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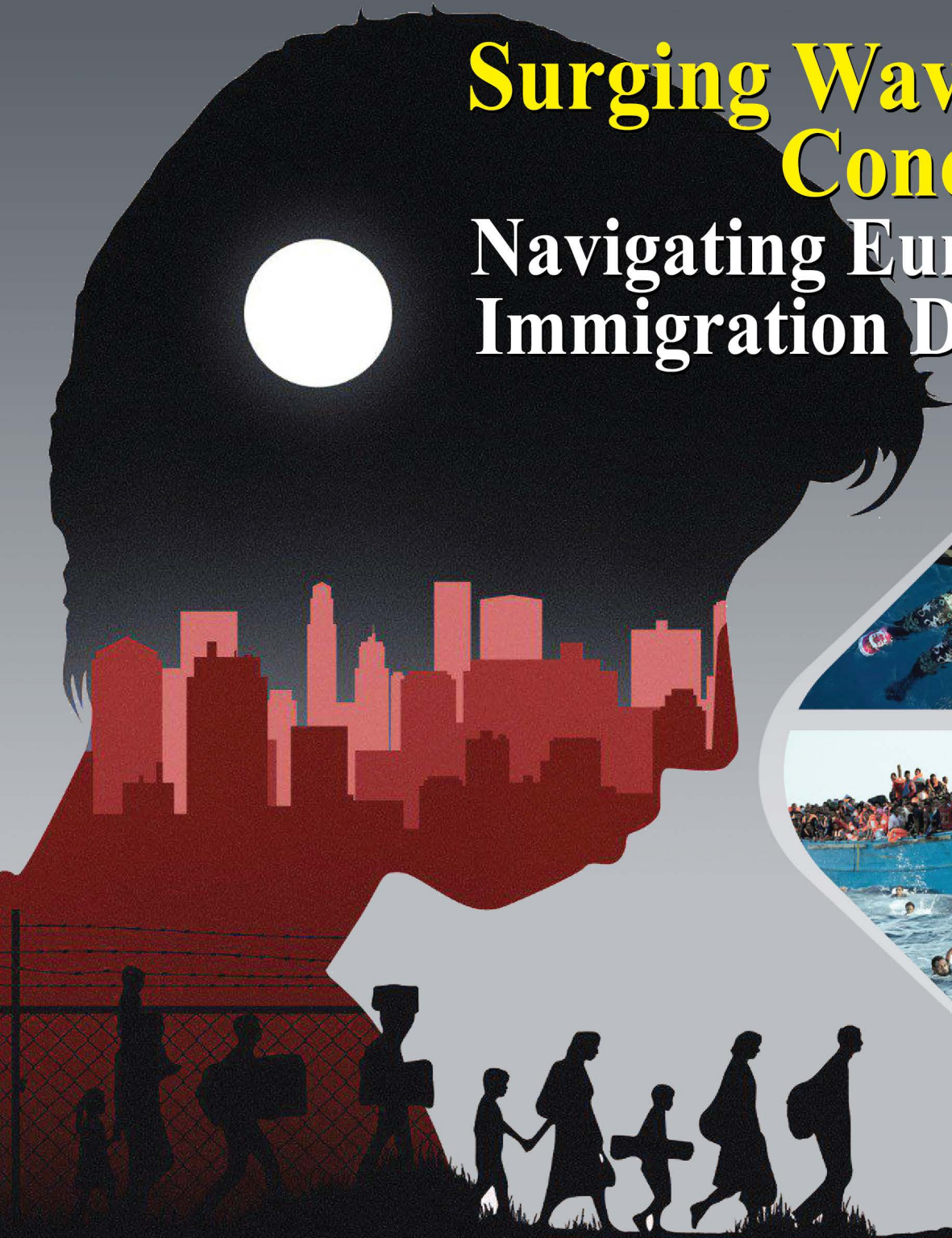
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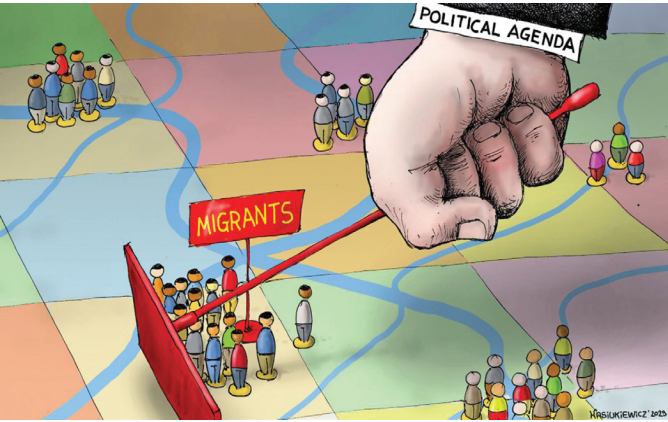


Echoes the Truth, Impacts the Future

erspective

Surging Waves of Concern: Navigating Europe's Immigration Debate





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What Prevents Us From Stopping the Infiltration of Drugs?

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Editorial

Equiforigi

Recently, the transgender issue has become a hot topic in Bangladesh. The reason was that a story was mentioned in the text book of class seven where transgender issues were inserted to inject and brainwash upcoming generations in order to normalise the transgender issue. The experience says that today's showcase of transgender people as victims is just the beginning of the big picture. The last step is to make the laws declaring any kind of criticism illegal. At that moment, today's self-declared victim will make the others the victims. As this is a Muslim country and they are deeply rooted in Islam and there is no place for transgender (changing the organs unnaturally and Hijras are different from transgender) people in Islam, the reaction towards the inclusion of transgender issues as a part of the normalisation process will surely be massive. There are two aspects to be discussed here. Firstly, this issue is deeply connected with power and politics. As the government has been in power through an undemocratic process and they need recognition from the USA and West, and the USA-West ally is the main patronizer of the LGBTQ movement, they can easily influence the government to insert transgender issues positively. On the other hand, the government may give permission in return for recognition. The government would not dare insert such a topic positively if they had been elected through a democratic process. The more government is away from people's recognition, the more they sway towards the west-based anti-social organisations. Secondly, in general, laws are and should be nothing but the reflection of social norms. The laws are modified, codified, and adopted as per social changes. But this has not happened regarding Bangladesh. The current law-making process and its purpose were inherited from colonisation, and that was not connected with our roots. The very purpose of such a process was to replace our own heritage and reconstruct the mindset of Muslims by making laws. So, there has been a conflict between law and morals. As part of that process, they inserted the transgender topic in the form of Hijra. They intended to change the social perspective on LGBTQ rights, but society has not accepted this. LGBTQ is the red line for Muslims, and any kind of acceptance of LGBTQ is considered the cross of the red line. Moreover, Allah has warned us about the LGBTQ in the Quran, mentioning the consequences of Ummah at the time of Nuh (alaihissalam). So, we condemn the insertion of transgender issues positively in the form of Hijra and request the authority to delete this topic from the text book.

Besides, this volume covers the USA-China rivalry and their diverse and adverse interests in the Middle East and Asia, as well as the different aspects of the Bangladesh-Pakistan bilateral relationship. We have seen the emergence of right-wing politics in Europe and their double standard regarding the rights of Muslims, which unfolded the black and covered face of Europe. The Perspective has also covered these issues. We are concerned about the Chittagong Hill tracks for militant seditionist groups' anti-state activities. The Perspective believed that the government would take initiatives to de-escalate the tensions in those districts. ■

Surging Waves of Concern: Navigating Europe's Immigration Debate

Ishfak Farhan Siyam

Almighty Allah says in His Holy Scripture, “O mankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you in peoples and tribes that you may know one another.” (Surah Al Huzurat: 13) Father Adam and Mother Eve were the first human beings, and from them, their descendants dispersed worldwide. Since the dawn of creation, human mobility has been a fundamental trait. Humans have always been on the move, whether it was for their livelihood, ties to their families, efforts to save lives, academic pursuits, or simply a desire for adventure and renewal. Religious narratives say Father Adam himself journeyed thousands of miles to reunite with his beloved wife, Eve. Throughout the millennia of human history, travel and migration were largely



unchallenged, unimpeded, and uncomplicated, in stark contrast to today's reality. A mere century and a half ago, concepts like passports and visas were nonexistent. Individuals could relocate freely, settling anywhere without hindrance or interrogation. It is only in recent centuries that the requisites of passports and visas emerged, mandating individuals to seek permission before entering foreign territories. Traditionally, humans have migrated to regions offering improved prospects for elevated living standards. However, the introduction of constraints and regulations has engendered numerous challenges, rendering migration one of the most contentious subjects of contemporary times.

According to experts, there are two main factors that drive migration: push factors and pull factors. Push factors come into play when conditions in the native country compel or influence individuals or groups to depart. These conditions may include poor living standards, natural disasters, or man-made threats. On the other hand, pull factors emerge when the native country offers a relatively stable living environment, yet foreign countries present better opportunities that attract individuals to migrate. However, contemporary migration is no longer a straightforward undertaking. Authorities have become increasingly stringent in controlling and limiting the influx of migrants into their countries. This heightened vigilance and restrictive approach have raised significant human rights concerns, particularly due to the substantial number of immigrants and the rigorous enforcement measures. The European approach to immigration has been a focal point of considerable controversy. While Europe is undeniably a sought-after destination for migrants, the strict decisions made by European authorities also bear a significant share of responsibility for the challenges surrounding migration.

The migration landscape in Europe underwent a significant shift following the fall of the Soviet Union, specifically the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This period witnessed Europe's transformation

into a more stable, symmetric, cooperative, and liberal region, rendering it an appealing choice for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. The simultaneous rise of a new wave of globalization, championed by liberal and capitalistic forces, particularly in the Western world, further fueled the attractiveness of Europe. Until 2011, migration to Europe had maintained a steady pace, with more or less consistent numbers. However, the dynamics changed with the onset of the Arab Spring in the Middle East. Before this, large flows of undocumented migration were primarily from Africa, predominantly through the Mediterranean route. The Arab Spring, not unfolding as anticipated, led to a substantial influx of refugees seeking refuge in neighboring European states, primarily from conflict-ridden countries such as Libya, Iraq, and Syria. The Syrian refugee crisis emerged as a watershed moment, marking the most significant surge of refugees on the European continent since the conclusion of World War II. Over 700,000 refugees from Syria alone have sought shelter in Europe to date. A report by Al Jazeera indicates that in the first half of 2023, 55,737 migrants attempted to reach Europe, with 48,829 of them opting for the perilous sea route, constituting 88% of the total. Tragically, more than a thousand people lost their lives during these perilous journeys. Adding to the complexity, the war in Ukraine, which commenced in early 2022, intensified the challenges associated with migration to Europe. Many experts have labelled it the "new largest influx of refugees in Europe since World War II." Paradoxically, the Ukrainian refugee crisis has accentuated the controversy surrounding European actions, with accusations of hypocrisy resonating prominently in discussions on the continent's response to different refugee crises.

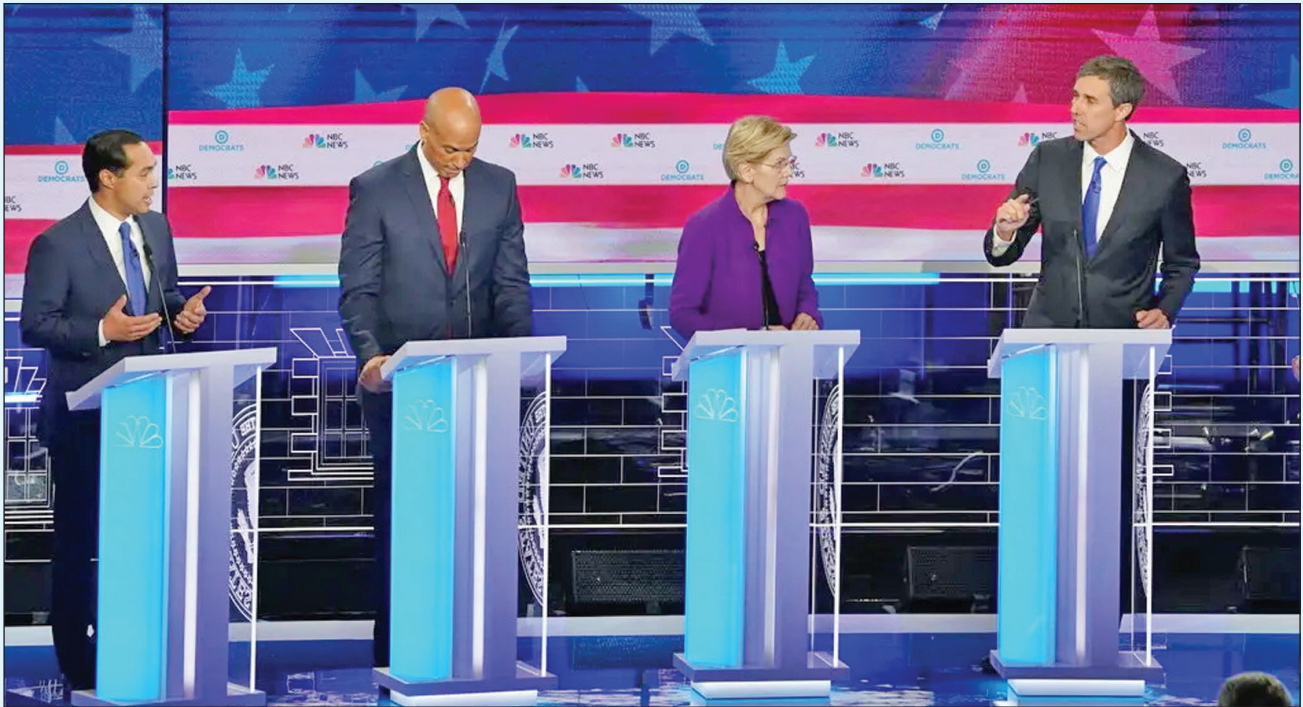
Amidst the turmoil caused by civil wars in certain Arab countries, the desperate attempts of their citizens to seek refuge in Europe have been met with considerable hostility from Europeans. The response has been characterized by a reluctance to accept these individuals and, if accepted, a

failure to provide them with proper human dignity and basic living necessities. Tragically, many lives were lost on the coast due to cold and hunger, as authorities refused entry despite being aware of the dire conditions. The primary argument put forth was the unpreparedness and concern about increasing population density, which was feared to undermine economic and social stability. This stance sparked widespread controversy, drawing criticism, fueling campaigns, and prompting protests globally. Despite international outcry, European authorities remained steadfast in their position. However, a stark reversal occurred with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. European nations executed a complete about-face, abandoning their earlier ethical arguments and extending a welcoming embrace to Ukrainian refugees. Meanwhile, Arab and African refugees continued to suffer, facing starvation and freezing to death at European borders. Notably, European nations were swift to attribute any wrongdoing in their countries to these largely Arab and African refugees without conducting proper investigations. Furthermore, the European narrative of accepting Muslim refugees is contested, with claims of exaggeration.

