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Rethinking Rule-Based Global Order:
Middle and Small States
in a Changing World

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Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Chittagong

ABSTRACT BOOK

RCAS | 香港亞洲研究中心
Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies
Bangladesh Center (RCASBC)



Department of
International Relations,
University of Chittagong

Good Neighbors
Bangladesh

TEACH FOR
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Keynote Speaker

Maritime Security and Regional Stability in the Indian Ocean: Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing Global Order

Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage, Former Navy Chief, Sri Lankan Navy.

Abstract:

The contemporary international system is undergoing a profound transformation as the post-Second World War rules-based international order faces unprecedented political, economic, and strategic challenges. The diffusion of global power, the resurgence of geopolitical rivalry, technological disruption, climate change, and transnational security threats have exposed the limitations of existing global governance institutions while creating demands for a more inclusive and representative international order. At the centre of this transformation is the intensifying strategic competition between the United States and China, which has expanded beyond military affairs to encompass trade, technology, finance, supply chains, artificial intelligence, and maritime security. India-China rivalry also plays an important role in this competition. This competition is reshaping regional and global geopolitics, particularly across the Indian Ocean, which has emerged as the world's principal strategic theatre. Simultaneously, the continuing crises in the Middle East have demonstrated the vulnerability of the global economy to geopolitical instability and unpredictable consequences even for states which are not involved in these conflicts. Disruptions to energy supplies, food security, maritime trade, and global logistics have reaffirmed the strategic importance of maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, the Malacca Strait, and the Bay of Bengal. These waterways have become focal points of strategic competition, where military power, economic interests increasingly intersect. Within South Asia, political developments in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the evolving security dynamics of the Bay of Bengal further illustrate how domestic political change can have wider regional implications. Against this backdrop, the Indian Ocean has assumed renewed strategic significance as the maritime crossroads linking the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa. As major powers expand their naval presence and strategic partnerships, regional states face increasing pressure to navigate competing interests while safeguarding their strategic sovereignty and economic development. For middle and small states, these developments present both risks and opportunities. Rather than remaining passive actors, many have adopted sophisticated strategies of hedging, strategic balancing, diversified partnerships, and active multilateral diplomacy to preserve strategic autonomy. Countries such as Sri Lanka demonstrate how geostrategic location, maritime connectivity, and diplomatic engagement can be leveraged to enhance national resilience amid great-power competition. The future international order is unlikely to be dominated by a single hegemonic power; instead, it will be characterised by competitive multipolarity, flexible coalitions, and issue-based partnerships. Consequently, global governance must evolve to become more representative, equitable, and responsive to contemporary realities. Middle and small states need to play a more meaningful role in this transition.

Keynote Speaker:

Human Security at the Margins: South Asian Middle and Small States in a Fragmenting Global Order

Dr. Purna Bahadur Karki, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Institute of Global Studies,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo

Abstract:

The unraveling of the rule-based global order has created pressures that extend far beyond traditional geopolitics, shaping the everyday security of millions across South Asia. Middle and small states such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives now confront a world where external disruptions, energy shortages, food price volatility, supply-chain interruptions, and labor market uncertainty quickly turn into domestic hardship. Their foreign policy choices are increasingly driven by the need to protect human security as much as national sovereignty. US–China strategic competition and India’s regional leadership continue to define the structural environment in which these states operate. Yet the most consequential impacts of these shifts emerge from vulnerabilities tied to maritime chokepoints in the IndoPacific, the Strait of Malacca, the Bay of Bengal, and the wider Indian Ocean. These routes are lifelines for fuel, food imports, and migrant mobility. When global crises such as the Ukraine–Russia war or Middle East conflicts disrupt these flows, South Asian households experience immediate consequences: rising inflation, shortages of essential goods, declining remittances, and heightened political tension. In response, South Asian states have adopted diplomatic strategies that blend hedging, diversification, and selective alignment. Bangladesh balances major-power relationships to stabilize export markets and energy supplies; Nepal’s cautious diplomacy reflects its dependence on remittances and hydropower imports; Sri Lanka’s outreach to multiple partners stems from the need to rebuild economic resilience after severe debt distress. These choices reveal a foreign policy shaped not only by geopolitical calculation but by the imperative to shield populations from external instabilities. Human security has therefore become a central lens through which these states interpret global instability. Protecting migrant workers, ensuring food and energy access, maintaining social welfare systems, and preventing political unrest now sit alongside traditional security concerns. In a fragmenting global order, the agency of South Asia’s middle and small states is expressed through efforts to secure the everyday well-being of their citizens while navigating an increasingly competitive geopolitical environment. This paper argues that understanding South Asia’s strategic behavior requires placing human security at the center of analysis. Doing so reveals how these states reshape regional dynamics and contribute to emerging Global South perspectives on a changing world order.

Keynote Speaker:

Denial of Rohingyas from the Origin: Role of Host Country and the International Community

Prof. Dr. Md. Faridul Alam Professor, Department of International Relations,
University of Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Abstract:

According to a statement to the Parliament, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) on April, 2026, the total number of Rohingya refugees having shelter in Bangladesh are 1.189 million. The number comprises the protracted refugees that were remaining after the so-called repatriation in the 1990s. In spite of consuming vicious experience in the previous periods, Bangladesh provided shelter to the persecuted Rohingyas from the Norther Rakhaine State of Myanmar due to brutal atrocities caused by the country of origin in 2017. The decision of GoB though was congratulated at that time throughout the world and commitments were passed for immediate and safe repatriation of the Rohingyas. After 9 years of the problem occurred, the Government of Myanmar (GoM) recently released a statement mentioning the people evacuated from the 'Rakhaine State' only, a slightly more than 3 hundred thousand will be repatriated in due course of time. The GoM reiterated the non-existence of any community named 'Rohingya', rather claimed the remaining are 'Bangali', who left back to their country of origin after long stay in Myanmar. The term 'refugee' is a legal status given in due process which has been deep-rooted through a number of international understandings, thus make the international community responsible to lessen the burden of the host community. At the same time, it is also to be noted that the protraction of the issue makes it difficult to resolve. 9 years have been passed, repatriation has not yet been started, attention of international communities have been shifted towards the other international crisis, all these have shaped new uncertainty of repatriation. Present position of 'denial' from the country of origin has multifaceted implications of bi-lateral relations as well as handling the global refugee problems. This paper is dedicated to understand the reason of non-repatriation, its causes and consequences, the role that the host country, and the role of the international to discharge their responsibilities on them.

Keynote Speaker:

Alignment Without Alliance: Transactional Multipolarity in a PostRegional South Asia

Prof. Dr. Shahab Enam Khan, Professor, Department of International Relations,
Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

Abstract:

The premise of this discussion is that South Asia has ceased to function as a regional security complex in any meaningful sense. Regions cohere when the security concerns of their members are so interlinked that they cannot be analysed apart. That condition no longer holds. The reclassification of Pakistan and Afghanistan out of the World Bank's South Asia grouping is an administrative recognition of an analytical fact, namely that the subcontinent's security dynamics now run outward, towards the Gulf, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, rather than inward.

What replaces the region is transactional multipolarity, an order in which alignment has been decoupled from alliance and influence accrues to states able to mediate rather than to those able to command. Poles here are not blocs but bargaining positions, and they are entered and exited at low cost. Islamabad's turn as negotiator, Beijing's corridor logic extending into Afghanistan, the emerging China–Bangladesh–Myanmar equation, ASEAN's recalibration and the deliberate fluidity of American policy are all expressions of the same structural condition rather than discrete events.

Two consequences follow. States that treat foreign policy as a portfolio of bargains gain manoeuvre, which is the logic behind Bangladesh's flexible realism. States that mistake proximity for entitlement lose it. And an order built on bargains still requires institutions to hold them, which is precisely what SAARC's paralysis and BIMSTEC's institutional thinness deny the region.

Keynote Speaker:

Decline of Rule Based International Order and Promotion of Bangladesh Interest

Ambassador M. Humayun Kabir, Former Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States,
Ambassador to Nepal, and High Commissioner to Australia and New Zealand.

Abstract:

Bangladesh, like many other developing countries, has been the net beneficiary of rule based international order, which was underpinned by respect for global norms and values, international law and predictability, multilateral institutions such as the UN and WTO. It ensured universal participation and legitimacy, and shared benefits accrued from the process of interdependence and supply chain predictability fed by globalization.

Since the global economic crisis in 2007-08 this global structure has been crumbling fast, which Canadian Prime Minister termed recently as a 'Rupture' in the international rule based order. The Prime Minister of Qatar Mr. Abdur Rahman Al Thani echoed similar sentiment while he called this as a 'system of checks and balance, which is gone!' Consequentially, the world had become unpredictable, often unhinged, fragmented, protectionist, leaving small and the middle powers badly exposed to risk and uncertainty. The emerging alternatives are also mixed in nature. The rapid retreat of democratic order, spread of technology alongside the rising threat of authoritarianism have inspired the younger generation to hit back hard against inequality, corruption and injustice adding another layer of complexity and uncertainty. Such a process has also revealed the vulnerabilities of Bangladesh, which have been compounded by the enduring crisis in domestic governance and ongoing tension in the region and wars in the Gulf and in Europe.

A few policy options could be worth considering from a small State perspective to survive and navigate in such challenging global environment. First, in a stormy climate outside, it will be prudent for a small nation to consolidate its domestic front through forging national consensus on key issues of vital national interests, and building its capacity in an inclusive manner. Second, a small nation may seek and ensure as much as agency as possible on issues where it has high stakes, such as economy, ecology, connectivity, reputation and identity. Third, it could also promote the idea of building creative and open regionalism to address issues of common concerns through formal and informal structures. Fourth, it may continue to highlight the value of multilateralism and remain engaged in all modes of multilateral arrangements to advance collective objectives and reduce pressure from external uncertainty. Fifth, it may also cultivate multi-alignment as a part of proactive diplomacy, without aligning with any particular country or a group to keep flexibility in protecting and promoting its vital national interests, bilaterally, regionally and globally.

Keynote Speaker:

International Relations in a Changing World: Interrogating 'Singularity' and 'Otherness'

Prof. Dr. Delwar Hossain, Professor, Department of International Relations,
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract:

Since its emergence in the aftermath of World War I, the study of International Relations (IR) has witnessed profound changes in perspectives and in theoretical, methodological, and empirical traditions. The dichotomy between Colonial and Decolonial IR, or Western and Non-Western IR, has captured the imagination of scholars worldwide. The dominance of positivism as a methodology and of realism as a theory has produced a kind of singularity in the study of IR. Concurrently, the persistence of West-centrism, or great-power centrism, has alienated IR from other societies and civilizations worldwide. The Global South remains deeply marginalized in the politics of knowledge production in IR. Most importantly, IR has increasingly been questioned for its dependence on Eurocentric and Western perspectives for the last three decades. Acharya's concept of the Global IR exemplifies the need to go beyond the singularity and otherness. This interrogation moves beyond questioning of power structures that create difference. It also focuses on underlying insights about identity formation, power and subjugation, securitization, 'standard' construction, and methodological shifts. What are the factors shaping 'singularity' and 'otherness' in IR, and how? Is global IR a response to the singularity and otherness? Do we need to go beyond global IR? To what extent has IR embraced a wide diversity and multiplicity? The paper attempts to reimagine IR as a discipline by examining the decomposition of singularity and otherness.

Keynote Speaker:

Geo-politics, geo-economics, & the Bay of Bengal: Rippling Rohingya spillovers

Prof. Dr. Imtiaz A. Hussain, Professor, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Bangladesh.

Abstract:

Why is the geo-politics and geo-economics behind the 2017 Rohingya eviction receiving lesser attention than humanitarian support and repatriation efforts, particularly when a 'local' incident predicts more tectonic 'global' changes? Indeed, what keeps these enduring change-makers on the back-burner of 'global' attention when they serve front-burner 'local' concerns?

A structured focused methodology is adopted to address those questions (George, 1979). It first separates the causes and consequences of the Rohingya crisis (2017-2026), then distinguishes between fear-driven Rohingya flight (when negotiations may permit repatriation) and Rohingya eviction (when no repatriation is possible), before assessing all dynamics along three dimensions (democracy; economic development and security, in that order), while separating the domestic domain from the external.

Among the findings, security considerations override other dimensions and the external context matters more than the domestic. In turn, the fulcrum shifts from Rakhine province and Myanmar to 'regional' rivals, primarily China but secondarily India, triggering obvious Bay of Bengal spillovers. Subordinating some spillovers to humanitarian needs helped them ripple deeper into 'regional' and 'global' alignments, lapping Southeast and Far East Asian shores as well as U.S. interests. Thus ethnic cleansing within defined boundaries today poses boundary-less geo-political and geo-economic thrusts whose possible consequences may be graver than any since World War II. Behind the Rohingya humanitarian caretaking in the world's largest displaced camp, then, also brews similar destabilizing features/futures for humans across the entire planet too.

Anchored upon turbulence theory (Rosenau, 1997), the study shows (a) the irreplaceable two-way flows between 'local' and 'global' eking both the 'global' to the 'regional' and elevating the 'local' to the 'global'; and (b) leaving both 'local' and 'global' in distress.

Keynote Speaker:

Rethinking Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development in the Global South: Insights from Bangladesh

Prof. Dr. Md. Kamal Uddin, Former Pro-VC (Administration), University of Chittagong.

Abstract:

Environmental governance in the Global South is organised through multilateral environmental agreements, treaties, set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making, legal, administrative, and technocratic models primarily developed based on the Global Northern perspectives. These models emphasize independent regulators, consistent enforcement, reliable data, and equitable citizen participation. However, the global environmental governance models mostly struggle to achieve their intended outcomes in the global south, particularly in Bangladesh. Despite a well-structured constitutional, legal, and institutional framework, the country increasingly faces the challenges for ensuring sustainable development. This paper argues that the persistence of severe environmental harm does not indicate simply a lack of legal framework and weak implementation, but a contextual mismatch between formal governance arrangements and the conditions through which they function. Employing the concept of environmental governance, green education, green criminology, gender perspectives and decolonial environmental justice, this paper explains how limited environmental knowledge, poor green education, green crimes, gender-specific needs, lack of women's participations, regulatory-capacity constraints, livelihood insecurity, corruption, and state-business-political networks can create extensive challenges for sustainable development in the global south, mainly in Bangladesh. Therefore, the keynote calls for the rethinking of existing environmental governance to overcome the sustainable development challenges in Bangladesh. However, this does not mean the complete rejection of existing environmental governance, but it emphasizes decolonization and revisitations. By investigating whose knowledge defines environmental harm, whose interests determine development priorities, who participates in decisions, and which communities and ecosystems bear the consequences, it proposes a contextualized model considering environmental knowledge and education, meaningful community co-governance, transparent data and citizen monitoring, independent, coordinated, and accountable enforcement, accessible remedies, livelihood-sensitive prevention, and safeguards against impunity. Bangladesh should not be considered merely a deficient adopter of global standards, but rather a landscape from which alternative governance knowledge can emerge. Finally, this keynote concludes that sustainable development in the Global South significantly depends on building legitimate, socially embedded, and ecologically equitable systems capable of addressing the socio-cultural and political realities

Keynote Speaker:

Assessing the Impact of Good Neighbors Bangladesh's Youth Development Initiatives on Human Security and Community Resilience

Bartin Gomes, Country Head, Good Neighbours Bangladesh

Abstract:

Background: Bangladesh's large youth population represents a significant opportunity for national development; however, many young people continue to face limited access to leadership opportunities, employability skills, civic engagement, and protection awareness. Good Neighbors Bangladesh (GNB) has implemented structured Youth Development Initiatives across multiple districts to address these gaps. This study assessed whether and how structured youth engagement contributes to measurable individual- and community-level changes and generated evidence to inform program learning and future scale-up.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach was employed to assess the impact of GNB's Youth Development Initiatives across 17 project areas in 13 districts. A quasi-experimental design was used to compare participating and non-participating youth from comparable socio-economic contexts. Quantitative data were collected from 635 youth aged 15–29, including 474 program participants and 161 non-participants. Qualitative evidence was generated through 12 focus group discussions, 17 key informant interviews, and 30 in-depth interviews with employed former participants to explore longer-term outcomes and pathways of change.

Results: GNB's youth development model provides a progressive pathway from volunteering and Youth Club membership to more responsible roles as Sponsorship Service Supporters, Dream School Teachers, and Interns, with capacity and confidence building progressively across stages. Participation in structured and progressive youth engagement was associated with improvements in personal development, leadership readiness, confidence, teamwork, self-reliance, civic participation, and community recognition. Compared with non-participants, participating youth reported greater confidence in decision-making, planning, and leading activities. At the community level, the initiatives strengthened climate and environmental action, child protection awareness and response mechanisms, positive social norms, and youth participation in local decision-making. Nature and Peace Clubs served as important platforms for environmental campaigns and community mobilization. Interviews with employed former participants indicated sustained benefits in communication, professionalism, teamwork, and ICT skills, which participants frequently linked to their career development and employment success.

Discussion and Conclusion: The findings suggest that structured and progressive youth engagement is associated with meaningful and sustained individual- and community-level benefits. Consistent opportunities for participation, leadership practice, community engagement, and skills development can strengthen youth agency while contributing to positive changes within communities. Continued investment in youth platforms, flexible engagement pathways, employability-focused skills development, and structured alumni mechanisms is recommended to reinforce sustained outcomes, career readiness, and program sustainability.

Keynote Speaker:

The Non-traditional Security Threats of the Bangladesh Maritime zone in the Bay of Bengal.

Prof. Dr. Safiqul Islam, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration),
University of Chittagong, Bangladesh

Abstract:

The paper focuses mainly on the non-traditional maritime security threats in the maritime zone of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. The maritime zone of Bangladesh is very significant to Bangladesh since there are four seaports, including the Matarbari deep seaport which is under construction, located to the zone. Besides, sustainable use and management of the resources of the coastal maritime zones of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal would leverage employment creation and food security. However, the maritime crimes and vulnerabilities in the maritime zone pose threats to the security, natural environment and bio-diversities. Thus, the paper investigates the nature of different maritime crimes and vulnerabilities, how they pose threats to the security of maritime zone and how these threats can be faced. To address the research questions, in-depth interview of fisherman, crew, coastguard and navy has been conducted. The empirical analysis is done based on the theory of non-traditional security threats. The paper finds out that armed robbery, illegal fishing, marine pollution, the trafficking of small arms, drugs, human and goods mainly pose threats in the maritime zone of Bangladesh. Taking strong security measures and making people conscious, these threats may be reduced.

Keynote Speaker:

**Geopolitical Uncertainty, Domestic Weakness and Bangladesh's
National Security**

Prof. Dr. Md. Abdul Mannan, Professor, Department of International Relations,
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract:

Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency for a second term has ushered in a rapid formation of geopolitical uncertainties in international politics. The 'rule-based international order' has been in decline, as Trump's 'America First' deinstitutionalizes international politics, replaces traditional global alliances with transactional, bilateral agreements, and undermines 'international society' by attacking other countries without regard for international rules and norms. The deinstitutionalization of international relations has made geopolitical conditions unpredictable, as evidenced by developments such as shifting alliances, technological rivalry, armed conflicts, trade wars, supply chain disruptions, and energy volatility. One may wonder whether a small power like Bangladesh can maintain its geopolitical non-alignment involving the U.S., China, Russia, and India under a deinstitutionalized international order. Such concern is compounded by Bangladesh's domestic weaknesses, characterized by dysfunctional state institutions and a severe lack of national capacity, which prevents the state from being resilient against external pressure. The paper seeks to examine how geopolitical uncertainties and domestic weakness combine to affect Bangladesh's national security.



Sub-theme - 01:
Rethinking Global Order:
The Role of Middle and Small States

Educational Sovereignty in a Fragmenting Order: Artificial Intelligence, Knowledge Dependence, and Small-State Agency in Bangladesh

Md. Fajlay Rabbi, Sourav Adhikary

Abstract:

Studies of the rule-based global order usually focus on trade regimes, security arrangements, and membership in international institutions. Education is treated as a domestic matter and left outside International Relations. This paper argues that the division no longer holds. For middle and small states, education systems have become one of the main sites where global rules arrive, get absorbed, and are sometimes reworked. The paper develops the idea of educational sovereignty, defined as a state's capacity to set the terms on which knowledge is produced, certified, and circulated inside its territory. It examines three pressures on that capacity. The first is the governance of generative artificial intelligence in teaching, assessment, and research. Technical standards and model behavior are set by a small number of firms and jurisdictions, so adopting states end up regulating outputs they cannot inspect. The second is the phantomization of higher education. Foreign-owned learning management systems, publishers, indexing databases, and accreditation frameworks make national quality assurance derivative of external benchmarks. The third is the link between credentialing and skilled migration, which turns domestic educational spending into labor supply for foreign markets and complicates the developmental case on which that spending rests. Bangladesh is the case. It combines rapid expansion of higher education, ongoing accreditation reform, national digitalization programs, promotion criteria tied to foreign indexing services, and a remittance economy built around exported skills. That combination makes it a demanding test of whether small states retain real agency in knowledge governance. The study uses a qualitative single-case design. It analyses national education, ICT, and higher education policy documents alongside the UNESCO, OECD, and World Bank frameworks they draw on, and traces how artificial intelligence policy has been adopted across the university sector. The argument is that small states are not simply rule takers. They borrow selectively, comply partially, and retain a constrained but real capacity to act. Artificial intelligence narrows that space, because compute, model weights, and evaluation standards sit outside national reach. The paper ends with what this implies for cooperation among small and middle states, including regional accreditation compacts and the adoption of open-weight models as a sovereignty measure.

Beyond Buffer-State Logic: Node-Based Agency in the Caspian-Middle East Conflict Network

Shaoyuan Wu

Abstract:

The renewed prominence of buffer-state language in analyses of Eurasian and Middle Eastern security reflects an enduring intuition: geographically exposed states located between stronger rivals are constrained more than they are empowered. Yet this territorial logic is increasingly incomplete. Contemporary conflict is sustained through distributed logistics corridors, overseas bases, airspace permissions, ports, sensors, maintenance systems, defense-industrial supply chains, and transferable operational knowledge. In such systems, states conventionally treated as peripheral can influence conflict by controlling the connections on which larger actors depend. This article develops the concept of node-based agency to explain how middle

and small states convert positional roles into strategic effects within the emerging Caspian-Middle East conflict network. Nodebased agency is defined as the deliberate use of authority over a consequential connection, facility, route, or interface to alter other actors' operational options, costs, timing, or exposure. It is not equivalent to geographic centrality. It requires four jointly reinforcing conditions: positional criticality, political discretion, conversion capacity, and resilience under pressure; its value declines as substitutes become easier to activate. The article identifies three mechanisms. Corridor power operates through the opening, pacing, prioritization, or rerouting of material flows. Access power derives from conditional permission to use bases, ports, airspace, sensors, and defense interfaces. Denial power arises when a state restricts, compartmentalizes, or refuses such use, thereby increasing coordination friction or limiting cross-theater integration. A structured qualitative comparison examines the northern Caspian logistics system, Gulf basing and air-defense access, and Ukraine's transfer of drone-defense expertise to five Middle Eastern states alongside the July 2026 Caspian maritime incident. The findings show that network position can generate influence disproportionate to material size, but only under restrictive conditions. Centrality without discretion produces dependency; discretion without conversion capacity produces symbolic refusal; and leverage without resilience can turn a node into a target. The article therefore moves beyond both passive buffer-state imagery and celebratory accounts of smallstate agency. It argues that contemporary networked conflict redistributes agency toward states able to govern critical connections while making those same states more exposed to coercion, retaliation, and systemic disruption.

