladesh's support to these ideals can be traced from her voting record on the disarmament & nuclear non-proliferation related resolutions – most of which were recurring in nature. Figure 9 depicts Bangladesh's voting record on the 395 such resolutions that were put to vote between 2001-17.³⁵ The evidence suggests that the country has consistently supported *all* such resolutions with *three abstentions* but *no opposition*. Bangladesh changed her position from “abstaining” to “supporting” the resolutions on The Hague code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation³⁶ and advancing multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.³⁷ The other abstention (in 2001) vote on the issue of “general and complete disarmament” relates to only one of the twenty sections of the resolution (A/RES/56/24).³⁸ Overall, the voting record is indicative of Bangladesh's strong adherence to the ideals set out by Bangabandhu.

Figure 4(5).9 Bangladesh's Voting Record in Disarmament & Nuclear Non-proliferation Issues (% of 'Y/N/A' votes/session, n=395*)



Source: Author's compilation.

* Data includes resolutions where Bangladesh was present and voting.

6. Conclusion

Forty-six years ago, Bangabandhu, in his first speech at the General Assembly outlined a set of enduring ideals for the new-born country. Bangabandhu's ideals were pragmatic, universal and bold with a vision to position Bangladesh in the international stage as a peace-loving country

and worthy equal. These ideals included respecting universal human rights, rights for self-determination, peaceful co-existence, disarmament, non-proliferation, multilateralism and establishing a just international economic order. This paper investigated the question: to what extent has Bangladesh remained seized supporting the enduring ideals on key global issues enunciated by Bangabandhu in his speech at the United Nations? The paper used Bangladesh's voting records at the UNGA for the period 2001-17 to trace country's adherence to the ideals.

The paper has revealed that, except for the politically sensitive country-specific human rights issues, Bangladesh continued supporting Bangabandhu's ideals with remarkable consistency in all thematic categories (between 92-100 per cent "yes" votes). Bangabandhu's emphasis on the primacy of the United Nations to build a peaceful and just world, non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, economic emancipation and global solidarity has become much more relevant in the Covid-19 era and the current geopolitical context of South Asia. The paper opens new avenues to conduct evidence-based research on the policy ideals and its practices. The methodology used in this paper can be expanded beyond the voting records to analyze Bangladesh's *adbrace and actions* on each thematic issue by employing appropriate proxy variables, derived from the domestic and external context. Such scholarly studies could be a valuable tribute to the legacy of the Father of the Nation in his birth centenary year.

Notes

- ¹ Bangabandhu (the friend of Bengal) is the honorific attested to the Father of the Nation by the people of Bangladesh. At the General Assembly, President of the 2243rd Plenary Meeting also invited him to deliver the speech as "His Excellency Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", attesting the universal recognition of the honorific. See Official Records, A/PV.2243, *Address by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister of Bangladesh*, United Nations General Assembly, Twenty-Ninth Session, 2243rd Plenary Meeting, 25 September 1974, p. 159.
- ² The purpose of strategic communication in the politics and international relations context is to "build political consensus or consent on important issues involving the exercise of political power and the allocation of resources." At the international level, this includes communications in support of public diplomacy and military stabilization. See also, Kirk Hallahan, Derina Holtzhausen, Betteke van Ruler, Dejan Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, "Defining Strategic Communication", *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, p. 8. For an analysis of how strategic communications in politics differ or seeks a way around at least some of the ethical and moral constraints also see, Mervyn Frost and Nicholas Michelsen, "Strategic Communications in International Relations: Practical Traps and Ethical Puzzles", *Defence Strategic Communications*, Vol. 2, Spring 2017, pp. 15-16.
- ³ The speech has been hailed by many including James Bridge (Chief Executive of UK National Commission for UNESCO) as "historic", the "Magna Carta" of Bangladesh's foreign policy. See also, "Bangabandhu's historic UNGA speech hailed in London, BSS News", *Bangladesh Shangbad Shangtha* (BSS), 26 September 2020, available at <http://www.bssnews.net/?p=460275>, accessed on 12 October 2020.
- ⁴ For a detailed analysis on whether a country's voting preferences at the UNGA can be a useful way to understand its policy inclinations, see also Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, "Is Voting Patterns at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) a Useful Way to Understand a Country's Policy Inclinations: Bangladesh's Voting Records at the UNGA", *SAGE Open*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2020, pp. 1-16.
- ⁵ The epistemic communities are a principal channel by which consensual knowledge about causal understandings is applied to international policy coordination and by which states may learn through processes of international cooperation. See also, Peter M. Haas, "Epistemic Communities", in Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Political Science*, Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2011, p. 2.