The Syrian refugee crisis, the most significant of the century, underscores this point. While the highest number of Syrian refugees, over 3.5 million, reside in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan hold the second and third positions, respectively. Germany ranks fourth with 522,575 Syrian refugees, and Sweden is the only other European country on the top list that hosts over 100,000 Syrians. Despite the 70–80% of Syrian refugees residing in non-European countries, objections and criticism against them predominantly emanate from European nations. On the flip side, Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic hold more than 1.5 million, 1 million, and 400,000 Ukrainian refugees, respectively, surpassing by far the numbers of Syrian refugees they host. Strikingly, there is a notable absence of objections, arguments, or excuses related to economic and social deterioration, a logic often cited in the case of Arab refugees. Although a report

by Carolina University argues that the reasons are geographic and cultural proximity of the although a report by Carolina University argues that the reasons are geographic and cultural proximity of the Ukrainians, it also explicitly mentions that “Europeans are much more likely to support a Christian asylum-seeker than a Muslim asylum-seeker.”

The surge in immigration, particularly from Arab and African regions, into Europe has had a profound impact, notably in bolstering right-wing ideologies across the continent. Despite the German Institute for Economic Research revealing that migration has contributed to a 1% annual increase in the EU GDP, public sentiment tends to reject the idea of hosting refugees. This sentiment has translated into political victories for far-right parties in recent elections across Sweden, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. This trend has prompted a significant shift in the political landscape, with parties traditionally known for liberal migration policies now veering towards more hardline stances in response to prevailing public opinions. Notably, Denmark’s center-left Social Democrats successfully adopted a stringent anti-immigrant agenda, mirroring the far-right Danish People’s Party and effectively defeating it. Similarly, the Green Party in Germany, once recognized for its liberal migration policies, appears to have pivoted towards a more restrictive stance. However, research indicates that this shift in policy may not be achieving its intended outcomes. Wolfgang Muno, a political scientist at the University of Rostock, believes, “But we know from studies that if you try to take over far-right positions, it is the far-right who profits.” A study of 12 Western European nations, published by Cambridge University Press, challenges the notion that accommodating radical right positions on immigration weakens them electorally. On the contrary, the study suggests that such policies become self-defeating, strengthening the radical right at their own expense’. As a result, anti-migration or strict migration policies are being implemented one way or another across Europe.



The large influx of migration and the taking of power by the far-right government across Europe made a new immigration law under the EU inevitable. It became evident that this legislation would be characterized by heightened strictness and increased restrictions. The pre-existing European Union migration law proved ineffective, particularly with the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees heading towards Europe in the wake of its civil war. In response to this challenge, European policymakers initiated research, examination, and negotiations to develop a new framework for managing migration. The proposed pact, introduced in September 2020, successfully gained approval from the European Parliament on December 20, 2023, less than a month ago. Expected to be implemented in early 2024, the agreement encompasses five key proposals outlined in the Pact:

- Screening Regulation: Creating uniform rules concerning the identification of non-EU nationals upon their arrival, thus increasing security within the Schengen area.
- Eurodac Regulation: Developing a common database and gathering more accurate and complete data to detect unauthorized movements.
- Asylum Procedures Regulation: Making asylum, return, and border procedures quicker and more effective.
- Asylum Migration Management Regulation: Establishing a new solidarity mechanism amongst Member States to balance the current system, where a few countries are responsible for the vast majority of asylum applications, and clear rules on responsibility for asylum applications.
- Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation: Ensuring that the EU is prepared in the future to face situations of crisis, including the instrumentalization of migrants.

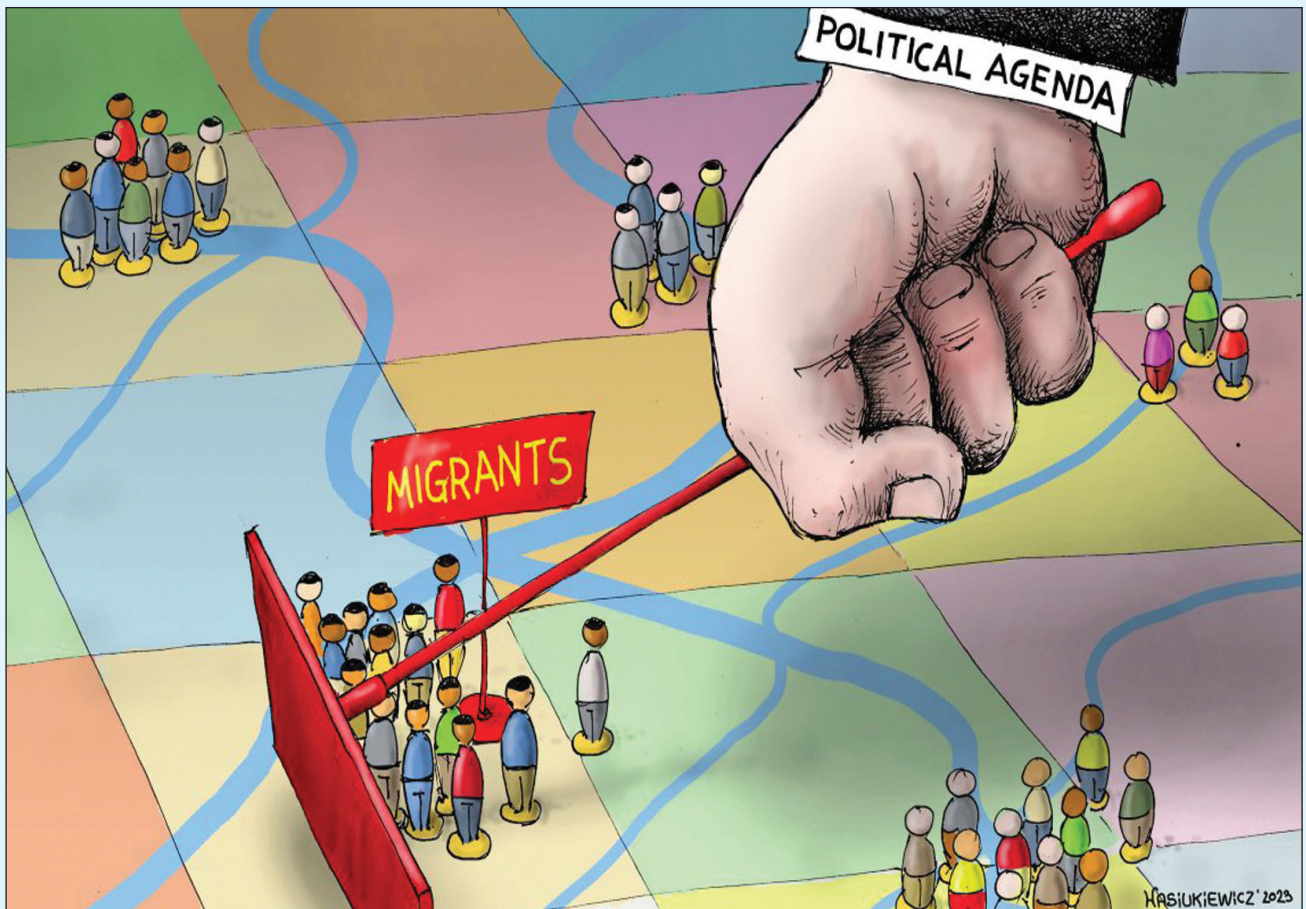
The unprecedented influx of over a million migrants, primarily hailing from the war-torn region of Syria, in 2015 resulted in EU member states engaging in a blame game over the

accommodation of these arrivals. In response to the challenges posed by irregular immigration, the new pact is designed to effectively manage the situation by allocating each EU country a share of the 30,000 individuals the bloc plans to host annually within its joint migration system. This allocation is determined based on factors such as GDP, population size, and the occurrence of irregular border crossings, including sea rescues. To ensure a fair and balanced distribution of refugee and migrant responsibility across the EU, nations not directly hosting individuals have the option to support hosting countries through financial aid (a minimum of 20,000 euros per person annually), equipment, or personnel. The agreement introduces a swift border procedure for individuals deemed unlikely to receive asylum to prevent prolonged stays within the bloc. This accelerated process is designed to handle their claims within a 12-week timeframe, and rejected applicants are expected to be repatriated to their home countries within an additional 12 weeks. The mechanism specifically targets individuals categorized as dangerous, uncooperative, or originating from countries with low asylum approval rates in the EU, such as India, Tunisia, and Turkey. Furthermore, EU nations have the flexibility to implement this expedited process for individuals intercepted at sea, those apprehended while attempting illegal entry, or those applying for asylum at a country's border rather than in advance. This comprehensive approach aims to streamline the immigration process, enhance security measures, and establish a more equitable system for managing the challenges associated with migration within the European Union.

However, among the member states that have signed the treaty, there is a notable presence of confusion and hesitation. Italy and Greece have raised initial concerns about the feasibility of the new system, primarily due to the reluctance of certain states to host migrants. Southern countries express apprehensions about potential overburdening, while those situated farther from the EU's external borders are hesitant to admit

arrivals. The implementation of solidarity schemes introduces complexities and delays, posing challenges to effectively managing the influx of migrants. Additionally, monitoring the movement of individuals within Europe's borderless travel zone remains a significant challenge, further complicating the operational aspects of the proposed system. Past attempts to share the responsibility for hosting migrants and refugees have faced obstacles, particularly because eastern EU members were unwilling to accept individuals who arrived in countries such as Greece and Italy. But the main issue is the overwhelming concerns from human rights groups.

In a recent post on X, formerly Twitter, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, a prominent umbrella body advocating for migrant rights, strongly criticized the new migration rules, describing them as "Byzantine in their complexity and Orban-esque in their cruelty." The reference to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban suggests a comparison with his approach, which involved erecting razor-wire fences to prevent the entry of migrants. Numerous refugee rights groups have echoed these concerns, asserting that the proposed deal would establish a "cruel system" that is impractical and could effectively lead to the creation of prison camps at the EU's borders. If implemented in its current format, the deal is feared to normalize the arbitrary use of immigration detention, extending to children and families, while also increasing racial profiling. The letter from 56 NGOs raises additional points of contention regarding the use of "crisis" procedures to enable pushbacks and the return of people to so-called "safe third countries." According to these rights groups, such practices could expose individuals to the risk of violence, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment. The letter further highlights concerns that the proposed scheme might revive distressing scenes reminiscent of tragic events that unfolded on the Greek islands several years ago. There are fears that the new plan could contribute to the establishment of overcrowded migration camps at the edges of



the EU, potentially resulting in the protracted detention of minors. Criticism is also directed at the perceived emphasis on keeping people away rather than providing assistance to those in need, raising ethical questions about the proposed approach to managing migration.

Criticism has also arisen from Hungary and the former government of Poland, both known for being vocal opponents of immigration from the Middle East and Africa within the EU. Despite providing shelter to millions of Ukrainians fleeing Russia's war, Warsaw has staunchly refused to host predominantly Muslim arrivals. Save the Children has expressed concerns that the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, known as the agreement, will lead to blatant violations of children's rights, endangering those on the move and contributing to the further separation of migrant families. The critique emphasizes that the

agreement is poised to systematize the detention of children of all ages at EU borders, undermining their fair access to asylum across the continent. The opportunity for the EU to reaffirm its role as a champion of child rights is perceived to be lost with the potential validation of this reform by the majority of the European Parliament and Member States in spring 2024. The systematic detention of families with children is predicted to become the norm, jeopardizing the safety of children, especially those travelling unaccompanied.

The EU Member States have rejected the absence of mandatory relocation and effective solidarity in sharing responsibility for receiving people seeking protection in Europe. Instead, the new law is seen as opening possibilities to construct more fences and walls, leaving people stranded at EU borders and subjected to inhumane treatment and violence. Rather than addressing these failures,

critics argue that the pact risks legitimizing current violations and perpetuating a cycle of mistreatment for those seeking protection. Furthermore, concerns are raised about children not being exempt from accelerated evaluation of their protection needs at borders. This may result in many of them being denied asylum or other forms of protection based on their personal history and needs, depriving them of access to education, health, housing, or psychosocial support like any other child in Europe. Eve Geddie, Director of Amnesty International's European Institutions Office, states, "This agreement will set back European asylum law for decades to come. Its likely outcome is a surge in suffering on every step of a person's journey to seek asylum in the EU." The pact, instead of prioritizing solidarity through relocations and strengthening protection systems, is seen as enabling states to simply pay to fortify external borders or fund countries outside the EU to prevent people from reaching Europe.

In the turbulent seas of Europe's immigration debate, the surging waves of concern are indicative of a complex and multifaceted challenge that demands nuanced solutions. As we navigate the intricate currents of history, policy shifts, and humanitarian crises, it becomes evident that the dynamics surrounding migration are deeply intertwined with geopolitical events and societal attitudes. The recent EU Pact on Migration and Asylum serves as an example of the European Union's response, which raises serious concerns about cooperation, management, effectiveness, and human rights violations. The consequences of this ongoing debate are far-reaching, shaping not only the continent's political landscape but also influencing the rise of right-wing ideologies and the evolution of migration policies. As Europe grapples with these challenges, the journey ahead necessitates a collective effort to find solutions that uphold the principles of solidarity, safeguard human dignity, and address the legitimate concerns of all stakeholders involved. The future requires careful navigation in the face of raging waves, guided by empathy, understanding, and a

dedication to fostering a more inclusive and just Europe.

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The Challenge of America

From the Middle East to Asia

Md Obaidullah

Background: Middle East Region and Geopolitical Importance

The Middle East refers to the territories surrounding the southern and eastern perimeters of the Mediterranean Sea. This encompasses, at a minimum, the Arabian Peninsula and, according to certain interpretations, extends to include Iran, North Africa, and occasionally beyond. The complexity of this region surpasses mere geographical demarcations. Its geopolitical landscape stands as one of the most intricate and intricate among all global regions. The Middle East holds profound significance

as the birthplace and spiritual nexus of three paramount monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Additionally, it stands as the primary repository of the world's largest single oil reserve. Historically, it has served as a pivotal hub in global affairs- a region of immense economic, political, and cultural sensitivity .

The Middle Eastern region boasts the most extensive reservoirs of oil, constituting 51% of the world's oil reserves, and a significant portion exceeding 40% of global natural gas reserves. This substantial endowment positions the region as a pivotal player in the global energy landscape, exerting a significant influence on the dynamics and functionality of the international energy system . Not only just the energy resources but the region serves as a crucial crossroad between Asia, Europe, and Africa, making it a pivotal hub for trade and commerce throughout

history. Control over key waterways like the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz is of utmost importance for global trade . However, the region is characterized by ongoing tensions and wars in the region- where major powers such as the US and Russia is involved. Ongoing disputes, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and regional rivalries- civil war in Yemen and Syria, have global implications and contribute to the volatility of the region .

