

## **The Dynamics Of Bangladesh-US Relations: Does US Foreign Policy Focus On Democracy and Human Rights Or Geopolitical Interests?**

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### **Abstract**

*The bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and the United States has undergone significant shifts over the years, shaped by complex interactions between democratic ideals, human rights concerns, and geopolitical interests. This study examines the multifaceted dynamics of Bangladesh-US relations, focusing on analyzing the extent to which US foreign policy prioritizes democracy, human rights, and geopolitical considerations. The study draws upon a comprehensive literature review of scholarly works, official documents, and expert analyses related to the historical context and critical milestones in Bangladesh-US relations. The present study employs a mixed-methods technique to incorporate qualitative data, which contributes to a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate aspects that shape United States foreign policy choices concerning Bangladesh. Using case studies and examining policy initiatives, this analysis assesses the concrete results of democracy and human rights measures, elucidating their influence on the bilateral relationship. Furthermore, the research explores the role of geopolitical considerations in shaping US engagement with Bangladesh. This analysis aims to evaluate the tangible outcomes of democracy and human rights measures by employing case studies and analyzing policy efforts. Through this approach, the study seeks to shed light on the impact of these measures on the bilateral relationship. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Bangladesh-US relationship, seeking to establish whether the US foreign policy strikes a delicate balance between promoting democracy and human rights while addressing its geopolitical interests.*

**Keywords:** *Human Rights, Democracy, Geopolitics, Trade, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Bay of Bengal.*

### **Abstrak**

*Hubungan bilateral antara Bangladesh dan Amerika Serikat telah mengalami perubahan signifikan selama bertahun-tahun, dipengaruhi oleh interaksi kompleks antara ideal demokrasi, keprihatinan hak asasi manusia, dan kepentingan geopolitik. Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika banyak dimensi dari hubungan Bangladesh-AS, dengan fokus pada menganalisis sejauh mana kebijakan luar negeri AS mengutamakan demokrasi, hak asasi manusia, dan pertimbangan geopolitik. Penelitian ini merujuk pada tinjauan literatur menyeluruh terhadap karya ilmiah, dokumen resmi, dan analisis ahli yang terkait dengan konteks sejarah dan tonggak kritis dalam hubungan Bangladesh-AS. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik metode campuran untuk menggabungkan data kualitatif, yang berkontribusi pada pemahaman menyeluruh tentang aspek-aspek rumit yang membentuk*

*pilihan kebijakan luar negeri Amerika Serikat terkait Bangladesh. Dengan menggunakan studi kasus dan menganalisis inisiatif kebijakan, analisis ini menilai hasil konkret dari tindakan demokrasi dan hak asasi manusia, menjelaskan pengaruhnya terhadap hubungan bilateral. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran pertimbangan geopolitik dalam membentuk keterlibatan AS dengan Bangladesh. Analisis ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi hasil nyata dari tindakan demokrasi dan hak asasi manusia dengan menggunakan studi kasus dan menganalisis upaya kebijakan. Melalui pendekatan ini, penelitian ini berusaha untuk memberikan gambaran mengenai dampak tindakan tersebut pada hubungan bilateral. Laporan ini menyajikan tinjauan menyeluruh tentang hubungan Bangladesh-AS, dengan upaya untuk menilai apakah kebijakan luar negeri AS mencapai keseimbangan yang baik antara mempromosikan demokrasi dan hak asasi manusia sambil menangani kepentingan geopolitiknya.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Hak Asasi Manusia, Demokrasi, Geopolitik, Perdagangan, Strategi Indo-Pasifik, Teluk Bengal.*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Bangladesh and the United States have a protracted and complicated history of diplomatic ties. Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the two nations have had numerous diplomatic, economic, and cultural interactions. While the relationship has had ups and downs, both countries have labored to maintain a positive and constructive partnership. Trade is essential to the US-Bangladesh relationship (Yasmin, 2016). The United States is the largest importer of Bangladeshi products, importing \$8.3 billion in 2021. US companies are the largest foreign investors in Bangladesh, making the United States the top Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) source in 2021. US companies have made \$4.3 billion in investments as of 2021, which accounts for 20 percent of the total FDI stock in Bangladesh (US State Department, 2022). Security cooperation is another essential aspect of the Bangladesh-United States relationship. The two nations have collaborated to combat terrorism and promote regional stability. Bangladesh has been an indispensable ally in the war against terrorism, sharing intelligence and collaborating on combined operations (Morsalin & Hannan, 2022). In addition, the United States has provided the Bangladesh Armed Forces with military training and equipment, strengthening their capabilities.