- ⁶ The UNGA voting may not be taken as an exact proxy of foreign policy. A foreign policy consists of decisions and actions. See also, AS Bojang, "The Study of Foreign Policy in International Relations", *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2018, p. 1.
- ⁷ United Nations Department of Public Information, "Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly", available at <https://library.un.org/index-proceedings/general-assembly>, accessed on 02 January 2021.
- ⁸ Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev and Erik Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2017, pp. 430–456; Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?", *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2000, pp. 33–63; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Measuring Systemic Polarity", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1975, pp. 187–216; Axel Dreher, Peter Nunnenkamp and Rainer Thiele, "Does US Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes? A Disaggregated Analysis", *Public Choice*, Vol. 136, No. 1-2, 2008, pp. 139–164; Enayetullah Khan, "Becoming Bangabandhu", *UNB News*, 15 August 2020, available at <https://unb.com.bd/category/Opinion/becoming-bangabandhu/56015/>, accessed on 04 October 2020; Jon C. Pevehouse, "Interdependence Theory and the Measurement of International Conflict", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66, No. 1, 2004, pp. 247–266; Axel Dreher and Jan-Egbert Sturm, "Do the IMF and the World Bank Influence Voting in the UN General Assembly?", *Public Choice*, Vol. 151, No. 1–2, 2012, pp. 363–397.
- ⁹ Forqan Uddin Ahmed, "Remembering Bangabandhu's Speech in United Nations", *The Independent*, 09 October 2019, available at <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/218740/>, accessed on 08 October; Forqan Uddin Ahmed, "Bangabandhu's Bengali Speech at the UN: A Memorable Event in the World History", *Our Time*, 30 September 2020, available at <http://www.ourtimebd.com/beta/2020/10/01/bangabandhus-bengali-speech-at-the-un-a-memorable-event-in-the-world-history/>, accessed on 14 October 2020; Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to The United Nations at The Plenary Meeting of The 60th Session of The United Nations General Assembly on Culture of Peace (Agenda Item 43), New York, United Nations, 20 October 2005.
- ¹⁰ From a Cold War perspective, the United States viewed that a unified Pakistan would better serve the developing Sino-US relationship to contain the Soviet Union. Others Western states did not want to endorse the Indian intervention in Bangladesh for fear that it could incite similar situations in many other countries. See also, Craig Baxter, *Bangladesh: From a Nation to a State*, United States: Westview Press, Harper Collins, 1997, pp. 145–148; Harry Blair, "Civil Society, Democratic Development and International Donors", in Rounaq Jahan (ed.),

Bangladesh: Promise and Performance, Dhaka: Zedbooks, The University Press Limited, 2001, pp. 181-217; Office of the Historian, "Foreign Relations of the United States 1969-1976, Volume XI, South Asian Crisis, 1971", available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/compl>.

- ¹¹ Soviet veto gave the precious time required for a swift military offensive by the Indians.
- ¹² Mannan Mashhur Zarif, "Recognition, as equals", *The Daily Star*, 17 March 2020, available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/recognition-equals-1881703/>, accessed on 12 October 2020.
- ¹³ The membership process involves a recommendation by the Council's Committee for Admission of New Member State, acted upon at the UNGA. The Indian representative at the Council presented a tabulated account of the time taken by the Committee to recommend the membership applications made by other countries, stressing that "since the thaw in the cold war, there has been no delay whatsoever in disposing of any application for membership." See Official Record, S/PV-1660, *Admission of New Members*, United Nations Security Council, Twenty Seventh Year, 1660th Meeting, New York, p. 4; Also see, United Nations, "Practice Relative to Recommendations to the General Assembly Regarding the Membership in the United Nation", in *The Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council (1972-1974)*, New York: United Nations, 1974, p. 73, available at https://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/72-74/72-74_07.pdf/, accessed on 03 October 2020.
- ¹⁴ Voting on the attitude of members on membership bid does not constitute a substantive decision. China, Somalia and Sudan abstained while Guinea opposed. See official document, S/10774, *Note by the President of the Security Council (Concerning Admission to UN Membership)*, United Nations Security Council, 23 August 1972, p. 93.
- ¹⁵ The Chinese representative also stated that Bangladesh's membership bid "runs entirely counter to the principles of the Charter and is totally untenable from a legal point of view." See Official Record, S/PV-1660, op. cit., p. 8. In a letter to the Secretary-General, the permanent representative of India repeated the Indian Foreign Minister's assurance that the "Indian troops will not be in Bangladesh a day longer than necessary." See also, S/10501 dated 11 January 1972, p.1.
- ¹⁶ Robert Alden, "China's First U. N. Veto Bars Bangladesh", *The New York Times*, 26 August 1972, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/26/archives/chinas-first-un-veto-bars-bangladesh-soviet-union-and-india-are.html/>, accessed on 14 October 2020.
- ¹⁷ See Official Record, S/11316, *Report of The Security Council Committee on The Admission of New Members Concerning the Application of The People's Republic*

of Bangladesh For Admission to Membership in the United Nations, United Nations Security Council, 07 June 1974; S/PV- 1776, *Admission of New Members*, Twenty Seventh Year, 1660th Meeting, United Nations Security Council, New York, 10 June 1974, pp. 1-18; A/PV.2233, Agenda Item 22: Admission of New Members to the United Nations, Twenty-Ninth Session, Official Records, 224 Plenary Meeting, United Nations General Assembly, 17 September 1974, pp. 8-31.