The reality persists that major powers have consistently sought influence in the Middle East, often making it a strategic battleground for their interests . The United States, Russia, and China have each sought to establish their influence in the region, driven by their individual interests. This article, therefore, investigates the evolving strategic interests of the United States in the Asian region, highlighting its burgeoning engagement



with the Middle East and South Asia. It examines the interconnectedness of America's growing ambitions in Asia and the resultant implications, challenges, and tensions that emerge within its engagement with the Middle East.

America's Growing Ambitions in Asia

Following the conclusion of World War II and the Cold War, the United States ascended as the foremost global power. It notably amplified its assertive involvement in the internal affairs of other nations, actively seeking to establish, sustain, and sometimes exploit hegemonic control while advancing strategies of subversion and infiltration. Despite ongoing scholarly debates regarding the potential transformative impact of China's ascent on the global order, the United States retains a considerable advantage in the contest for global hegemony. This country still maintains the world's largest economy, most potent military, and most dynamic society. Notably, both the United States and its allies in the Asian sphere aim to uphold a balance of power within the Indo-Pacific region, ostensibly aimed at curbing China's aspirations to assert regional hegemony.

The US's increased focus on Asia stems from various factors, including economic interests, security concerns, alliances, and technological collaborations.

Economic Interests: The Asian region contributes nearly 60% of the world's economic growth, underscoring its status as a substantial market for American goods and services. Furthermore, the exportation of U.S. products to Asia stands as a primary generator of employment. Strengthening economic bonds with Asian nations not only facilitates advantageous trade accords and alliances but also reinforces the United States' position in securing favorable business environment. It is noteworthy that among the top 10 countries from which the U.S. imports goods, five originate from Asia.

Security concerns and alliances in the Asian region:

The United States has substantial concerns regarding China rather than Russia in the Asian region. The primary concern revolves around the perceived prospect of Beijing gradually convincing neighboring nations to disengage from affiliations with the US. China's explicit ambition to attain a position as a "leading global power" and its active endeavors aimed at reshaping established norms, particularly evident in the South China Sea and other pertinent domains, seem to validate these apprehensions. As a result, the U.S. seeks to maintain stability in the region, reinforcing its strategic alliances with countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and others to counterbalance potential threats.

The United States sustains a network of 750 military bases spanning more than 80 nations globally, with around 310 of these strategically situated in Asian countries. Notably, within this region, South Korea and Japan together house a combined total of 193 bases, positioning a substantial presence in proximity to China. This presence functions as a deterrent against security threats and plays a pivotal role in upholding peace and stability within the region. Moreover, it signifies an effort to impede China's expansion within the Asia-Pacific realm.

Technology and Innovation Hub: Asia is a hub for technological innovation, particularly in areas like AI, robotics, and renewable energy. Collaborating with Asian counterparts enables the U.S. to stay at the forefront of technological advancements and maintain its competitive edge. Such as, Taiwan is renowned for its microchip and semiconductors. It produces more than 90% of the world's most advanced microchips and 60% of semiconductors overall. Also, Japan is renowned for producing high-quality electronics, such as televisions, cameras, and laptops.

The US and South Asia

Geopolitical Importance and Diplomatic Relations: South Asia holds significant

geopolitical relevance due to its strategic location between the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia. Also, strengthening diplomatic ties in South Asia allows the U.S. to expand its influence in the region. Building relationships with countries like India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka serves broader diplomatic and strategic interests for the U.S. in both regional and global contexts.

US-India Relationship: India has become Asia's third great power. Its emergence as the major power in Asia stems from its significant economic strength, cultural influence wielded through soft power, proficient military capabilities, and possession of a nuclear arsenal. According to US department of state, *The relationship between the United States and India is one of the most strategic and consequential of the 21st century. The United States supports India's emergence as a leading global power and a vital partner in promoting a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.* The bilateral relationship between the two countries focuses on the defense and security, clean energy, space, multilateral cooperation, and people to people ties.

The strategic significance of India to the US resides in its role as a counterbalance to China's regional influence, prompting a closer rapport between the two nations. Within this dynamic, an argument can be made that the United States perceives a greater need for India in the region than vice versa. However, amidst a rapidly fragmenting global landscape marked by geopolitical volatility, leaders such as Modi and Biden have exhibited a shared inclination to strengthen bilateral ties. Notably, India rebuffed a proposal to join NATO plus, discerning potential constraints on its independent diplomatic pursuits. Furthermore, the inauguration of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) during the September 10, 2023, proceedings of the G20 summit in New Delhi underscores a concerted India-U.S.-led countermeasure vis-à-vis the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

US-Bangladesh Relationship: The United States and Bangladesh share a vision for an inclusive, secure, and prosperous future. According to the US Department of State, "The United States seeks a strong, multi-faceted relationship built on mutual respect for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights; inclusive economic growth and development; people-to-people ties; enhanced capacity to tackle the climate and pandemic crises; and a greater contribution to regional security." (US Department of State, 2022).

Geostrategic Position of Bangladesh

Bangladesh's geostrategic positioning renders it a pivotal nation for the United States amid escalating geopolitical rivalries and the discernible shift in geopolitical focus from the Middle East toward the Asia-Pacific, particularly South Asia. As the United States contends with diminishing influence in the Middle East, the imperative to forge new alliances in Asia, specifically in South Asia, has become apparent. Consequently, within the context of the burgeoning competition among geopolitical connectivity endeavors, Bangladesh has emerged as a significant focal point.

Bangladesh has historically held and is anticipated to persist in holding a role pivotal to the ongoing transformation of the regional power dynamics between India and China. This significance could be highlighted by the development of Bangladesh's energy reserves and regional energy and trade routes to China and India.

Economic relationship between the US and Bangladesh

The United States and Bangladesh have fostered a robust economic partnership, characterized by substantial U.S. investments exceeding eight billion dollars over the past five decades. Bangladesh's commendable humanitarian efforts in hosting nearly one million Rohingya refugees have been duly recognized.



Additionally, amid the challenging backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. has played a crucial role, extending support by donating vaccines and providing over \$121 million in vital aid to Bangladesh (US Department of State, 2022). Economically, the United States stands as the primary importer of Bangladeshi goods, accounting for imports valued at \$8.3 billion in 2021. Furthermore, U.S. companies have taken the lead in foreign investments, contributing \$4.3 billion, constituting approximately 20 percent of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Bangladesh for the year 2021. However, recent years have witnessed strains in this amicable relationship, largely attributed to the United States' concerns and dissatisfaction with Bangladesh's internal socio-political landscape.

The US's pressure on Bangladesh

The recent policy implementations by the US Department of State, including visa restrictions aimed at supporting electoral integrity, coupled with Bangladesh's omission from the "Summit for Democracy" events hosted by the Biden

administration in 2021 and 2023, reflect a recalibration in bilateral relations. Additionally, reports of Bangladesh and neighboring India's exploration of local currency transactions for import-export activities, diverging from the prevalent use of the US dollar, have garnered attention, prompting discussions on potential de-dollarization, remarkably noted by Russia.

These actions underscore the multifaceted motives driving the United States' engagements with Bangladesh. While human rights and democratic concerns remain significant drivers, a parallel ambition to maintain influence within the Asia-Pacific region forms a crucial aspect.

As China's influence expands in Bangladesh and the broader Asia-Pacific, the US perceives the necessity for steadfast alliances in this strategic sphere. This perspective casts China as a primary adversary, prompting concerted efforts to counterbalance its burgeoning influence. Consequently, diverse strategies are employed by the US to exert pressure on governments across different nations. Notwithstanding this

stance, the United States endeavors to avoid estranging Bangladesh, seeking instead to foster collaborative engagement.

Understanding Why the US Feels Like a Fish Out of Water in the Middle East

The United States grapples with escalating challenges in the Middle East, characterized by a swift erosion of its power and hegemonic influence. This diminishing stature not only signifies a reduction in its global dominance but also positions the nation amidst a profound and acute crisis within the region.

with the exception of certain areas within the Idlib region. Following a ceasefire in Idlib in March 2020, active frontline hostilities diminished, giving way to sporadic skirmishes.

Despite this, the United States diverges from its Arab allies, who have begun normalizing relations with the government led by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. While the US remains steadfast in its refusal to normalize relations with the Assad regime until genuine UN-led political progress aligning with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 occurs, it refrains from imposing penalties on countries that move closer to engaging with



The diplomatic ties between Iran and the United States have remained severed since 1980. In August 2018, Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, imposed a ban on direct negotiations with the United States.

In the Syrian civil conflict that commenced in 2011, the United States provided support to rebel factions such as the Free Syrian Army. These groups, initially bolstered by arms supplied by NATO and GCC states, achieved substantial territorial gains against government forces, which, in turn, received support from Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah, the latter deploying specialized military units. Notably, rebel forces captured key regional capitals, including Raqqa in 2013 and Idlib in 2015. However, the conflict's dynamics shifted significantly following Russia's military intervention in support of the government in September 2015, marking a pivotal turning point.

Subsequently, by late 2018, the government reclaimed control over most rebel strongholds,

al-Assad's government.

As Syria regained control over substantial portions of its territory, supported by Iran and Russia, certain Arab nations gradually softened their stance toward Damascus. Though the US actively discourages its allies from pursuing normalized ties with Syria, it refrains from punitive measures against countries that opt to engage more closely with the Assad administration.

The diplomatic ties between Iran and the United States have remained severed since 1980. In August 2018, Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, imposed a ban on direct negotiations with the United States. This enduring rift has perpetuated a historically strained relationship

marked by recurrent imposition of sanctions by both nations. Notably, Iran has cultivated robust affiliations with certain countries such as Russia, Syria, Lebanon, and China, all of which are regarded as adversarial entities from the perspective of the United States.

In the recent Palestine-Israel conflict, the United States and its allies have provided direct military support and diplomatic backing to Israel. Israel appears to be encountering strategic setbacks in the ongoing conflict with Hamas, a group aiming to remove Israeli settlements. Hamas' operational capabilities in this conflict are believed to have been bolstered by extensive Iranian training, the supply of Iranian weaponry, and substantial financial backing from Iran over the years. While the U.S. has consistently supported Israel, recent shifts in its perspective have become apparent. Tensions between the United States and Israel became public as President Joe Biden cautioned that Israel was losing international support for its campaign against Hamas, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly rejected American post-war Gaza plans.

Consequently, it is evident that the United States faces considerable challenges in pursuing its ambitions in Asia. While maintaining strong relations with South Asian nations like Bangladesh and India, Bangladesh's recent alignment with China reflects a notable shift, contributing to the rapid growth of Chinese influence in the broader Asian region. Additionally, the intricacies of the Middle East, a complex geopolitical arena where the U.S. once held a favorable position, have undergone notable transformations due to various factors, including evolving relations between Syria and Arab nations, Iran's connections with Hamas, and strategic setbacks experienced by Israel in recent conflicts.

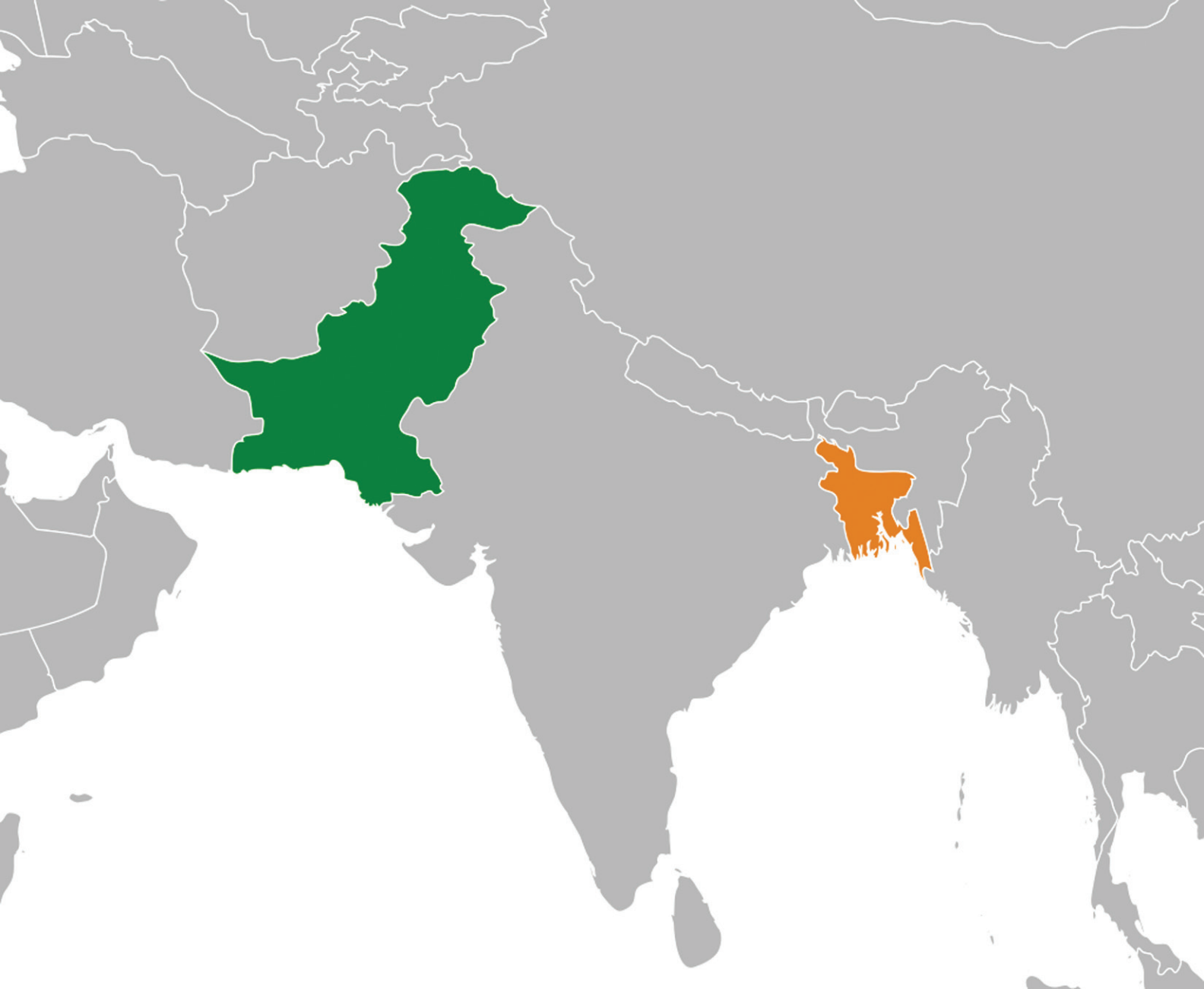
As a result, the forthcoming steps for the United States present a complex landscape. The achievement of its Asian ambitions appears increasingly elusive and may require an extended

duration. Moreover, the diminishing hegemony poses significant challenges for the United States.