In recent years, Bangladesh's geographical location and growing economic growth have made the United States particularly interested in Bangladesh (Alam, 2022). At the same time, Bangladesh's good relations with China have made the United States think anew. While

the world's economy has been hit hard by COVID-19, the United States has suffered the most fatalities in the world (Yan, 2022). So far, they are the worst affected countries; China's continued economic rise in the face of the situation could lead to dramatic changes in the global political and economic scenario in the coming days (Jenkins, 2022). In this case, by clinging to democracy and human rights, they are trying to put pressure on some states so that the primary purpose is to bring the states out of China's sphere and corner China.

Moreover, that is why, when we see countries in the Middle East failing miserably in this so-called democracy and human rights exercise, the United States can never be seen to be vocal about it. Furthermore, the main reason for this is that they are each other's partners, historically recognized. Promoting political stability and democracy, economic growth, and respect for human rights are prioritized by the United States government in its policy toward Bangladesh. The United States of America provides Bangladesh with economic support, and the two countries' militaries have close connections, including collaboration in global peacekeeping operations. The United States is interested in Bangladesh because of its role in South Asia's more incredible geopolitical dynamics, which is another reason Bangladesh is essential to the United States (Razzaque, 2022).

### **Research Problem and Background of the Research**

During Bangladesh's great war of Independence in 1971, the United States favored West Pakistan (Brown, 2013). However, American residents led by Archer K Blood, consul general, sent a series of telegrams against the atrocities of West Pakistanis on Bangladeshi people, students, and intellectuals (Bishoyi, 2021). Many took a stand against the Nixon administration, remaining silent on the genocide in Bangladesh and cooperating with the Pakistani military junta (Budhraj, 1973). The general people's position in the United States changed against Nixon's policy on Bangladesh (Bhagwati, 1972). Bangladesh became independent on December 16, 1971. On April 4, 1972, the United States of America recognized Bangladesh and provided \$300 million for assistance (Aziz, 1982). Then Herbert D. Spivak was the chief American diplomatic officer posted in Dhaka. Four days later, the United States and Bangladesh agreed to promote mutual diplomatic relations at the embassy level (Chowdhury, 1989). On May 18 of the same year, the Consulate-General was upgraded to the Embassy. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, during his visit to the

US in October 1974, had rightly understood the great importance of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Bangladesh is one of the US's main allies in the South Asian region. Due to the implementation of numerous regional and global security initiatives, efforts to combat militancy, and climate change initiatives, the two nations have demonstrated their commitment to addressing these critical issues (Morsalin, 2022). Bangladesh has been one of the US's essential partners in the Obama administration's international development initiatives, food security, health development, and environmental development. In 2012, a strategic agreement was signed between the two countries. Marcia Bernicat, the US ambassador to Bangladesh, called the relationship "vibrant, multifaceted, and indispensable" in 2015 (The Daily Star, 2015). Relations between the Bangladeshi government and the United States have deteriorated since the major opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), boycotted the 2014 election, and election manipulation charges surfaced before the 2019 election. However, all kinds of bilateral relations and cooperative activities were carried out at an average pace. The US policy towards Bangladesh was "three D's." These are Democracy, Development, and Denial of space for terrorism or militancy (Huque, 2019). Bangladesh-US political relations have been strained over the past decade due to persistent US concerns over democracy and good governance, the Grameen Bank and Dr. Muhammad Yunus affairs, the Rana Plaza tragedy and the subsequent withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), and the Holey Artisan attack and its consequences. As of 2021, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and seven current and former commanders have been hit with unilateral sanctions by the Biden administration for alleged human rights violations (Zagaris, 2022).

## **B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to understand the dynamics of Bangladesh-US relations comprehensively. The study combines qualitative and quantitative methods to triangulate findings and enhance the depth and breadth of the analysis.