RCASBC-2026-31

Can Small States Influence Global Governance? A Study of Bangladesh's Climate Diplomacy

Israt Jahan Isue

Abstract:

Climate change has drastically altered the international system, transforming environmental issues from a purely scientific problem to an essential component of global governance, international security and even human survival. Although big power have long been at the forefront of developing international rules and institutions, the growing power of small and climate-vulnerable states demonstrate that global governance is no longer defined solely by military or economic power. Several small states have gained influence in international climate negotiations through diplomacy, coalition building and norm entrepreneurship. Bangladesh is a good example of small state in the current rule-based international system. Bangladesh is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change, despite accounting for less than 0.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The country is particularly vulnerable to challenges such as rising sea levels, increased intensity of tropical cyclones, river erosion, salinity intrusion and flood. According to the World bank, if no effective adaption strategies are implemented, climate change could internally displace up to 19.9 million people in Bangladesh by 2050. The Global Climate Risk Index consistently ranks Bangladesh as one of the countries most affected by extreme weather events in recent decades. As a result of these vulnerabilities, Bangladesh has emerged as the leading advocate for climate justice and effective Global governance on the issue. Bangladesh does not rely on hard power, performing to advance its interests through multilateral diplomacy, international legal action, coalition building and climate advocacy. It actively participate in CVF and V20, promotes the CBDR-RC principle in the UN climate regime and supports the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP 27. Moreover, Bangladesh has emerged as a leading voice in adaption finance, resilience building and climate justice, demonstrating

how small states can contribute to global discourse through diplomacy and norms entrepreneurship. This paper investigates whether and how a small steps can exert influence in global governance by examining Bangladesh's climate diplomacy in the context of the evolving rule-based international order. Based on the small state diplomacy theory, global governance theory and norm entrepreneurship theory, the paper contends that Bangladesh has successfully wielded influence in the international community by converting its climate vulnerability into diplomatic leverage. Furthermore, this paper examines the prospects and constraints of small state's ability to influence international decision making in the context of increased geopolitical rivalry and multilateral fragmentation. As a result, the paper claims that the example of Bangladesh demonstrates that today's influence in global governance necessitates not only power but also diplomatic skills, coalition building, moral leadership and participation in international institutions.

RCASBC-2026-36

Strategic Autonomy and Coalition-Building: How Middle and Small States Are Reshaping Global Governance in a Multipolar Order

Asmatwali

Abstract:

The post-Cold War liberal international order is undergoing sustained erosion, driven by intensifying great-power competition, geopolitical fragmentation, and the weakening of multilateral consensus. Within this shifting landscape, middle and small states are no longer confined to the role of passive rule-takers; instead, they are increasingly emerging as active shapers of regional and global governance through strategic autonomy, issue-based coalitionbuilding, and calibrated diplomatic engagement. This paper examines how middle and small powers are adapting their foreign policy behaviour to navigate an increasingly contested, multipolar international system, moving away from binary alignment choices toward flexible, interest-driven partnerships that maximise policy space and bargaining leverage. Drawing on recent diplomatic developments, including multi-vector engagement strategies, cross-regional coalition platforms, and selective institutional participation, the paper argues that strategic autonomy has become a defining feature of contemporary middle-power statecraft, allowing these states to hedge between competing great powers while preserving the flexibility to pursue independent policy trajectories. The analysis further explores coalition-building as a distinct governance strategy, examining how middle and small states pool diplomatic capital through mini-lateral groupings and issue-specific coalitions to influence agenda-setting on pressing global concerns such as security, trade, and institutional reform, even in the absence of formal great-power backing or traditional alliance structures. The paper situates these dynamics within broader debates on the crisis of multilateralism and the reform of global governance institutions, paying particular attention to how middle-power regional leadership is reconfiguring the normative and structural contours of the international system. It also considers how the Global South's growing assertiveness intersects with these strategies, as emerging and middle powers increasingly demand representation commensurate with their material and normative contributions to global order. The paper concludes by evaluating the implications of this shift for the future of rule-based multilateralism, arguing that inclusive, middle-power-driven governance models may offer a more resilient, representative, and durable alternative to great-power-centric international order, one better equipped to accommodate the interests of a genuinely multipolar world.

Towards Multiplexity: Foreign Policy Evolution Beyond Exclusive Alignment— The Case of Bangladesh

Sukanya Chakraborty

Abstract:

How aspiring regional powers seek status recognition within an increasingly multiplex international order remains one of the most contested questions in International Relations scholarship. This article develops an integrated conceptual framework by drawing critical analysis on regional power scholarship, Global IR, and constructivist approaches of identity and status to explain how foreign policy evolution enables aspiring regional powers such as Bangladesh to reconstruct their identities while preserving strategic autonomy. In this article, I outline some major analytical questions and research gaps that emerge from considering the framing of emerging regional powers as weak, structurally constrained, and dependent actors within the multiplex global order in International Relations scholarship. This article addresses this gap by arguing that Bangladesh, rather than pursuing exclusive alignment with major powers, has adopted proactive diplomacy and selective engagement as complementary strategies to expand its regional and international influence. This paper further demonstrates that the 'Bangladesh First' doctrine represents an indigenous articulation of foreign policy rooted in Bangladesh's own strategic priorities rather than an imitation of great-power or emerging-power models. Finally, the article shows how Bangladesh increasingly employs multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations, as arenas for diplomatic socialization, coalition-building, and international recognition rather than merely forums for cooperation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that Bangladesh's foreign policy evolution reflects a process of identity reconstruction through which it seeks recognition as a cooperative regional leading power without relying on exclusive alignment with major powers.

RCASBC-2026-60

Connectivity Power: How Middle States Are Reshaping the Rule-Based Global Order

Fozia Hafeez

Abstract:

The rule-based international order, which has traditionally been predicated on the dominance of superpowers, is going through a significant transition. The traditional belief that great powers are the only ones that create and uphold global order should be re-examined as unipolarity gives way to a more disputed and multipolar environment. This essay makes the case that middle and small states, especially those in Asia, are changing how "rules" are negotiated, contested, and implemented by becoming active architects of regional stability, economic connectivity, and institutional realignment rather than passive subjects of that order. Using Pakistan as a central case study, the paper examines how a middle power positioned at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean has translated geography into strategic relevance. Through frameworks such as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and by balancing relationships among China, the United States, and the Gulf states, Pakistan illustrates a broader pattern: middle and small states increasingly exercise influence through infrastructure, trade corridors, and diplomatic networks rather than military capability alone. Two conceptual contributions are introduced in the work. First, connection power is the ability of a state to influence regional and international politics through economic integration, infrastructure, and geography as opposed to using hard force. In contrast to traditional alliance blocs or territory domination alone, influence flows through overlapping economic, technological, and diplomatic networks (BRI, CPEC, SCO, BRICS, AUKUS, the Quad, and IMEC). This is

known as networked multipolarity. These frameworks are provided as tools that are useful to small and middle-sized states facing comparable structural positions outside of South Asia. The paper argues that the future of the rule-based order will be determined more by whether current institutions can accommodate or will be altered by the strategic decisions of medium and small nations, rather than by great-power confrontation, by emphasizing geoeconomics and connectivity. It concludes that reconsidering global order necessitates reconsidering who has the authority to establish its regulations.

RCASBC-2026-64

Sustainable Finance as Soft Power: ESG Regulation and the Repositioning of Middle and Small States in the Rule-Based Global Order

Afroza Sultana

Abstract:

Geopolitical fragmentation, climate governance and sustainable finance are three areas where the contemporary rule based international order is undergoing a deep transformation and reshaping international cooperation. Although major powers still dominate the rule-making process in global finance, middle and small states are becoming active participants—using their domestic financial reforms in a strategic way to enhance their international credibility and influence. While the study of environmental, social and governance (ESG) regulation has grown significantly in recent years, the current literature has largely focused on the aspects of environmental compliance, banking regulation and financial risk management. The strategic significance in international governance or the use of ESG regulation as a tool of financial statecraft and soft power by middle and small states has received comparatively little attention. This paper proposes that sustainable finance regulation should be considered as a way in which states signal their credibility, reinforce their international legitimacy and redefine their role in the emerging global financial order based on norms. The study uses a qualitative comparative case-study approach, including the countries of Bangladesh, Vietnam, Kenya, Costa Rica and Morocco, which have different regulatory sequencing models: mandate-led, market-led, technical-assistance-led, multi-regulator and roadmap-first. Based on the central bank's regulations, sustainable finance policies, documents on the green taxonomy, official implementation reports and selected secondary literature published from 2011 to 2026, the paper compares the development, implementation and international positioning of ESG regulatory frameworks. To synthesize the comparative evidence, it crafts a descriptive ESG Regulatory Soft-Power Signaling Index (RSSI) that measures four dimensions: international referencing intensity, institutional partnership depth, reporting continuity and transparency, and symbolic timing alignment. The results show that ESG regulation is a strategic signaling mechanism that goes beyond national financial supervision in all five countries, although there are differences between them. Sustainable finance policies, green taxonomies, and climate-related regulatory frameworks further the engagement with multilateral development banks, draw in climate finance, connect with international sustainability pledges, and boost national credibility in global financial governance. The article brings together sustainable finance, International Political Economy, and global governance lenses to offer a new framework that places ESG regulation as a new instrument of financial statecraft, where middle and small states can wield influence in an evolving rulegoverned global order. The results indicate that ESG regulation is becoming a tool of financial statecraft that could help build the credibility of the regulatory system, increase access to sustainable finance, and increase the strategic importance of middle and small states in the changing rule-based global financial order. The paper's contribution is a novel conceptual framework that reframes the ESG regulation as a strategic tool of financial statecraft, combining sustainable finance and International Political Economy (IPE) and global governance perspectives.

Reforming Global Governance for the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Nibedita Roy

Abstract:

The changing dynamics of the international system in the 21st century have posed significant challenges to the existing global governance framework. Institutions established after World War II, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, have contributed to international peace, economic cooperation, and development. However, growing concerns about institutional effectiveness, legitimacy, representation, and adaptability have highlighted the need for comprehensive reform. This paper will examine the challenges and opportunities associated with global governance reform in the context of emerging global issues such as climate change, pandemics, cyber security, artificial intelligence, geopolitical competition, and economic inequality. The study will adopt a qualitative research methodology based on an analysis of academic literature, institutional reports, and policy documents. The analysis will be guided by Keohane's (1984) liberal institutionalism theory and an analysis of three schools of thought on globalization. Liberal institutionalism emphasizes the role of international institutions in facilitating cooperation among states. As a result, three perspectives of globalization theorists will be explained to analyze whether states can engage in mutual cooperation while maintaining their own interests. There is an opportunity to analyze the role of international institutions and the capacity of nation-states to address global problems. The research findings will attempt to examine how the current governance system is facing limitations due to unequal representation, institutional rigidity, and insufficient coordination among global actors. The need for more inclusive decision-making processes, stronger multilateral cooperation, improved institutional accountability, and adaptive structures to address emerging challenges will be emphasized for effective global governance reform. This research is justified in realizing the need for global governance reform with the aim of creating a more legitimate, and sustainable international system capable of addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The Climate Justice Deficit Index (CJDI): A Transparent, Reproducible Framework for Measuring the Gap Between Climate Vulnerability and Climate Finance

Md Saazid Bin Saif, Mahin Bin Marfath

Abstract:

International climate finance is often based on the principle of need, but a standard, universally accepted and widely-used measurement of climate vulnerability and international climate finance provided to a country does not exist. This paper presents the Climate Justice Deficit Index (CJDI), a replicable, open methodology index, which is entirely publicly available based on the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI), Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Country Index, and the OECD Climate-Related Development Finance (CRDF) database, as well as the World Bank's IDA/IBRD project ledgers. First, we build a Composite Climate-Exposure and Sensitivity Index (CCESI) out of exposure,

sensitivity and adaptive-capacity components and validate it externally against ND-GAIN (Pearson $r = 0.80$, 95% CI [0.74, 0.85]; Spearman $\rho = 0.89$; $n = 190$; $p < 10^{-43}$). We demonstrate that CCESI is not sensitive to the aggregation weights; for example, the correlation between the rankings obtained by the equal weights and PCA weights is $\rho = 0.99$. The percentile-rank difference between the climate vulnerability and the climate aid received by a country is then defined as CJDI. In 137 countries with available data, we document a metric-choice paradox: country absolute and per-capita aid rankings are only weakly correlated ($\rho = -0.03$), and CJDI is much more sensitive to the choice between absolute and per-capita aid ($\rho = 0.35$) than to the choice of vulnerability-weighting scheme ($\rho = 0.99$). The countries with the worst justice deficits – Sudan, Syria, Burundi and DPR Korea – are high-vulnerability, low-income countries, that are all but invisible in absolute-dollar measures of aid recipients. We report the complete ranking of the CJDI, the regression and nonparametric tests of the vulnerability-aid relationship, and provide multiple tests of robustness, and argue that reporting per-capita, in light of needs, should be the norm in assessing the equity of the international climate finance regime.

RCASBC-2026-132

From Hedging to Strategic Autonomy: Assessing Bangladesh's Foreign-Policy Agency amid Great-Power Competition

Nazmul Hasan Raz, Shammi Islam

Abstract:

Great power competition in the Indo-Pacific has created a more complex situation for Bangladesh, requiring it to navigate competing powers while maintaining its own foreign-policy interests. The use of hedging in Bangladesh's economic and security relations has become a prominent theme in the existing scholarship. Recent scholarship has increasingly characterized Bangladesh as a 'hedging state' that seeks to diversify its economic and security relations while avoiding excessive dependence on any single major power. Meanwhile, recent studies have identified strategic autonomy as one of the foreign policy goals for Bangladesh. Yet one crucial analytical issue remains insufficiently addressed: does Bangladesh's hedging strategy actually lead to greater strategic autonomy in policymaking? The paper addresses this question by examining how Bangladesh uses its strategic flexibility in foreign policy to create policy space in the competition between great powers. It conceptualizes hedging as a strategy and strategic autonomy as an outcome. It distinguishes a state's ability to maintain multiple external relationships and pursue policy choices with limited external constraint. The study examines four domains of Bangladesh's strategic policy behavior: diplomatic, economic, security, and multilateral. It examines the forms of hedging Bangladesh employs, how much autonomy these policies create, what factors help and hinder this autonomy, and when hedging increases or decreases external dependence. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach with a structured thematic analysis of scholarly literature, policy documents, official statements and relevant economic, diplomatic and security evidence to propose a multidimensional framework for measuring Bangladesh's strategic autonomy. The study contributes to the literature on small-state foreign-policy agency and strategic behavior under great power competition by connecting Bangladesh's strategic behavior with its autonomy outcomes. Its main proposition is that strategic flexibility does not necessarily mean strategic autonomy, since the effectiveness of hedging depends on the availability of reliable alternatives, the degree of external dependence, domestic capabilities and the policy domain in which strategic choices are made.

Beyond Strategic Hedging: Bangladesh as a Constrained Agent in the US–China–India Rivalry

Al Amin

Abstract:

The intensification of strategic competition among the United States, China, and India has created a complex foreign policy environment for smaller states in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia. Bangladesh occupies a particularly important position within this emerging geopolitical configuration because of its geographic proximity to India, expanding economic engagement with China, substantial access to Western markets, and strategic location in the Bay of Bengal. Existing analyses have increasingly characterized Bangladesh's foreign policy as a form of strategic hedging, whereby Dhaka avoids exclusive alignment with any major power while maintaining cooperation with multiple actors. This paper builds on that interpretation but argues that Bangladesh's hedging behavior should not be understood as an expression of unconstrained strategic autonomy. Rather, it represents bounded or structurally constrained hedging undertaken within an asymmetric international environment. Drawing on neoclassical realism as the primary theoretical framework, supplemented by strategic hedging theory, smallstate theory, and asymmetric interdependence, the paper develops the concept of constrained agency to explain this condition. It argues that Bangladesh possesses meaningful foreign policy agency, but that this agency is filtered through four major constraints: geography, economic interdependence, security asymmetry, and systemic pressure generated by US–China–India rivalry. Using a qualitative case-study approach and thematic analysis of policy documents, economic data, and relevant scholarly literature, the study demonstrates that Bangladesh's foreign policy choices are neither simple balancing nor bandwagoning. Instead, they constitute managed choices under structural pressure. The paper therefore contributes to strategic hedging scholarship by demonstrating how small-state agency can remain active while simultaneously being substantially bounded by asymmetric power relations.

BRICS Expansion and the New Politics of Coalition-Building: Realigning the Emerging International Order

Dhrubajyoti Roy

Abstract:

The international order is undergoing major transformation, characterised by growing multipolarity, challenging the established institutional structures, and an increasing influence of emerging and developing states. Within this changing order, BRICS has evolved from its original four-member arrangement into an expanded grouping with a wider geographical and political representation. The existing scholarship has extensively examined BRICS in terms of economic cooperation, its challenge to Western dominance, de-dollarisation, institutional reform, and the significance of its expansion. However, comparatively less attention has been given to BRICS as an evolving mechanism of coalition-building and its broader importance for the emerging international order. The objective of this paper is to fill the gap by examining how the expansion of BRICS transformed the nature of coalition-building among emerging and Global South states and the prospects of such coalition-building. This paper is situated within the broader concept of rethinking the global order and the role of middle and emerging powers. It specifically highlights

coalition-building, agency of the Global South and the changing character of global governance. It posits BRICS as a flexible coalition of states with diverse, sometimes competing, interests which come together to aggregate capabilities, coordinate positions, increase bargaining power and gain greater representation in the global institutions, rather than as a traditional alliance or a singular bloc. The expansion of the grouping presents a significant puzzle. While a larger membership increases the grouping's collective economic, demographic, and political weight, greater heterogeneity may simultaneously create diverging interests and constraints on collective action. The paper uses a qualitative approach. It combines descriptive and analytical approaches and is built around a case study of BRICS and its expansion. It is based on secondary sources, mainly academic literature, official statements, BRICS declarations and documents, international reports, policy papers, and relevant scholarly analyses. The paper studies the evolution of BRICS, the drivers and outcomes of its expansion, and the patterns of collective and institutional engagement by employing content analysis and process tracing. ¹ The paper argues that BRICS represents an emerging pattern of flexible coalition-building in international politics. It reflects the attempts by the Global South and emerging states to act together and shape the global power distribution patterns. Its expansion, therefore, has significance not merely for the grouping itself but for the broader realignment of the emerging international order.

RCASBC-2026-183

From Vulnerability To Welfare Power: Small-State Diplomacy, Social Protection And Economic Resilience In Bangladesh

Mst Ruhita Rahman Tanha, Nazifa Nawar Eshika

Abstract:

While international collaborations offer essential assets for developing internal resilience, small nations have been enduring institutional and economic weaknesses that limit their ability to cope with external shocks. Nevertheless, studies on small-state diplomacy have mainly focused on strategic vulnerability, diplomatic power and international negotiations whereas research on social protection has primarily considered external funding as a resource without adequately exploring the role of diplomatic agency in transforming it into welfare results. This research addresses this gap by defining “welfare power” as the ability of a vulnerable nation to convert international cooperation, developmental aid and climate funding into efficient domestic social security and economic stability. Due to its regular susceptibility to economic and climate disruptions and its substantial involvement with bilateral and multilateral development partners, Bangladesh presents a noteworthy case. This study establishes a longitudinal empirical framework covering 1995–2024 that includes welfare measurements, macroeconomic indicators, social protection spending, climate financing initiatives, foreign aid promises, disbursements and climate shock indicators. Our analysis combines annual international-finance and macroeconomic data, and repeated rounds of the Bangladesh Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) to assess the relationship between international resource mobilization and domestic welfare institutions. An Economic Resilience Index measures household income, consumption, employment, assets, food security and vulnerability; while social-protection spending and coverage act as the key domestic transmission mechanism. Additionally, the research examines if more robust social-protection frameworks improve households' ability to handle climate-related and economic shocks and to convert externally provided resources into concrete welfare improvements. By linking small-state diplomatic efforts with social protection and householdlevel resilience, the paper broadens current discussions on the rules-based international order beyond traditional measures of strategic and diplomatic influence. It argues that the effectiveness of cross-border collaborations depends not just on the number of

resources obtained but also on the national institutional ability to transform these resources into welfare systems that are inclusive and adaptable. The findings aim to guide policy decisions for enhancing Bangladesh's external resource mobilization approach, its social protection framework and its path to climate resilience while mentioning welfare provision as a less examined aspect of the agency of small states.

RCASBC-2026-188

Beyond Bilateral Goodwill: Rethinking Bangladesh's Security Strategy in a Fragmenting Global Order

Nafew Siddique Roman

Abstract:

Since independence, Bangladesh has formulated its foreign policy on the basis of friendship to all and enmity to none. This has been a successful strategy for the country, contributing to decades of relative regional stability, insulating it from bloc politics, and drawing development partners from across the ideological spectrum. However, currently the international system is rather different from the one in which this doctrine was formed. The security context is one of great power competition, geopolitical fragmentation and erosion of multilateral standards, where friendly ties alone may not safeguard against coercion or attack by a stronger belligerent. This study explores whether Bangladesh's conventional non-alignment posture is adequate to meet its security needs, or if the government needs to pursue more formal defence agreements. The paper employs comparative cases of small and middle power security strategies, namely non-alignment, soft balancing and formal alliance commitments, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of all three models in relation to Bangladesh's particular geopolitical position, straddled as it is between two major powers and sitting within a contested maritime space. The analysis indicates that goodwill diplomacy is useful for economic and political engagement but is not deterrence in and of itself. It also says that a totally non-aligned stance could make Bangladesh strategically vulnerable as competition increases in the region. Instead of endorsing one alliance option, the study advocates for a calibrated 2 | Page hedging strategy: selective defence cooperation, capability development, and issuespecific security alliances that protect Bangladesh's sovereignty and diplomatic flexibility, while boosting deterrence. This study provides a field-informed perspective on the practice of doctrine in a small state facing great power competition, drawing on the author's operational experience in staff planning, regional security operations and multinational peacekeeping. It responds to the primary question of the conference on the place of medium and small states in a changing global order with a case study of Bangladesh that has broader significance for similar nations across South and Southeast Asia.

RCASBC-2026-192

Grassroots to Global: Evaluating Public and Youth Perspectives on Women in Peacekeeping as Bangladesh's Soft Power

Atasy Aranya, Mayeesha Ibnath, Atkia Maysha Amin

Abstract:

Bangladesh is one of the high contributing troop countries globally in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. In recent years, this contribution has taken a clear gendered direction with more female peacekeepers being deployed to conflict and post-conflict areas. Official government and diplomatic narratives present these female peacekeepers as the key to building national prestige and showing Bangladesh's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. However, previous related research has explored how ordinary citizens, specially young people, see this contribution. This study tries to fill that gap by looking at public perception in Bangladesh focusing on how people view female

peacekeepers as both a source of domestic gender empowerment and a tool for building international soft power. The research is based on primary survey data collected from 184 respondents from different age groups and backgrounds, and is supported by a literature review covering small state diplomacy, gendered security governance and public diplomacy. The findings show strong public support for the idea that female peacekeepers improve Bangladesh's global image. 78.4% of respondents stated that this initiative helps boost the country's reputation and 71.2% linked it to portraying Bangladesh as a progressive and capable nation. A majority (81.5%) also stated that female peacekeeping is as or more effective than traditional bilateral diplomacy in building goodwill internationally. A more interesting finding appears when analyzing age groups separately. Younger respondents (age 18–30) mostly see female peacekeepers as a symbol of personal empowerment, career growth and a modern national image while older respondents focus more on military duty, humanitarian service, and institutional representation. Even though the overall success rating was high (84.3%), the data also shows a gap between how the government talks about this issue and how much the general public actually has knowledge regarding it. 44.3% of respondents felt that awareness is still limited mostly to educate and urban people. Based on these results, the paper recommends increasing the number of female peacekeepers deployed, along with public diplomacy campaigns inside Bangladesh to close this awareness gap and further strengthen the country's soft power.

RCASBC-2026-211

“From Cultural Performance to Soft Power: Reimagining Bangladesh’s Film as Instrument of Cultural Diplomacy in a Changing Global Order”

Md. Saddam Hossain

Abstract:

In the changing global system, diplomacy is no longer limited to state negotiations, political agreements or economic relations. Culture, art, and creative media are now important areas for shaping a state's international identity and fostering relationships between people. The main objective of this research is to reconsider Bangladeshi cinema as a strategic medium of cultural diplomacy and analyse how cinema can create cultural relations and mutual understanding by presenting Bangladeshi culture, history, values, and social reality on an international scale. Cultural diplomacy here refers to presenting Bangladesh's cultural identity to people in other countries through film, creating cultural connections, increasing mutual understanding, and building long-term international relations. From this perspective, film is not just a medium of art or entertainment; it is an important cultural communication and diplomatic resource of the state. The way Bangladeshi films present the liberation war, language movement, folk traditions, religious and social diversity, rural and urban life, the experiences of marginalised people, the climate crisis, and contemporary social changes can create a multidimensional cultural identity of Bangladesh for international audiences. The research will specifically explore how International Film festivals, film distribution platforms, cultural exchange programmes, and transnational co-productions can establish Bangladeshi cinema as an effective vehicle for cultural diplomacy. At the same time, it will analyse how the cultural representation of films can create interest, familiarity and positive perceptions of Bangladesh among international audiences. Theoretically, the research will integrate Joseph Nye's concepts of soft power, cultural diplomacy, performance studies and film studies. The textual and visual analysis of narrative, performance, visual language, cultural symbols, and historical representation in selected Bangladeshi films will be conducted. The main argument of the research is that if Bangladeshi films are used as part of cultural diplomacy in a planned manner, they can play an important role in enhancing the country's cultural identity globally, increasing soft power and people-to-people connections, and fostering long-term international cultural relations.