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■ NATIONAL

History of Bangladesh-Pakistan Bilateral Relations of Fifty Two Years

Athar Noor

Pakistan and Bangladesh are two important countries in South Asia. In 1971, through the bloody liberation war, East Pakistan was separated from Pakistan, and the secular democratic republic of Bangladesh was formed.

As a potential regional power, Bangladesh and Pakistan are founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and both countries are members of eight developing countries: the OIC and the Commonwealth of Nations. Both countries have been identified as the next eleven emerging economies.



Bangladesh has a High Commission in Islamabad, while Pakistan has a High Commission in Dhaka. As two independent sovereign Muslim states in South Asia, they share a mixed history, tradition, culture, and politics. After many ups and downs based on these things, bilateral relations have entered their 52nd year today.

Freedom from Pakistan's 24 years of unbearable economic oppression and tyranny through the glorious victory of the Great War of Liberation and then independence, the economic journey of independent Bangladesh began in 1972. Bangladesh has touched a unique milestone of growth and development in the last 52 years. Meanwhile, Bangladesh has fulfilled all the criteria for transitioning from a least-developed country. In 2020, the country had a population of over 168.31 million and a per capita gross national income of \$1,940 (2019). Bangladesh has experienced mixed development in terms of both macroeconomic stability and economic growth over the past few decades.

According to the latest published forecasts of the British economic research organisation Centre for Economic and Business Research, Bangladesh is now the 41st largest economy in the world, according to the 2020 index. The growing development of Bangladesh shows that the country is moving towards a large economy step by step. Bangladesh will be the 25th largest economy in the world by 2035. Today, after 52 years, they are lagging Bangladesh in almost all socio-economic indicators. This is the great achievement of freedom. Also, recently, Bangladesh's incredible economic growth and geopolitics have increased its relevance in international politics.

After the partition of the country, the two countries were united for about 24 years. Pakistan's bilateral relationship with Bangladesh has seen various phases—sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes bitter separation. In this context, former diplomat Humayun Kabir said, "The diplomatic relations between the two countries are actually like the flow of a river." Sometimes



Relations between the two countries reached their most fragile state in 2013, when Bangladesh began prosecuting 71 perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

the tide starts in it; sometimes the tide starts. However, Pakistan has to go a long way to normalise the relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Peru has to go through many difficult roads.

It is important to note that the late President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was the main architect of independent Bangladesh, started formal good relations with Pakistan. He was the first in 1974 to open a new horizon of relations by giving a red carpet reception to the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in Dhaka, ignoring the various arrows of criticism and showing his generosity for the welfare of the state. It should be noted that the complication of the relationship between the two countries regarding the role of Pakistan in 1971 exists to date. Although many analysts believe that the matter was settled by

Bhutto's visit to Bangladesh at that time, when the Shimla Agreement was successfully concluded in 1974, Pakistan was forced to express its regret and recognition to Bangladesh. And Bangladesh and India began repatriating Pakistani prisoners of war.

President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman attended the conference held in Pakistan despite the express objection of the Indian government to pave the way for improved relations with the Muslim world through the OIC conference. In continuation of this, in 1980, military equipment was exchanged among themselves for the first time. Pakistan sells F-6 fighter jets and some tanks to Bangladesh. Thus, relations with Pakistan were maintained for many years, albeit on a limited scale.

However, relations between the two countries reached their most

The Pakistan-China-Afghanistan-Turkey connection is very important for Bangladesh now. Apart from China, Turkey can be one of the most reliable military partners for Bangladesh. Undeniably, the connection has grown in importance since the Taliban came to power.

fragile state in 2013, when Bangladesh began prosecuting 71 perpetrators of crimes against humanity. The Pakistani government has been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of the country. In particular, the relationship between the two countries has reached a tense situation when questions about the judicial process are raised. One country began expelling and counter-expelling the diplomats of the other country, which continued for many days. The exchange of diplomatic visas between the two countries was informally suspended.

Later, during the golden jubilee celebration of Bangladesh's independence, in a report for Pakistan's influential daily Dawn, the president of the country commented that Pakistan is interested in increasing relations with Bangladesh. Arif Alvi. He also called for all kinds of activities for the development of bilateral relations. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh said, as always, "If we want to improve relations in the true sense, Pakistan must formally apologise for their events in the 1970s. The families of the victims of the 1971 massacre must be compensated. And the then arrears of Bangladesh shall be returned.

It should be noted that at that time, former Prime Minister Imran Khan took great initiative to change the relationship. On September 17, 2019, when Dhaka did not agree to a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Khan Saheb sat directly on the phone and praised the Hasina government's governance and comprehensive economic

development. It was the first conversation between the prime ministers of the two countries in almost 10 years. At that time, there was talk in diplomatic circles that almost-severed relations with Pakistan had regained momentum. Pakistan's best friend, China, has played the biggest role in this regard. However, some people think that the West Asian country of Turkey plays a key role in the development of relations between the two countries.

Needless to say, all current national or international political approaches are very advanced and pragmatic for strategic reasons. Traditional ways of thinking, old cultures in decision-making, or conflicts should be unimportant. So I think, in the larger interest and considering the strategic aspects of Bangladesh, bilateral relations should be increased. Therefore, we need to understand the importance of relationships in addition to discussing the development of bilateral relations. The Pakistan-China-Afghanistan-Turkey connection is very important for Bangladesh now. Apart from China, Turkey can be one of the most reliable military partners for Bangladesh. Undeniably, the connection has grown in importance since the Taliban came to power. In the future, Afghanistan will be a huge labour market and investment area for foreigners. On the other hand, Pakistan needs to enter Afghanistan. Not only that, but undoubtedly, the positive relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan will lay a new foundation for liberal and pragmatic politics in the South Asian region.

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The Rise of the Extreme Right-Wing Party in Europe: Reasons and Consequences

Md Tareq Hasan

Introduction

Some Belgians protested on September 2, 2023, in a town south of Brussels under the Belgian political party Flemish Interest, holding various placards that were anti-Islam and anti-immigration. The Brothers of Italy political party, which Georgia Meloni leads, won the Italian election on September 25, 2022. The Brothers of Italy is a far-right neo-fascist political party. The rise of extreme right-wing political parties is increasing in the parliament of Finland, another country on the list that

POLITICS



is commonly known as the happiest country in Europe. Right-wing populist marches can be seen on the streets of various European countries, including Italy, Spain, and Hungary, constantly violating the constitution. According to research by political scientist Matthijs Rudhuizen, last year's national elections in 31 countries showed 32 percent of European voters voting outside mainstream political parties. At the beginning of the 21st century, which was 20 percent, it was only 12 percent at the beginning of the 90s of the last century. In other words, one in three people is currently voting against the European settlement and outside the mainstream, a large part of which is essentially the extreme right wing. Now this is a common question: will the rise of these extreme right-wing political parties bring peace to the people, or is this going to be a situation of fear for the common people? Discussing the current picture of the extreme right-wing parties in Europe and the reasons behind their growth is a topic to showcase the long-term effects for Europe.

Who are the right-wing parties?

A far-right political party is a political organization that is ultra-nationalist, authoritarian, and ideologically driven (intolerant of dissent), often espousing traditional values, defending strong borders, and opposing multiculturalism and globalization. There is no single agreed-upon definition of a far-right political party, but there are certain characteristics that political scientists

have suggested are indicative of far-right parties. Far-right groups are variously called radical right, populist (populists can be either right-wing or left-wing), far-right, right-wing populist, and populist radical right.

The far-right rejects liberal democracy, including pluralism and minority rights. Far-right nativists who believe that the state will be for the natives or homogenous, non-native elements (immigration, intolerance of different religions, e.g., Islamophobia) are a threat to the fundamentally homogenous nation-state. Most of the parties that emerged in Europe after World War I were primarily parties based on far-right political ideologies. The National Fascist Party (Italy), the Nazi Party (Germany), the National Socialist German Workers Party (Austria), etc. are called far-right political parties for the above reasons. These extremist groups promoted nationalist ideology after World War I and advocated strong central power and limited political freedom (authoritarianism). The rise of this right-wing party was one of the causes of World War II.

The current picture of Europe

After the Renaissance in Europe, man became the root of everything. The ideological and practical decline of rule by a divine king or dynastic ruler began. Through 'Bill of Rights', the power of the king was reduced and people's rights were talked about in England; Bastille fell in France with the slogan 'Equality, Friendship, Freedom'. Liberal democracy emerged in Europe to establish real freedom and rights for people. But the liberal democracy of Europe is currently under threat due to the political ideology of the extremist right wing.

There are currently 234 active anti-settlement political parties in Europe, of which 112 are far-right. Brothers of Italy's 2022 single vote share was 26%; France's presidential election 2022 Marie Le Pen's vote was 41.46%; Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) received 10.3% of the vote share in the 2021 election; Spain's far-right party Vox (VOX) received 15% of the vote; Hungary's Viktor





Orbán's far-right party formed a government with 59% of the vote in the 2022 election, all of which were far-right parties. Among them, a coalition or a single extreme-right government is in charge of several nations, including Italy, Finland (the Finns), and Hungary.

Why is this extreme right-wing party growing?

After World War II, political stability returned to European countries, freed from fascism, economic fragility, and unemployment. European states gradually became welfare states. Due to this, the Europeans did not lean towards the extreme right. The exact opposite was seen after World War I, when a number of far-right groups emerged. But in the late 20th century and again in the 21st century, the emergence of such groups is increasing in Europe. There are some reasons behind this.

Disillusionment with mainstream politics

Loss of trust in mainstream politics is a major factor in the rise of extreme right or left political parties. People in Europe accept democracy as the preferred system of government, but they are not

satisfied with the performance of the government. Due to the increase in the number of immigrants in European countries, the government is forced to adopt an immigration policy that many people do not like. Extreme right-wing parties are taking advantage of this opportunity. They are convincing people that change is possible if they come to power. For example, in 2007, 51% of French people said they trusted the EU, while 34% did not. But in 2018, 57% said they did not believe, and 33% did. That is, their trust in the government is decreasing.

Globalization and Multiculturalism

Globalization has increased the free movement of people across the globe. People from one continent are able to work on other continents. As a result of this globalization, people from different cultures are flocking to Europe, some for jobs, some for a better life. This resulted in job and economic stagnation in Europe, creating new class divisions. Modernization, in the age of globalization, creates advantaged and disadvantaged classes. Due to this, migration creates unemployment and identity

problems. Also, the rate of multiculturalism in the same city increases as people from different countries gather. As a result, extreme right-wing parties get an opportunity. They oppose globalization and speak of a closed economy, the preservation of their own culture, etc.

Immigration

One of the most prominent far-right political parties in Europe is anti-immigration. They tend to portray immigration negatively because of unemployment, the economic crisis, or cultural mixing. According to the theory of economic competition, native Germans compare their economic status with that of immigrants. These parties attract voters to the elections by capitalizing on the immigration policies of the current European governments. Germany's Alternative for Germany campaigned against Angela Merkel's immigration policies and derided Merkel as the refugee chancellor. According to a 2011 survey, 71% of Germans consider immigration a serious problem. Similarly, anti-immigration protests can be seen in Belgium. In this way, the radical right-wing party emerged by promoting the negative aspects of immigration.



Islamophobia

Protesters were holding anti-Islamic posters in what was initially described as an incident. European citizens think that Muslims are a problem for their country; Muslims are not loyal to the country. Also, there is a mismatch between Muslim culture and European culture. They think Muslims are dangerous to European countries and cultures and may cause their own culture to disappear. Anti-Muslim crime in England has risen by 42 percent in the past year. The same picture can be seen in other European countries, with France increasing by 53% in 2020 and Germany with 871 anti-Muslim crimes in 2019. The European radical right can easily increase its vote bank by spreading Islamophobia.

Homogeneous nationalism

Hitler's nationalism in post-World War I Germany was German homogeneous nationalism, in which minority Jews were persecuted. But today, the modern state does not run on the basis of nationalism; it runs on the basis of principles. E.g., equality is a principle; everyone will be equal to the state regardless of religion, caste, gender, etc. When the state adopts nationalism as its policy, minorities suffer discrimination. Homegrown nationalism is on the rise in Europe, fueling the rise of far-right parties. Radical right groups prioritize the philosopher Rousseau's 'will of all', whereas modern liberal democracy prioritizes Rousseau's 'general will' or the true will of all people. If this continues, the glory of Europe's liberal democracy will become a thing of the past, the state will run on the basis of fake interest, and the will of the real people will be lost.

Conclusion

If you think about the rise of the right-wing parties in Europe today, the things that come to the fore very easily are people fed up and angry about inflation, unemployment, and immigration. They want protection from the established government at any cost and security of life. When it comes



In fact, the strengthening of the far-right in European politics has only just begun, and a mass awakening can be said to have been created. However, if you review the special reasons, the thing that can be clearly understood is that the rise of these extreme right-wings in Europe may not have been active in European politics 20 years ago, but for various reasons, the rise of these extreme right-wings may be called a big shock in European politics.

to addressing these issues, the left-wing parties have lost touch with these people and have largely failed, which is why they have turned to the right-wing. Only time will tell if the rise of the extreme right will bring welfare to Europe or give birth to a non-welfare state. Here, however, is the real question: whether those coming to power have the capacity to govern the country and whether it will be possible to introduce a stable system of government and establish a welfare state for all. In fact, the strengthening of the far-right in European politics has only just begun, and a mass awakening can be said to have been created. However, if you review the special reasons, the thing that can be clearly understood is that the rise of these extreme right-wings in Europe may not have been active in European politics 20 years ago, but for various reasons, the rise of these extreme right-wings may be called a big shock in European politics.

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What Prevents Us From Stopping the Infiltration of Drugs?

Md. Anisur Rahman Zuel

Abuse of drugs poses a serious threat to peace, prosperity, health, and security throughout the world, and it also distorts the bonding of the whole social structure. There is no way to protect any nation from the curse of drugs. Bangladesh is situated in a crucial location, very close to two major drug-producing and trafficking belts: the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle.

■ HEALTH



It is very tough to ignore that such a geographical location is by far responsible for drug inflows into our soil. This unhygienic issue is escalating across the country as well as around the globe due to illicit gains. It is very important to iron out this menace to build a drug-free nation for our next generation. Drug abuse is causing social unrest and criminal tendencies, as well as serious impediments to human resource development.