### **Quantitative Research:**

· **Survey Design:** A structured survey questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on public perceptions regarding the priorities of US foreign policy in Bangladesh-US relations. The survey included a combination of closed-ended questions, Likert scale items, and demographic questions.

· **Sampling:** A probability-based sampling method was used to select a representative sample of respondents (students, policymakers, diplomats, scholars, and representatives from non-governmental organizations) in Bangladesh and the United States. The sample size consisted of 100 participants from both countries, ensuring a diverse representation across demographics.

· **Data Collection:** The survey was administered electronically using online survey platforms. Participants were recruited through various means, including social media advertisements, email invitations, and random sampling techniques.

### **Qualitative Research:**

· **Interviews:** Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, diplomats, scholars, and representatives from non-governmental organizations with expertise in Bangladesh-US relations. A total of 20 interviews were conducted, with 15 participants from Bangladesh and 5 from the United States.

· **Content Analysis:** Qualitative content analysis was performed on relevant policy documents, official statements, and media coverage to identify recurring themes, discourses, and rhetoric about democracy, human rights, and geopolitical interests in Bangladesh-US relations.

The study acknowledges several limitations, including potential sampling biases in the survey, the subjectivity of qualitative analysis, and the constraint of generalizability beyond the study's scope. The research design also focused on public perceptions and key stakeholder perspectives, which may only partially represent part of the factors influencing Bangladesh-US relations. The mixed-methods approach adopted in this study allowed for a comprehensive examination of the research question. Quantitative data provided insights into public perceptions, while qualitative data from interviews and content analysis enriched the analysis by offering nuanced perspectives from key stakeholders. This methodology facilitated a holistic understanding of whether US foreign policy in Bangladesh-US relations emphasizes democracy and human rights or is primarily driven by geopolitical interests.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the key findings from the mixed-methods research to explore the dynamics of Bangladesh-US relations and the extent to which US foreign policy emphasizes democracy and human rights instead of geopolitical interests.

## Quantitative Findings: Public Perceptions

The quantitative analysis of public perceptions in Bangladesh and the United States provided valuable insights into how these populations view the priorities of US foreign policy in the context of their bilateral relations.

### 1. Public Priorities in Bangladesh-US Relations:

- **Democracy Promotion:** A substantial majority (72%) of respondents in Bangladesh perceived democracy promotion as a crucial aspect of US foreign policy towards their country.
- **Human Rights:** A significant proportion (64%) of respondents in Bangladesh also considered promoting human rights as a central objective of US foreign policy.
- **Geopolitical Interests:** Interestingly, 58% of respondents in Bangladesh acknowledged the importance of geopolitical interests in shaping US foreign policy towards Bangladesh.

### 2. Public Priorities in the United States:

- **Democracy Promotion:** Among respondents in the United States, 63% believed that the US should prioritize democracy promotion in its relations with Bangladesh.
- **Human Rights:** A similar proportion (65%) of US respondents emphasized the importance of upholding human rights in the bilateral relationship.
- **Geopolitical Interests:** Geopolitical interests also garnered substantial attention, with 71% of US respondents recognizing their significance in shaping US foreign policy toward Bangladesh.

## Qualitative Findings: Key Stakeholder Perspectives

The qualitative component of the research involved in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, diplomats, scholars, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. These interviews provided nuanced perspectives on the dynamics of Bangladesh-US relations.

### 1. Democracy and Human Rights:

- Key stakeholders in Bangladesh highlighted that while democracy and human rights are valued aspects of US foreign policy, they often serve as secondary

considerations. The respondents indicated that the United States prioritizes stability and economic interests in the region.

- In contrast, US stakeholders acknowledged that democracy and human rights remain fundamental principles, but they acknowledged that pragmatic concerns sometimes lead to trade-offs with geopolitical interests.

## **2. Geopolitical Interests:**

- Both Bangladeshi and US stakeholders acknowledged the growing strategic importance of Bangladesh in South Asia. They pointed to the influence of regional dynamics, including the rise of China and the fight against terrorism, as drivers of US geopolitical interests in the country.
- However, stakeholders on both sides also emphasized that while geopolitical interests are a significant factor, they are often pursued in a manner that considers the broader context of regional stability and partnership.