THE POWER TO SAY NO Commitment-Level Exit Capacity in Bangladesh's Development-Finance Partnerships

Nerob Ahmed

Abstract:

Research on small-state autonomy often treats diversified partnerships as evidence of strategic room for manoeuvre. That inference overlooks a commitment-level problem: a state may engage several external partners yet lack a usable way to carry a public function from one financing arrangement to another. This article develops commitment-level exit capacity as a meso-level construct for analysing that gap. Assessed commitment-level exit capacity is the pre-decision capability to refuse, modify, refinance, terminate, or substitute a specific asymmetric development-finance arrangement. It is constituted by authority, attainability of a project-specific alternative, functional transferability, and relative affordability; domestic implementation capacity conditions all four. The construct therefore asks not merely whether another partner exists, but whether a state can convert an alternative into a credible, function-preserving transition within a particular commitment. The article uses concept development and theory-guided documentary analysis. It distinguishes assessed capacity from exit-related action, executed bargaining outcomes, and functional-exit outcomes. It also separates six legal and operational objects of exit: non-entry, portfolio removal, procurement exit, framework exit, financing exit, and technical exit. India-supported Lines of Credit provide the principal institutional application. The relevant documents show that consultation, amendment, and framework-termination provisions coexist with surviving financing and repayment obligations, while procurement rules narrow formal eligibility and may increase project-specific transition constraints. Reported requests to revise selected Chinese loan terms illustrate voice within an ongoing financing relationship, but the absence of executed amendments and revised repayment schedules prevents classification of the reported response as a verified bargaining outcome. Selected Japanese ODA documents demonstrate variation in procurement and disclosure architecture, including general-untied procurement, but do not establish that Japanese finance was available as a substitute for the same projects. The analysis does not identify a demonstrated functional exit. Instead, it provides conceptual boundaries, observable indicators, documentary classification anchors, and three propositions for later comparative testing. It argues that national partner diversity becomes commitment-level leverage only when an alternative is legally usable, attainable, functionally transferable, and preferable to continuation. The framework offers a disciplined way to assess small-state agency without equating diversification with autonomy, formal termination with successful transition, or reported negotiation with verified improvement.

A Shift in Small State Diplomacy in a Changing International Order

Arusha Benta Amir, Iqra Islam Jol

Abstract:

The international system is undergoing a profound transformation marked by intensifying great-power competition, growing geopolitical fragmentation, and increasing uncertainty. While debates on this transformation largely emphasize great and middle powers, these developments have significant implications for small states which are particularly vulnerable to the shift in the distribution of global power. This study shows the innovative and autonomy-oriented diplomatic strategy adaptation by the small states in order to navigate the emerging geopolitical and economic challenges. This paper emphasizes on

the transformative diplomatic measures of the small states and the impending challenges in order to balance their position in the international power dynamics. Moreover, based on a qualitative method it analyzes the implications of great power competition for small states and scrutinizes their diplomatic strategies in balancing such power dynamics. By focusing on these frameworks, the study clarifies the shift in the policy of small states is not just an approach to balance the power politics rather a survival mechanism in this anarchic international system.

RCASBC-2026-251

Rethinking Small State Agency: Indian MNCs, Sustainability Governance, and Bangladesh's Strategic Options in a Shifting Global Order

Jarin Subha Sara Moni, Dorjoy Acharjee, Dr. Muslima Zahan

Abstract:

Bangladesh navigates one of South Asia's most consequential asymmetric bilateral relationships, sharing three borders with India while managing deep economic and geographical interdependence across trade agreements, port access, water-sharing treaties, and political arrangements. Bangladesh's sovereign agency over its relationship with India is limited because, historically, Bangladesh has worked within a structural framework; the strategic and economic benefits that the regional power India is deriving from existing pacts and contracts are disproportionate. The global order is shifting abruptly, with great-power competition, economic nationalism, and the reassertion of sovereign interest by smaller states. Bangladesh faces both a challenge and an opportunity: to move from passive recipient of foreign capital to active architect of its own economic partnerships. This paper argues that Bangladesh's agency in managing Indian Foreign Direct Investment is not fixed but structurally contingent. It is determined by how and through what mechanism investment enters the country. This study analyses 30 prominent Indian multinational companies currently operating in Bangladesh, assessing the relationship between their global strategic orientation, market entry mode, and local sustainability behavior. Statistical relationships across environmental, social, and ethical dimensions were rigorously examined through pairwise Phi coefficients and Chi-square significance tests, applied to secondary data drawn from corporate disclosures and sustainability reports. The findings of the analyses reveal statistically significant patterns. Firms pursuing an "International" strategy favor "Beyond Compliance Leadership" and sustained ethical governance, effectively exporting high standards into the host market. Whereas "Localization" strategies are closely linked to "Environmental Cost Leadership," prioritizing efficiency over genuine ecological commitment. Of particular significance for Bangladesh's strategic interests, Government-to-Government partnerships demonstrate the most holistic sustainability adoption across all three dimensions (social, environmental, and ethical), while Joint Ventures exhibit a strong preference for localization driven by partner knowledge requirements. These findings have direct implications for the foreign investment policy of Bangladesh. Small state theory posits that nations with limited material capabilities must employ strategic institutional mechanisms to protect their sovereign interests in an asymmetric global order; utilizing this framework, this paper argues that Bangladesh holds its greatest leverage in G2G investment arrangements. Therefore, Bangladesh should strategically prioritize G2G partnership over private foreign direct investment. This diplomatic framework can extract maximum social, environmental, and ethical value from Indian capital. In the long run, Bangladesh will be shaping its own economic destiny within a changing global order by moving from reactive host to proactive architect of the India-Bangladesh investment relationship.

Agency of Small State in International Relations: Strategic Autonomy and Bangladesh

Dr. Sariful Islam

Abstract:

This paper argues that Bangladesh, constrained by its status as a small country in terms of its economy and military power, navigates the international system with a restrained strategic autonomy. Given its geopolitical location on the world map, domestic necessities, and astute leadership, it engages pragmatically with powerful actors in the region and around the world. This paper critically examines traditional IR scholarship that neglects the agency of small states in international relations. It also takes a critical look at IR scholarship that overemphasizes the agency of small states. This paper argues that a small state like Bangladesh asserts its agency in international relations with pragmatism and does not allow powerful actors in the region and the international system to dictate its foreign relations overwhelmingly. Employing the case study method and historical analysis of Bangladesh's international relations, the paper argues that, by not relying on any particular powerful country, Bangladesh negotiates within existing power dynamics. Although there is an asymmetric interdependence, Bangladesh creatively implements its foreign policy by engaging with multiple actors with competing interests.

Digital Sovereignty as Strategic Hedging: How Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Kenya Layer Chinese Digital Infrastructure in the Indian Ocean by

Dr Vithiyapathy Purushothaman

Abstract:

The littoral states of the Indian Ocean face the strategic imperative of modernizing telecommunications infrastructure while preserving their strategic autonomy. Indian Ocean Rim states choose between western and eastern models of modernization, procurement, and digital cooperation. Consequently, small and middle states now face a striking paradox. Specifically, they actively court Chinese digital infrastructure ranging from 5G networks to smart cities. While simultaneously invoking "digital sovereignty" to resist external control. Existing literature frames this as a dependency or strategic trap. However, the precise mechanisms through which these states exercise agency remain under-theorized. The paper analyzes that these shifts were adopted by the state to engage in strategic hedging through institutional layering. The study employs structured comparison and within-case process tracing. Moreover, the paper examines three Indian Ocean states such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. The cases exhibit variance in regime type, geographic position, and infrastructure portfolios. However, they share a common logic of digital governance and execute a multi-layered architectural strategy. Notably, during the post-2025 interim government, Bangladesh has recalibrated Chinese smart city and 5G contracts. Simultaneously, it maintains the SEA-ME-WE cable multilateral framework and advances EU-aligned data protection legislation. Thus, sovereignty rhetoric intensifies precisely when structural dependence is deepest. In Sri Lanka, the Colombo Port City and Huawei-led telecommunications upgrades operate alongside Indian and Japanese digital urban systems. Accordingly, a layered architecture emerges wherein no single actor controls standards, finance, and operations simultaneously. Meanwhile, the Konza Technopolis in Kenya and Chinesebuilt Safe City platforms coexist with British Commonwealth regulatory legacies. Furthermore, the domestic data localization laws illustrate how institutional layering preserves formal sovereignty even when hardware supply chains remain concentrated. Thus, the paper makes three distinct contributions. Firstly, it extends

strategic hedging theory from security and trade studies into digital political economy. Specifically, it demonstrates that small states manage great-power digital competition not by balancing or bandwagoning, but by segmenting infrastructure partnerships across commercial, governmental, and regulatory domains. Secondly, it reconceptualizes digital sovereignty for the Global South. In particular, it frames sovereignty not as autarky or Western-style data protection, but as sovereignty through layering. Such as the deliberate accumulation of overlapping governance arrangements that prevent any single external power from achieving lock-in. Thirdly, it challenges the deterministic “debt-trap digital colonialism” narrative. Remarkably, the evidence reveals that Indian Ocean States exercise measurable agency in vendor selection, contract negotiation, and adoption of standards.

RCASBC-2026-286

From Brain Drain to Transnational Power: Bangladeshi Students in Global North Universities as Agents of Soft Power and Economic Development

Tasnia Rubayet

Abstract:

Bangladeshi students who seek higher education in the universities of the Global North have been a topic of discussion in the context of brain drain. The narrative surrounding brain drain often overlooks the opportunities for development, networking, and entrepreneurship that young people can generate through acquiring knowledge and professional competencies abroad. While the phenomenon of brain drain indeed creates a dilemma for the authorities in Bangladesh, the issue requires more attention to highlight the opportunities for international students to build professional networks, knowledge, and business contacts beyond their domestic educational environment. The current article aims to demonstrate how Bangladesh can benefit from the presence of its students in the Global North, both intellectually and economically. Specifically, the article will focus on how young Bangladeshis can act as agents of soft power and contribute to mutual economic relations between their country and other Global South countries. The current research will rely exclusively on secondary sources of information, including scholarly articles, official documents, reports by international organizations, and other resources. Additionally, the articles will analyze the experience of other developing countries, including India, China, and the Philippines, with regard to international education. The study will adopt a qualitative approach to research and will be based on such theoretical frameworks as Nye’s Annotated Bibliography, theories of human and social capital, diaspora and transnational networks, and brain circulation, linkages, and drain. The article will argue that there is a need to conceptualize a new framework in which international students can serve as drivers of networking, research, and innovation, as well as economic and cultural development in Bangladesh. More specifically, the article will propose the Transnational Student Soft Power and Development (TSSPD) Framework, which would conceptualize the relationship between international education, soft power, and economic development. The TSSPD framework would highlight the role of young Bangladeshis in building professional networks and partnerships with businesses and organizations in their countries of origin and around the globe. The current article will demonstrate the value of such education-related initiatives for Bangladesh and the Global South in general. The current article will demonstrate that the government of Bangladesh should shift from the dichotomy between encouraging young people to return to Bangladesh and discouraging them from leaving the country. Instead, the government should promote circular migration and longterm professional expertise of Bangladeshis in the Global North, leveraging their competencies and transnational networks for the benefit of the domestic economy and broader international relations.

The Multi-alignment Strategy of Middle Powers in Fragmented Global Order

Sidra Shaukat

Abstract:

Rationale: The post-cold war unipolar world order is giving away to more fragmented, multicentric international system which has been driven by relative rise of China, reassertion of Russia and the diffusion of economic weight beyond the west. Structural realism explains this shift as a direct consequence of changing capabilities distribution. The shifting international order has eroded concentration of power on unipolarity which has weakened the near universal alignment of states on single hegemon and compelled middle and small powers to adjust their external behavior accordingly. Within this loose structure, middle powers have shown to be active adapters that are pursuing security and economic partnership along separate and sometimes divergent tracks.

Objective: The study aims to understand the decoupling of military alignment and economic integration by the middle powers which has helped them to expand their agency across strategic, economic, technological and diplomatic domains where they can influence the outcome.

Research questions: The decoupling of military alignment and economic integration is empirically visible but it is under theorized where existing scholarship is still treating state's security partner and its economic partner as same. This study seeks to fill this gap by asking the questions; to what extent middle powers exhibit the decoupling between alignment and integration under the conditions of systemic fragmentation; and to what extent these powers can exhibit their influence in shaping rule making, institutional design and global governance.

Theoretical framework: The study combines structural realism (that explains why states hedge when systemic constraints weaken) with hedging theory that provides with operational elements needed to understand whether states are hedging empirically or they are just asserting it.

Significance: The significance of this study lie in understating the position of middle powers in broader hierarchies of power, technology and normative laws which can help in assessing future trajectories of global governance and emerging pluralism.

Methodology: The study has adopted qualitative methodology and it will provide a structural comparison of four middle powers (Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and India) to address the broader question of decoupling and fragmentation. The analysis is drawn from books, journal articles, defence agreements, regional bloc's communiqués, and statements of head of states and foreign ministers.

Findings: The Study concludes that middle powers, despite having real and increasingly influence on regional and global politics, are not architect of new system rather they are system modifiers whose influence is situational, time and sphere specific, and structurally bounded rather than transformative.

Algeria and Palestine: Settler Colonialism, Resistance, and the Politics of Liberation

Sadiya Inam

Abstract:

Beneath the distinct geopolitical landscapes of French Algeria and historic Palestine lies a shared, unrelenting blueprint of erasure: the settler-colonial drive to eliminate Indigenous populations and rewrite the land in the colonizer's image. Drawing fundamentally upon Patrick Wolfe's theoretical framework, this paper provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of French rule in Algeria (1830–1962) and the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine, arguing that both regimes are driven by this shared “logic of elimination”. Rather than treating these regions as exceptional or isolated conflict zones, the study juxtaposes them to expose how this structural imperative is continuously operationalized through intersecting strategies of spatial domination, land expropriation, legal exclusion, and cultural erasure. The research illustrates these systemic parallels by comparing the racial hierarchies and disenfranchisement enforced by the French “Code de l'Indigénat” with Israel's deployment of the Absentee Property Law and complex military permit regimes, both of which are designed to formalize settler privilege and mandate Indigenous exclusion. Furthermore, the study explores how both projects have relied on the physical and linguistic renaming of landscapes, alongside the deliberate suppression of native heritage and institutions, to overwrite Indigenous history with a new, permanent settler reality. A critical dimension of this analysis is the reliance on both spectacular and systemic state violence to maintain settler permanence. The paper explicitly frames the recent, catastrophic military assaults and siege on Gaza not as an isolated humanitarian crisis, but as a genocidal escalation of Israel's ongoing settler-colonial enterprise, mirroring the violent counterinsurgency tactics historically utilized by the French. In doing so, the article critiques fragmented academic narratives that isolate the post-1967 occupation, revealing instead an unbroken structural continuity of colonial domination stretching back to the 1948 Nakba. Despite detailing these profound mechanisms of oppression, the study equally emphasizes the unwavering “tenacity and resistance of colonized populations.” It examines how the Algerian War of Independence reclaimed Indigenous identity and galvanized global anti-colonial movements across the Global South, drawing a direct line to contemporary Palestinian liberation efforts that utilize armed conflict, grassroots organizing, and cultural production to fight for existence and historical redress. Ultimately, by placing these case studies within a global context, this research advances our understanding of how active colonial legacies shape contemporary geopolitics, underscoring the absolute necessity of dismantling structural domination in the ongoing, collective pursuit of decolonization and justice.

Women Diaspora in the Gulf: Contributions, Challenges, and Policy Implications

MD Arif, Sadiya Inam

Abstract:

Migration has long been a key driver of economic growth, with diaspora communities playing a significant role in shaping global financial flows, entrepreneurship, and labor markets. However, the economic impact of diaspora communities is not uniform and is deeply influenced by gender. The case of Indian migrant workers in the Gulf illustrates this disparity, where male migrants dominate construction and technical fields while women are largely confined to domestic work under precarious conditions. Many female workers in the region face exploitative labor practices due to restrictive visa policies and lack of legal

protection. A similar trend is seen among GCC's domestic workers in the West Asia/Middle East, who significantly contribute to their home country's economy through remittances but remain vulnerable to exploitation. The Kafala system, which ties workers' legal status to their employers, further exacerbates these vulnerabilities, limiting their mobility and bargaining power. Many women face non-payment of wages, physical abuse, and lack of legal recourse. Despite these challenges, women migrants are often the primary financial supporters of their families, challenging traditional gender norms in their home country. In contrast, African women entrepreneurs in Europe highlight a different aspect of diaspora economic participation. Many Indian and African migrant women engage in small and medium-sized enterprises, contributing to job creation and economic diversification. However, they often struggle with limited access to credit, financial networks, and discriminatory business environments. Studies suggest that despite these hurdles, female entrepreneurs from African diaspora communities have created innovative business models that support transnational trade, benefiting both host and home countries. This paper explores how men and women within diaspora communities contribute to economic development differently, the unique challenges women face, and the policy gaps that limit their full economic participation. This paper argues that addressing gender disparities within diaspora economies requires targeted policies that promote financial inclusion, legal protection, and gender-sensitive migration policies. Governments and international organisations must create supportive ecosystems that provide migrant women with access to formal banking services, entrepreneurship training, and legal aid. Additionally, bilateral agreements between home and host countries should be strengthened to safeguard the rights of female migrant workers. By recognizing and addressing the gendered dimensions of diaspora economics, policymakers can unlock the full potential of migrant communities, leading to more fair and sustainable economic development. This study contributes to the broader discourse on migration, gender, and economic policy by providing empirical evidence on how diaspora communities shape global economies through a gendered lens. By examining case studies from the Indian diaspora in the Gulf domestic workers in the Middle East, and African women entrepreneurs in Gulf, this study highlights the gendered dimensions of remittances, employment, and financial inclusion. Women in diaspora communities often face structural barriers, including wage discrimination, limited access to financial resources, and restrictive labor policies. Despite these challenges, they play a crucial role in poverty reduction and economic development, particularly through remittances. Research shows that women remit a higher proportion of their earnings compared to men, prioritising household welfare, children's education, and healthcare. However, their contributions are often undervalued due to the informal nature of many of their jobs, particularly in domestic work and caregiving sectors.

Objectives 1. To analyze the economic contributions of diaspora communities with a focus on gender disparities in labor markets, entrepreneurship, and financial flows. 2. To examine the unique challenges faced by women in diaspora communities, particularly in terms of exploitative labor practices, restrictive visa policies, and lack of legal protection. 3. To explore the economic roles of Indian female migrant workers in the Gulf domestic workers in the Middle East, and African women entrepreneurs in Gulf. 4. To assess the impact of the Kafala system on female migrant workers, highlighting issues such as non-payment of wages, physical abuse, and restricted mobility. 5. To investigate the role of female migrants in remittancedriven economic development and their contributions to household welfare, children's education, and healthcare. 6. To evaluate the barriers faced by African women entrepreneurs in accessing credit, financial networks, and navigating discriminatory business environments.

Reconfiguring Global Power: The Sino-Islamic Axis and the Contestation of American Hegemony in a Multipolar World

Sadia Eskander Mukta

Abstract:

The international system after 1945 is in significant structural transformation, moving from a unipolar system of power, with the USA as the primary center of power, to a multipolar system of power, with a number of center of power undergoing flux and contestation of norms of power. This paper, on one hand, expands and challenges the transition through the lens of the analytical framework offered by Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, while on the other hand, extends and challenges the transition with the hypothesis of the emergence of a new and deepening strategic convergence between the People's Republic of China and the Muslim-world, in dialectical contrast to the historically established security and economic partnership between the United States and its Muslim-majority allies. The study indicates that the current geo-political situation is dangerously moving towards the 'core-state conflict' category and the Islamic world is growing more united and powerful in countering the 'west' comprising the US and India. The study concludes that the geopolitical situation now increasingly appears to be shifting towards a "core-state conflict", a "high-order" contest between the Islamic world and the "Western bloc" (with the United States and India as the leaders), that is, serious conflict between the two blocs, as opposed to the "fault-line conflict", or "low-order" contest, that is, localized conflict, which is the one the study suggests is currently more characteristic of the geopolitical moment. The first section outlines the institutional and material structure of the USA – Muslim world relationship, which dates back to the Gulf Security Partnership (GSP), forward deployment of the U.S. Fifth Fleet of warships whose headquarters is in Bahrain, important military bases such as Al Udeid and Al Dhafra Air bases and the long-standing cooperation on oil and gas between the United States and Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Iraq. These bilateral and multilateral agreements also dovetail into other U.S. grand strategic initiatives, like the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), some of which were conceived, at least in part, to counter China's increased footprint in the Global South. In this context the paper systematically analyzes the new Sino-Muslim axis, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the flagship corridor of BRI, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the China-Saudi Vision 2030 partnership and the China-Iran Strategic Partnership. They are theorized as part of a wider Chinese counter-institutional approach, including an attempt to combine the Global Development Initiative (GDI) with USAID, the Global Security Initiative (GSI) with the IPS and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) with western ideas and concepts of "democratic partnership" — and the new institutional competition between BRICS and the G7, between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and NATO. The study also addresses the technological aspect of this contestation and examines greatpower competition over AI systems and artificial intelligence ecosystems and, in particular, those of China, built around DeepSeek and Huawei, versus the American ecosystem, which is dominated by OpenAI, Google and Meta AI. The world's current order is not capable of being described in terms of binary opposition between civilizations, nor of a binary bipolar competition, it is a multi-vector and multidimensional reconfiguration of the world, which can be understood as an economic interdependence, military alignment, technological development and civilizational identity, all woven together and reinforcing one another. It calls for revival of the Sino-Muslim alliance as opposed to the long-lasting U.S.-Gulf security partnership, which will shape the trajectory and the rules of the twenty first century multipolar world.

Confucianism as Third Eye: An Analytical Lens on People Centric Approach of China's Global Governance Initiative in Bangladesh

Sharif Noorjahan

Abstract:

China's foreign policy is increasingly explaining from dual lens: the institutional format of 'people-centric approach' global governance and the civilizational language of Confucian religion's 'relational ethics'. This article focuses this duality, which in this study is called the 'Confucianism as third eye', as an analytical point on the application of the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) of the Chinese state in an "unusual" small developing state of the region, namely Bangladesh. GGI was declared by President Xi Jinping at the TCO Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Tianjin 2025. Drawing on contemporary new-constructivist international relations theory, including the tenets that identities, Social behavior, religious norms, and inter-subjective meaning (not material capability alone) are state interests and international order, the article proposes that the GGI is both a proposal for rules-based governance and an extension of a Confucian-inflected worldview. It reflects Beijing's self presentation as a benign, "non-hegemonic power". In the context of Bangladesh, the study examines the operationalisation of GGI's people-centric principle in the Sino-Bangladesh development co-operation and whether it is more in terms of strategic-material interest, genuine normative commitment or a combination of both. The study explores two research questions: What is the influence of Confucian religious and political philosophy on the normativity of the China's Global Governance Initiative? and How is the GGI's "people-centric approach" applied in the China-Bangladesh relationship? The article uses qualitative and interpretative research design with government document analysis, secondary literature analysis and process tracing method for examining the relationship between China and Bangladesh since its emergence as a Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in 2016. The findings are expected to reveal that Confucian religion and normative language would not supplant material and geostrategic calculations for the Chinese, but rather complement them. In addition, the study is a valuable addition to constructivist studies of non-Western international relations theory and to the empirical research on small state agency in the changing, multi-polar world order.

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Beyond Hedging: Asymmetric Leverage and the Restructuring of Multilateral Governance by Small and Middle Powers

Md. Faisal Mahmud

Abstract:

While post-Cold War systemic shifts are predominantly analysed through the prism of great power rivalries, smaller states are routinely relegated to passive, secondary actors in a polarizing global order. This research challenges this structural reductionism by examining how small and intermediate powers strategically exercise agency to actively shape international institutions rather than merely adapting to structural shifts. Moving beyond traditional concepts of "hedging" and "balancing," the study proposes a comprehensive conceptual framework centred on asymmetric leverage the strategic utilization of niche diplomatic arenas, minilateral coalitions, and selective institutional engagement to constrain hegemon dynamics and prevent systemic bipolar collapse. Utilising a comparative analytical design, the paper evaluates recent institutional maneuvers across regional economic and security architectures, assessing how non-hegemonic states transform structural ambiguity into normative influence. The analytical core focuses on how middle powers

leverage specialized diplomatic networks to embed rules of engagement within contested domains. Preliminary findings indicate that smaller powers are successfully institutionalizing multi-alignment as a durable governance norm, thereby forcing great powers to bargain within institutional channels rather than imposing unilateral outcomes. The study demonstrates that non hegemonic actors exploit multipolarity not merely for immediate survival, but to redesign regional governance rules that protect state sovereignty against great-power encroachment. Ultimately, the paper argues that the long term durability and stability of the emerging international order will depend significantly on the capacity of these states to maintain institutional autonomy. By establishing functional frameworks for cooperation in fragmented spaces, small and middle powers serve as critical anchors of global stability. These insights offer valuable implications for contemporary international relations theory, demonstrating that strategic agency in modern geopolitics is increasingly decoupled from raw material power capabilities.