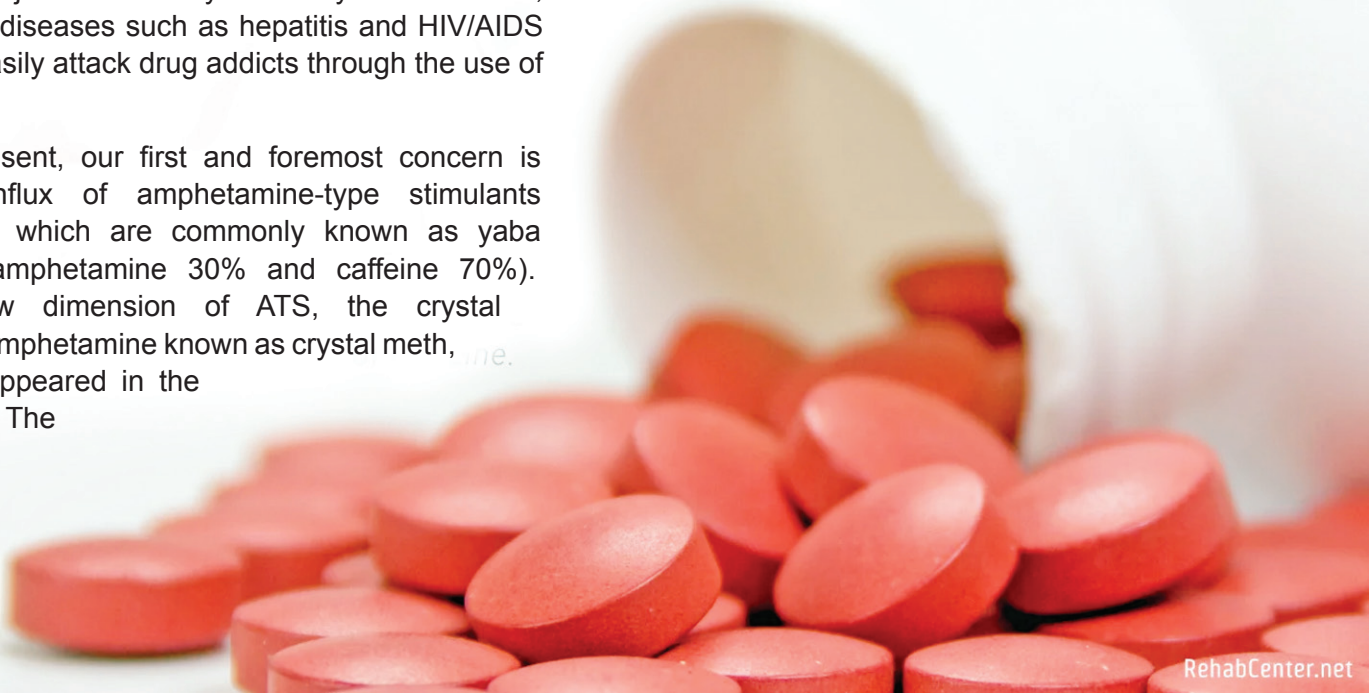
The drug problem is continuing to have a grave impact on the world community, causing immense suffering ranging from individuals to state concerns, especially by putting pressure on the health system, crippling development, making various setbacks, and escalating the security system. In addition, illegal financial flows related to drug trafficking and their impact on development and security have posed a vulnerability. With growing global connectivity in terms of money transfer, financial innovation, and cutting-edge technology, the threat of illicit financial flows has increased exponentially.

Drug addiction impacts the rapid erosion of educational, cultural, moral, and family values. The addicts lose their professional and educational capabilities, their self-dignity, and get involved in serious or pretty criminal activities. The sole aim of the life of an addict becomes the procurement and use of drugs. Life's other goals and objectives fall by the wayside. Besides, dread diseases such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS can easily attack drug addicts through the use of drugs.

At present, our first and foremost concern is the influx of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), which are commonly known as yaba (methamphetamine 30% and caffeine 70%). A new dimension of ATS, the crystal methamphetamine known as crystal meth, also appeared in the scene. The

Department of Narcotics Control and all concerned law-enforcing agencies are continuing to conduct operations to recover illicit drugs smuggled into Bangladesh and to arrest and prosecute criminals.

Many experts believe that Bangladesh is often used as a transit point for international drug trafficking, making the country vulnerable to drug abuse. Traffickers are making their shipments through Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Khulna, and other routes in Bangladesh. So, in the near future, Bangladesh will face a disaster if the alarming drug abuse is not effectively checked through extensive motivation and prevention. Bangladesh is situated at the central point of the Golden Crescent (Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Iran) in terms of geographical location. Additionally, the major Asian producers of drugs are all around it, and many of them are tightening their drug laws and stepping up enforcement. Bangladesh, with its easy land, sea, and air access, is becoming a major transit point. Traffickers who supply drugs in the markets of Northern America, Africa, and Europe are making their shipments through Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Khulna, Jessore, and other routes in Bangladesh. There are so many cases filed every year across the country. And the number of cases is increasing rapidly in every division.



Division wise case statistics in 2022 by DNC*

Division	Case Number	Case Percentage
Dhaka	7556	29.45
Chattogram	3748	14.60
Rajshahi	4541	17.70
Khulna	3305	12.88
Rangpur	2735	10.66
Barishal	619	2.41
Sylhet	1077	4.19
Mymensing	1133	4.41
Intelligence	940	3.66
Total	25654	100

Source : Annual Drug Report'22 by the Department of Narcotics Control

In this region, an increasing number of drugs, in particular amphetamine (yaba) and crystal meth, are being trafficked into Bangladesh through this border area from Myanmar. In 2020, law enforcement agencies (LEA) seized 36381017 pills of yaba. In 2021, the number of yaba pills was 53073665, and in 2022, it was 45868569. A massive influx of yaba is flowing alarmingly in this region and beyond.

In 2022, data shows that seizures increased by 13.75% compared to the previous year. According to the data, the number of yaba patients who received treatment is 12756. In 2022, data shows that seizures of heroin decreased by 23.33% compared to the previous year. According to the data, the number of heroin patients who took treatment is 1438. Similarly, the seizure of cannabis increased by 33.07% in comparison with 2021, and the number of cannabis-dependent patients receiving treatment is 8459. At the same time, the seizure of codeine in 2022 increased by 22.94% compared to the previous year, and 5629 patients were admitted to hospitals for treatment in the same year. Finally, the seizure of injecting drugs is on the rise sharply, accounting for 90.59% of all patients in 2022, and the number of patients is 915.

The fundamental building blocks of anti-narcotics

law are embedded in the Constitution. The Narcotics Act, 1990, was enacted in 1990, and subsequently, it was replaced by an enactment titled "The Narcotics Act, 2018 (amended in 2020)" to counter the changed atmosphere of drug dealing. This legal instrument is a special law. The following laws are applied to finally dispose of a criminal case filed under the Narcotics Control Act, 2018 (amended in 2020):

- The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1898
- The Penal Code, 1860
- The Evidence Act, 1872
- The Children Act, 2013
- The Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012
- The Digital Security Act, 2018

We must take some necessary steps to prevent the curse of drug abuse in our country. Some of them are as follows: Awareness-building: demand and supply of drugs are closely related to each other. If the demand for drugs reduces, the supply will fall, and vice versa. At present, Bangladesh must place importance on creating and increasing public awareness among the people. This is an enormous task that requires people of all classes and professions to raise their voices against drugs.

Protection of borders is a very important step to stop the infiltration of drugs. Law enforcement agencies have a prime responsibility to protect the land, sea, and air borders. Reports from the Indian Narcotics Control Bureau also indicate that heroin is smuggled from India to Bangladesh through the porous Indo-Bangladesh.

Advanced technology and sophisticated equipment are part and parcel of addressing the challenges arising from drug-related offences. To combat the challenges, we have taken on a project that is under way to equip our hands by getting the following items: a high-tech scanner for drug scanning (for all sea, air, and land ports), a hand-held drug detector, a mobile tracker, a metal detector, a mobile phone jammer, firearms, and modern drug-detecting equipment for drug testing laboratories.

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A Comparative Review of Discrimination in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regarding the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights

Rahimul Islam and Md. Shariful Islam

Chittagong Hill Tracts refers to the three districts of the south-eastern part of Bangladesh: Khagrachhari, Rangamati, and Bandarban. These three districts together are called Chittagong Hill Tracts. Although before 1981, the entire territory of these three districts was collectively known as Rangamati—that is, before the creation of Bandarban in 1981 and Khagrachhari district in 1983—this entire region was administratively under Rangamati district. Chittagong Hill Tract is geographically a landlocked area. Tripura state of India borders it to the east, Mizoram state of India to the south, Myanmar to the south, and Chittagong district of Bangladesh to the west. About 10 percent of the entire land area of Bangladesh is included in this region. Chittagong Division has the largest forestland (43%) in the entire country, and most of the forests in Chittagong

Division are in Chittagong Hill Tracts. This vast amount of forestland supplies most of the wood demand for the entire country. Moreover, the only gas field in this region called the Semutang gas field is in Khagrachhari district. Rangamati has the Karnaphuli Paper Mill and Kaptai Hydroelectric Station. The contribution of these institutions to the country's energy and economic sectors is undeniable.

There are thirteen small ethnic groups living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, including Bengalis. According to the Population and Housing Census 2022, the total population of this region is 18,42,815, of which 50 percent are Bengalis. Minor ethnic groups include Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Murang, Bam, Pankhwa, etc. All the people of this region are citizens of Bangladesh and have been enjoying all the civic benefits provided by the government. Nevertheless, since the country's independence, at different times, a small section of ethnic groups have been involved in various terrorist activities that have undermined the country's independence and sovereignty. Some of the prominent terrorist organisations are Parbattya Chattogram Janasonghati Samity (JSS), UPDF, Kuki Chin National Front (KNF), etc. According to a report from 2023 by a renowned national newspaper of the country, "Dainik Somoyer Alo," at least 38,000 innocent Bengalis have lost their lives at the hands of these terrorist groups till now. Apart from this, there are various crimes, including daily extortion, harassment, rape, and physical injury. These terrorist groups complained that the Bangladesh government has been depriving minorities in the region of various rights. Their aim was to obtain additional benefits for the backward communities. But surprisingly, despite living in a free and sovereign country, they have taken a position against the Bengali citizens of the country living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts! In order to expel the country's lawful Bengali citizens from this region, they have taken up arms by contesting the state's sovereignty over independent Bangladesh.

In order to meet these unjust caprices and demands, the Bangladesh government in 1997 signed the "Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord," including 72 articles and 99 sub-articles with Jotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (Santu Larma), the representative of the "Parbattya Chattogram Janasonghati Somity," or JSS, the leader of these terrorist groups. . Out of the 99 sub-sections of the agreement, the government has fully implemented 69, 15 are partially implemented, and 15 are in process of implementation. On the other hand, Jana Sanhati Samiti was supposed to implement only two sections, one of which was to surrender all their firearms and the other was to give up terrorist activities and return to normal life. But after so many years of signing the agreement, they have not implemented any of it, and the willingness to implement it is not visible. At times, they are even seen attacking law enforcement and the army. They have also killed several army personnel in the past few years. However, at the time of signing this agreement, the government paid no attention to the implementation of the rights of the 50% of Bengali citizens living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; rather, the Bengali population of this region has been deprived of various civil rights in comparison to the rest of the country. This deal has degraded Bengali citizens to a second-class status. In addition to the fundamental rights recognized by the country's constitution, the universal human rights declared by the United Nations are also being denied in some cases. Various discriminations have been seen in the achievement of the rights of Bengalis and minority ethnic groups living in the same region. The remainder of the article provides a comparative picture of this disparity.

Deprivation of basic citizen rights

According to Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, all citizens of the state are equal in the eyes of the law, and according to Article 19, all citizens of the state are equal in terms of rights and opportunities. According to Article 2 of the United Nations



Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are equal in rights and freedoms. There is no scope for discrimination on the basis of geography, caste, religion, or caste. But despite these recognitions, the Bengali citizens of this region enjoy fewer benefits than in other regions of the country. For example, except for the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts, any person from any other region of the country cannot lawfully purchase land or conduct business in this territory. However, any citizen of this region's ethnic minorities has the right to buy and invest in land in any area of the country. It is possible to argue that citizens of the same nation are unfairly adhering to two different sets of rules. Which is not the declared equality in Bangladesh's constitution, but rather its polar opposite. Citizens of this region cannot enjoy any land-related benefits like those in other regions of the country at will. All the facilities, including Khatian Number, Land Map, and Mauza Map, are available online in all the districts of the country, but the citizens of this region are not under this facility. Even if all the

citizens of the country can enjoy all the benefits of digitalization, why can't the citizens of Chittagong Hill Tracts? However, how will equality be created among the citizens of the country?

Imbalance in the education sector

The country called Bangladesh has been coping with various storms since independence, especially in the field of education. According to UNICEF, the country's literacy rate after independence in 1971 was just over 16 percent. Currently, the country's literacy rate is 72.9 percent. Undoubtedly, this is excellent news. Unfortunately, the literacy rate in Chittagong Hill Tracts is only 44%. The most shocking fact is that whereas ethnic minority groups in this region have a literacy rate of 45 percent, Bengalis have a literacy rate of only 23 percent! Only the Chakma ethnic group has a literacy rate of 73 percent, which is higher than the country's overall rate! However, due to the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and quota allocation, ethnic minorities are enjoying more benefits than ordinary citizens. According to statistics from the

last ten years, at least 3,108 students from ethnic groups have had the opportunity to enrol in the country's government universities and medical institutions as a result of the allocation of tribal quotas in admission. On the contrary, the Bengali community of Chittagong Hill Tracts, despite living in the same area and being backward, does not get any such benefits. As a result, they are lagging behind at an alarming rate in the field of education, which is contrary to Article 19 of the Bangladesh Constitution itself. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board, an autonomous organization formed for the development of the Chittagong Hill



Tracts, provides a scholarship every year to the students of the region. The Bengali community is also discriminated against in awarding these scholarships. In the last academic year 2021-2022, the "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board" provided scholarships to 2183 students, out of whom 1583 were ethnic minorities and only 600 were Bengalis. This is clear discrimination. If we do not ensure equal benefits for the country's backward Bengali population in this region, we will be undermining the fundamental goal of developing digital Bangladesh. And, without a doubt, these are clear examples of discrimination and violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Discrimination in the job sector

According to Article 29 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, all citizens of the state shall have equal employment opportunities. However, it can be seen that citizens belonging to minority ethnic groups enjoy different quota benefits in terms of getting appointed to various ministries and offices in the country. Bengalis from these regions are also eligible for this quota if they have previously qualified as citizens of backward regions. However, unlike other ethnic groups, Bengalis do not have quotas; hence, it is clear that Bengalis in this region are falling behind in both the employment and education sectors. Ethnic minorities are also preferred over Bengalis for employment in several government institutions in the hill districts. It is impeding the country's overall development. There would be a gradual rise in poverty among the Bengali people living here. And poverty will worsen the law-and-order situation. As a result, social and economic development will be hindered.