This research suggests that while democracy and human rights are important elements of US foreign policy in Bangladesh-US relations, they coexist with and sometimes intersect with US geopolitical interests. Public perceptions in both countries reflect the recognition of these dual objectives, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between democratic values and pragmatic considerations in international diplomacy.

The relationship between the United States and Bangladesh has been extensive and intricate. Bangladesh has been a traditional ally of the United States. Still, the relationship has sometimes been strained due to US foreign policy prioritizing democracy, human rights, and geopolitical interests. The primary focus of the US foreign policy towards Bangladesh has been promoting democracy and human rights. The United States has long supported the Bangladeshi people's efforts to establish a strong democracy. It has provided economic and technical assistance to the Bangladeshi government to help enhance the country's economic and social welfare. The United States has assisted organizations such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross in safeguarding vulnerable populations. However, the United States has had to balance its commitment to democracy and human rights and its regional geopolitical interests. Historically, the United States has been concerned with the region's security and has sought to ensure that Bangladesh is not a safe refuge for radical groups that could threaten American interests. The United States has also sought to maintain its

regional political and economic influence. It has provided aid and military support to Bangladesh to ensure its continued alliance with the United States. Ultimately, the United States' foreign policy towards Bangladesh has been a delicate balancing act between promoting democracy and human rights and pursuing its regional geopolitical interests. While the United States has generally sought to promote democracy and human rights, it has had to balance these objectives with its geopolitical interests, such as assuring the region's security and preserving its political and economic influence.

The 'new visa policy' announced by the US State Department on visas for Bangladeshi nationals puts pressure on the government for a fair, acceptable and participatory election in Bangladesh (US State Department, 2023). The US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, announced the new visa policy to ensure the "advance a free and fair electoral process" and aimed to "support all those who want to advance democracy in Bangladesh". If the country had already had a fair electoral system and favourable conditions as the government claimed, then the US would not have felt the need to announce such a new policy, let alone discuss it. The new policy states that the United States will not grant visas to Bangladeshis responsible for or involved in obstructing the democratic electoral process in Bangladesh. Those responsible for or involved in obstructing Bangladesh's democratic electoral process are said to include current and former officials of the Bangladesh government, members of pro-government and opposition political parties, members of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and security forces.

A year and a half ago, the US imposed sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion and seven of its officers for alleged severe human rights violations (Zaman, 2023). Soon after, disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the country decreased significantly, opposition parties could hold rallies almost unhindered, and international pressure to hold the country's upcoming elections increased. On the other hand, the government started criticisms of this sanction and the country that gave it, America. Since then, sanctions have become a hot topic in Bangladesh politics. There are speculations in various media about whether or not more sanctions are being given and what kind of sanctions are being given. Some answers to these speculations were found on the late night of May 24, 2023. The US Secretary of State announced the new visa policy for Bangladesh today and clarified the country's continued vigilance in free, fair and peaceful elections (Mohammad, 2023).



The United States has a long history of engagement with Bangladesh, and the two nations enjoy a substantial partnership based on shared values and interests (Haque & Islam, 2014). The partnership focuses on trade and investment, development, democracy and human rights, security, and education. The United States supports Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, advance human rights, and promote economic development. Through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US government assists Bangladesh in enhancing its capacity to better its citizens' livelihoods. The United States and Bangladesh governments have joined forces to combat global threats like terrorism, drug trafficking, and climate change (Zafarullah & Haque, 2023).

The two nations have also collaborated on initiatives such as humanitarian aid, health programmes, and disaster management. The United States and Bangladesh administrations have also strengthened civil society and promoted sound governance. The United States Department of State has supported programmes that strengthen the media, promote the rule of law, combat corruption and impunity, and increase adolescent participation. Despite the progress in enhancing the bilateral relationship, there are still areas of contention. Human rights concerns continue to be a source of concern. The United States has repeatedly expressed concern regarding the human rights situation in Bangladesh, including the use of extrajudicial executions and torture by state security forces. In addition, the United States has expressed concern over Bangladesh's lack of democracy. The United States has also criticized religious intolerance and religious minority discrimination in Bangladesh. Despite these challenges, the United States supports Bangladesh's efforts to create a democratic and prosperous society. The United States is committed to advancing its geopolitical interests and promoting democracy and human rights in the region.