¹⁸ Official Record, S/PV. 1660, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁹ The NAM sprung from the unilateral act of a state “declaring itself independent of the predominating spheres of international influence”. It formally came into being through the signing of a joint declaration by Egyptian president Nasser, Indian Prime Minister Nehru, and Yugoslav president Tito in 1956. For an illuminating account of the emergence of NAM see, Radoslav Stojanovic, “The Emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement: A View from Belgrade, Case Western Reserve”, *Journal of International Law*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1981, pp. 443-450.

²⁰ Syed Badrul Ahsan, “Bangabandhu the Statesman”, *The Financial Express*, 17 March 2020, available at <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/mujib100/bangabandhu-the-statesman-1584424167>, accessed on 16 October 2020; “Bangabandhu’s first UNGA speech Magna Carta for Bangladesh’s multilateral diplomacy”, *The Business Standard*, 26 September 2020, available at <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/bangabandhus-first-unga-speech-magna-carta-bangladeshs-multilateral-diplomacy-138019/>, accessed on 10 October 2020.

²¹ From the years 1946-2007, each supplement to the Repertoire is organized into twelve chapters. From 2008 onwards, each supplement is organized into ten parts.

²² Nicholas Rostow, “Before and After: The Changed UN Response to Terrorism Since September 11th”, *Cornell International Law Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2002, p. 480.

²³ Qualitative content analysis involves “subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. See also, Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis”, *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 15, No. 9, November 2005, p. 1278; Eliot R. Smith, “Content Analysis and Narrative Analysis”, in Harry T. Reis and Charles M. Judd (eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 313–335.

²⁴ For an illuminating account of Bangabandhu’s speech at the fourth Summit of Heads of State/Government of the Non-aligned countries held in Algiers in September 1973 see also, AKM Atiqur Rahman, “Bangabandhu in Algiers for Non-aligned Summit”, *The Daily Sun*, 03 September 2020, available at <https://>

- www.daily-sun.com/post/503216/Bangabandhu-in-Algiers-for-Nonaligned-Summit, accessed on 12 October 2020.
- ²⁵ Bibek Chand, "Dynamics of Rivalry between Geographically Contiguous Regional Powers: The Case of Sino-Indian Competition", *Asian Politics & Policy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2019, pp.133-35; Graham P. Chapman, *The Geopolitics of South Asia*, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 263-281; For discussions on geopolitics and how India and China, the two key regional players, seek to re-define their sphere of influence in the region, see also, Ashok K. Behuria, Smruti S. Pattanaik and Arvind Gupta, "Does India have a Neighborhood Policy?" *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2012, pp. 229-246; Shivshankar Menon, "Some Thoughts on India, China and Asia-Pacific Regional Security", *China Report*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2017, pp. 188-213.
- ²⁶ Bangladesh was one of the 74-member states who abstained from voting on this resolution.
- ²⁷ Bangladesh was one of the 58-member states who abstained from voting on this resolution.
- ²⁸ Bangladesh was one of the 83-member state who abstained from voting on this resolution.
- ²⁹ The UNGA resolutions on Culture of Peace, pioneered and steered by Bangladesh aim to "bring peoples closer across cultures, civilizations and faiths." See also, Statement by H.E. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, op. cit.; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations, "United Nations General Assembly holds High-Level Forum on Bangladesh's flagship resolution 'Culture of Peace'", New York, 10 September 2020.
- ³⁰ Armed Forces Division, "Bangladesh in UN Peace Operation", available at <https://www.afd.gov.bd/index.php/un-peacekeeping/bangladesh-in-un-peace-operation>, accessed on 09 February 2021.
- ³¹ The very first proposal co-sponsored by Bangladesh after her admission to the UN was that of including the question of Palestine in the agenda of the General Assembly. See Official Record, A/PV.2262, Twenty-Ninth Session, 2262nd Plenary Meeting, Speech by Mr. Hossain (Bangladesh), United Nations General Assembly, 09 October 1974, p. 589.
- ³² Lee Jones, "ASEAN's Unchanged Melody? The Theory and Practice of 'Non-interference' in Southeast Asia", *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 2010, pp. 479-502; Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, London: Routledge, 2001.
- ³³ UNDRO ceased to exist when incorporated into the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, set up in April 1992, currently, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

- ³⁴ The recurring resolution on agricultural technology for development was put to vote six times between 2007-17. Bangladesh supported the resolution in 2007 but abstained in subsequent occurrences.
- ³⁵ These resolutions call for achieving the universality of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), devising effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives, design disarmament and non-proliferation education and training programme to promote a culture of non-violence and peace.
- ³⁶ This recurring resolution was put to vote seven times between 2004-2017. Bangladesh abstained from voting in 2004 but supported the resolutions in all subsequent occurrences.
- ³⁷ This recurring resolution was put to vote six times at the UNGA between 2012-2017. Bangladesh abstained in 2012 but voted yes in all subsequent occurrences.
- ³⁸ Resolution on general and complete disarmament (A/RES/56/24) contains 22 sections (24A to 24 V). Bangladesh supported all other sections.