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Estimating the Trade Cost of Preference Erosion: A Gravity Model Analysis of Bangladesh's LDC Graduation

Jobayed Hasan Ovi

Abstract:

Bangladesh is scheduled graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November 2026 represents a major milestone in its economic transformation but it also raises concerns about the erosion of preferential market access that has supported the country's export performance. The potential withdrawal of LDC trade preferences may raise tariffs on Bangladeshi exports and reduce their competitiveness in major international markets. Existing studies have largely relied on partial-equilibrium simulations and descriptive analyses of trade flows, creating a need for econometric estimates of the trade effects of preference erosion. This study addresses this gap by using a gravity model to examine the relationship between preferential market access and Bangladesh's bilateral exports. The study will construct a panel dataset covering Bangladesh's exports to major trading partners over an extended pre-graduation period. Bilateral trade data will be obtained from UN Comtrade, while tariff and preferential-market-access information will be collected from the World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) and other publicly available international databases. The empirical model will incorporate standard gravity variables, including trading-partner economic size and bilateral geographical distance. The analysis will first assess the magnitude and distribution of Bangladesh's existing preferential tariff advantages across major export destinations and, where data permit, across product groups. The gravity estimates will then be used to assess how changes in preferential market access are associated with bilateral export performance and to simulate potential export effects under alternative preference-erosion scenarios. The study is expected to provide a quantitative assessment of the trade implications of preference erosion associated with Bangladesh's LDC graduation and identify the trading partners and export sectors most exposed to changes in preferential market access. The findings will contribute to the literature on trade costs, preferential trade arrangements, and the economic consequences of LDC graduation. From a policy perspective, the study will provide evidence relevant to Bangladesh's transition strategy, including efforts to secure preferential market access through GSP+ and bilateral trade agreements, diversify export markets and products, and strengthen domestic export competitiveness. As a lower-middle-income country navigating structural change in the global trading order, Bangladesh's experience also contributes to broader debates on how small and middle-income states adapt to changing international economic rules and institutions. By using a gravity model to analyze Bangladesh's LDC transition, this study provides an empirical assessment of the potential trade effects of preference erosion.

Bangladesh's Strategic Autonomy: Assessing its engagement with the Saudi-led multinational maritime defence alliance

Rokeya Haque, Tasnim Jahan

Abstract:

The shifting maritime security order is presenting complex strategic dilemmas for the small states especially which states heavily depend on vulnerable maritime routes. Since Bangladesh is a maritime state which is connected with the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, it has generally pursued strategic autonomy through strategic balancing, diversified partnerships and selective engagement with competing powers. Bangladesh's recent participation in the Saudi-led Multinational Maritime Defence Alliance really presents a significant development of Bangladesh's maritime engagement. This participation comes amid growing insecurity in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. This presents an important case for examining how a small state maintains its maritime security interests with strategic autonomy. This study is mainly based on a qualitative approach. It is drawing on the literature on small-state strategic autonomy, maritime security. It also uses thematic analysis of official government statements, literature and authentic contemporary reports to understand Bangladesh's strategic interests and also the implications of its participation in the Saudi-led alliance. For Bangladesh, participating in a maritime coalition can be important for safeguarding the supply chain, strengthening strategic partnership across areas including migration, infrastructure and diplomacy. It may also draw Bangladesh into major power rivalries, create new forms of dependency and limit sovereign foreign policy choices. Existing studies largely focus on foreign policy relations of Bangladesh and its different dynamics with countries like the United States, India, China etc while comparatively limited attention has been given toward Bangladesh's engagement with gulf countries and its maritime security dimension. The study therefore seeks to address whether Bangladesh's alignment toward the Saudi-led Maritime Defence Alliance could maintain strategic autonomy of Bangladesh or whether it may create new forms of constraints and dependencies. This study is mainly based on a qualitative approach. It is drawing on the literature on small-state strategic autonomy, maritime security. It also uses thematic analysis of official government statements, literature and authentic contemporary reports to understand Bangladesh's strategic interests and also the implications of its participation in the Saudi-led alliance. The study is expected to identify potential benefits of Bangladesh's participation the alliance such as contributing to the protection of maritime routes around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and Red Sea to support the uninterrupted trade and energy supplies, preserve stable remittance inflows as Saudi Arabia is the major destination of Bangladeshi migrants workers, enhance maritime cooperation. At the same time the study also assesses potential obstacles for instance deepening relations with Riyadh can bind Bangladesh closely with the strategic bloc and pull away from the historical foreign policy stance of maintaining balanced relations with all countries and also it may expose regional geopolitical rivalries. The findings analyze whether the benefits of engagement ensure strategic autonomy of Bangladesh or whether the constraints overshadow the benefits.

U.S.-China Rivalry: Impact on Bangladesh's Foreign Policy and Coping Mechanisms

RIAZUL ISLAM RIPON

Abstract:

The intensifying strategic rivalry between the United States and China is reshaping the rules, institutions, and alignments of the Indo-Pacific concurrently increasing pressure on middle and small states to navigate competing economic, security, and diplomatic demands. Located at the northern Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh has gained strategic importance and remains deeply connected to both powers through unequal and functionally differentiated relationships. This paper examines how U.S.-China rivalry affects Bangladesh's foreign policy and the way Bangladesh responds to its pressures and opportunities while seeking to preserve sovereign decision-making, developmental priorities, and diplomatic flexibility. Drawing on hedging theory, small-state foreign-policy scholarship, and the concept of asymmetric interdependence, the paper argues that Bangladesh's behavior cannot be adequately explained as passive neutrality, balancing, bandwagoning, or alignment. It employs a qualitative, interpretivist casestudy design and thematic analysis of official policy documents, bilateral statements, government and institutional reports, and relevant academic literature. The findings demonstrate that Bangladesh has gradually adapted its traditional principle of "friendship to all, malice toward none" into a more active strategy of strategic autonomy. It maintains extensive cooperation with China in infrastructure, industrial imports, development finance, connectivity, and defense procurement, simultaneously maintaining significant relations with the United States in export trade, development cooperation, labor dialogue, maritime security, and diplomacy. Bangladesh goes well with these differentiated relationships through selective engagement, partnership diversification, limited balancing, and participation in BIMSTEC, the United Nations, and ASEAN-led mechanisms. Its 2023 Indo-Pacific Outlook similarly supports a free, open, peaceful, secure, and inclusive regional order without endorsing bloc politics or exclusive alignment. The paper concludes that Bangladesh practices strategic autonomy under asymmetric interdependence. Its reaction and coping mechanisms enable it to obtain economic and security benefits from both powers while reducing the risks of dependence, coercion, and strategic vulnerability. By extending hedging analysis to the Bay of Bengal, the study demonstrates that small states are not merely objects of great-power competition. They can exercise meaningful agency through adaptive and multi-vector diplomacy. Although their room for maneuver remains constrained by structural dependence and intensifying geopolitical pressure.

Human-Centred Digital Sovereignty: Perceptions of AI, Data Control, and Governance among University Students in Bangladesh

Fatima Akter

Abstract:

Digital sovereignty is increasingly discussed in global debates on artificial intelligence (AI) and data governance, yet the human dimension, and how ordinary people understand and experience it remains underexplored, especially in the Global South. This study examines how university students in Bangladesh, as emerging citizens and future professionals, perceive digital sovereignty in relation to their everyday use of digital technologies and AI tools. Using an online survey shared through student networks, the research collected responses from a diverse sample of university students across different disciplines. The

questionnaire included socio-demographic items, questions on patterns of digital and AI use, Likert-scale statements on trust, rights, regulation, and surveillance, and open-ended questions inviting students to define digital sovereignty in their own words. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple group comparisons, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis. The findings suggest that students are active users of digital platforms and AI tools, strongly support human rights oriented data protection, and expect governments to ensure fair and transparent regulation. They express ambivalent trust in both state institutions and large technology companies, and voice concerns about surveillance, misuse of personal data, and the possible dehumanization of decision-making through AI. The study highlights a clear demand for human-centred digital sovereignty in Bangladesh. An approach that prioritizes dignity, autonomy, and accountability, and while pointing to the need for greater public engagement and digital literacy to include youth voices in future AI and data governance frameworks.

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Decision-Consequence Asymmetry and the Agency of Small States in a Changing Global Order

Kazi Shabira Siddiqa Mariam Tondramoni

Abstract:

The contemporary international order is nominally grounded in sovereign equality and multilateral rulemaking, yet the authority to shape consequential decisions remains as unevenly distributed as exposure to their aftermath. This study conceptualizes that gap as decision-consequence asymmetry whereby capability-rich states disproportionately determine international outcomes while small and developing states absorb greater shares of the resulting economic, energy, food, health, environmental and security vulnerabilities. The paper examines three interrelated dimensions of global governance which are the distribution of decision-making authority, the allocation of resulting costs and vulnerabilities and the extent to which existing governance mechanisms enable weaker states to exercise meaningful influence before adverse outcomes materialize rather than merely seek redress afterward. It draws on structural realism, small-state agency theory, strategic hedging, international legal agency and global-governance legitimacy scholarship and employs a mixed-method comparative design. The quantitative strand builds a purposively selected panel of fourteen small and developing states across South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for 2010-2025, drawing on World Bank, FAO, WHO, IEA, EIA, UNHCR, IMF, UNCTAD and UN indicators of poverty, food insecurity, energy exposure, displacement, health vulnerability, external debt and institutional voice. The qualitative strand uses systematic document analysis, structured content analysis and process tracing by examining Security Council voting and veto practices, Council-reform negotiations, the 2024 Pact for the Future, climatefinance commitments, Global South coalition-building and strategic hedging behavior through relevant UN records, policy documents, official statements and institutional reports. The study expects to identify a persistent gap between formal institutional voice and effective influence with small and developing states remaining more exposed to the consequences of decisions they have limited capacity to shape. It will also examine whether coalition-building, strategic hedging and collective diplomacy allow these states to strengthen their agency within existing structural constraints. The findings are expected to contribute to policy discussions by identifying ways to strengthen meaningful participation, anticipatory consultation and collective bargaining for small and developing states by shifting attention from managing consequences after they emerge toward giving vulnerable states greater influence over decisions before those consequences materialize.

The “Bengali” Narrative as an Instrument of Statelessness: Myanmar’s Citizenship Regime, the Rohingya Identity Dispute, and Implications for Bangladesh’s Security and Refugee Governance

Aiman Noor Sadia Chowdhury, Towfique Ahmed

Abstract:

Myanmar's military regime has long characterized the Rohingya as "Bengali" immigrants rather than an indigenous ethnic minority, a claim now central to one of the largest protracted refugee crises on earth. This paper argues that the "Bengali" narrative functions not merely as a historical disagreement but as a political and legal mechanism for exclusion, statelessness, and denial of citizenship under Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law. That law confines full citizenship to 135 officially recognized ethnic groups, excludes the Rohingya and forces applicants to accept the "Bengali" label; a designation that itself disqualifies them from citizenship and reinforces systemic discrimination. This study employs doctrinal legal analysis of Myanmar's citizenship legislation and historical source criticism of pre-colonial colonial and post-colonial records to challenge the regime's post-1826 migration claim. The legal analysis examines statutory text, parliamentary debates, and administrative regulations governing ethnic classification and naturalization procedures. The historical analysis draws on systematic review of historiography, including Francis Buchanan-Hamilton's 1799 documentation of a Muslim community self-identifying as "Rooinga" and describing itself as native to Arakan, alongside archaeological and textual evidence of Muslim settlement from the 8th century and population displacement following the 1784 Burmese conquest. Source evaluation applies established historiographical criteria for authenticity, provenance, and corroboration across British colonial archives, Burmese court chronicles, and East India Company records. The analysis further situates the identity dispute within contemporary international legal and institutional frameworks through policy analysis of international institutional responses from 2016 to 2026. This includes examination of the 2026 merits hearings in *The Gambia v. Myanmar* before the International Court of Justice, evidentiary materials submitted by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, UNHCR's refugee status determination practice, and the UK's 2026 country policy assessment. From a critical criminological perspective, the paper applies Agamben's theory of "bare life" and the state of exception to examine how manufactured statelessness produces juridical abandonment, enabling arbitrary detention, forced labor, human trafficking, and gender-based violence with impunity. The public administration dimension employs Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities and James C. Scott's "legibility" framework to analyze how the "Bengali" classification operates as a technique of governance; rendering the Rohingya administratively visible as foreigners while erasing their indigenous claims. The paper concludes that safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return requires dismantling the "Bengali" fiction and restoring citizenship rights rather than treating the population as foreign migrants. For Bangladesh, a small state navigating great-power indifference and regional security pressures, this dispute has direct implications for border governance, refugee repatriation policy, and international accountability mechanisms.

Borderlands of Exclusion: Geo-Psychological Liminality, Non-Traditional Security, and the Strategic Dilemmas of Middle and Small States in the Bengal-Arakan Shatter Zone

Tania Ahmed Uma

Abstract:

The contemporary transformation of the rule-based global order—defined by the retreat of multilateral human rights norms, intensifying geopolitical fragmentation, and hardening sovereignty regimes—poses acute strategic and governance challenges for middle and small powers. In South and Southeast Asia, these global systemic shifts manifest acutely across sub-regional borderlands, where the transition from fluid historical frontiers to rigid, exclusionary nation-state boundaries has destabilized regional security architecture. This paper examines the Bengal-Arakan frontier—encompassing Bangladesh, Northeast India, and Myanmar—as a critical post-colonial "shatter zone" to investigate how state-building practices and the securitization of legal identity reshape regional stability and challenge small-state diplomatic navigation. Utilizing a constructivist and post-colonial analytical lens, the study explores the intersection of geo-psychological marginalization, manufactured statelessness, and non-traditional security crises. Rather than analyzing domestic identity policies (such as Assam's National Register of Citizens and Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law) as isolated administrative anomalies, this research situates them within a broader regional transition from inclusive, civic territoriality to exclusionary ethnocentric citizenship models (*jus sanguinis*). This legal erasure produces liminal, "in-between" populations—most prominently illustrated by the protracted displacement of 1.2 million Rohingya and trans-border ethnic instabilities among Kuki-Chin communities—whose structural deprivation inadvertently fuels informal economies, human trafficking, narcotics networks, and armed militancy. For middle and small states like Bangladesh, the externalization of domestic state-building failures by neighboring regimes severely strains national capacity, territorial governance, and bilateral diplomacy. The study demonstrates that traditional realist responses—characterized by physical border militarization, extensive fencing, and defensive securitization—have failed to mitigate these transnational spillover effects. Instead, they compound regional precarity and undermine international normative frameworks. By bridging micro-level human security realities with macro-level international relations theory, this paper argues that middle and small powers must look beyond reactive border-defense postures. To safeguard their sovereignty and foster sustainable stability amid great-power indifference, these states must actively champion human-centered governance, bilateral confidence-building, and localized multilateral coalitions. In doing so, this study challenges orthodox, state-centric definitions of regional security and offers a framework for how middle and small powers can reformulate the rule-based order from the periphery inward.

Corporate Geopolitics and Techno-Dependency: Challenges to the Strategic Autonomy of Medium-Sized and Small States

Anmon Rahman

Abstract:

Background: Globalization and digital transformation have created deeper integration between state economies and global corporate technology platforms. While this integration brings economic and technological benefits, medium and small states are increasingly facing a structural dilemma: reliance on foreign corporate technology for technological advancement and digital infrastructure expansion can simultaneously limit their strategic autonomy, information sovereignty, and digital policymaking capabilities. The concentration of corporate control over digital infrastructure, cloud services, technological standards, and key platforms raises important questions about how medium and small states can maintain policy independence while maintaining technological participation in an interconnected world. **Objective:** This paper examines how corporate geopolitics and techno-dependence affect the strategic autonomy of medium and small states. The research identifies the main mechanisms by which technodependence operates and explores how dependent states can preserve their policy and institutional domains of authority while maintaining technological participation and economic integration. **Methods:** The research follows a comparative case study analysis of six medium and small countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Vietnam, Kenya, and Cyprus. A documentary analysis of government digital strategies, national technology and cybersecurity policies, regulatory frameworks, government procurement and selected corporate contracts, and related policy documents for the period 2018-2026 is conducted. In addition, international and national secondary data have been used to analyze the market structure of cloud and digital infrastructure, trade flows of technology and ICT products, foreign investment, and the level of critical technology-dependency. Data from the World Bank, UNCTAD, ITU, OECD, Eurostat, and relevant national government and regulatory agencies, as well as annual reports and published documents of selected technology companies, are used. Recurring patterns in the relationship between technology-dependence, corporate concentration, and strategic autonomy are identified through thematic document analysis, comparative case matrices, and cross-case pattern matching.

Results: The analysis identifies four mechanisms through which technological dependence can constrain state strategic autonomy: (1) infrastructural lock-in, which makes switching technologies costly; (2) information and capability asymmetries, arising from concentrated technical knowledge, data, and computing capacity; (3) regulatory dependence, shaped by technological standards, corporate power, and market concentration; and (4) critical technology supply-chain dependence, which can restrict policy options during disruptions or geopolitical shifts. Comparative cases show that greater digital capability does not necessarily ensure greater strategic autonomy. Estonia and Poland demonstrate strong digital capacity alongside external dependencies, while Kenya and Vietnam retain greater scope for technological alternatives but face significant infrastructural and economic constraints.

Conclusion: Comparative analysis suggests that full technological self-reliance may not be economically and institutionally realistic for medium and small states. Instead, “strategic pluralism” could be a viable alternative framework for maintaining strategic autonomy, which includes developing alternative technology and infrastructure partnerships, diversifying across multiple technology providers and platforms, strengthening regional digital cooperation, and establishing strong data governance and interoperability frameworks

Neither Washington Nor Beijing: Bangladesh's Semiconductor Strategy in the Chip War

Nafiz Akib Khan, Mohammad Kaiba Hasnat, Nishat Jahan Nowshin

Abstract:

The fight between the US and China over chips has changed the international tech alliances and coalitions allied around export controls, subsidies and investment screening. In East Asia, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company occupies a prominent position. The chip war's implications go beyond the actions of these powers. Countries such as Bangladesh, which do not have their own chip fabrication capacity, daily depend on imports of chips, equipment and digital infrastructure as well. In what ways can Bangladesh leverage dependence to attain diplomatic benefit, rather than leaving them vulnerable? Bangladesh should give up on any ambition to compete in sophisticated wafer fabrication. Instead, it should pursue active hedging. In other words, it should cultivate parallel, non-exclusive partnerships with the US, China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and India in chip design, testing, OSAT, and packaging. The Bangladesh National Semiconductor Taskforce, along with the FY2026–27 customs and tax incentives until 2031 and the BUET STAR research facility, show national policy prioritising design-first and fabrication-free. Using small state hedging theory and digital diplomacy as framework, the paper subjects BIDA documents, comments from Bangladesh Semiconductor Industry Association and recent industry coverage on the sectoral push to USD 1 billion export by 2030 from USD 8 million base to qualitative document analysis. Bangladesh has a strong advantage in engineering skill, low cost of labour, and proximity to Asia supply-chain clustering. However, the country is found wanting in cleanroom infrastructure, export control capability, and enforcement of intellectual property rights. The paper argues above all that Bangladesh's leverage will not come from technological imitation but rather from disciplined diplomatic diversification underpinned by the ability to signal, reliably, to multiple blocs simultaneously, that he/she is a rule-compliant actor. Put differently, a credible defence can stimulate the same risk by that credibility.

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From “String of Pearls” to “Necklace of Diamonds”: Reassessing India's Maritime Strategy and the Agency of Small States in the Indian Ocean Region

Suruchi Sharma

Abstract:

The evolving geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a defining feature of twenty-first century international relations, with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) becoming a critical area for strategic competition, connectivity, and maritime governance. The major actors have been significantly contesting to get hold in the region. The growing presence of major powers such as India, China, the United States, and other extra-regional actors has transformed the region into a focal point of geopolitical engagement. While much scholarly attention has focused on China's String of Pearls strategy and the broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India has advanced its own Necklace of Diamonds strategy as an alternative maritime vision aimed at counterbalancing China by strengthening regional partnerships, enhancing security cooperation, and promoting a stable and inclusive Indo-Pacific order. Through strategic engagement with littoral states such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and other Indian Ocean partners, including the ASEAN nations, India seeks to expand its maritime influence while addressing

emerging security challenges. Despite growing interest in India's maritime initiatives, existing studies remain largely state-centric and often underestimate the agency of small and middle powers in shaping regional dynamics. This paper examines India's Necklace of Diamonds strategy through the lens of small-state agency, such as littoral states and regional order transformation. It comprehends the ways in which smaller states engage with, negotiate, and influence strategic partnerships in the Indian Ocean rather than functioning as passive actors of great-power competition. The research addresses the following questions: How does India's Necklace of Diamonds strategy contribute to shaping a stable and rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific? In what ways do small and littoral states engage with, negotiate, and influence India's strategic partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region? And to what extent does the strategy promote regional cooperation while responding to the strategic challenges posed by China's growing presence in the region? Comprehending theories of small-state agency, regional security complex theory, and strategic balancing, the study investigates how these interactions affect maritime security, regional governance, and the evolving balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents, official statements, strategic literature, and selected case studies, the paper argues that the success of India's maritime strategy depends not only on its material capabilities but also on its diplomatic choices, strategic and geopolitical interests, and the participation of smaller regional actors. By foregrounding their role, this paper contributes to broader debates on regional security, Indo-Pacific geopolitics, and the changing nature of global order.

RCASBC-2026-451

Sovereignty Beyond Consent: Security Dependence, Strategic Autonomy, and the International Legal Position of Small African States

Syed Moin Hossain Orchy

Abstract:

Sovereign equality curtails from the principle of consent in international law, sanctioning states to theoretically renegotiate or withdraw from treaties, alliances, or founding arrangements. However, this theory often clashes with the practical realities of dependence on foreign powers for security. For smaller states, the cost of changing course can outweigh the initial benefits of such arrangements, resulting in superficial consent that lacks real sovereignty, particularly when their security policy is heavily dependent on military support, bases, or intelligence services provided by larger powers. This paper argues that the international law framework regarding sovereignty has not adapted to contemporary challenges. It emphasizes that while the moment of agreement is protected, little is said about what makes agreements irreversible. Analyzing four African cases, Djibouti's multi-power basing economy, Seychelles' diversification, Lesotho's dependence on South Africa and SADC, and Rwanda's military diplomacy, the paper demonstrates how security dependence limits state options long after agreements are established. It juxtaposes these cases with relevant legal instruments, including the UN Charter, African Union principles on sovereignty and non-intervention, and the law of treaties concerning withdrawal and material breach. The paper presents a comprehensive framework aimed at distinguishing between formal consent and effective consent within the realm of security partnerships, particularly concerning the African Union (AU). It underscores the necessity for AU and international legal doctrines to integrate safeguards that mitigate dependence-driven lock-in when evaluating these partnerships. Central to the discussion is the concept of sovereignty, with the paper emphasizing its critical importance. Furthermore, the analysis delves into the legal intricacies of treaties, specifically focusing on aspects of withdrawal and material breach, and illustrates these concepts through various African cases. The framework advocates for a nuanced understanding of consent that goes beyond mere formality, advocating for measures that truly respect sovereign autonomy and promote effective consent in security arrangements.