Bangladesh needs to build national unity by considering the issue of US sanctions on Bangladesh. Bangladesh is seen as an important country in South Asia regarding geopolitical realities. Bangladesh has also received the support of US ally India in the South Asia region. However, US's recent approach to Bangladesh is also seen as a change in the US policy of viewing Bangladesh in India's eyes. There is a change in the policy of India-centric thinking towards Bangladesh in the United States. The US administration seems to be seriously rethinking other South Asian countries outside India and Pakistan. One thing is clear from this trend the US is trying to reduce India's dependence on South Asian politics.

Moreover, it is also one of the principles of the current US administration to conduct the diplomacy process as per its requirements without seeing the region in India's eyes. Due to its location, major powerful countries keep an eye on Bangladesh. Although the United States has proposed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and agreements, it has taken time to finalize them. Unnecessary surveillance is being carried out on Bangladesh due to the recruitment of lobbyists of anti-independence forces and the continuous spread of false and untrue information about Bangladesh. A lobbyist firm should be appointed in the United States to present the facts against such propaganda. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Bangladesh should be vigilant about diplomacy with the United States. The Bay of Bengal is in a significant strategic or geopolitical position for the major powers. Because of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), the QUAD's sea-facing activism, escalating tensions and competition in the South China Sea, Bangladesh's geographic location are significant. A new relationship or engagement between the United States and the South Asian region will be formed. The United States has re-realized the strategic importance of small states in this region.

## **Discussion**

This report presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings and insights from the study titled "The Dynamics of Bangladesh-US Relations: Does US Foreign Policy focus on Democracy and Human Rights or Geopolitical Interests?" This discussion aims to analyze the complex interplay between democracy, human rights, and geopolitical interests in shaping the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and the United States. The findings of this study shed light on the intricate dynamics that shape Bangladesh-US relations and the relative emphasis placed on democracy and human rights compared to geopolitical interests within the context of US foreign policy. The discussion below explores the implications of these findings, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this relationship. The quantitative data reveal that Bangladeshi and US respondents recognize the importance of democracy promotion, human rights, and geopolitical interests in Bangladesh-US relations. These results underscore the multifaceted nature of US foreign policy, where multiple objectives coexist and sometimes overlap. Both publics perceive the United States as pursuing a nuanced approach to engaging with Bangladesh.

**Public Perceptions vs. Stakeholder Perspectives:** A notable finding is the alignment between Bangladesh's public perceptions and stakeholder perspectives. Both groups acknowledge the significance of democracy and human rights in US foreign policy. However, they recognize that these principles may sometimes be subordinated to geopolitical interests and regional stability concerns. The United States has a similar alignment in the importance attributed to these dual objectives. It suggests a degree of consistency in the perceptions of various stakeholders, including policymakers and scholars, regarding the fundamental principles of US foreign policy. The discussion incorporates insights from interviews with experts, policymakers, and diplomats involved in Bangladesh-US relations. These perspectives provide valuable real-world experiences and nuanced views on the dynamics between democracy, human rights, and geopolitical interests. Experts' opinions vary, revealing a diversity of viewpoints on the relative importance of these factors in US foreign policy decision-making.

**Geopolitical Context:** The qualitative findings highlight the increasing geopolitical importance of Bangladesh in South Asia, driven by factors such as China's growing influence in the region and counterterrorism efforts. Stakeholders on both sides of the relationship acknowledge the complex geopolitical context within which US foreign policy decisions are made. The discussion also sheds light on the significance of geopolitical interests in influencing US foreign policy towards Bangladesh. Geopolitical considerations, including regional security, counterterrorism, trade, and strategic alliances, have substantially shaped US engagement with Bangladesh. The study reveals instances where geopolitical interests precede democracy and human rights concerns in policy decisions.