The present world of the 21st century has become a global village. Various human rights organizations, including the United Nations, are working relentlessly for the implementation of basic human rights all over the world. The Bangladeshi government is also working towards sustainable development and has a variety of objectives, including the five-year plan. At this point, it is absolutely unacceptable to discriminate against the exercise of fundamental and human rights in one region of the country solely on the basis of racial or ethnic distinctions. Otherwise, it will become a major obstacle to building a prosperous Bangladesh for all citizens. Government and human rights organizations should take appropriate initiatives to eliminate this discrimination.

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What Does the Reason Say?

Ibn al-Nafīs' Problematization of Natural Reason

Md Ashraf Aziz Ishrak Fahim

Introduction

The thirteenth-century polymath Ibn al-Nafīs' (d. 1288) found himself in an environment where the falasifa privileged themselves by relegating "theological sources" as secondary and, even, somewhat deprived. The basic argument of the falasifa perhaps could be summarized this way: reason itself is enough in unearthing the truth, and religion is for simpletons, if not entirely superfluous. Ibn al-Nafīs' issues a rejoinder to this narrative in his *Risālat Fādil*

ibn Nātiq (The Book of Fadil ibn Natiq), hereafter *Risālat*, also known as *al-Risālat al-Kāmiliyya fī al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyya* (The Treatise Relating to Kāmil on the Life-History of the Prophet).

In this essay, I propose a novel reading of Ibn al-Nafis' work and argue that his work has problematized the category of reason itself by denying it an independent, extra-contextual existence. In other words, it is my claim that the *Risālat* demonstrates that reason itself is subject to the social environment in which it is thought about, communicated to one another, and its boundaries are (re-)negotiated. One important caveat is that I am not setting out to discover Ibn al-Nafis' intent, that is, to say whether he indeed did intend to offer this particular reading that I am proposing.

The radical potential of such a reading of Ibn al-Nafis' *Risālat* lies in denying any race, epistemology, socioeconomic class, normative orientation, or scholarly class, to name only a few groups, any (false) sense of superiority through an exclusive claim to objective, pre-political, natural facts. This anti-foundationalist reading of the *Risālat* forces grand claims to natural truth to, firstly, provincialize themselves and, secondly, enter a more honest conversation with competing epistemologies. In the contemporary world, this reading of Ibn al-Nafis' disrupts the dominant trend of marshalling the logic of natural reason to marginalize other epistemologies.

The first section of the essay sets the stage; it outlines the background against which Ibn al-Nafis' produced the *Risālat*, as well as a synopsis of the text. The second section deals with Ibn al-Nafis' unmasking reason's social groundedness, to the point that the reason versus revelation dichotomy collapses. In the final section, I underscore the importance of such a reading of Ibn al-Nafis' work in guiding our approach to truth and ways of knowing it, especially vis-à-vis the question of power.

Setting the stage

Ibn al-Nafis found himself in an environment wherein the *falasifa*, beginning with Ibn Sina and drawing upon the Greek philosophical tradition, privileged human reason over revelation. They insisted that truth is knowable through reason alone and that revelation is at best a crude attempt at transmitting it to the uninitiated masses. They denied that revelation is a valid source of knowledge (Marmura 1983: 87–102, Rahman 1958: 42–45, Abrahamov 1998). The Andalusian scholar Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1186), working within this tradition, advanced a theory of rational mysticism in which religious truths, including “a mystical vision of God,” are harmonized with the discoveries made by *falsafa*, but revelation ultimate remained redundant (Fancy 2009: 220).

Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzanis* is the text against which Ibn al-Nafis's *Risālat* set itself up. As such, an account of the *Risālat* must begin with an appreciation of Ibn Ṭufayl's work. Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* is a story of Ḥayy, a human who naturally comes into being—i.e., without being born to human parents—on an isolated island, although an alternative version of Ḥayy's birth contained in the story says that he is abandoned by his parents. On the island, a gazelle took care of Ayy until the former died. Ḥayy, without the knowledge of human language, embarks on a journey of rational inquiry, leading him to a range of discoveries, including the knowledge of the existence of the Creator. Through reason alone, he also deduces the necessity of worshipping the Creator. Suddenly, Ayy comes into contact with human society as a ship reaches the shore of the hitherto solitary island. His interaction with humans teaches him the human language and religion. He concludes that the truth he discovered through his independent rational inquiry is in agreement with the essential truth encapsulated in religion, although the former is a higher and purer kind of truth. Travelling to human society, Ayy hopes to enlighten his fellow humans but is frustrated by the latter's inability to outgrow the



so-called literalism of the revealed religion. He then self-exiles himself to his island (Ibn Tufayl, 2009).

Kāmil, the protagonist of Ibn al-Nafis' *Risālat*, shares a number of similarities with Ḥayy. Like Ḥayy, Kāmil also naturally comes into existence on an isolated island without any human parents. The text does not provide any alternative versions

of his birth. Kāmil then observes his surroundings and makes a series of discoveries, including the existence of God. Like Ḥayy, Kāmil also encounters a group of humans with whom he travels to human society. This is the point where Kāmil's path diverges from that of Ḥayy. Although Kāmil's self-made discoveries perfectly align with what he comes to know about the revealed religion of human society, he learns a lot more from that

society about the specificities of that religion, with which he rationally agrees after reflecting upon them. The text does not mention anything about Kāmil's return to a solitary life. It does not elicit the idea that Kāmil thinks ill of the knowledge gleaned from his interaction with humans, who had access to that knowledge through the revealed religion. In other words, the superiority of Ḥayy and his access to purer knowledge through pure reason vis-à-vis commoners and their access to dumbed-down knowledge through revelation is absent in Ibn al-Nafis' *Risālat* (al-Nafis 1968; see also Fancy 2009, Lauri 2017).

With this concise background in mind, I turn to the issue of problematization of the reason-revelation binary in Ibn al-Nafis' text.

Problematizing the reason-revelation binary

The striking similarity, as well as the differences, between Ibn al-Nafis' Kāmil and Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy is not lost on scholars. While Ḥayy is often described as a self-taught philosopher, Kāmil is termed a self-taught theologian (Fancy 2009: 220–21).

Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy exemplifies the limits of the revealed, organized religion and scholarly class that the religion gives birth to and, in turn, is guarded by. Ḥayy promotes a mode of knowing that, notwithstanding its much-stressed conformity with the essence of the revealed religion, is independent of any prophetic revelation. Not only is the truth made knowable through pure reason, it is also posited as a superior form of truth—truth in its purest form—in contrast with the dumbed-down truth of the revealed religion, which is for the laymen (Germann 2016, Fancy 2009).

Kāmil, on the other hand, inverts the equation. Although Kāmil, like Ḥayy, makes rational inquiries, his discoveries can go within the metaphysical realm only as far as rationalizing the existence of the Creator. The intricate details of the religion reveal themselves to Kāmil only through the humans with whom he comes into contact. This

limit is pure reason, which is then juxtaposed with the vast and possibly all-encompassing knowledge of the revealed religion that the humans encountered possessed. Thus, Kāmil's rationality is indebted, rather than superior, to the revealed religion of human society. In this sense, Fancy (2009) argues that Ibn al-Nafis' does not merely marshal rationalist arguments in defence of theology but heals and highlights the limits of reason to make theology indispensable to knowledge in its totality. Fancy, therefore, denies that Kāmil's journey could be reduced to a rationalist defence for theology (2009: 221).

I, however, argue that a more important contribution of the text is how it problematizes the concept of an extra-contextual reason. The description of Kāmil as a self-taught theologian who discovers the orthodox Islamic tenets by using pure reason, a portrait that Nancy is opposed to, should not be dismissed a priori. Kāmil certainly deploys reason to reach the conclusions deemed traditional religious beliefs, prompting the translators Schacht and Meyerhof to declare Kāmil a self-taught theologian (al-Nafis 1968). Even when Kāmil harmonizes his rational thoughts with what he came to know through his contact with human society, he does so by putting reason to use. If it is pure reason that drives Kāmil to organize and reveal religion and Ḥayy away from it, the question that arises is this: what does the reason say? Asked differently, does reason have an existence outside the context in which it appears?

If both Ḥayy and Kāmil are using pure reason but ending up on different shores, it may mean one of the two things. Either the concept of an extra-contextual reason with a defined linear feature is wrong or one of the two protagonists made at least one mistake at some point in their journey that led them to different conclusions. The second scenario presents us with yet another conundrum: how do we reconcile competing claims of reason? If either Ḥayy or Kāmil is being irrational, we can only know it through a recourse to a third, neutral

rational approach. But doing so is an impossibility because the existence of yet another rationality would render both Ḥayy and Kāmil's respective rationalities inferior and incomplete. And if we are to judge both of them against one of their experiences, the result will always favor the individual whose experience we are using as the yardstick. In short, the dilemma here is no less complicated than mediating between competing theologies or telling a soothsayer from a prophet.

In other words, the categories of reason and religion, as well as the rivalries between different sets of actors based on the distinction between the two, fall apart insofar as both reason and religion become amorphous. If reason is as arbitrary and subjective as religion, we might even ask what useful function the distinction between the two plays.

Fancy's objection to viewing Kamil as a marshalling reason in defence of the revelation also contains an outstanding issue. Fancy admits

that Kāmil "becomes aware of the existence of God" through pure reason (2009: 230), although he learns about the specifics of this God after his encounter with human society. The latter part takes a privileged position in Fancy's investigation into Kāmil's epistemology. However, I propose that the question we should be asking instead is the following: What guarantee do we have that pure reason would lead us to conclude that a God exists, let alone the Muslim God that both Ḥayy and Kāmil discover? Before I return to this point in the succeeding section, it is worthwhile to appreciate Fancy's treatment of the *Risālat*, building upon which Lauri concludes that "Ibn al-Nafis' would have probably shared our conviction of the inherently collaborative nature of scholarly activity." What he means by that is that Ibn al-Nafis' "shows purely self-relying reason to be insufficient, bringing it again to its societal and testimonial dimensions" (2017: 297). The following section fleshes out this concept and places it in the context of debates over the legitimacy of the experiences of marginalized groups as legitimate knowledge.

Social groundedness of reason

Social scientists often debate the human condition and the corrupting influence of society. In order to isolate societal influences from the inbuilt personality of a character, they have initiated a debate on nature versus nurture. Like Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn al-Nafis' have allowed Ḥayy and Kāmil, respectively, to be found and grown up in a solitary state, social scientists have also studied cases as closely resembling Ḥayy and Kāmil as possible. The results of those studies show that blank slates like Ḥayy and Kāmil remain blank slates if not otherwise tempered with. Put differently, without socialization, individuals come to know next to nothing simply by observing their surroundings (Davis, 1940, 1947). Studies on even identical twins demonstrate that their personalities depend in large parts on the environment in which they grew up (Holden 1980, 1987).

Ibn al-Nafis' foremost contribution, in this sense, is that he forces the modern reader to humble himself or herself by acknowledging that his or her reason is identical to a believer's beliefs. There is nothing separating reason from belief except how they are named, grouped, and approached (or not) in particular historical and cultural milieus.



Nevertheless, actors with different persuasions often cash in on the charm of positing something as natural. For instance, Christian philosopher/theologian Abu Qurrah (d. 825) offers the story of the hidden king, which belongs to the same genre as Ḥayy and Kāmil's. The story follows a similar type of rational inquiry from scratch that confirms the Christian faith tradition (Griffith, 1994). It is not only the religiously oriented who want to impose their will on the blank slate and call it the natural disposition. John Rawls (1971), widely regarded as the father of modern liberalism, also speaks in similar terms when he formulates his theory. The whole philosophical terrain of natural law is inundated with thinkers trying to advance a certain agenda by tying that to nature (McIlroy 2019).

Calling a truth-claim natural gives that claim an edge over its competitor(s). But the hollowness of such a lazy attempt at avoiding scrutiny by simply invoking terms like nature and reason is laid bare when it faces similar counter-claims. Intellectual gymnastics practiced by thinkers with different persuasions lead us to conclude what I have already stated before: there is no extra-

contextual meaning, shape, or form of reason, or of nature for that matter.

A suspicion towards truth-claims masquerading themselves as natural underlies contemporary Western critical scholarship that exposes multifaceted ways partisan objectives hide within the so-called natural (Bock 1994; 2019; Weiss 2016). They demonstrate, for example, that the Lockean notion of natural law functions as a justification for colonial land-grabbing in the Americas (Arneil 1992). Interestingly, scholarly inquiry into Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn al-Nafis' impact on the formation of Lockean natural law, as well as its associate classical liberalism (Russell 1993), is often uncritical of this instrumentalization of the naturals. That said, feminist scholars have highlighted the androcentrism embedded in the Rawlsian blank slate (Okin 2005). Black scholarship carefully highlights the white accent with which Rawlsian natural reason speaks (Mills 2009). And there have been accusations that Rawlsian liberalism facilitates Islamophobia (Khan 2017).



What appears to be natural in a narrative is a consequence of the construction of that narrative. Put differently, one man's natural is another man's artificial, arbitrary, or contingent. The appeal to nature is an attempt to solve the problem of infinite regress in the same way God can be and is invoked to do so. In both cases, the task of covering up the lack of a foundation is relegated to entities like nature and God, which have no foundations themselves. The *falasifa*, through their advocacy of the natural religion and natural reason, engage in a power play with the ecclesiastical class. But what the natural religion is and what natural reason says remains, as I have tried to demonstrate, as contested a terrain as that of religion. It is perhaps not a coincidence that, in the absence of a secular age, both Ḥayy and Kāmil reasonably believe in God. However, it's possible that the historical and cultural context precludes atheism from being reasonable or even an option for that matter (see Taylor 2007). In

contrast, a modern author, using a similar writing style, would probably endorse the opposite, i.e., the non-existence of God, as the natural or reasonable conclusion.

Ibn al-Nafis' foremost contribution, in this sense, is that he forces the modern reader to humble himself or herself by acknowledging that his or her reason is identical to a believer's beliefs. There is nothing separating reason from belief except how they are named, grouped, and approached (or not) in particular historical and cultural milieus. In many (but not all) ways, Ibn al-Nafis' faced the same conundrum as many moderns face. Ibn al-Nafis' adversaries sought to suppress a body of knowledge, a mode of reasoning, and people associated with them by terming them inferior, if not outright illegitimate (Fancy 2009). In modernity, women and people of color, among others, are struggling with these gate-keeping attitudes that suppress so-called unreasonable experiences and beliefs from the socially legitimate body of knowledge (see Fricker 2007). Ibn al-Nafis' Kāmil in this regard stands as a solemn reminder that at the core of the tension is not any pre-political, natural truth but an intense political competition over marking, mapping, and shaping what is presented as natural or reasonable.