Is American Superpower Declining? Contemporary Exploration of Decadence and Rising Landscape of USA and China

Khan Mehedi Hasan, Meheebub Hassan, Gourab Dutta

Abstract:

The United States of American is considered the world's most and/or sole superpower due its military capability, control over global institutions, technological power and economic dominance. An emerging shift from a unipolar world to complex multipolarity has increasingly observed in recent times, at least in regional basis that is threatening superpower dominance. US's sole dominance is being challenged in multiple dimensions by multiple countries in recent decades. Thus, question arise, whether American superpower is decreasing. This paper assesses the changing landscape of global hegemony over the past few years. More specifically, this exploratory research focuses on the indicators global superpower and judge US's and China's position on those. The research employs the Lowy Institute Asia Power Index, the Great Powers Index by Ray Dalio and other indicators like America debt, share of global reserve currency, relation with allies to determine US position in superpower. According to Asia Power Index 2025, the US is in the top of the comprehensive national power with score of 81.7 topped by China with 72.7 score, where China is in increasing trend. Economic capability score between countries are very close (87.8 and 86 for US and China gradually). US's net trade on goods is in decreasing trend. As per Global Innovation Index 2025, US is in the 3rd position. As per Global Firepower Military Index 2026, US, China, and Russia are in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd position gradually with minor differences. However, China's score is in the increasing trend which is reverse for USA. China's global soft power index 2025 has been exceeded by Canada, France, Germany, Japan and UK and placing in the 2nd position just behind USA in the 1st position. In diplomatic influence score China has exceeded USA since 2023. USA experienced a turmoil relationship with NATO, EU and some tested allies since US-Iran war. IMF data shows that the share of USD in global foreign currency reserve is gradually decreasing which is currently below 60%. Competitors, mostly China have shown a great resilience over the years and capable of reducing the strategic gap with USA in economic, military and diplomatic aspects. The result concludes that United States is still the most dominant power in the world, though its sole superpower entity is on a channel of gradual decline and there is clear indication of rising in Chinese superpower.

Supply Chain Resilience as a Pathway to Strategic Autonomy in Small and Middle States: A Systematic Review of Geopolitical Disruptions, Strategies, and Outcomes

Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, MD Shakhawat Chy Sajid, Reshmi Akter

Abstract:

Supply chain resilience (SCR) could offer an attractive pathway to enhance economic security while boosting strategic autonomy (SA) in the face of mounting geopolitical disruptions. Small and middle states with open economies that are reliant on global markets and external suppliers are particularly vulnerable to such shocks. This review aims to systematically synthesize peer-reviewed research on geopolitical shocks' vulnerability-exposing effects, resilience strategies, and implications for SA in selected small and middle states from studies identified through a systematic literature review. Eligible articles were sourced from Scopus and Web of Science databases in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines and analyzed

according to their research method, theoretical approach, study context, nature of geopolitical shock, types of supply-chain vulnerability, and resilience strategy considered. Reviewed studies employed quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, conceptual review, case study, systematic review, and bibliometric approaches. The majority of articles centered their analyses on geopolitical risk and vulnerability in supply chains, followed by resilience strategies, supply-chain restructuring, digitalization, and supplier diversification. The primary geopolitical disruptions represented in the literature include armed conflicts/wars, trade restrictions/sanctions, geopolitical risk/tensions, protectionism, and chokepoint disruptions. Common vulnerabilities preventing SCR identified across studies are overreliance on particular suppliers/markets, lack of financial and technological resources, weak infrastructure, insufficient institutional capacity, and lack of supply-chain visibility. Prominent resilience-enhancing strategies examined in the literature are supplier diversification, market diversification/regionalization, nearshoring/reshoring, strategic stockpiling, digitalization, flexible sourcing strategies, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and government support. Results suggest that SCR may help firms do more than mitigate operational risks by decoupling from critical dependencies and contributing to the SA of small and middle states. Future research is necessary to better understand how firm-level resilience strategies interact with home-base country policies and international coordination in the development of SA and resilient supply networks in an era of growing global fragility.



Sub-theme – 02:
Geo-Politics and Regional Security

The Geopolitical Significance of Central Asia in Shaping Regional Power Dynamics

Sandamini Dasanayaka

Abstract:

This study mainly explores the geopolitical context of Central Asia, especially the impact of emerging great powers and regional alliances on its security and economic conditions. Geographically located between Asia and Europe, this region is endowed with vast resources and energy sources. Therefore, Central Asia has become the main platform for the ongoing tensions between China, Russia, the European Union and the United States. Recently, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has boosted infrastructure investment and trade, reshaping economic dependencies in Central Asia. Russia's energy control and military influence continue to exert significant influence on all Central Asian states. The sovereignty of Central Asia has been affected by the strategic military and counter-terrorism roles of the United States and NATO. The dialogue between Central Asia and the European Union is based on economic cooperation. The Collective Security Treaty Organization and energy exports have reinforced the eroding hegemony in Central Asia. The study is conducted using secondary data. A qualitative methodology was used, including literature review, policy analysis, and thematic analysis. The realities of regional geopolitics have been analyzed primarily using neo-realist theory. This research reveals complex challenges including border conflicts, water conflicts, extremism, and interregional tensions, and shows that Central Asian states are pursuing multi-vector foreign policies to balance the influence of great powers and rising powers. The findings demonstrate that the growing engagement of India, Türkiye, Iran, and Afghanistan has become an important factor in shaping Central Asia's regional security and geopolitical balance. Finally, this study argues that Central Asia is considered an important center for contemporary geopolitical competition. The study concludes that adaptive as well as multilateral approaches are essential to ensure regional stability in the region, with implications for global security.

Media Framing and Geopolitical Contestation during Bangladesh's July Revolution: A Comparative Analysis of Western and Indian News Coverage

Labiba Marzuka Mahee, Md. Zahid Hasan

Abstract:

The July 2024 Bangladesh Student Revolution emerged from demands for quota reform in public sector employment. It evolved into a nationwide uprising that culminated in the resignation of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024 (Al Jazeera, 2024). The movement gained international attention due to the state's violent response, the unprecedented internet blackout imposed between July 18 and 23, and the subsequent political transition (Raso et al., 2025). This offers a vital lens on how middle and small states in the Global South, such as Bangladesh, are represented in international communications during acute political transformations. Against the backdrop of a total state-enforced internet blackout, this study investigates the construction of competing transnational media narratives amid severe digital disruptions. Grounded in Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), the Protest Paradigm (Boykoff, 2006; McLeod & Hertog, 1992), and Media System Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976), this research examines geopolitical framing, actor labeling dynamics, and newsroom sourcing practices across three chronological phases: pre-blackout, blackout window, and regime transition. Employing a comparative mixed-methods

content analysis, the study analyzed N = 155 news reports published between July 10 and August 10, 2024, across six Western and five Indian outlets. A Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(1, N = 155) = 21.52, p < .001, \phi = 0.373$) reveals a profound geopolitical bifurcation: Western media overwhelmingly deployed a "Democracy Frame" (88.8%), representing the crisis through universalist liberal-democratic norms and selective legitimization (Baum & Zhukov, 2015). Conversely, the regional Indian press shifted heavily toward a "Security Frame" (43.9%), reflecting New Delhi's strategic perimeter realism and regional stability imperatives (Mishra, 2008; Thussu, 2008). A two-way factorial MANOVA demonstrates that state-enforced communication blockades triggered a structural sourcing vacuum, causing direct local student attributions to universally decay ($F(2, 149) = 6.09, p = .003$). Bypassing this blackout, Western outlets established information bridges with decentralized diaspora proxies in London and Oslo, endowing street actors with legitimizing "revolutionary" agency ($p = .010$). In contrast, Indian newsrooms indexed official state information subsidies (Bennett, 1990; Gandy, 2007), relying on persistent delegitimizing "rioter" labels ($p = .016$) to justify security containment. Ultimately, global crisis narratives concerning small states are structurally pre-conditioned by home-state geopolitical priorities, exposing the communicative power asymmetries embedded within global news flows.

RCASBC-2026-79

The Bay of Bengal as an Emerging Maritime Chokepoint: Bangladesh's Hedging Strategy Amid Indo-Pacific Great Power Competition

C.A.M. Al Wahi, Tanin Bushra Ali

Abstract:

The Bay of Bengal, long treated as a secondary theatre of Indo-Pacific geopolitics, is undergoing rapid securitisation as great-power competition intensifies across South and Southeast Asia. Existing literature on maritime chokepoints concentrates heavily on the Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea and the Strait of Hormuz; the Bay's parallel emergence as a contested strategic corridor and functional chokepoint for sea lines of communication linking Malacca to the eastern Indian Ocean remains insufficiently theorised through the lens of strategic hedging and middleand small-power agency. This gap is consequential: littoral middle and small states like Bangladesh, at the Bay's northern apex and now a focal point of competing ports, naval diplomacy and connectivity initiatives, in particular must navigate an increasingly crowded and securitised maritime environment while preserving policy autonomy. This paper asks how Bangladesh, as the Bay's principal littoral middle and small power, is exercising strategic hedging between competing regional and extra-regional actors and what does this reveal about the scope and limits of small-state agency in a contested maritime corridor? The research paper's objectives are threefold: to map the Bay's shift from a secondary theatre to a securitised Indo-Pacific corridor, to analyse Bangladesh's multi-vector hedging strategy, most explicitly articulated in its 2023 Indo-Pacific Outlook toward India, China and extra-regional powers and to assess the implications of this contestation for regional maritime governance, UNCLOS implementation and the wider Indo-Pacific security architecture. Employing a qualitative case-study methodology that combines doctrinal legal analysis with foreign-policy analysis drawing on the Indo-Pacific Outlook, UNCLOS and bilateral and multilateral instruments, read against comparative strategic-hedging literature (Kuik, Goh), the paper argues that Bangladesh's calibrated non-alignment, pursued not merely to avoid strategic alignment but also to preserve a rules-based maritime order grounded in UNCLOS, offers an instructive, though increasingly constrained, model of middle- and small-power agency amid great-power maritime rivalry. The paper's expected contribution is twofold: theoretically, it extends strategic hedging theory beyond its dominant Southeast Asian focus to a South Asian maritime setting; empirically, it offers an updated account of Bay of Bengal geopolitics, focusing on Bangladesh's

ports Chattogram and the Matarbari deep-sea port as well as its evolving naval modernisation and diplomatic signalling. Given Bangladesh's landmark ITLOS (2012) and PCA (2014) maritime boundary settlements, the paper situates a Bangladesh-centred case within the conference's broader inquiry into how middle and small states reshape global governance amid a fragmenting rule-based order.

RCASBC-2026-115

Geopolitical Risk and Energy Imports: Does Government Effectiveness Matter?

Joshim Uddin, Myne Uddin, Jahirul Islam

Abstract:

The increasing frequency of geopolitical tensions has heightened uncertainty in global energy markets and challenged the stability of energy imports. Understanding the impact of geopolitical risk on energy imports is crucial for strengthening energy security and ensuring resilient energy supply chains. However, existing studies provide limited evidence on the moderating role of government effectiveness and the heterogeneous effects of geopolitical risk across different levels of energy imports. Therefore, this study examines the impact of geopolitical risk on energy imports across 42 countries from 2000 to 2024, focusing on the moderating role of government effectiveness. The study employs Method of Moments Quantile Regression (MMQR) and Driscoll–Kraay standard errors (DKSE) to obtain robust estimates. The results show that: (1) geopolitical risk significantly reduces energy imports, with insignificant effects at the 10th and 25th quantiles, a stronger negative effect at the 30th quantile, and progressively weaker effects at higher quantiles; (2) government effectiveness directly increases energy imports and weakens the adverse effect of geopolitical risk, with the moderating effect being stronger at lower quantiles but becoming insignificant from the 40th quantile onward; and (3) the negative effect of geopolitical risk is stronger in countries with higher economic growth, higher energy consumption, greater geopolitical risk, and lower government effectiveness. The findings suggest that policymakers should strengthen government effectiveness and institutional capacity to mitigate the adverse effects of geopolitical risk on energy imports. Countries should also diversify energy sources and suppliers and strengthen strategic energy reserves to enhance energy security and resilience to geopolitical shocks.

RCASBC-2026-129

From Passive Hedging to Strategic Agency: Bangladesh amid U.S.–China–India Rivalry

H. M. Sabbir Hossain

Abstract:

Bangladesh occupies a position of growing significance to the United States, China and India, yet its foreign policy remains largely reactive. As competition between the three powers intensifies across the Indo-Pacific and the Bay of Bengal, small and middle states caught in their overlapping spheres face a shared strategic question: whether to remain passive recipients of great-power attention or to construct a deliberate posture of hedging and strategic autonomy. This paper asks why Bangladesh, despite its geographic and demographic weight, continues to behave as the former rather than the latter, and what would allow it to move toward the latter. Drawing on official documents, secondary literature, and five semi-structured expert interviews conducted in 2026, and integrating Subaltern Realism, Regional Security Complex Theory and small-state hedging theory, the paper argues that Bangladesh's passivity is rooted less in external structural constraint than in an unfinished domestic state-making project. Seven interlocking internal deficits — an absent foreign policy doctrine, a generalist and personalised bureaucracy, an India-

centred political cleavage, economic mono-dependence, weak strategic planning capacity, an undertrained diplomatic corps, and fragile digital governance — explain why Bangladesh hedges competently in isolated crises, such as its 2026 energy-security response and its selective screening of Belt and Road financing, but has not converted this competence into institutionalised practice. A comparison with Singapore and Vietnam shows that economic and technological multi-alignment is an achievable middle-power strategy, while full geopolitical balancing remains structurally bounded by India's direct security stake in Bangladesh's stability. The paper's broader theoretical claim is that domestic state-making completeness functions as a precondition for deliberate hedging, not merely a parallel explanation alongside external structure — a sequencing question the existing small-state hedging literature, built largely from already-consolidated states, has had little occasion to examine. The paper closes with a concrete, sequenced reform agenda for converting Bangladesh's latent leverage into durable strategic agency, offering a template relevant to other small and middle states navigating great-power rivalry from a position of incomplete institutional consolidation.

RCASBC-2026-131

Bangladesh in the Indo-Pacific Strategic Environment: Managing Opportunity and Pressure as a Mid-Ranking State

A.N.M. Saif Uddin

Abstract:

The Indo-Pacific region is one of the most disputed arenas in the contemporary international relations. Here, choices of small and middle states of this region are progressively shape by the rules-based regional and global order, regional influence, connectivity, maritime security, economic and technological competition. In this Indo-Pacific setting, Bangladesh as a midranking state faces a two-fold strategic dilemma due to her geographical position. Geographybased potentials of this country creates significant opportunities, but at the same time it also faces the strategic pressures generates by major-power hostility, alignment politics, regional volatility and maritime insecurity. Owing to the country's strategic position between South and Southeast Asia, direct opening to the Bay of Bengal, geographical connection with India and Myanmar, proximity to Northeast Indian region and progress in maritime collaboration and regional connectivity Bangladesh holds a significant stance in this rapidly changing regional setting. This article through a qualitative approach examines how Bangladesh strategically copes both opportunities and difficulties generated by the competing interests of China, India, USA and other regional actors. The study identifies few key opportunities in maritime engagement, blue economy, port-based progress, development of infrastructures, diversification of trade, energy cooperation, connectivity diplomacy and enhanced diplomatic visibility. Furthermore, it assesses the impacts resulted from India-China competition, China-US rivalry, Indo-Pacific political alignment, crisis situation in Myanmar, the Rohingya refugee influx, institutional weakness of the region and concern over maritime security. Therefore, the study argues that most appropriate strategic response for Bangladesh is balanced approach with issue-based regional and international cooperation while seeking for strategic autonomy instead of holding strict alignment or submissive non-alignment posture. Geographical uniqueness of Bangladesh is actually by default or natural, but such uniqueness creates potential. The country whether can convert those potential into strategic benefit depends on its governance capacity, economic resilience, diplomatic skills, sea-based development and overall institutional coordination. In regard to the argument on the role of small and middle states in a changing global order, this article contributes by showing how Bangladesh pursuesto safeguard its national interest in hostile and highly competitive regional backdrop. Finally, the article also demonstrates the significance to enhance Indo-Pacific role of Bangladesh with the advancement in various aspects such as regional cooperation, value- maritime governance, creating connectivity and policy continuity.

Governing the Corridor: Institutional Capacity and the Selective Regulatory Export of Migrant Worker Protection in the Bangladesh–East/Southeast Asia Labor Migration Corridor.

MD ZAHIDUL ISLAM, Mst. Sumaia Akter, Md. Shazid Hasan

Abstract:

Existing migration-policy indices such as IMPIC, MIPEX, and DEMIG measure whether protective policy exists across dozens of states, but none pairs that measure against each jurisdiction's own institutional capacity to test whether the two move together — this paired measurement, not the corridor itself, is this article's point of departure. The article tests the field's standing assumption that institutional capacity constrains codified migrant protection across four receiving jurisdictions — China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore. Its contribution is the Migration Governance Decoupling Index (MGDI): each jurisdiction's Institutional Capacity Score (the mean of four World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2015–2024) set against an independently derived Legal Protection Score (LPS), coded directly from each jurisdiction's principal labor-migration statutes rather than from the same survey data underlying capacity. The standing assumption does not hold. Singapore (MGDI 63.4) and Hong Kong (42.0) — the corridor's two highest-capacity jurisdictions — show the largest gaps between administrative strength and codified protection, while South Korea (10.6) shows a markedly smaller gap despite lower capacity, and China (–20.2) shows protection exceeding capacity — a pattern that survives independent LPS coding and alternative-weighting robustness checks. High-capacity jurisdictions, the article argues, are not failing through weakness but exercising "selective regulatory export": calibrating a bounded, enforceable subset of protection by policy choice. Bangladesh, the corridor's principal sending state, shows the inverse pattern — a Sending-State Protective Architecture Score of 87.5 against institutional capacity of only 36.3 — and a within-country comparison of its government-to-government arrangements with South Korea and Malaysia shows this gap tracks the destination jurisdiction's willingness to exclude private recruitment intermediaries, not Bangladesh's own capacity. For Bangladesh and comparable sending states, the finding reframes bilateral leverage: capacity is not a ceiling on what a destination jurisdiction can offer, but a variable it chooses how to spend.

Maritime Vulnerability and National Food Security: Assessing the Impact of Strategic Chokepoint Disruptions on Bangladesh's Agricultural Supply Chains.

G.M Sifat Iqbal, Hussain Ahmed, Tafhim Rob Chowdhury

Abstract:

Global maritime chokepoints significantly impact food security in import-dependent developing countries, particularly Bangladesh, a mega delta state with a coastline of 720 kilometers along the Bay of Bengal. This situation poses an existential threat to its 170 million inhabitants, especially as disruptions in strategic sea lanes could jeopardize food sovereignty amid challenges in agricultural supply chains. The paper presents a qualitative case study illustrating the vulnerabilities exposed by the anticipated closure of the Strait of Hormuz in 2026, highlighting weaknesses in Bangladesh's agricultural input supply system. Using a single-country embedded case study design, this paper explores the contagion of disruptions through Bangladesh's fertilizer procurement from three temporally stacked maritime chokepoints: the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the South China Sea. Bangladesh's agricultural supply chains are in a critical state due to heavy dependence on imports for essential resources like oil and urea fertilizer,

primarily sourced from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In 2026, a significant crisis exacerbated these issues when rising energy prices led to the shutdown of fertilizer plants, resulting in a shortage of urea fertilizer during crucial planting times, which spiked food prices. This situation poses severe challenges for the populace already struggling financially, and the government's 2023 Indo-Pacific Outlook lacks a strategy to address potential supply chain crises. This paper emphasizes the need for Bangladesh to address its maritime vulnerabilities, particularly in protecting agricultural supply chains reliant on sea transportation. It advocates for the inclusion of a national food security strategy that prepares for such risks, proposing diversification of supply sources, stockpiling fertilizer for emergencies, and international collaboration to enhance preparedness for future challenges to food security.

RCASBC-2026-145

The Boomerang Effect of Omnibalancing: Regime Security and the Collapse of the Sheikh Hasina Regime in Bangladesh (2009-2024)

Md. Asad Ullah All Masum

Abstract:

This study draws on Steven R. David's analytical framework of omnibalancing to examine the Sheikh Hasina regime's relations with neighbouring India. David's framework explains why Third World leaders often align with external powers to counter internal threats to their regime rather than external threats to the state. Existing literature has focused on explaining alignment formations such as why Anwar Sadat, Mengistu Haile Mariam, King Hussein, or Emomali Rahmon chose the patrons they did. However, less attention has been given to alignment failure: what happens when an omnibalancing strategy is sustained over a long period and becomes the mechanism of regime collapse? Therefore, this study develops a "boomerang" extension to the omnibalancing framework, using the fifteen-year alignment between Sheikh Hasina's government in Bangladesh and India (2009-2024) as the primary case, with the terminal phase of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria (aligned with Russia and Iran) and Tajikistan's ongoing alignment with Iran as comparative cases. After analysing these cases, this study argues that omnibalancing generates a predictable pathology. Omnibalancing substitutes external legitimacy for domestic legitimacy and channels coercive capacity into domestic politics instrumentally. This approach suppresses the internal threat. It does not resolve it. As a result, it weakens the institutions that would otherwise mediate political conflict. As a result, the regime's stability becomes personalized and externally dependent rather than institutionally rooted, based on a patron-client relationship. This study suggests four scaling conditions for capturing this scenario: legitimacy substitution, institutional atrophy, the mobilization threshold, and patron visibility and entrapment, and these convert the alignment (omnibalancing) itself into the proximate cause of the leader's fall. After the case study, this framework yields two propositional pathways: the legitimacy-erosion pathway and the patron capacity pathway. Finally, this study outlines implications for how currently aligned regimes and their patrons might assess the alignment durability of similar arrangements today and in the future.

China's Expansionist Policies in the South China Sea: Threats and Responses in the Context of India's Maritime Security

Ms. Ashu, Dr. Manju Kundu

Abstract:

China's maritime posture in the South China Sea has become a defining feature of Indo-Pacific security, with direct implications for regional stability and great-power competition. Beijing's assertion of "historical rights" through the nine-dash line, upheld through island-building, militarisation, and grey-zone coercion, exceeds the entitlements permitted under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and places it in direct legal conflict with the exclusive economic zones of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia. While extensive scholarship examines this contestation and, separately, China's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean, few studies treat the two theatres as a single interconnected strategic arc, and fewer still connect China's naval build-up to its economic instruments of leverage, including the Belt and Road Initiative and its "String of Pearls" port network. This paper addresses that gap by combining offensive realism with complex interdependence theory to explain both the drivers of China's assertiveness and the constraints that global economic integration places upon it. Using a qualitative, comparative research design drawing on academic literature, government strategy documents, and think-tank assessments covering the period 2013–2025, the paper traces how China's militarisation of the South China Sea parallels its dual-use port development across the Indian Ocean, and how India has responded through a calibrated, rules-based strategy combining SAGAR, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, Quad cooperation, and naval modernisation. The findings show that India is shifting from reactive to proactive maritime engagement, that smaller littoral states such as the Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles are emerging as consequential strategic actors, and that deep economic interdependence between China and India makes direct military confrontation unlikely even as strategic competition intensifies. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening ASEAN cohesion, diversifying Quad cooperation beyond security signalling, and supporting a rules-based maritime order capable of resisting coercive economic statecraft.

Indo-Bangladesh Relations in the Post-Sheikh Hasina Era: Rethinking Regional Security amid Great Power Competition

Aditya Raj Kanaujia, Prosun Roy

Abstract:

Bangladesh's strategic location at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal, the Indian subcontinent, and the overland routes to Southeast Asia has long made it a focal point of regional geopolitics. While the Indo-Bangladesh relationship has been extensively studied through the lens of bilateral cooperation achieved during Sheikh Hasina's fifteen-year tenure, the August 2024 political transition and its cascading effects on regional security architecture remain comparatively underexamined. Existing scholarship has largely treated the rupture as a bilateral diplomatic disruption, with limited attention to how it has reconfigured great power competition involving China, Pakistan, and the United States. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the structural and geopolitical challenges confronting Indo-Bangladesh relations in the post-Hasina period. Drawing on qualitative secondary analysis situated within a Realist-Liberal-Constructivist theoretical framework, it analyses the resurgence of Chinese Belt and Road investment, Pakistan's diplomatic and security re-engagement, the United States renewed strategic interest including the contested St. Martin's Island question, and the implications for India's Siliguri Corridor and

northeastern states. In doing so, the study assesses the extent to which Bangladesh's post-transition external alignment constitutes a regional security concern transcending bilateral diplomacy, while identifying the institutional and policy gaps that constrain a coherent Indian response and outlining possible future trajectories for the relationship.