**Democracy and Human Rights Promotion in US Foreign Policy:** The discussion highlights the extent to which US foreign policy has focused on promoting democracy and human rights in Bangladesh. Analysis of policy documents, official statements, and case studies reveals that democracy and human rights have been essential to US foreign policy discourse. The US has often supported democratic governance and human rights protection in Bangladesh. Initiatives like diplomatic engagement, development assistance, and capacity-building programs have been directed towards these objectives. While democracy and human rights remain core values, the findings suggest that the United States considers the broader regional context when formulating its policies toward Bangladesh. It indicates a pragmatic approach that seeks to balance principles with strategic interests.

**Policy Implications:** These findings have significant policy implications for both Bangladesh and the United States. Understanding the nuances of US foreign policy priorities for Bangladesh can inform its diplomatic strategies and foster a more constructive partnership. It suggests that Bangladesh may benefit from engaging with the United States on both values-based and regional stability and security issues. For the United States, the findings underscore the importance of maintaining a balanced approach in its relations with Bangladesh. While democracy and human rights remain integral, the geopolitical realities of the region require a flexible and adaptive policy framework. It may involve trade-offs and nuanced approaches that consider regional dynamics.

### **Limitations and Future Research:**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research focused on public perceptions and key stakeholder perspectives, which may need to capture the complexities of foreign policy decision-making fully. The study did not delve into specific policy decisions or case studies that could provide more granular insights into the relationship. Future research in this area could explore specific policy initiatives and their outcomes to understand better how US foreign policy is operationalized in Bangladesh-US relations. Additionally, comparative studies with other countries in South Asia could offer valuable insights into regional patterns of US foreign policy priorities. **Finally**, this research illuminates the multifaceted nature of Bangladesh-US relations, where democracy and human rights coexist and sometimes intersect with geopolitical interests. The study's findings suggest that a balanced approach, recognizing the complexities of the relationship, is essential for both countries to foster a constructive and mutually beneficial partnership in an evolving regional landscape.

### **Way to Improve**

Improving US-Bangladesh relations following implementing of a new visa policy and sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) requires diplomatic efforts and constructive engagement between the two countries. Here are some steps that could help improve the relationship:

1. **Diplomatic dialogue:** Initiate diplomatic talks between the United States and Bangladesh at various levels. It could involve high-level meetings, such as visits by

government officials or diplomats from both countries, to discuss the concerns and find common ground.

2. **Clarification of policies:** The United States should communicate the rationale behind its new visa policy and the sanctions on RAB to Bangladesh. It would help address misunderstandings and allow both sides to better understand each other's perspectives.
3. **Rebuilding trust:** Both countries need to restore confidence and strengthen bilateral ties. It can be achieved through increased cultural exchanges, educational programs, and people-to-people interactions. Encouraging visits by students, scholars, artists, and professionals from both countries can foster mutual understanding and goodwill.
4. **Cooperation on common issues:** Identify areas of common interest and work together. It could include collaboration on counterterrorism, regional security, trade, investment, climate change, and humanitarian efforts. The two countries can develop a more positive and constructive relationship by finding common ground.
5. **Address concerns:** The United States should be open to addressing Bangladesh's concerns regarding the visa policy and the RAB sanctions. Engaging in a meaningful dialogue to understand the underlying issues and exploring potential solutions can help alleviate tensions and pave the way for improved relations.
6. **Track record improvement:** Bangladesh can work towards addressing any legitimate concerns the United States raises. It could involve improving human rights, governance, the rule of law, and transparency. Demonstrating a commitment to reform and addressing identified issues can help build confidence and positively impact the relationship.
7. **Multilateral cooperation:** Both countries can explore opportunities for collaboration within multilateral organizations and frameworks. It can provide a platform for constructive engagement and collaboration on regional and global challenges.
8. **Track II diplomacy:** Encourage Track II diplomacy initiatives involving non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academics from both countries. These unofficial channels can foster dialogue, generate ideas, and build trust and understanding.
9. **Address geopolitical interests:** The US and Bangladesh should work together to address geopolitical interests, such as countering terrorism, promoting regional stability and addressing transnational crime. It can be done through increased security, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic engagement with regional countries.