This anti-foundationalist reading of Ibn al-Nafis' *Risālat* confirms Fish's assertion that "questions of fact, truth, correctness, validity, and clarity can neither be posed nor answered in reference to some extra contextual, ahistorical, or non-situational reality (1989: 345). This reading of Ibn al-Nafis' forces us to be more self-aware about our truth claims and engage with rival truth claims more honestly instead of simply dismissing them by categorizing them as unnatural. What passes as natural at any particular point in time and space curvature is therefore a matter of discursive construction. And the discursive construction that becomes dominant in a society is reflective of the power relations in that society (see Srinivasan 2019). This is the lesson we can draw from Kāmil's socially grounded reason.

Conclusion

Ibn al-Nafis' intervention in the debate with the *falasifa* through his *Risālat* has liberating potential for the marginalized groups and their respective epistemologies. His text problematizes the idea of a natural reason and demonstrates that reason gains its meaning, shape, and form within a certain milieu, beyond which it has no validity. It lays bare the impasse of the politics of attributing to something the adjective natural or rational as a way of shutting down debates. The critique of natural reason as a depoliticizing tool allows for alternative imaginations and facilitates bracketed knowledge systems to be taken seriously. It highlights the contingencies and power relations responsible for the rise and fall of an idea or epistemology, thus enabling critique of the dominant narrative(s) as well as eliciting hope for change.

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India's Ascent

Charting the Course to Global Prominence and the Quest for Superpower Status

A. Hasan

As the balance of global power shifts from bipolar and unipolar to multipolar, with a focus moving from the West to the East, many analysts are considering the rise of the Global South. In this context, several Asian emerging powers aspire to achieve superpower status. Before delving into this discussion, it is important to first define what it means to be a

“superpower” and how we can determine a country’s classification as such.

The term “superpower” conceptually refers to a country with significant influence and power on a global scale across various domains, including economic, military, political, cultural, and technological spheres. Therefore, a country



can be considered a superpower if it possesses these attributes. India's remarkable rise as a global powerhouse is evident, transitioning from a colonial subject to an independent and influential player on the world stage in a relatively short period of time. The country's rapid economic growth, technological advancements, and diplomatic initiatives have all contributed to its emergence as a major global player.

India's quest for a superpower

In recent years, India has actively sought a larger role in global affairs, forming strategic partnerships with major powers like the United States, and Russia. Its growing influence in international politics and economies has been undeniable to the world. India's participation in various global organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, G-20, and BRICS reflects its pursuit of superpower status.

India's booming economy is a key driver of its rise, making it one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. With consistently high GDP growth rates, India has become a significant player in the global market, attracting foreign investment and trade. Its thriving tech industry has further enhanced its reputation as an innovation and entrepreneurship hub. India's human assets and progress in utilizing its human capital worldwide have also been a major source of remittance. Moreover, New Delhi's long-standing political, economic, and defense influence in the region and globally is undeniable. Its pivotal role in South Asia's regional initiatives and cooperation is indispensable. Besides, India's military modernization and growing defense capabilities have cemented its position as a key player in regional security.

While superpowers are known for their leadership in scientific research, technological innovation, and education, India's substantial contributions to scientific research and information technology, particularly in software development, IT services, and business process outsourcing, have been

noteworthy. Additionally, India's space agency, ISRO, has achieved significant milestones in space exploration, including successful missions to Mars and the Moon.

Superpowers exert a strong cultural influence through media, entertainment, language, and other forms of soft power. India's cultural influence extends across the Asia Pacific and beyond, and Hinduism plays key roles. Indian cinema, especially Bollywood, has gained popularity in various parts of the world, further enhancing its cultural impact. Moreover, India is a predominantly Hindu-populated country, and many neighboring states share this religious affiliation, which also plays vital roles in sharing the same thoughts and culture.

Furthermore, India's diplomatic efforts, including the Act East Policy, South Asia Policy, and the Indo-Pacific strategy, reflect its dedication to shaping the geopolitical landscape in its favor.

What India still lacks to acquire a superpower status

India's quest for superpower status is rife with challenges. The nation grapples with a myriad of internal, regional, and global issues, including poverty, inequality, and infrastructure development, all of which are essential for sustaining its growth trajectory. Furthermore, India faces formidable competition from other emerging powers, notably China, whose ascent as a global superpower presents a significant obstacle to India's ambitions.

On the domestic front, India contends with numerous challenges stemming from political, cultural, and ideological disparities, leading to substantial discrepancies between provinces across the country. According to rights organization Oxfam International, wealth distribution is glaringly unequal, with the richest 1% owning more than 40% of the country's total wealth. Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar stated, "The country's marginalized—Dalits, Adivasis,



Muslims, women, and informal sector workers—continue to endure hardship in a system that perpetuates the prosperity of the wealthiest.” Income inequality has markedly increased across Indian society, with approximately 15 percent of the population still living below the poverty line and more than 17 percent lacking access to sanitation facilities. Politically, India, the world’s largest democracy, is experiencing heightened polarization due to divergent political ideologies among the political elite, according to experts. The V-Dem report of 2023 identified India as one of the most significant autocracies in the past decade. Additionally, minority groups, particularly Muslims, have faced severe harassment and violence while practicing their faith, as highlighted in the USCIRF report of 2023.

Regionally, India has held a significant advantage for years due to its substantial capacity compared to most countries in the region. In terms of size, India comprises approximately 75 percent of the total area, with the remaining seven countries making up about 25 percent. India, which dominates the region’s economy, accounts for about 72% of the population and 80% of South Asia’s GDP. Additionally, India possesses the largest share of natural resources in the region and

boasts a significant industrial and technological base compared to other South Asian states. Furthermore, India has strong ties with other Asian countries, surpassing all other regional powers except China. However, despite India’s material superiority in the region, its regional power faces a threat from China’s dominant presence, particularly through connectivity investments. As stated by Wagner (2016),

“India is often perceived as a regional power, but a closer look reveals that it is in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis China in South Asia. The first reason is that Indian governments never had the political, economic, and military capacities to pursue their regional power ambitions with their neighbors in the long run. South Asian countries could always play the China card in order to evade India’s influence. Second, India’s new South Asia policy with the focus on trade and connectivity has improved regional cooperation since 1991. But China remains an economically more attractive and politically more reliable partner for India’s neighbors.”

Additionally, other economically powerful regional states, such as Japan, have been actively working to strengthen bilateral relations with Asian

countries, particularly with South Asian nations like Bangladesh. It is also noteworthy that the former superpowers, the USA and Russia, have re-evaluated their foreign strategies in the Indo-Pacific region, focusing on individual countries rather than viewing the region solely through the lens of India and Pakistan.

Several studies indicate that India has faced challenges in easing tensions with Pakistan,



promoting regional integration and cooperation, prioritizing the strengthening of SAARC, meeting the financial needs of its neighbors, and understanding the political intentions of the people in other South Asian countries. Consequently, China and other regional and global powers have taken advantage of these shortcomings to counter or diminish India's dominant position in the region.

Given that the economy is a key factor in achieving superpower status, it is important to examine the overall economies of China and India and assess how Beijing's strategies and policies have outperformed New Delhi's in the South Asia region. Over a five-year period, China's bilateral trade with India's immediate and nearby neighbors has surpassed India's by more than double, raising concerns among Indian leaders and policymakers and hindering their aspirations to become a superpower in the near future.

Table 1: China's overall economy, 2018-2022

Year	GDP growth* (%)	Total imports (trillion \$)	Total exports (trillion \$)	Total foreign trade (trillion \$)	Trade with Asian states (trillion \$)	Trade with South Asian States (bill. \$)
2018	6.7	2.14	2.49	4.62	1.84	131.1
2019	6.1	2.09	2.49	4.57	1.97	136.6
2020	2.3	1.83	2.59	4.65	2.07	134.4
2021	8.4	2.01	2.76	5.24	2.35	140.3
2022(est.)	5.7	2.15	2.85	5.38	2.45	145.2

Sources: World Bank, IMF, and China's government reports

Table 2 : India's overall economy from 2018-2022

Year	GDP growth*	Total imports (billion \$)	Total exports (trillion \$)	Total foreign trade(billion \$)	Trade with Asian states (billion \$)	Trade with South Asian States (bill. \$)
2018	6.5	514	323.10	888.80	227.94	23.5
2019	3.9	514	314.39	818.19	213.41	24.8
2020	-6.6	467	292.07	818.60	186.71	19.8
2021	9.1	530	400.81	923.96	208.98	22.3
2022(est.)	7.2	560	448.59	1.02 (trillion)	224.36	25.5

Sources: World Bank, IMF, and India's government reports.



Indian Economy

In the light of the aforementioned data, it is evident that China holds a significant advantage over India and has been successful in establishing a strong presence among India's neighboring countries. Similarly, an examination of military activities between the two nations over the past five years reveals that China's military budget exceeds that of India by more than three times.

On a global scale, India has played crucial roles in shaping various international affairs, encompassing economics, politics, and security, in recent years. The country is a member of several influential global organizations such as the G-20 and BRICS, and is striving to expand its economic influence in the global economy. However, it faces substantial competition from other emerging economies and established powers. India also grapples with challenges related to climate change, environmental issues, human rights, social concerns, and intricate diplomatic relations, which hinder its pursuit of becoming a major global power.

Findings

India's ascent as a major global player is undeniable. The country's growing influence in international affairs, combined with its economic

and technological advancements, has set the stage for India to chart a course towards global prominence. Here are some key contributions of India towards its pursuit of superpower status in the global arena:

- India's economic growth and technological advancements are on the rise.
- India holds a significant position in regional and international affairs, with New Delhi playing a crucial role in South Asia.
- India is a member of numerous influential associations and organizations, alongside developed countries.
- India has established substantial access to global markets, contributing to its growing influence on the global stage.
- India's vast manpower has positioned it as a significant global power among other nations.

India's quest for superpower status is not without its challenges. There are several factors that thwart New Delhi achieving superpower status. Some of these include:



- Internal challenges: political turmoil, politicization of influential institutions, polarization, religious violence (including the issues in Jammu and Kashmir), poverty, inequality, and corruption.
- Regional hurdles: the rivalry between India, China, and Pakistan; limited regional integration and cooperation; weaker institutions; slower implementation of Indian Act South and East Asia Policies (in comparison to China); and support from specific political parties in neighboring smaller countries instead of understanding the sentiments of the general population in those states.
- Global issues: ongoing wars and conflicts worldwide (such as Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine), India's roles in these conflicts, regionalism in various parts of the world, and financial crises.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that India has made significant progress in nearly every regional and international forum. The Asian powerhouse has established itself as a prominent global player. However, New Delhi still has a long way to go in achieving its goal of superpower status.

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Global Pursuit of Knowledge

Unraveling the Surge of Bangladeshi Students Studying Abroad

Kamrul Islam

Over the past 15 years, the departure of Bangladeshi students pursuing higher education abroad has witnessed a remarkable threefold increase, signaling a profound shift in educational aspirations. While the United States remains the top destination, the United Kingdom, Canada, Malaysia, Germany, and Australia have emerged as preferred choices, reflecting a diverse range of preferences among the student community. The desire for high-quality education, access to global job markets, and the promise of improved living conditions are just a few of the factors supporting this surge. Scholarships and facilities offered by developed countries further fuel this trend, prompting a constant rise in Bangladeshi students enrolling in foreign universities.



The number of students going abroad has tripled in 15 years, despite the university boom.

The number of students going abroad

Year	Number of Students
2008	16, 609
2013	24, 112
2022	49, 151
2023	52, 799

Source: The Daily Star

Quality education abroad

Education officials acknowledge the superior quality of education abroad compared to Bangladesh, providing a compelling incentive for students to seek education beyond the nation's borders. The allure of ancient and esteemed institutions abroad adds an extra layer of appeal for Bangladeshi students.

Challenges faced by Bangladeshi youths

Bangladeshi youths grapple with challenges like limited job opportunities, political uncertainties, and doubts about domestic education quality. Reports from Bangladesh Business News underscore that issues in the local job market, such as restricted career growth opportunities and a competitive landscape, have come to the forefront.

Economic imperatives

The economic factors driving this migration stem

from the pursuit of prosperity. Students seek higher salaries and improved living standards, in addition to academic excellence. Remittances play a crucial role in sustaining households and contribute significantly to the national economy, creating a symbiotic relationship between the Bangladeshi diaspora—those living abroad—and Bangladesh. Case studies highlight individuals seeking global opportunities due to restricted career growth locally. Exposure to global business practices motivates these individuals, contributing to a diaspora that actively participates in Bangladesh's economic development.

Political and social dynamics

Political instability significantly influences the decisions of Bangladeshi youths, with concerns about governance and a desire for a more open society actively shaping their migration choices. For instance, the recent unrest during political movements, such as taking back the caretaker government, and the controversies surrounding the 12th National Election have contributed to this trend. Societal factors, such as the allure of experiencing different cultures, also play a pivotal role in the migration trend. The quest for a cosmopolitan lifestyle becomes a compelling reason to explore opportunities beyond national borders.

Challenges in the local job market

Reports from Bangladesh Business News emphasize limitations in the local job market, including restricted career growth and a





competitive landscape. Ambitious individuals, aiming for exposure to international business practices, are driven to explore opportunities overseas.

Corruption and lack of job opportunities

Corruption's corrosive role propels Bangladeshi youth abroad, driven by the lack of transparency and equal opportunities in the domestic job market. Examining specific case studies reveals the tangible impact of corruption on job opportunities, underscoring the need for systemic changes to retain local talent.

Quality of life and happiness abroad

Beyond economic factors, the pursuit of happiness emerges as a powerful driver. Bangladeshi students seek a more fulfilling life abroad, where personal aspirations intertwine with the global pursuit of contentment. Personal stories and interviews provide nuanced perspectives on the challenges and triumphs of navigating life in a foreign land.

Seeking better job opportunities abroad

Features in Dhaka Tribune, including interviews and articles, shed light on the frustration among youths facing a scarcity of suitable employment options domestically. The decision to leave

in search of better job opportunities abroad becomes a pragmatic response to a challenging job market.

Poor research facilities in Bangladesh

Challenges in the research sector, including limited resources and outdated infrastructure, contribute to the migration trend. Inadequate facilities impact the professional aspirations of young researchers, limiting their potential for groundbreaking contributions. Detailed exploration of these challenges, along with data on the state of research facilities, unveils another layer of the complex migration narrative.

Academic opportunities and cultural exchange

Beyond the pursuit of degrees, the allure of social and cultural exchange has become an integral part of the decision to study abroad. The main drivers behind this migration include the promise of quality education, accessibility to post-education job markets, and improved living conditions. Developed countries, particularly the United States, actively attract Bangladeshi students by offering scholarships and various facilities, contributing to the steady rise in their enrollment.

Challenges and concerns

Despite the growing number of students going abroad, there remain concerns about the quality of education within Bangladesh. Education officials emphasize that the disparity in education quality is a key factor propelling students to seek opportunities elsewhere. To address this, experts advocate raising the standards of domestic higher education institutions and creating more job opportunities for the youth.