RCASBC-2026-190

US-China Strategic Competition in the Taiwan Strait: Implications for Indo-Pacific Maritime Security

Fatema Zannat Samiha

Abstract:

The Taiwan Strait serves as one of the world's most vital maritime choke points, handling over 80 percent of the global container fleet by tonnage and hosting TSMC, the leading supplier of advanced semiconductor chips. Consequently, any military instability in this narrow waterway poses an immediate threat to the global economy and regional peace. This paper examines the escalating strategic competition between the United States and China within the Taiwan Strait and evaluates its security implications for the wider Indo-Pacific. In recent years, China has intensified its gray-zone tactics, frequent Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) incursions, and naval blockades to assert sovereignty over Taiwan. In response, the United States has reinforced its strategic ambiguity while expanding defense aid, arms sales, and Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to preserve the status quo. Using a qualitative analytical framework, this study analyzes how the militarization of the Taiwan Strait affects critical Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) and forces regional nations into complex strategic hedging. The paper highlights the dilemmas faced by neighboring countries attempting to maintain economic cooperation with Beijing while relying on Washington for maritime defense. By incorporating recent geopolitical developments, military deployments, and alliance dynamics, this paper concludes that maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait requires strategic restraint and multilateral security dialogues to prevent an inadvertent confrontation in the Indo-Pacific.

RCASBC-2026-220

Economic Resilience and Strategic Autonomy: Bangladesh's Development Challenges in the Context of India-China Competition

Dr. Badri Prasad Dash, Dr. M. Venkataraman

Abstract:

Bangladesh's growing economic and strategic significance in the Bay of Bengal is increasingly shaped by the intensifying competition between India and China. Both powers are important development partners, providing Bangladesh with opportunities for infrastructure development, connectivity, trade, energy cooperation, investment and technological advancement. Even then Bangladesh growing external dependency may generate vulnerabilities constraining policy choices and long-term strategic autonomy. Against this backdrop, the paper examines how Bangladesh can leverage engagement with India and China while strengthening the domestic foundations of economic resilience and strategic autonomy. The article examines two interrelated dimensions of the challenge being faced by middle powers like Bangladesh: economic diversification, particularly in exports, investment, energy and supply chains and strategic autonomy and policy choices amidst competing external interests of India and China. It analyzes how geopolitical balancing, engagement with multilateral frameworks like ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), and the sustainable development of the blue economy can insulate Bangladesh from India-China rivalry. The article argues that Bangladesh's geographical position can be transformed from a source

of strategic vulnerability into an asset by promoting strategic autonomy and at the same time building diversified partnerships and promoting resilient economic and technological capabilities. This is by way of upgrading institutional capacities, modernizing domestic industry beyond ready-made garments, and maintaining an issue-based, non-aligned foreign policy posture. The article uses qualitative methodology using descriptive and analytical approaches from predominantly secondary literature sources along with government documents and publications.

RCASBC-2026-234

The Changing Dynamics of Post-Cold War World Order, Regional Security, and Bangladesh Politics: An Overview

Tama Rani Mistry, Reshmin Akther, Tarana-E-Tarannum Sumaiya

Abstract:

Global Political situation, regional security issues and concerns in South Asia, and Bangladesh's domestic politics has experienced several turns and twists since the end of the Cold War. These turns and twists have affected us all living in this planet. Bangladesh's domestic politics has also changed largely corresponding to the changes in the global politics and regional security issues in South Asia. Domestic politics in any country is determined by many factors; both endogenous and exogenous. Bangladesh is no exception. This paper deals with the role that the exogenous factors, namely, global order and South Asian regional security issues have played significant role in shaping Bangladesh's domestic politics. Attempt has been made in this paper to explain changes in Bangladesh politics since the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the firming up of absolute global Politico-economic and military-security hegemony by the United States -- the victorious party in the Cold War. India, in South Asia, with her new-found and growing strategic partnership with the global hegemon, the U.S, also began to assert her security interests in the region. That efforts of India have deeply affected Bangladesh. This paper explains changing pattern of Bangladesh's domestic politics from global and regional security contexts and perspective. Of course, this is a qualitative study. This paper is likely to shed some lights on the issues dealt with in this study

RCASBC-2026-262

Beijing as a Strategic Pivot: Great-Power Realignment and Bangladesh's Hedging Strategy in Asian Security

Abu Sayed Md. Nazmul Haider

Abstract:

This article explores Beijing's rise as a strategic pivot in Asian security by discussing the back-to-back visits of U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin to China in May 2026. It suggests that the visits were not just bilateral, but part of the effort to link patterns of a new regional and global operating system to China's geopolitical dynamics with the U.S. manoeuvred into rivalry and pragmatic strategic co-operation with Russia. The article, drawing on structural realism, power transition theory, complex interdependence and strategic hedging theory, explains how the logic of great power competition is now acted out militarystrategically and geoeconomically. It then queries about what this whole set-up means for Bangladesh, a developing nation dependent on markets for U.S. exports, Chinese infrastructure and industrial deals, Russian energy ties, and other interests, in the larger context of Indo-Pacific partnerships. The article suggests that the best possible way for Bangladesh to act is not to align rigidly or to remain passive but to hedge in a disciplined manner: to be active and to build an interest-based strategy through diversified partnerships abroad and enhanced domestic capacity, debt vigilance, export flexibility, energy management and institutional coordination.

The Role of BIMSTEC in Shaping Regional Geopolitics

Dr. Md. Shayed Hossain

Abstract:

In the age of globalization, countries face economic, security, environmental, and other challenges that can no longer be managed nationally, and that is why regional institutions are becoming more important. BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, is a grouping of seven South and Southeast Asian countries in the Bay of Bengal region that has now gained new strategic significance. BIMSTEC is playing a prominent role in determining the course of regional geopolitics by cooperating with each other through trade connectivity, security, energy, technology, climate change, and disaster-related activities and people-to-people relations between member countries. It adopts a qualitative research design with document and thematic analysis. Expert appraisals are the most relevant research methods, highlighting recent institutional developments such as the upcoming implementation of the BIMSTEC Charter in May 2024 and the adoption of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030 at the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit in April 2025. These developments have solidified the organization's legal and strategic framework and, more importantly, have opened up a clearer path toward regional cooperation. The analysis also indicates that BIMSTEC has the potential to be a significant bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia, leading to increased economic integration, better regional connectivity, and cooperation on shared security and environmental issues. Political disagreements between member states continue to exist and hamper the effectiveness of the organization. The record of implementation is poor. Decision-making is slow. Commitments made by the countries have been inconsistent. The paper argues that the geopolitical importance of BIMSTEC would be determined more by the successful implementation of existing commitments than by new declarations. BIMSTEC needs stronger political commitment, institutional capacity, and coordination among member states to play a bigger role in regional stability, resilience, and sustainable economic development.

From Strained Ties to Strategic Reset: Bangladesh-India Relations under the BNP Government

Abeda Khatun Chowdhury, Shamsun Nahar, Sharmin Yeasmin, Nupur Khanom

Abstract:

Bangladesh-India relations have entered a new phase following the return of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to power in February 2026. The relationship had become increasingly strained following the political upheaval of 2024, particularly over the presence of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in India, diplomatic mistrust, and disagreements over bilateral and regional issues. The new BNP-led government, headed by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, has emphasized a national-interest-oriented foreign policy while signalling an interest in improving relations with India. Recent diplomatic engagements, including the April 2026 visit of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister to New Delhi and subsequent calls for a more conducive environment for high-level engagement, indicate an emerging attempt at rapprochement. However, unresolved issues, particularly Sheikh Hasina's extradition, border management, water-sharing, trade, and strategic concerns, continue to constrain the prospects for a comprehensive reset. This paper examines whether the BNP government's emerging India policy represents a genuine strategic reset or a pragmatic recalibration of bilateral relations. Drawing on Neoclassical Realism and the concept of

Strategic Autonomy, the study adopts a qualitative case-study design and analyses official statements, diplomatic engagements, bilateral agreements, policy documents, scholarly literature, and credible media and policy reports from 2024 to August 2026. The paper argues that the emerging approach is best understood as pragmatic engagement rather than strategic realignment. Bangladesh seeks to normalize relations with India while simultaneously preserving policy flexibility and diversifying its external partnerships. The study further argues that the success of this reset will depend on the ability of both governments to manage politically sensitive disputes while expanding cooperation in trade, connectivity, energy, border management, and regional security. The paper contributes to understanding how domestic political change and strategic autonomy shape small-state foreign policy in South Asia.

RCASBC-2026-328

From the Himalayas to the Gulf: Chinese Engagement and Shifting Geopolitics between South and West Asia'

Rebeka Ahmed

Abstract:

The area extending from the Himalayas through South Asia to the Persian Gulf is gaining more significance in the evolving global political environment. China's rising involvement in this region, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), infrastructure projects, energy collaboration, trade, and strategic alliances, is modifying traditional patterns of regional cooperation and challenges. This paper explores how China's increasing participation is transforming relationships between South and West Asia and what this implies for regional security, economic linkages, and the emerging global structure. Instead of viewing South Asia and West Asia as distinct geopolitical areas, the study treats them as increasingly linked through infrastructure, trade, energy systems, and diplomatic ties. It centers on four key examples: the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the China-Iran 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement, China's expanding ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, and the ongoing Sino-Indian border disputes in the Himalayas. The research employs a mixed-methods strategy, incorporating comparative case studies, examination of policy documents and official communications, qualitative thematic analysis, and data on trade, investment, energy, and security. The analysis is grounded in Mackinder's Heartland Theory, Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), neo-realism, and the idea of geo-economic statecraft. The paper states that China's regional involvement is no longer confined to economic collaboration. Infrastructure ventures, energy partnerships, trade ties, diplomatic efforts, and security cooperation are becoming more tangled and are now essential tools for China to enhance its regional influence. At the same time, regional countries are responding in varied ways. Pakistan has formed a close strategic bond with China, India has adopted a mix of competition and selective engagement, Iran has deepened its partnership with Beijing, while Gulf States are increasingly pursuing balanced relationships with both China and the United States. These differing responses highlight the rising importance of balancing, hedging, and strategic independence within the region. The study adds to discussions about the changing global order by illustrating how China's rise is creating stronger connections between South and West Asia and changing established power dynamics. It concludes that the new geopolitical landscape is likely to be shaped not only by great-power competition but also by how regional nations leverage economic opportunities, strategic partnerships, and diplomatic adaptability to safeguard their national interests.

The Mecca Joint Defense Agreement: Implications for India-Pakistan Security Competition

Sayed Anwar, Rukaya Zaman, Sajuti Mahata

Abstract:

The Mecca Joint Defense Agreement, signed by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye in August 2026, establishes a collective-defense clause treating an attack on one member as an attack on all, raising fresh questions about its bearing on India-Pakistan security competition. This study examines the agreement's strategic implications for India and Pakistan and asks: what are its consequences for the two states, and how might it reshape their evolving rivalry? The analysis assesses effects on Pakistan's strategic position, India's threat perceptions, deterrence calculations, and the broader regional balance of power. It addresses a gap in the literature, since scholarly treatment of this newly formed trilateral framework and its cross-regional security consequences remains limited. Methodologically, the study follows a qualitative design built on secondary sources, including scholarly literature, policy reports, official statements, and credible media coverage. Neorealism supplies the theoretical framework, foregrounding power distribution, security competition, balancing behavior, and strategic alliance formation. The study argues that although the agreement is officially defensive and its operational commitments remain ambiguous, it is likely to strengthen Pakistan's diplomatic standing and deterrent posture while prompting India to reassess its regional security partnerships and hedging strategies. It further contends that the pact's significance lies less in its explicit military clauses than in the strategic signaling it produces: a trilateral bloc spanning the Gulf and South Asia alters the calculus of extended deterrence and alliance credibility that both New Delhi and Islamabad must now factor into their planning. The paper concludes that the agreement is likely to intensify strategic competition and accelerate diplomatic maneuvering between India and Pakistan without producing an immediate military realignment. By situating the pact within neorealist theory, the study contributes to understanding how cross-regional alliances reshape South Asian deterrence dynamics and offers a foundation for future research on Gulf-South Asian security linkages.

The role of geopolitics and developing states in the Strait of Hormuz

Shushil Kabir Miaz, Sohalia Bashir Shifa

Abstract:

International relations literature has traditionally portrayed resource rich developing nations as the victims of rivalries between developed nations. However, that has been far from the truth. The resolution of global or regional conflicts relies upon the geopolitical alliances of these developing nations as opposed to codified international instruments. The Strait of Hormuz situation is the prime example of this reflection. Even though, Iran is signatory to the United Nations Convention on Law of The Sea (UNCLOS) it never achieved ratification. The state has consistently denied any right of transit passage the convention implies on the strait and has claimed the right to innocent passage, empowering them to assert claims over the passage of any warships. As a result the strait has been subject to disputes due to this gap. Starting from the tanker wars of 1984 to the full closure of the strait by Iran in 2026, each of the issues had escalated due to the geopolitical alliances of the states involved. While, the defiance of UNCLOS, IMO conventions by Iran is a strict violation of their international law obligations, they are still in control approximately 25 percent of the world's oil distribution. This alongside their unilateral adaption of the Persian Gulf Strait Authority controlling any transit through the strait in contradiction to its actual legal status is a demonstration of

asymmetric leverage. Even if, the initial attacks were conducted against US allied Gulf nations such as Qatar, UAE same states (i.e.: Oman) have negotiated with Iran in order to gain their own trade passage on the strait. The Security Council developments regarding this issue also highlights this dimension. Although, Resolution 2817 condemning Iran's attacks was successfully adopted the follow-up resolution advocating for coordinated safe passages was vetoed by China and Russia citing the failure of the resolution in addressing the violations by the US-Israel coalition. States such as Pakistan, UAE, Qatar, and Oman have all been mediating agents dictating this conflict. It is this agency which is the focus of this study. Regional states are no longer the victims of these conflicts. Rather they are the conducting agents. This paper utilizes the qualitative study method in analyzing these political dimensions establishing the smaller-state agency literature in the present context.

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Hybrid Warfare in the Indo-Pacific: China's Grey Zone Strategy and India's Security Response

Bhawna Bhansali, Kruti Hudka

Abstract:

The research paper examines the phenomenon of digital sovereignty, which is supposed to be an advanced form of power that states are applying in the age of artificial intelligence and its impact on traditional ideas about sovereignty. Traditionally, Westphalian sovereignty was based on the concept of territory, which makes it possible for nations to act in an independent manner and to make sure that they preserve their sovereignty on their territories. However, the unrivaled speed of development in the sphere of artificial intelligence technologies, algorithm-driven decision-making, means of communication, and mechanisms of data transmission makes it necessary to reconsider the principle of exercising power beyond the borders of the territory. The research paper aims at studying whether the increasing number of algorithms, cross-national corporations, infrastructure, and artificial intelligence technologies creates new forms of power of the state contrary to the traditional state-centered worldview in the international system. The research looks at the relationship between territorial sovereignty, digital sovereignty, data sovereignty, and algorithmic sovereignty with the emphasis on the governing capability of the state in respect of AI technologies together with its ability to control important digital infrastructures and data. The research assesses the existing national and international legal systems governing AI, data, cyber security, as well as digital technologies with the aim of detecting the weaknesses in the traditional sovereignty system. This paper further explores how leading technology companies and AI creators are gaining their transnational power in the context of information flows, economic activity, technical requirements, and decision-making. Using doctrinal and normative legal methodology in research, this study highlights the international legal rules, emerging frameworks of governance in AI, national practices, and literature related to the issues of sovereignty and technologies' governance. The study argues that algorithmic sovereignty does not need to imply replacing state sovereignty. Instead, algorithmic sovereignty can be construed as a new layer of sovereignty. The process of controlling algorithms, data, technology infrastructures, and AI systems is to be interpreted as a significant aspect of national and international power. Further, it demonstrates that the current Westphalian model does not cope well with algorithmic systems due to their cross-border nature. The paper concludes that a new international order will be needed in the age of AI, which would include rethinking sovereignty in order to include not only territorial sovereignty, but also governance through technology, data, and algorithms. The research suggests that the world needs more cooperation among countries, transparent governance in the field of AI, accountability of international tech companies, and preservation of state autonomy in terms of its regulations and development of common principles for responsible AI.

The Northern Sea Route and Reconstruction of Mackinder's Heartland Theory

Mohammed Nabil Ahsan, Joyanti Shil, Arpon Chowdhury

Abstract:

The association between Mackinder's Heartland Theory and Northern Sea Route (NSR) is influenced significantly by the evolution of the Arctic from an unexplored natural barrier into a prospective and strategic shipping route. As Mackinder's perception on Eurasian Heartland was a geographically protected land power core with the frozen Arctic was acting as a strong northern wall. But the Northern Sea Route is becoming increasingly vital as arctic ice is melting due to climate change while creating the possibilities of establishing new trade corridor between Asia and Europe. However, existing studies are focused mainly on examining the NSR from the perspectives of shipping, trade, energy resources or Arctic geopolitics while very limited attention was given to the connection between the NSR and the geopolitical logic of Heartland theory. This study explores the future potential of the NSR by connecting Mackinder's Heartland concept with new realities of Arctic navigation possibilities as well as related infrastructure development, trade possibilities, energy politics and geopolitical competition. The study used a mixed method approach combining historical and theoretical analysis using latest secondary data on Arctic sea ice condition, NSR shipping activity, cargo volume and related geopolitical perspectives. A comparative analysis of NSR and traditional Eurasian maritime routes was used to analyze its strategic advantages and limitations while scenario analysis was applied to examine possible future pathways of NSR development under different economic, climate and geopolitical condition. The study argues that NSR should not be considered only as a shorter alternative shipping route between Eurasia. Its deeper significance is its potential to change the strategic geography of Eurasian Heartland by turning the Arctic from a natural wall to a profitable maritime route as well as a strategic interface between land and sea power. The research proposes a new perspective of Heartland theory while explaining how its development can fundamentally alter the geopolitical meaning of old Heartland theory.

Geopolitics of Energy in the Bay of Bengal: Demystifying the Evolving Trilateral Competition for Energy Resources Between Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar.

Md. Jahidul Hasan Nayan, Md. Saiful Islam

Abstract:

The Bay of Bengal (BoB) is affluent with hydrocarbon reserves and renewable energy resources. Along with its energy potentials, the BoB region is flourishing increasingly due to the changing dynamics of regional geopolitical and geostrategic milieux. The growing strategic importance, exacerbated by its crucial maritime trade routes, economic vitality, and energy supply chain, has added new impetus to existing regional politics. Moreover, the resolution of maritime disputes between and among Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India in 2012 and 2014 has expedited competition between these countries. Notably, the increasing need for energy security, created by mounting thrives for development drives and industrialization processes of these countries, is intensifying the competition. Hence, these three countries are striving for meeting their energy necessities and establishing supremacy over maritime zones in the BoB. The research analyzes the evolving trilateral competition among Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar for energy resources in the Bay of Bengal and the dynamics of energy geopolitics, framing the analysis through the lens of realism, sea power theory, and resources politics. By employing qualitative approach, the study analyzes

how the BoB region has shifted into a geopolitical hotspot due to its extensive untapped hydrocarbon reserves, renewable energy resources, strategic location, vital maritime trade routes, and the enactment of a sustainable blue economy drive to meet increasing energy demands. Although maritime boundary disputes among three countries have been resolved through international law, the study contends that constant challenges such as unauthorized resource exploitation, illegal mining, competing claims over continental shelves and gas fields, and strategic approaches of extra-regional powers like the United States of America, China, and Japan through the Belt and Road Initiative, Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt are creating complexities. Furthermore, the study examines how regional crises, such as the Rohingya crisis, are deeply convoluting with geopolitical and geo-economic interests. The study shows that the Bay of Bengal serves as a launching pad of regional energy geopolitics of littoral states and great power rivalries over energy security and naval dominance. Consummately, the paper provides possible recommendations aimed at addressing the challenges and alleviating competition among Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar regarding energy resources in the Bay of Bengal.

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Bangladesh–China Relations and South Asian Regional Security: Strategic Autonomy amid China–India Competition

Sharmin Yeasmin, Fahmida Aktar, Md. Kawsar Miah

Abstract:

South Asia has become an increasingly important arena of geopolitical competition as the regional influence of China expands and strategic rivalry between China and India. These developments are reshaping the regional security environment and creating new opportunities as well as challenges for smaller states. Bangladesh occupies a strategically important position because of its geographic location, growing economic links with China, closer relations with India and access to the Bay of Bengal. The expansion of Bangladesh–China relations in trade, infrastructure, connectivity, defence and development has therefore acquired significance beyond the bilateral level. It has become increasingly connected to wider questions of regional security, strategic competition, and the changing balance of power in South Asia. This study examines the implications of Bangladesh–China relations for South Asian regional security, with particular attention to Bangladesh's foreign policy choices amid growing China–India competition. It seeks to understand how Bangladesh manages its relations with two major regional powers while attempting to protect its national interests and maintain strategic autonomy. The study adopts a qualitative research approach based on the analysis of scholarly literature, official documents, bilateral agreements, policy statements, and relevant secondary sources. The concepts of strategic autonomy, strategic hedging, and small-state agency provide the analytical basis for examining Bangladesh's position within the changing regional security environment. The study argues that Bangladesh's growing engagement with China has contributed to greater economic and strategic diversification but has also introduced new security considerations into South Asian geopolitics. Chinese involvement in infrastructure, connectivity, and defence cooperation has increased Bangladesh's strategic options, while simultaneously generating concerns in India regarding China's expanding regional presence. However, Bangladesh's continued engagement with India and other regional and global actors indicates an effort to avoid exclusive alignment with any major power. This strategy allows Bangladesh to pursue economic and strategic interests while retaining a degree of foreign policy flexibility. The study concludes that the choices of a smaller state can influence broader patterns of regional competition and cooperation. Bangladesh's experience further demonstrates that small-state agency and strategic hedging can play a meaningful role in shaping regional security dynamics amid intensifying major-power competition.

Bangladesh's Maritime Interests in a Changing Global Order: From Blue Economy to Strategic Autonomy

Abid Hasan Joy

Abstract:

Bangladesh's marine interests are situated at the nexus of growth, security, and great power rivalry, and the Bay of Bengal has grown in importance as a venue for geopolitical confrontation and economic opportunity. Bangladesh has sovereign rights in the Bay of Bengal and abundant maritime resources. However, previous research on Bangladesh's Blue Economy has mostly concentrated on sectoral development, sustainable resource management, economic growth, and ocean governance. In view of the expanding influence of China, India, the United States, and other regional entities concurrently, recent research has examined Bangladesh's strategic autonomy and hedging behavior. However, there has not been much research done on the connection between Bangladesh's Blue Economy and its quest for strategic autonomy. In order to close this gap, this article investigates if and how Bangladesh's growing maritime economy may improve its strategic autonomy in a shifting global order. The study conceptualizes the Blue Economy as a tool for economic development as well as a potential source of partnership diversification, economic diversification, and geopolitical bargaining power. It is based on a qualitative analysis of policy documents, academic literature, and Bangladesh's maritime engagements with major external partners. The paper argues that by lowering undue reliance on any one external partner and enabling more flexibility in foreign policy decision-making, a more diverse and institutionally capable Blue Economy might increase Bangladesh's strategic space. However, reliance on foreign technology, infrastructure, investment, and security cooperation could restrict this independence and strengthen strategic hedging. In light of the growing geopolitical rivalry in the Bay of Bengal, the study proposes a Blue Economy–Strategic Autonomy nexus where maritime economic capacity, bolstered by sound ocean governance and diverse partnerships, can enhance Bangladesh's ability to pursue its national interests.

Manufacturing the "Infiltrator": Media Securitization of Cross-Border Mobility and Regional Security in South Asia

Oyshy Enayet

Abstract:

Across South Asia, cross-border human mobility is overwhelmingly driven by seasonal economic demand, informal labor markets, and deltaic environmental displacement. However, mainstream news coverage across regional destination and transit states consistently converts routine migration into an immediate national security emergency. This article explores print and digital news organizations as independent securitizing actors who map the architecture of threat that socially reconstructs transnational labor mobility within a trajectory that ultimately defines it as an existential priority in terms of state sovereignty and regional security. Employing Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study evaluates an empirical corpus of sixty news reports, editorials, and investigative features published between 2020 and 2026 across four major regional newspapers: The Times of India, The Indian Express, The Daily Star, and DAWN. The textual analysis is grounded in an integrated critical security framework combining Copenhagen School securitization, Paris School insecurity, Stephan Scheel's culture of suspicion, and Maciej Śliwiński's concept of securitism. The empirical analysis reveals three dominant discourse nodes: The Illegal Alien, The Demographic Threat, and The Infiltrator/Crime Source. The micro-linguistic analysis illustrates a discursive activation of outgroup threat schemas in public discourse through

lexicalizing/ criminalizing (e.g. ghuspaethiye) and deviant semantics in the use of "floods" and "torrents". News coverage demonstrates a systematic agency bias in the use of passive voice to erase state border violence and active voice to centralize migrant aggression. News schemas also display a form of heavy institutional dependency, sometimes taking up to fifty percent of the layout dependent on police and paramilitary-related press releases, whilst eliminating migrant and human rights perspectives altogether. Comparative synthesis demonstrates that destination-state press outlets sustain an overarching securitist ideology where security logic overrides economic and environmental facts, whereas origin-state media emphasize borderland violence and asymmetry. By illustrating how media threat manufacturing conditions public social cognition and legitimizes militarized border regimes, this study advances critical security studies in South Asia and provides policy insights for demilitarizing regional security management among middle and small states.