It is important to note that the specific approach and effectiveness of these steps may vary based on the dynamics between the two countries and the willingness of both sides to engage in constructive dialogue. Open communication, mutual respect, and a desire to find common ground are essential for improving any bilateral relationship.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

In terms of democracy, human rights, and the Indo-Pacific strategy, the current international political environment has had a substantial effect on the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States. The recent visit of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the United States has helped strengthen the relationship between the two nations. However, there is still room for development in several areas. Concerning democracy, the United States has voiced concern over Bangladesh's lack of political freedom. While the Hasina administration has made some economic and social progress, there have been reports of human rights violations and restrictions on the media and civil society. The 2023 national election in Bangladesh will be a crucial test for the country's democratic credentials. The United States will closely monitor the process to ensure it is free, fair, and transparent.

Regarding the Indo-Pacific strategy, Bangladesh is an essential US partner in the region due to its location and strategic importance. As part of a more significant endeavour to counter China's expanding influence in the area, the US has been working to strengthen its ties with Bangladesh in trade, security, and infrastructure development. Concerns exist, however, about the possibility of this partnership growing at the expense of democracy and human rights. Although the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States is fraught with difficulties, there is substantial potential for cooperation and collaboration. Both nations want to advance regional stability, economic development, and democratic values. It will be essential for both parties to continue the dialogue and collaborate to resolve areas of concern and create a stronger partnership that benefits both countries and the region as a whole.

To further strengthen the enduring relationship between the two countries, we must address mutual challenges and take the bilateral relationship forward through the progress and prosperity we have achieved in various fields. We should also increase people-to-people engagement in addition to G-to-G involvement. One of the main objectives of Bangladesh's foreign policy is to increase development and trade while maintaining good relations with all. Moreover, in this context, it is said that infrastructure is a sector where Bangladesh can gain enough from the IPS. Bangladesh joined China's BRI mainly to fund its infrastructure projects.

However, despite the emphasis on developing the IPS, it is considered more of a security alliance.

Moreover, this has become one of the main reasons for Bangladesh's retreat. In joining the IPS, Bangladesh fears that relations with its strategic China could deteriorate. In many cases, the United States is a significant development partner of Bangladesh. The United States is the largest destination for garments made by Bangladesh's most extensive export products. The US is also the second-largest investor in Bangladesh. In this situation, the IPS has put Bangladesh in a critical situation. The challenge before Bangladesh is balancing relations with China and the US without disturbing its interests. Bangladesh is believed to have maintained good relations with all major global powers. However, the situation is increasingly moving towards choosing one of the spheres. Will Bangladesh distance itself from China and get closer to the US? In the past, the US played the role of a police state by supporting various autocratic and undemocratic regimes, unsolicited interference in different countries, and waging worldwide wars. Recent war failures (especially the Taliban victory in Afghanistan) have severely damaged the country's image. The United States is the leading country responsible for the global environment and climate disasters. Even if current President Joe Biden makes promises, it is questionable whether they will be implemented. Considering the overall situation, we must find an acceptable solution for Bangladesh-US relations. In this case, along with diplomatic skills, the nation's unity is necessary to overcome this situation. In today's geopolitical reality, China needs to maintain good bilateral relations on its own and in our needs. Moreover, we need to maintain good relations with the United States at a tolerable level without moving away from liberal democracy and a free market economy. In the current context of international politics, the main objective of our foreign policy should be to formulate a balanced foreign policy without directly supporting any particular party.

Bangladesh-US relations have traditionally been based on shared values of democracy and human rights. The United States has long been a strong supporter of Bangladesh's democracy and has provided various forms of assistance, including economic and military assistance, to help Bangladesh protect and promote human rights and democratic principles. The United States and Bangladesh want to promote regional stability, counterterrorism, and violent extremism. The United States has assisted Bangladesh to strengthen its counterterrorism capabilities and promote regional stability. The United States and Bangladesh are also committed to international trade, and the United States is a significant trading partner

for Bangladesh. The United States and Bangladesh are working together to expand Bangladesh's access to the global economy, including through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The United States and Bangladesh cooperate on various global issues, including climate change, disaster relief, and health and pandemic preparedness. The United States has assisted Bangladesh to help address climate change's impacts and prepare for and respond to natural disasters. The United States also works with Bangladesh to combat global health threats, including through the Global Health Security Agenda. In conclusion, Bangladesh-US relations are based on a shared commitment to democracy and human rights, but they also involve geopolitical interests and a desire to promote regional stability and economic growth.

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