Global comparison

While the number of students studying abroad in Bangladesh is on the rise, it still lags behind neighboring countries like India, Pakistan, and Nepal, from India, a total of 5,08,174 students went abroad for higher studies in 2023, and from Nepal, a total of 88,904 students went abroad for higher education in 2023. Educationists acknowledge the positive message sent by students pursuing higher education abroad, but there's a growing concern about their return rates and the limited opportunities they find upon returning, posing a potential threat to the nation's future.

Expert opinions and strategies

Professor Dr SM Hafizur Rahman from Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research attributes the trend to the continuous backwardness of the country's institutions. He emphasizes the appeal of opportunities in the USA and highlights the influence of easy access to jobs and better living conditions. Rahman believes that preventing the trend requires a concerted effort to enhance the quality of Bangladesh's higher education institutions. Omar Farooq, director of the Private University Division at the Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC), shares ongoing initiatives to improve the quality of universities. These include instructing vice-chancellors to align syllabi with international curricula, regular monitoring, and collaborative efforts with various supervisory bodies.

Complex dynamics and reasons behind migration

Despite a doubling of universities in the last 15 years, the flow of students leaving persists due to a combination of factors, including the perceived lack of quality in higher education, political uncertainties, and limited employment opportunities within the country.

Diverse academic offerings abroad

Foreign colleges attract Bangladeshi students with a myriad of specialized courses. The broad selection of courses, majors, and focuses abroad allows students to tailor their education to meet unique professional goals. This includes cutting-edge technology, novel business models, and specialized topics such as environmental sustainability.

UNESCO data

According to the latest UNESCO data, a total of 52,799 Bangladeshi students went abroad for higher education in 2023. The United States was the most preferred destination, with 8,524 students, followed by the UK (6,586), Canada (5,835), Malaysia (5,714), Germany (5,046), Australia (4,987), Japan (2,082), India (2,606), the Korea Republic (1,202), and Saudi Arabia (1,190).

Report analysis

A recent report highlighted the tripling of Bangladeshi students going abroad over the last 15 years, despite the increase in homegrown universities. The central argument points to the perceived lack of quality education at home, compelling those with financial means to seek higher education abroad. The report identifies push factors while discounting certain pull factors in this mobility.

After all, the surge in Bangladeshi students pursuing international education demands a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted factors at play. While the appeal of quality education



abroad is evident, addressing concerns about domestic institutions, political uncertainties, and limited opportunities is crucial. Collaborative efforts between academic institutions, regulatory bodies, and policymakers are imperative to ensure a robust educational ecosystem that retains and nurtures local talent.

Addressing the multifaceted migration trend among Bangladeshi youths demands a comprehensive approach, including political and economic reforms, improvements in the domestic job market, and substantial investments in research infrastructure. Fostering an environment that supports academic and research excellence will enable Bangladesh to retain talent and contribute significantly to global knowledge. Integrating UNESCO data emphasizes the scale of the migration trend, with specific numbers highlighting the preferred destinations of Bangladeshi students. These details underscore the urgency of addressing the outlined challenges, providing a robust foundation for understanding and tackling the

complexities of the migration trend.

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Henry Kissinger Uncovered Peeling Back the Layers of a Diplomatic Enigma

Mamun Mia

Not only in Bangladesh but also in most of the countries of this subcontinent, we cannot see so many people who reach 100 years old at this time. We must have seen or heard stories of many people who lived to be 100 years in their lifespan. People who are turned to 100 are called 'centenarians'. Statistics say, "There are ~8100000K people living in the world in this current day." Compared to the worldwide population, the number of centenarians is very insignificant. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), "the number of centenarians worldwide was approximately 573k in 2021."

Among the countries, the US is home to 97K centenarians, the highest absolute number in the world. Definitely, being one of 97,000 people in a country of 340,000 people is a matter of fortune. Henry Kissinger is one of the luckiest people in that sense. Also, he is not only a lucky person in terms of age but also in terms of finances. This Jew, who once came to the United States as a refugee from Germany, was the owner of a net worth of \$50 million at the time of his death, according to the website of the Celebrity Net Worth.

Kissinger reached a personal milestone: his 100th birthday on May 27, 2023. As such, his date of birth is May 27, 1923. Various events were held in the elite society of America to celebrate his 100 years of age. He died on November 29, 2023. In this, the question has also arisen in a soft voice: how will world political history remember Henry Kissinger? Should America be proud of Henry Kissinger? Especially when there is credible evidence against him of many wrongdoings in many countries!

The Guardian has made a comment about Kissinger in one of its opinion articles: “But in the United States, Kissinger is untouchable. One of the 20th century’s most prolific butchers is beloved by the rich and powerful, regardless of their partisan affiliation. Kissinger’s bipartisan appeal is straightforward: He was a top strategist of America’s empire of capital at a critical moment in that empire’s development.”

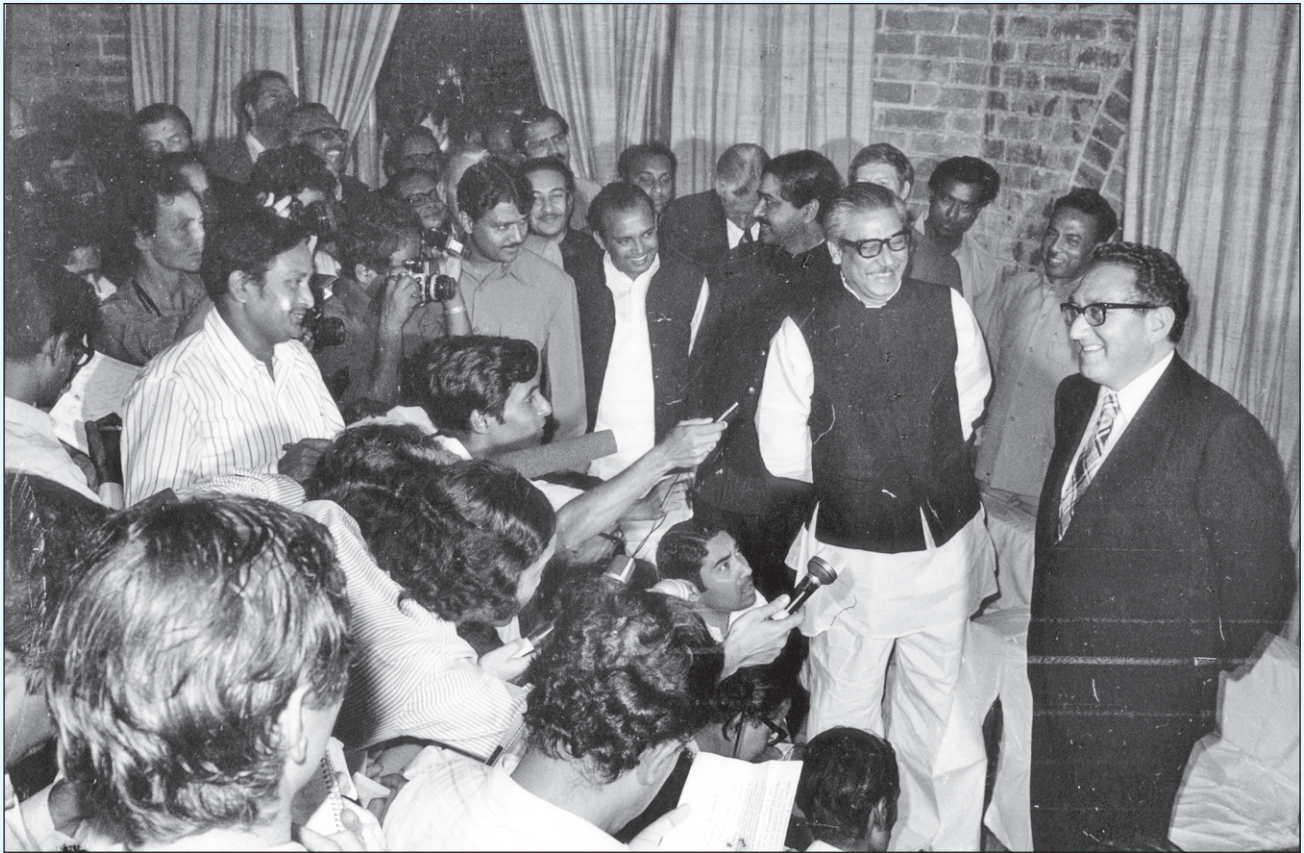
Although he began his career as an intellectual, researcher, and professor, Kissinger’s reputation was primarily as a diplomat. From September 23, 1973, to January 20, 1977, he was the Secretary of State for about 40 months. With his appointment, he became the first person ever to serve as both Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, a position he had held since President Nixon was sworn into office on January 20, 1969. However, on November 3, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford removed him from his National Security Adviser

position while keeping him as Secretary of State. He was a member of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1984 to 1990. From 2001 to 2020, he was a member of the Board on Defence Policy for two decades. All such responsibilities have been part of his diplomatic life for almost 50 years. Even so, he was serving actively as president of Kissinger Associates and as a consultant to dozens of other organisations until his death.

Like a coin, Henry has both sides—some pay tribute to him as a global policymaker, while others treat him as a war criminal. He earned respect for his work in building diplomatic relations between the US and China. He was also able to do so for the United States in relation to the Soviet Union.

In 1971, Kissinger made two trips to the People’s Republic of China. One of them was in July (a secret trip), and another one was in October [6]. On his first trip, he and the PRC discussed the Taiwan issue. China demanded to pull U.S. forces out of Taiwan and end military support, as the United States recognised that Taiwan was a legitimate part of the PRC. Kissinger ended that trip by promising to pull U.S. forces out of Taiwan; two-thirds would be pulled out when the Vietnam War ended, and the rest would be pulled out as Sino-American relations improved. The Chinese government deserved to be represented in the United Nations, which came up again in October 1971 during his second trip to Beijing.

Kissinger told Zhou (the First Premier of the PRC) that a majority of Americans favoured Taiwan’s continued membership in the UN, proposing the possibility of a “two Chinas” compromise to align with American public sentiment. Zhou firmly asserted that the People’s Republic was the rightful government of all of China, rejecting any compromise on the Taiwan issue. Kissinger, acknowledging Chiang Kai-shek’s (former PRC President) historical alliance with the U.S. during World War II, emphasised the difficulty of completely severing ties with him.



Additionally, Kissinger expressed reservations about George H.W. Bush's representation of the U.S. at the UN, describing him as "too soft and not sophisticated." Despite the UN General Assembly's decision to expel Taiwan and transfer China's seat on the UN Security Council to the People's Republic, Kissinger showed no outward displeasure. Kissinger's diplomatic missions set the stage for the historic 1972 summit involving Nixon, Zhou, and Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, marking the initiation of formalised relations between the United States and China. This concluded a period of 23 years characterised by diplomatic isolation and mutual animosity. Ultimately, full normalisation of relations with the People's Republic of China was achieved in 1979.

Additionally, there was a policy of *détente*, signifying the easing of tensions with the Soviet

Union. Kissinger and Nixon's strong rapport, which contributed to Kissinger's influential role, organised the dynamics between the two superpowers of that time. This framework facilitated discussions on nuclear arms control, the establishment of guidelines for handling conflicts involving their respective allies, and regular summit meetings. These efforts collectively played a crucial role in preventing the Cold War from escalating into hot conflicts or, more critically, leading to nuclear escalation.

However, his polarising policies in the United States and his support for anti-communist dictatorships, particularly in Latin America, made him a divisive figure. Kissinger played a role in extending the duration of the Vietnam War, expanding the conflict into the neutral territory of Cambodia, and being associated with genocidal events in Cambodia, East Timor, and Bangladesh.



His actions also contributed to the acceleration of civil wars in southern Africa, and he provided support for coups and death squads across Latin America. The Yale University historian Greg Grandin, author of the biography *Kissinger's Shadow*, estimates that Kissinger's actions from 1969 through 1976, a period of eight brief years when Kissinger made Richard Nixon's and then Gerald Ford's foreign policy as national security adviser and secretary of state, meant the end of between three and four million people. The Vietnam War (1955–1975) was extended to more than four years due to his policy. The prolonged war cost the lives of millions of Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians. North Vietnam and its revolutionary allies in South Vietnam would topple the U.S.-backed government in Saigon in 1975. That same year, due in large part to Nixon and Kissinger's expansion of the war into the tiny, neutral nation of Cambodia, the American-

backed military regime there fell to the genocidal Khmer Rouge, whose campaign of overwork, torture, and murder then killed 2 million people, roughly 20 percent of the population. American journalists Christopher H., Samantha Power, and others have made old claims that 3,875 bombs were dropped in the Cambodia campaign with Kissinger's direct approval. Kissinger's notoriety was not limited to Vietnam and Cambodia. He caused the biggest accident in Chile. In 1970, Salvador Allende, who openly identified as a Marxist, was democratically elected to serve as the president of Chile. Over the ensuing three years, the US invested millions of dollars into fomenting a coup under the approval of Nixon and Kissinger. In 1973, he helped General Augusto Pinochet come to power in a military coup, and the elected government of Allende was thrown out to protect US interests. During Pinochet's 17-year-long rule, more than 3,000 people were

disappeared or killed, and tens of thousands of opponents were imprisoned. More than 30 years after Pinochet was finally forced out of office, Chile is still grappling with the former dictator's US-enabled legacy. In 2014, a large number of documents were released, detailing Kissinger's enthusiasm for Argentina's 'dirty war'. He was there, urging Foreign Minister Cesare Augusto Guzzetti to 'quickly clean up the problems'. In 1975, after his visit to Jakarta, President Suharto, a brutal dictator, moved in with his US-equipped army, killing 200,000 East Timorese. He only backed this because of his anti-communism. Kissinger's support for Pakistan's ruling group during the Bangladesh War was quite open. He also consented to the 1976 assassination of right-wing generals in Argentina by the leftists. About 10k people died and 30k opponents disappeared during the military's rule under dictator Jorge Rafael Videla, which lasted until 1983. Moreover, let's take Kissinger's Nobel Prize. This is perhaps the most controversial and condemned announcement in the history of the Nobel Prize. The man who, together with President Nixon, was destroying Vietnam was awarded the Peace Prize in 1973, shocking the world.

Kissinger shared the award with Lee Duc Tho of North Vietnam. Even after this 'Peace Prize' was announced, it took two years for the Vietnam War to end. It was embarrassing for Kissinger, while another recipient of the award, Lee Tho, refused to accept it. Later, after the release of old documents from the Nobel Committee, Kissinger himself wanted to return the award after the war in May 1975, in the face of widespread criticism. The Nobel Committee did not agree.

Kissinger's theory as a policymaker to 'put the United States ahead on the world stage' is that Washington must 'sometimes ignore moral and ideological considerations' to do so.

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