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From Tariffs to Strategic Competition: The Discursive Construction of the U.S.-China Trade War, 2017–2025

Rabeya Sultana

Abstract:

This study examines the narratives from US and Chinese officials and how those narratives transformed tariff measures into strategic competition instruments from 2017 to 2025. The tariff war between the US and China is often considered as an expression of great power rivalry, however, not enough attention has been paid to how the dispute was framed as part of a broader strategic competition. Presidential speeches, trade and security documents, legislative debates, and negotiation communiqués are analyzed through process tracing and comparative discourse analysis methods. Strategic competition framing, as the findings show, emerged before major tariff escalation, particularly through the 2017 National Security Strategy and 2018 National Defense Strategy. Under Biden, this framing persisted through de-risking and technology controls. By 2024–2025, China's resistance had gradually given way to acceptance of the increasingly competitive relationship. The findings show the political narratives, from both ends, not only described the tariff conflict but also helped shape its escalation and institutionalization. It offers a discourse framework for understanding great-power economic competition.

RCASBC-2026-363

Geo-Psychology, Statelessness and Regional Security of Border Regions in the Rohingya Crisis

Tania Ahmed Uma, Mahamid Hosen Mahi

Abstract:

The expulsion of the Rohingya population from Myanmar's Rakhine State transcends a mere regional humanitarian concern, representing a calculated geopolitical maneuver driven by interests in global trade expansion and maritime dominance. This study investigates the intersection of ruthless geopolitical politics, the stark reality of institutional statelessness, and the resulting implications for regional security in Southeast and South Asia. Utilizing a qualitative research approach grounded in secondary sources—including academic journals, historical maps, government reports, and foundational literature—the paper evaluates how great-power competition reshapes border dynamics. The theoretical framework integrates Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power Theory and Hans Morgenthau's Classical Realism to decode why powerful nations, particularly China, prioritize strategic sea lanes and economic corridors over humanitarian resolution. Specifically, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) and the Kyaukpyu deep-sea port in Rakhine State serve as central pillars of this maritime expansion, where controlling sea

power correlates directly with global hegemony. Psychologically, the crisis is fueled by dual, opposing fears: the existential dread of the military junta and hardline groups fearing demographic shifts, contrasted with the debilitating identitylessness, uncertainty, and trauma experienced by the stateless Rohingya. These geo-psychological factors, analyzed through sociological and psychological perspectives, create fertile ground for radicalization and security vulnerabilities. For Bangladesh, hosting over 1.2 million stateless refugees introduces severe economic pressures, environmental degradation, and heightened risks of drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and border-based criminal networks. Applying Talukder Maniruzzaman's framework on the security of small states, the study emphasizes that Bangladesh cannot rely solely on military power; instead, it requires sophisticated diplomatic defense strategies, bilateral negotiations, and multilateral balance. The findings suggest that the crisis will persist unless Bangladesh effectively links the Rohingya repatriation process with the broader economic and security interests of regional superpowers. Furthermore, international bodies such as the United Nations, ASEAN, and BIMSTEC must move beyond basic relief operations to apply concerted political and economic pressure on the states responsible. Ultimately, resolving this protracted crisis necessitates a pragmatic synthesis of realist foreign policy, international law, and moral geo-psychology to restore human rights, safeguard border stability, and stabilize maritime power dynamics in the region.

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Maritime Security Cooperation in the Malacca Strait and Its Transferable Lessons for the Bay of Bengal

Anton Chakma, Rifah Tasfia Ishadi, Zonayer Ahammed

Abstract:

The Malacca Strait is a maritime route where Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand have developed practical arrangements to address maritime security threats. The Malacca Straits Patrol combines coordinated sea patrols, combined maritime air patrols, and intelligence exchange, while regular meetings support operational coordination and information sharing. Existing literatures also show that cooperation in the Strait is shaped by sovereignty, economic interests, legal obligations, and regional institutions. At the same time, maritime security cooperation has become increasingly important in the Bay of Bengal, where Bangladesh and other regional states face shared security challenges and are developing cooperation through BIMSTEC. However, the existing literature is dispersed across studies of piracy, maritime security, regional cooperation, the Malacca Straits Patrol, and Bay of Bengal security. Less systematic attention has been given to identifying which practices from the Malacca experience are transferable to the Bay of Bengal and which depend on Southeast Asia's political and institutional conditions. This study therefore examines the existing literature to identify the mechanisms, conditions, outcomes, and limitations of maritime security cooperation in the Malacca Strait and assess their relevance to the Bay of Bengal. The study will use a systematic literature review of approximately 40 academic and policy sources identified through structured database searches and defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Bibliometric analysis will map publication trends, key themes, influential studies, and relationships among major concepts. The selected literature will then be coded thematically according to cooperation mechanisms, information sharing, joint patrols, institutional arrangements, sovereignty concerns, and conditions affecting cooperation. The analysis is expected to show which elements of the Malacca experience have wider relevance and which are context-specific. The study will distinguish between practices that may be transferable, practices requiring adaptation, and practices unlikely to fit the Bay of Bengal context. The findings will provide a literature-based assessment of how regional maritime security cooperation could be strengthened and identify implications for Bangladesh's role in Bay of Bengal security cooperation.

The Undaunted Delta: Rethinking Bengal's Politico-Military Culture from Antiquity to Contemporary Bangladesh's Strategic Culture

Reazul Mostafa

Abstract:

The study of Bangladesh's strategic culture has been anchored, almost exclusively, to the Liberation War of 1971, producing an account of the state's security behaviour that begins only fifty years into a much longer regional history. This paper argues that such temporal narrowing is a genuine gap in the literature rather than a defensible starting point, and it addresses that gap by reconstructing the politico-military culture of the wider Bengal region from classical antiquity to the present. The Bengal delta, one of the largest and most distinctive deltaic environments in the world, has been contested by some of history's most formidable military powers, from the generals of Alexander the Great to the Mughal Empire, the British East India Company, and the Pakistani Army. Against each of these, local polities developed recognisable and recurring patterns of resistance: riverine mobility that exploited terrain conventional armies could not master, asymmetric and irregular warfare, and popular legitimacy deployed as a substitute for conventional military weight. Drawing on classical sources, Mughal-era chronicles, colonial administrative records, and modern historical scholarship, the paper traces this tradition through the war-elephant armies described in Gangaridai and the Pala Empire, the Turkic conquest and the Bengal Sultanate's assertion of political autonomy, the celebrated riverine resistance of the Bara Bhuiyans against Mughal incorporation, the structural political failures underlying the fall of Bengal at Plassey, the underground revolutionary tradition of the colonial period, and the systematic institutional suppression, and eventual re-emergence, of Bengali martial identity within Pakistan. It argues that these episodes are not disconnected historical curiosities but expressions of a single, coherent politico-military culture, shaped by a consistent geographic environment and transmitted across dynastic and colonial rupture through geography, institutional memory, and narrative continuity. Read against this longer history, the Liberation War of 1971 appears not as an origin point but as the most recent and most dramatic expression of a much older tradition. The paper contributes to strategic culture studies by extending the analytical timeframe applied to Bangladesh into the pre-colonial period, and by offering a South Asian case study that the anglophone strategic culture literature has largely overlooked.

Iranian Cultural Influence and the Geopolitics of Iran-US Relations: A Historical Analysis

Dr. Mojammel Huq, Shafayet Ullah

Abstract:

Iran-US relations have long been shaped by strategic rivalry, ideological differences, economic sanctions, regional conflicts, and nuclear politics. Yet the relationship cannot be fully understood through conventional geopolitical and security frameworks alone. Cultural perceptions, historical memories, religious encounters, intellectual exchanges, media representations, Persian language and literature, artistic production, and Iranian diaspora networks have also contributed to the changing character of Iran-US relations. This paper examines the historical evolution of Iranian cultural influence and its relationship with the geopolitics of Iran-US relations. Adopting a historical-interpretive approach, the study traces the cultural dimension of the relationship from the emergence of sustained US-Iranian contacts through the

1953 political crisis, the Pahlavi era, the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the hostage crisis, the post-revolutionary period, the nuclear dispute, and the contemporary era of strategic confrontation. Particular attention is given to how Iranian cultural identity, Persian heritage, religious narratives, intellectual exchanges, cinema, literature, media, and diaspora communities have shaped perceptions of Iran in the US and contributed to Iran's efforts to project cultural influence beyond its borders. This paper argues that culture has functioned not merely as a secondary dimension of Iran-US relations but as a significant arena in which identity, legitimacy, representation, resistance, and geopolitical contestation are constructed and negotiated. The study further argues that Iranian cultural influence has operated through both state-sponsored initiatives and non-state transnational networks, producing complex and sometimes contradictory images of Iran. By bringing culture into the analysis of Iran-US geopolitics, the paper seeks to demonstrate how historical memory and cultural representation can shape international perceptions, diplomatic possibilities, and geopolitical competition.

RCASBC-2026-384

OPERATION 1027 IN MYANMAR: REVISITING BANGLADESH'S TRADITIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS

Tahsin Binte Hasan, Dr Razia Sultana

Abstract:

Operation 1027, a major military offensive initiated in late 2023 by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in Myanmar, has added new facets to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar. The spill-over effects of this crisis are faced by the neighbouring countries, creating probable risks of escalation in the future. This paper highlights a significant research gap in addressing traditional security threats for Bangladesh in the context of the recent developments in Myanmar after Operation 1027 and argues that the traditional security apparatus of Bangladesh requires reevaluation in response to emerging threats from Myanmar. Applying the Border Security Cooperation Framework (CBSC Model), grounded in Boundary Making Theory, the paper establishes that a comprehensive, multiactor, and institutionalized approach to border security is essential for Bangladesh to effectively address and respond to the traditional security threats emerging from the Myanmar crisis. Through a detailed examination of Key Informant Interviews (KII), news articles, and academic journals, this study employs a qualitative methodology based on data triangulation. Furthermore, the paper identifies several critical areas where Bangladesh's security is under threat including the risk to St. Martin's Island, border skirmishes, civilian casualties, and the increasing military strength of Myanmar. Finally, from the analysis, a response apparatus is outlined for Bangladesh to effectively address and mitigate these traditional security challenges from Myanmar.

RCASBC-2026-400

From Shared Spaces to Divided Borders: Partition and the Making of Illicit Economies in Bangladesh

Asif Mahmud, Md Shakhawat Hossain, Mojammel Hossen Rumman

Abstract:

Illicit economic activities in Bangladesh's borderlands remain a persistent but understudied issue. They are often treated mainly as matters of law enforcement and border security. This qualitative phenomenological study examines how Partition and postcolonial border-making changed social, kinship, and economic relations in selected border communities of Kushtia, Meherpur, and Chapainawabganj. It also explores how these historical changes, along with current livelihood and governance conditions, shape informal and illicit

economic practices. Data were collected from 22 participants through purposive and snowball sampling. The sample included 14 in-depth interviews and 8 key informant interviews. The study uses an integrated theoretical framework based on Edward Said's postcolonial theory and the anthropological perspectives of Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson on borders and borderlands. The findings show that Partition disrupted long-standing kinship ties, trade networks, and shared markets. Border communities then had to reorganize mobility and economic exchange within new state-controlled systems. Limited livelihood opportunities and uneven border governance further increased economic and social marginalisation. In this context, some existing social and economic networks became linked to informal and, in some cases, illicit cross-border activities. The findings suggest that illicit economic activity cannot be explained only by poverty or individual criminal behavior. It develops through the interaction of colonial and postcolonial legacies, changing social and economic networks, limited livelihood options, and current border governance. The study therefore highlights the historical roots of borderland economies and shows how state borders can reshape local economic practices. It adds empirical evidence from Bangladesh to wider debates on borderland economies, informal trade, and postcolonial state formation in South Asia.

RCASBC-2026-403

China's Rise as a Global Superpower: Strategies of International Influence and Pressure

Md. Nahid Hasan, Nishat Jahan

Abstract:

China's rapid economic development and its increasing participation in the international arena have had a profound impact on the global balance of power. By examining the tactics China uses to increase its influence abroad and solidify its place in the world political and economic system, this study investigates China's ascent to prominence. The study is conducted based on qualitative research methodology which is limited to secondary data obtained from reliable online database information, government publications, international organizations, books, research reports, and scholarly journals. Economic diplomacy, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), international trade and investment, military modernization, technological advancement, diplomatic engagement, soft power, and participation in global governance institutions are among the main facets of China's global strategy that are the subject of the study. Based on the research to date, China has been pursuing various strategies, such as infrastructure connectivity, economic investment, diplomatic outreach and international organizations, to expand its influence beyond its own region. Meanwhile, other countries have engaged China in various ways in response to its more aggressive diplomatic, propaganda and economic agendas, from cooperation to resistance. Thus, the study examines the opportunities and challenges of China's emergence as a potential superpower and the effectiveness of the instruments in working together to advance China's quest for greater global leadership. Rather than relying solely on economic power, the study argues that China's success is due to a complex approach that incorporates economic, political, technological, military and diplomatic elements. The results are expected to aid in understanding how China's position in the world has evolved and what implications this has for the existing global order.

Beyond Bilateralism: Can Multitrack Diplomacy Overcome the Challenges in Water Management between Bangladesh and India?

Md Rahatul Mowla Rahat, Md.Badrul Islam, Mahammad Sohel

Abstract:

Bangladesh-India water relations have historically been conducted primarily through bilateral negotiations, agreements and understandings at the state level. However, long-standing issues such as water sharing from common rivers, river management, upstream water withdrawal and information and data exchange have highlighted the limitations of a purely bilateral state framework. In this context, multitrack diplomacy involving governments, diplomats, civil society, water experts, academics, environmental organizations, local communities and other non-state stakeholders can be considered as an alternative and complementary approach to resolving the Bangladesh-India water problem. The objective of this study is to determine how effective multitrack diplomacy can be in addressing water-related challenges between Bangladesh and India and what additional opportunities it can create compared to conventional bilateral state negotiations. The study will follow a qualitative approach. Data will be collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary and secondary sources will include government statements of Bangladesh and India, bilateral agreements and understandings, documents of relevant ministries and institutions, policy papers, academic research and reports of national and international organizations. In addition, in-depth interviews will be conducted with water experts, diplomats, government officials, academicians, civil society representatives and other relevant stakeholders and data collection will continue until the saturation point of engagement is reached. The collected data will be analyzed through thematic content analysis. The following main issues are expected to emerge from the analysis: i. Evolution of Bangladesh-India transboundary water relations; ii. Limitations of conventional bilateral water diplomacy; iii. Theoretical foundations of multi-pronged diplomacy; iv. Role of Track I, Track II and Track III in water cooperation; v. Potential and challenges of multi-pronged diplomacy in Bangladesh-India water relations; and vi. Role of domestic, regional and international factors in transboundary water management. The findings of the study suggest that it is not possible to replace bilateral negotiations with multitrack diplomacy. But, it may complement the ongoing bilateral relations by creating new areas of dialogue, exchanging knowledge and scientific information, enhancing mutual trust, and ensuring the participation of relevant stakeholders.

Bangladesh's New Radar Infrastructure and Airspace Security in the Bay of Bengal

Mohammad Kaiba Hasnat, Nafiz Akib Khan, Afshara Tasneem Zoa

Abstract:

The modernization it is making of its civil and military radar and ADS-B equipment is an attempt to bridge the 'spatial-sovereignty gap' between its legal jurisdiction in national airspace and maritime space and its ability to monitor and verify activity on its own, something India has traditionally done with its radar facilities in Kolkata. Based on the available documentation of the CAAB, ICAO, and Thales, only the known locations and approximate dates of this infrastructure are traced here, such as a new Air Traffic Management Centre under construction at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka (planned from 2019, reported to be completed around December 2025); ADS-B stations confirmed by ICAO exist in Cox's Bazar, Dhaka, Barishal, Saidpur, and Sylhet; radar-related construction operations are reported at

Lalmonirhat airbase since December 2025, and unactivated radar infrastructure is reported at Shah Amanat International Airport, Chattogram. The technical specifications and coverage range claims are intentionally omitted because they are not public or verifiable. The paper contextualizes these developments in the framework of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), which sees the Bay of Bengal as a region of structural interdependence between the security complexes of Bangladesh, India, China, and Myanmar, and suggests that Myanmar's historical position as a buffer zone between the security complexes of South and Southeast Asia has been undermined. This is related to existing studies on India-Bangladesh maritime cooperation that show that bilateral cooperation in connectivity and naval engagement has advanced significantly, but maritime-security cooperation has been identified as comparatively underdeveloped, and the influence of competing regional cooperation initiatives (BIMSTEC and SAARC) on how Bangladesh is positioning itself. The paper adopts a qualitative, document-based approach and presents arguments that the development of radar infrastructure in Bangladesh complements existing trends in the regional security literature and enhances the country's spatial sovereignty but also remains part of current bilateral engagement. The paper concludes that this modernization can consolidate both strategic autonomy and the security of the Bay of Bengal security complex, as long as it's presented as a common security threat to the region instead of being based on alignment with any one power.

RCASBC-2026-454

Values and Realpolitik: A Comparative Study of U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Bangladesh Under Democrat and Republican Administrations

Farhana Khan Juthy, Helal Uddin Ahmmmed

Abstract:

The promotion of democracy has been a core value of US foreign policy, creating a tension between normative commitment and geopolitical pragmatism in response towards strategically important states. Such tension is particularly visible in the last two and a half decades of the U.S.- Bangladesh relationship. Being a South Asian and Bay of Bengal littoral country, its relevance with counterterrorism and Indo-Pacific strategy complicate the pursuit of U.S. democratic ideals. The data are presented through a thematic analysis of various U.S. policy documents, speeches, and press releases related to Bangladesh from 2001 to 2024, supplemented by key-informant surveys with related officials. The analysis examines the relative policy emphasis across administrations under four themes of democracy promotion, human rights, governance and institutional capacity, and geopolitical interests. Findings show that the Democrats have more frequently emphasized grassroots democracy, civil society and electoral integrity, while Republicans gave priority to security partnerships and government stability. Both administrations have persistently acknowledged the strategic importance of Bangladesh within the Indo-Pacific framework and counterterrorism. These patterns suggest that the United States geopolitical considerations persistently shape the practical implementation of democracy promotion, regardless of party rhetoric. Along with thematic discussions, this paper contributes to the literature on U.S. democracy assistance by offering a systematic, document-based comparison of U.S. partisan approaches to a single strategically important state, and it offers implications for how policymakers might better align stated democratic commitments with foreign policy practice.

Strategic Warning in Grey-Zone Competition: Detecting Escalation in the China–Philippines South China Sea Disputes

Parul Trivedi

Abstract:

The China–Philippines maritime dispute in the South China Sea has increasingly been characterized by recurrent confrontations involving coast guard vessels, maritime militia, naval forces and civilian maritime actors. Water-cannoning, blocking, ramming, dangerous manoeuvres and other coercive practices are frequently treated as individual episodes of greyzone competition. However, the accumulation and sequencing of such incidents may reveal changes in strategic behaviour that are not immediately evident from isolated events. This paper examines the intelligence problem underlying this dynamic: when does a maritime incident become a strategic signal of an emerging escalation trajectory. The paper has three objectives. First, it identifies recurring indicators within China–Philippines maritime confrontations that may provide early-warning signals of changing coercive behaviour. Second, it examines whether the frequency, intensity, actor composition, operational methods and geographic distribution of incidents demonstrate identifiable patterns across three major flashpoints: Second Thomas Shoal, Scarborough Shoal and Sabina Shoal. Third, it assesses whether cumulative-signal analysis can strengthen anticipatory approaches to regional-security assessment. The study adopts a qualitative comparative case-study methodology, combining open-source intelligence (OSINT), structured event analysis and process tracing. Maritime incidents during the selected study period will be systematically classified according to their actors, tactics, intensity, location, frequency and temporal sequencing. These indicators will subsequently be examined against major episodes of confrontation and de-escalation to determine whether clusters of low- and medium-intensity events preceded observable changes in the security environment. The study anticipates four principal findings. First, individual maritime incidents have limited explanatory value when examined independently, whereas convergence among multiple indicators provides stronger evidence of changing strategic behaviour. Second, shifts in the frequency, intensity and composition of maritime encounters can reveal escalation trajectories before they culminate in major confrontations. Third, comparison across the three flashpoints can distinguish localized incidents from patterns reflecting broader strategic behaviour. Fourth, cumulative-signal analysis can complement conventional event-driven monitoring by providing a more systematic basis for strategic warning and preventive regional-security assessment. The paper argues that the contemporary intelligence challenge in the South China Sea is increasingly one of signal discrimination rather than information scarcity: determining which developments matter, how seemingly discrete events connect, and when their convergence warrants strategic attention. By applying geopolitical intelligence analysis to the China–Philippines maritime dispute, the study contributes to scholarship on grey-zone competition, strategic warning and regional security in Asia.

Nuclear Deterrence and Big Brother Behaviour: India-Pakistan Rivalry and Its Implications for Small States in South Asia

Meherun Nessa, Nasrin Akter Mitu, Sajuti Mahata

Abstract:

The acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan in 1998 marked a critical juncture in South Asian geopolitics, reinforcing what this paper terms “big brother behaviour” — a pattern of coercive, hegemonic, and asymmetric conduct exhibited by both nuclear-armed states towards their smaller neighbours. While existing scholarship on South Asian nuclear dynamics has extensively examined deterrence stability and crisis escalation between India and Pakistan themselves (drawing largely on classical deterrence theory associated with scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan), comparatively little attention has been paid to how this nuclear rivalry reshapes the diplomatic treatment of third-party smaller states in the region — a gap this paper seeks to address. Specifically, the paper asks: has the diplomatic language and behaviour of India and Pakistan towards smaller South Asian states changed during crisis moments following nuclearization, and what does a comparative before-and-after analysis of key episodes — including the 1999 Kargil conflict, the 2001-02 military standoff, and the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis — reveal about this shift? Building on this empirical inquiry, the paper further interrogates a critical normative question: does this nuclear-backed “big brother” hegemony weaken the notion of a “Rule-Based Global Order” in South Asia, where the sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and bargaining power of smaller states such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan are, in practice, substantively constrained even as their formal juridical sovereignty remains intact? This tension between formal sovereign equality and substantive strategic subordination reveals a deeper contradiction within the liberal international order's application in nuclearized regional contexts — an area underexplored in existing small-state and regional-order literature. Methodologically, the paper draws on qualitative content analysis of official statements, diplomatic communiqués, and crisis-time rhetoric, supplemented by secondary literature from nuclear deterrence theory (Waltz, Sagan), small-state security studies (scholars such as Robert Rothstein and Annette Baker Fox on small-power behaviour), and South Asian regional order literature, including analytical work published through institutions such as the Stimson Center and the International Crisis Group on South Asian crisis dynamics. By bridging these bodies of work, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on middle and small power agency in a changing global order, and offers insights into how rule-based frameworks can be made more responsive to the lived realities of smaller states navigating the shadow of nuclear-armed neighbours.

Settled Borders, Moving Seas: Who Owns the Bay of Bengal When Geography Changes?

Fawje Ferdous Millat Ramisa, Bibi Khadiza

Abstract:

Sea-level rise is transforming coastlines at a pace that challenges the territorial assumptions underlying the contemporary law of the sea. For Bangladesh, one of the world's most geographically vulnerable deltaic States, this transformation presents a fundamental legal question: when the coastline recedes, must maritime rights recede with it? The physical disappearance or inland movement of coastal territory should not automatically entail the disappearance of maritime entitlements that have been lawfully established under international law. Yet the conventional relationship between land, baselines and maritime zones

leaves vulnerable coastal States exposed to precisely such uncertainty. This article advances the concept of “freezing law” to argue that international law should preserve Bangladesh’s existing maritime entitlements despite subsequent coastal regression caused by sea-level rise. Freezing law does not seek to freeze geography itself. Rather, it seeks to freeze the legal consequences of geographical change where that change results from an external phenomenon that threatens to transform established sovereign rights. The argument therefore distinguishes between the physical mobility of a coastline and the juridical continuity of maritime entitlements. The legal basis for this proposition emerges from the structure of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), particularly Articles 5, 7 and 16. Article 7(2) is especially significant because it recognises the exceptional instability of deltaic coastlines and permits straight baselines to remain effective notwithstanding subsequent regression of the low-water line. Bangladesh’s deposited baseline coordinates and its legally established maritime boundaries further demonstrate that its maritime space is not merely a product of an ever-changing physical coastline, but also of legally constituted rights and expectations. The article argues that allowing sea-level rise to progressively diminish Bangladesh’s maritime entitlements would convert climate-induced geographical loss into a second, legally imposed loss of sovereign territory and marine resources. Such an outcome would undermine legal certainty, sovereign equality and the stability of rights upon which small and vulnerable States depend. Drawing upon the emerging international law of sea-level rise, including the International Law Commission’s 2025 conclusions, the article proposes that preservation of lawfully established maritime entitlements should develop as a principle of legal stability in the face of sea-level rise. Bangladesh consequently offers more than a case study of climate vulnerability. It represents a critical test of whether international law can preserve sovereign rights when the geography generating those rights is itself disappearing.

RCASBC-2026-472

Geopolitical Risk and Economic Performance: Evidence from Southeast Asian Countries

Md. Nezum Uddin, Mohammed Rakibul Hasan, Mohammed Jashim Uddin

Abstract:

This study examines the impact of geopolitical risk, foreign direct investment, and inflation on economic growth in five Southeast Asian countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam—over the period 1985–2025. The study finds significant crosssectional dependence among the countries, motivating the use of second-generation panel unitroot tests. The results indicate that all variables are stationary at levels, while the slope homogeneity test reveals significant slope heterogeneity across the five economies. Accordingly, the study employs the Cross-Sectional Autoregressive Distributed Lag Mean Group (CS-ARDL-MG) estimator to account for both cross-sectional dependence and heterogeneous slopes. The results indicate a negative association between geopolitical risk and GDP per capita growth in the short-run, suggesting that heightened geopolitical uncertainty can adversely affect economic performance. In contrast, FDI is positively associated with economic growth, highlighting the potential importance of international capital inflows for supporting economic activity. Inflation is also incorporated into the model to capture domestic macroeconomic conditions. To assess the robustness of the findings, the study additionally employs Common Correlated Effects Mean Group (CCE-MG) specifications that account for unobserved common factors and cross-sectional dependence. The results remain qualitatively consistent across the alternative CCE-based specifications. The findings contribute to the emerging literature on geopolitical risk and economic performance by providing evidence from a group of highly integrated Southeast Asian economies and highlight the importance of strengthening macroeconomic resilience against geopolitical uncertainty.



Sub-theme – 03:

**Digital Sovereignty: Technology, AI, and
Global Governance**

AI-Generated Political Reels on Facebook: A Comprehensive Analysis During the Rise of Generative AI Use in Bangladesh

Md. Jahirul Islam

Abstract:

The rapid growth of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has reshaped political communication on social media, particularly through AI-generated short-form video content like reels and deepfakes. In Bangladesh, the increasing circulation of AI-generated political reels on Facebook has raised concerns about disseminating misinformation, propaganda, buildup narrative, agenda setting, political manipulation, and opinion engineering during the politically sensitive periods. Despite these concerns, systematic empirical research on this phenomenon remains limited. This study examines AI-generated political reels on Facebook in Bangladesh using a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis, the research analyzes 60 AI-generated, comparatively high-engagement, publicly accessible Facebook reels posted between June 1 and July 31, 2025. AI-generated content goes through a multi-dimensional process combining AI-detection tools, visual and audio cues, metadata analysis, and manual verification. Quantitative analysis focuses on categories of political affiliations and engagement patterns, while qualitative analysis explores dominant ideology, narratives, presented identity, and the presence of misinformation. This research is guided by some applicable theories, such as Agenda-Setting and Propaganda Theory, which is closely related to this research. This study carefully investigates what types of messages are provided and narratives constructed through the AI-generated political reels in Bangladesh political discourse. The findings aim to contribute to AI-driven political communication and the use of AI in political discourse in the Global South and inform polity, platform governance, and AI literacy initiatives.

The Geopolitics of Algorithmic Power and Epistemic Hegemony: A Digital Sovereignty Framework

Shafin Muhammad John

Abstract:

The contemporary world is increasingly getting techno-bipolar and informationally anisotropic, with numerous global transactions occurring outside the mainstream political frameworks. In this current strategic rivalry between the Western transnational tech conglomerates and the Eastern Asian tech firms, this academic paper is concerned more with the geopolitical, strategic and intellectual security of this particular region. This paper conceptualizes how one of the most overlooked dimensions of middle and small-power policy-making, which concerns the effects of algorithmic power and mass artificial intelligence on HEIs' epistemic sovereignty, actually matters for regional security architecture and thus its international behavior. With the growing dependence on foreign algorithms, particularly the large language models (LLMs), by domestic academics, the domestic academia ecosystem is increasingly prone to political and commercial dependence on particular political and corporate powers. Through conceptual approaches in analyzing a more or less unexplored area, the research explores a potential risk when it examines the strategic role of large language models (LLMs), employed in policy development, curriculum designing, and research, towards the domestic academia's ability in achieving alternative techno-academic paradigms. Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative conceptual analysis, synthesizing secondary academic literature, regional policy documents, and institutional frameworks to evaluate these techno-epistemic dynamics. Using Bangladesh as a crucial reference, the current paper hypothesizes how the

introduction of AI-driven tools and foreign language models, can undermine the epistemic security of sensitive, timely and critical intelligence with post-colonial neoclassical realism with respect to the nation's historical-institutional contexts. Instead of highlighting the instructive role of LLMs or other kinds of AI, this research problematizes the strategic significance of such a phenomenon of the adoption of 'external algorithms' as soft-power and-informational tools. While investigating the structural challenges in safeguarding the information security and sovereignty in the domestic Higher Education Institutions (HEI) with IQAC (Institutional Quality Assurance Cell), this academic argument reiterates that national digital competitiveness can best be shaped through strategizing national academia. In leveraging upon regional actors' resources such as the Hong Kong Research Centre for Asian Studies (RCAS), this paper articulates conceptual solutions towards the negotiation of sovereign data regimes and regional information governance policies concerning higher education within South Asian academic context. Furthermore, this research fills a conceptual vacuum regarding how epistemic sovereignty can be negotiated amid the encroaching influence of multinational technology conglomerates. Ultimately, it provides a critical regional perspective on balancing techno-epistemic competition and safeguarding academic autonomy for sustainable knowledge production in an emerging era of informational conflict.

RCASBC-2026-48

Digital Sovereignty at the Margins: Reframing AI Governance for Small and Middle States through Bangladesh's National AI Policy Trajectory

Syeda Rafia Ahmed Ishika

Abstract:

The global debate on digital sovereignty has been dominated by the competing national regulations of the great powers: the EU, the USA and China with the policy autonomy of small and middle states treated as a residual or derivative effect of the great power game. The gap between theory and practice is blinding, as small and middle states are increasingly developing local AI governance regulations while being caught up in external technical, financial, and normative dependency on the great powers. This paper suggests that this can be seen as a form of agency which is exercised by such small states, as Bangladesh does, but is not often recognized as such, especially within the governance of AI, which this paper names asymmetric digital sovereignty, the ability to define rules in the realm of AI that are legitimate within their own country, whilst simultaneously being structurally subservient in relation to external infrastructures, capital and standards. Based on the conceptual literature on digital sovereignty, global governance of AI, and small-state international relations, and Bangladesh's National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2024 as a critical case, the paper formulates four dimensional Asymmetric Digital Sovereignty Framework (ADSF) based on infrastructural dependency, regulatory agency, data and algorithmic autonomy, and coalition-based bargaining power. The framework then goes beyond the binary notions of sovereignty as either realized or absent by each dimension being operationalized through a close reading of policy text, institutional design and capacity to implement. The analysis points to a model of sovereignty within dependency, and not of sovereignty versus dependency, for public-sector AI governance in Bangladesh, where the authorship of public-sector regulations and dependency on them coexist rather than pitting one against the other. The reframing also has broader theoretical implications for the notion of digital sovereignty beyond the trio of great powers and aids in conceptual and practical lessons for other small and middle states grappling with the challenges of AI governance in a competitive great-power environment. The paper ends with actionable policy suggestions for Bangladesh and other states in similar situations, while also proposing a research programme focusing on small state agency in digital and AI governance.

Beyond Westphalian Sovereignty: The Emergence of Algorithmic Sovereignty and the Reimagining of International Order in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Prof. Dr. S V Damodar Reddy, Chingireddy Sony

Abstract:

The research paper examines the phenomenon of digital sovereignty, which is supposed to be an advanced form of power that states are applying in the age of artificial intelligence and its impact on traditional ideas about sovereignty. Traditionally, Westphalian sovereignty was based on the concept of territory, which makes it possible for nations to act in an independent manner and to make sure that they preserve their sovereignty on their territories. However, the unrivaled speed of development in the sphere of artificial intelligence technologies, algorithm-driven decision-making, means of communication, and mechanisms of data transmission makes it necessary to reconsider the principle of exercising power beyond the borders of the territory. The research paper aims at studying whether the increasing number of algorithms, cross-national corporations, infrastructure, and artificial intelligence technologies creates new forms of power of the state contrary to the traditional state-centered worldview in the international system. The research looks at the relationship between territorial sovereignty, digital sovereignty, data sovereignty, and algorithmic sovereignty with the emphasis on the governing capability of the state in respect of AI technologies together with its ability to control important digital infrastructures and data. The research assesses the existing national and international legal systems governing AI, data, cyber security, as well as digital technologies with the aim of detecting the weaknesses in the traditional sovereignty system. This paper further explores how leading technology companies and AI creators are gaining their transnational power in the context of information flows, economic activity, technical requirements, and decision-making. Using doctrinal and normative legal methodology in research, this study highlights the international legal rules, emerging frameworks of governance in AI, national practices, and literature related to the issues of sovereignty and technologies' governance. The study argues that algorithmic sovereignty does not need to imply replacing state sovereignty. Instead, algorithmic sovereignty can be construed as a new layer of sovereignty. The process of controlling algorithms, data, technology infrastructures, and AI systems is to be interpreted as a significant aspect of national and international power. Further, it demonstrates that the current Westphalian model does not cope well with algorithmic systems due to their cross-border nature. The paper concludes that a new international order will be needed in the age of AI, which would include rethinking sovereignty in order to include not only territorial sovereignty, but also governance through technology, data, and algorithms. The research suggests that the world needs more cooperation among countries, transparent governance in the field of AI, accountability of international tech companies, and preservation of state autonomy in terms of its regulations and development of common principles for responsible AI.

Online Gambling Platforms and the Coloniality of Digital Extraction: The Case of Bangladesh

Jubayer Hossain, Mayasha Afrose Mithila

Abstract:

This paper examines online gambling platforms in Bangladesh through the lens of digital colonialism and platform capitalism. While critical scholarship on digital extraction has concentrated on social media infrastructures, artificial intelligence, and surveillance economies, comparatively little attention has been paid to gambling platforms operating across digitally mediated transnational networks in the Global South. In Bangladesh, despite legal restrictions, online gambling has rapidly expanded through offshore betting

applications, encrypted messaging channels, social media promotion, and mobile financial infrastructures. These platforms mainly target economically precarious youth populations by framing gambling as entertainment, entrepreneurial participation, and speculative economic mobility. Drawing on qualitative interviews with online gambling participants alongside digital ethnographic observation of gambling-related online communities, this study argues that online gambling platforms function as infrastructures of digital extraction that reorganize economic vulnerability into a profitable platform-based system. Extending existing debates on data colonialism, the paper introduces the notion of risk extraction to conceptualize how financial precarity itself becomes a source of accumulation within digital capitalism. Through algorithmic retention mechanisms, behavioral profiling, targeted incentives, and asymmetrical probability structures, gambling platforms sustain user participation while concentrating profit within transnational digital networks. The findings of this study shows that these platforms operate through four interconnected dynamics: the commodification of aspiration, the algorithmic management of risk, the outward circulation of profit through offshore infrastructures, and the continuous extraction of behavioral data from user activity. Rather than treating online gambling solely as a regulatory or moral issue, the paper situates it within wider structures of platformized inequality and contemporary coloniality. In doing so, the study expands current understandings of digital colonialism beyond data capture to include financialized forms of extraction regulated within everyday digital participation in Bangladesh.

RCASBC-2026-97

Transforming Remittances into Sustainable Economic Stability: Exploring the Role of Digital Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship Development among Migrant Families

Harun Ar-Rashid Mamun, Abdur Rahim

Abstract:

Remittances play a vital role in improving household welfare and supporting national economic development in Bangladesh. However, many migrant families continue to face challenges in converting remittance income into sustainable economic stability because of limited digital financial literacy, inadequate financial planning, and insufficient entrepreneurial capacity. While previous studies have primarily examined the economic contribution of remittances, less attention has been given to understanding how digital financial literacy and entrepreneurship development influence the long-term financial resilience of migrant households. This study aims to explore the role of digital financial literacy and entrepreneurship development in transforming remittances into sustainable economic stability among migrant families. A qualitative research design was adopted in Feni District, Bangladesh, involving migrant households participating in a remittance-focused development initiative. Data were collected through Case Studies and key informant interviews with migrant family members, community representatives, financial service providers, and project stakeholders. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and interpret participants' experiences and perceptions. As the study is currently in progress, the expected findings suggest that improved digital financial literacy enhances households' ability to save, budget, and utilize formal digital financial services, while entrepreneurship development encourages productive investment of remittance income and income diversification. The study is also expected to reveal that the combined effect of financial knowledge and entrepreneurial skills strengthens household resilience, reduces economic vulnerability, and promotes long-term financial security. The findings will provide practical insights for policymakers, financial institutions, and development organizations seeking to maximize the developmental impact of remittances. Integrating digital financial literacy with entrepreneurship development is recommended as a sustainable strategy to improve the economic stability and resilience of migrant families in Bangladesh.

Hedging Against Cyber Hegemony: South Asia's Quest for Cyber Autonomy

Ashiqur Rahman, Shaila Solaiman

Abstract:

The expanding role of technology in international relations and foreign policy represents a classical trend of the post-Cold War international order. Small and middle powers' hedging for cyber autonomy against great powers' cyberspace dominance is the striking feature of this era. The South Asian subsystem experiences this dilemma more than any other part of the world due to the lack of a common sense of belonging, varying national interests, and the systemic nature of the fragmented cyber world. The absence of a South Asian systemic great power practically compels eight South Asian states to balance against structural great powers, like a stagnant USA, rising China and declining Russia. Although South Asian small and middle powers' traditional geopolitical hedging and digital sovereignty are available in existing International Relations research, integrated cyber hedging strategy, that is, balancing national cyber autonomy against systemic cyber vulnerability, is the unexplored operational reality for South Asian small and middle powers. This research adopts hedging as its primary conceptual framework, expanding traditional international relations alignment theory into the cyber domain. This study is framed within the qualitative research approach's phenomenological study design and based on primary and secondary data. This research investigates the extent to which South Asian small and middle powers can retain cyber autonomy through asymmetric hedging against the great powers' politics. This study will explore three core dimensions. First, how small and middle powers induce differentiated strategies to procure and secure critical digital infrastructures will be discussed. In this part, the reason why small and middle powers bring diversification while purchasing hardware and software will be analyzed. Moreover, it will be illustrated why small and middle powers alter security and intelligence sharing instead of depending on binding security alignment with any great power. Second, the balancing strategies of small and middle powers against great powers for national interests will be analyzed. This section largely emphasizes on the use of great powers' competition and multilateral forums to negotiate better terms for the nation-states. Lastly, the structural tradeoffs of cyber hedging, i.e., financial costs and political and diplomatic pressure of managing hybrid technologies will be evaluated.

Algorithmic Bias and the Right to Equality: Legal Challenges of AI Governance in Developing Countries

Aparajita Chowdhury

Abstract:

The extensive incorporation of artificial intelligence in 21st century is creating concerns regarding fairness, accountability, and the protection of fundamental human rights. Now, decisions are being driven by AI-based algorithmic systems giving rise to biased outcomes in areas such as recruitment, credit scoring, healthcare, and public administration. The unregulated manipulation of AI technologies is posing legal and moral challenges for developing countries. The research evaluates the impact of algorithmic bias on the right to equality and the challenges stemming from it. To examine the influence of the algorithmic decision-making process, drawing on the principles of international human rights and emerging AI regulatory frameworks are mandatory. This paper argues whether such decision-making produces discrimination as well as depicts the prevailing protection mechanisms against such harms, focusing on transparency,

accountability, and effective access to remedies for individuals affected by such decisions. UN Global Digital Compact, the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, and scientific oversight from the UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI are some of the legal mandates that protect the Fundamental Human rights from the exploitation of AI bias. Moreover, the study compares traditional anti-discrimination legislation with the challenges posed by AI technologies. It highlights the necessity of a rights-based AI framework that embeds the principles of equality and fairness in the design, deployment, and oversight of AI systems and calls for comprehensive and answerable AI governance while promoting the principles of sustainable and equitable development and the effective protection of fundamental human rights.

RCASBC-2026-174

SOVEREIGN-AI: A Computational Framework for Measuring and Stress-Testing National AI Sovereignty in the Global South

Protik Das

Abstract:

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded in critical national infrastructure, from financial services to disaster response and public health, “AI sovereignty” has emerged as a pressing yet poorly operationalized policy concept. Existing discourse often treats digital and AI sovereignty as a qualitative or rhetorical claim rather than a measurable condition, leaving middle and small states without practical tools to assess exposure to foreign technological dependency. This paper introduces SOVEREIGN-AI, a computational framework for quantifying national AI sovereignty across six dimensions: data, model, compute, infrastructure, operations, and governance. It operationalizes this assessment through a National AI Sovereignty Score (NASS) and evaluates resilience to external disruption through a National AI Resilience Score (NARS), derived from structured stress-test simulations of foreign-provider cutoff scenarios. A core design principle is evidentiary traceability: every sub-variable score must be supported by a citable, dated public source. Where adequate public evidence is unavailable, the sub-variable is left unscored and reported explicitly as a limitation rather than estimated. The framework is applied comparatively to three Bangladeshi AI deployments across distinct sectors: bKash, the country’s largest mobile financial services provider; the GoogleBWDB flood-forecasting partnership, a state-anchored disaster-management system; and CAD4TB, a foreign-vendor tuberculosis-screening tool deployed in outreach clinics. Evidence coverage varies substantially across cases. bKash permits assessment of 11 of 14 framework sub-variables (79%), yielding a provisional NASS of 40.6/100; the floodforecasting case permits assessment of 6 of 14 (43%), yielding a provisional NASS of 28.3/100; while the healthcare case remains insufficiently documented for a provisional score. This evidence asymmetry is itself a substantive finding: sectors operating under binding financial or data-protection regulation generate substantially greater public disclosure than sectors governed primarily by general strategy documents. Across the cases, foreign model provenance remains consistently limited, while regulatory jurisdiction does not necessarily translate into technical sovereignty. The flood-forecasting case, for example, has one of the strongest direct state partnerships yet among the weakest observed technical-sovereignty profiles. SOVEREIGN-AI therefore contributes a replicable, falsifiable, and transparently evidenced methodology for operationalizing digital sovereignty in the Global South. By connecting strategic-autonomy scholarship with computational policy analysis, the framework provides middle and small states with a practical diagnostic for evidence-based technology policy and moves the sovereignty debate from broad rhetoric toward measurable, stress-tested assessment.

Detecting the Unfamiliar: Locally Trainable AI Intrusion Detection and the Limits of Digital Sovereignty for Small States

Nirzor Chowdhury, Dr. Sandeep Gurung

Abstract:

Middle and small states increasingly depend on externally managed cybersecurity monitoring. This dependence is not merely commercial. Many conventional intrusion-detection deployments depend, directly or indirectly, on externally produced attack signatures and threat-intelligence feeds, which means a state's capacity to recognise an attack is bounded by what external actors have already catalogued and chosen to share. This paper asks a narrow but consequential question: can a state detect attacks it has never been told about? We address this empirically through a network intrusion detection framework that uses a normal-only detector and therefore requires no external catalogue of attack signatures. Using a controlled protocol on a public benchmark, entire categories of attack were withheld from supervised training and from every calibration decision, appearing for the first time at final evaluation. Across five independent runs, the normal-only anomaly detector identified 79% of withheld attack families, compared with 25% for a conventional supervised classifier trained on locally available attack data. For two attack families the supervised model achieved no detection at all, while the normal-only approach detected 92% and 48% respectively. A calibrated routing mechanism further allows an operator to trade false-alarm burden against detection coverage without retraining, a control that matters where analyst capacity is scarce. These findings suggest that locally trainable detection could reduce one specific dependency, namely reliance on foreign threat intelligence, using commodity hardware and no proprietary data. We deliberately resist a stronger claim. The system has not been deployed operationally, the results derive from a single dated benchmark, and reduced dependence on external signatures is not sovereignty. Technical capability is one component of an ecosystem that also requires governance, regulation, a trained workforce, incident response and international cooperation, and a detection model cannot substitute for any of these. The paper contributes a concrete, measured case to debates on digital sovereignty that frequently remain aspirational. It argues that meaningful discussion of technological autonomy for middle and small states requires specifying which dependency is being reduced, by how much, at what operational cost, and what remains outside technical reach. Measurement, rather than aspiration, is what turns sovereignty from a rhetorical claim into a policy question.

RCASBC-2026-191

Rethinking Digital Sovereignty: Essential Digital Utilities, UN Frameworks, and Localized AI for Small and Medium States

Mohammad Taifur Rahman

Abstract:

Today, the internet is dominated by a handful of global tech giants, forcing small and medium states to follow foreign rules. This imbalance begins with the user. Citizens are data sources, not protected consumers, and their consent is manufactured by non-negotiable terms of service. These contracts can not be challenged by developing states as they do not have a market leverage and thus their digital independence is lost. This paper uses qualitative doctrinal and legal-policy analysis to explore the clash between corporate terms and international human rights frameworks. The study examines standard digital contracts to show how platforms extract data and bypass domestic laws. The big question is obvious. How does international law prevent private companies from being like sovereign rule makers but not give that

much power to the state? The 2024 UN Global Digital Compact calls for better data governance, but does not make the rules mandatory. This paper suggests the creation of a new digital right in international law to fill this gap. Major platforms should be treated as essential digital utilities or information fiduciaries. What this really means is treating big tech as if it were public water service. Often these are run by private companies, but because they are so essential to society running, they are heavily regulated as public utilities acting fairly instead of imposing arbitrary rules. This approach advocates rights protective digital sovereignty, which empowers states to protect citizens from corporate overreach without resort to authoritarian state surveillance. To secure this right, the paper proposes a UN-linked regulatory agency with equal voting power for smaller states. If a state is not technically able to verify compliance of corporations, legal rights will fail. The proposed UN body, by contrast, would operate a pooled technical secretariat, similar to the IAEA, to carry out shared algorithmic audits for member states. This central institutional support links global enforcement and domestic AI literacy initiatives directly. Along with this international thrust, the paper sets out pragmatic measures at the state level. Regional digital platforms can be created by small and medium states with independent identity verification to prevent government tracking. They may also want localized AI infrastructure to keep citizen data under domestic control. At last, this gives smaller states a clear route to play a more active role in shaping the digital world.

RCASBC-2026-195

Legitimacy Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Global Governance

Shohanur Rahman Shuvo

Abstract:

The increasing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in global governance raises critical questions about its future impact, legitimacy, and the potential shift towards a clash of civilizations or a cosmopolitan world order. This study aims to investigate these dynamics and their implications for human rights and state sovereignty in algorithmic decision-making dominated global governance, and whether AI will gain political legitimacy in global governance mechanisms. As AI is one of the defining components of the future world, the prospect of its implication depends on how international society perceives it and manage a workable relation among the society to govern AI and ultimately allow some sort of governance by AI. Allowing governance by AI on a global level is one of key concerns as different states within international society understands and implements AI within their domestic capacity differently. To what degree the states will allow themselves to be governed by AI is one of the key aspects I look into this study. AI has the potential for becoming an instrument for ‘bad’ governance and ‘good’ governance either way. While delegating policy making and decision-making authority to Artificial Intelligent entities might undermine the political self-determination of people, creating data bias driven discriminatory scenarios; on the other hand, it might lessen the burden of rigorous human effort by executing decisions with data accuracy. Thus it is imperative to look into the matter keeping in mind the difference of technological capacity among states and why some of the states would advocate for a greater sphere of AI influence than others and contradictions in legitimizing AI in the global spectrum. This study aims to address these counter forces in a nuanced manner for materializing the balance between political legitimacy, ethical concerns and efficiency in governing meta administrative burden on a global scale.

Can States Control What They Cannot Produce? Digital Sovereignty under Technological Dependence in Bangladesh.

Angel Hossain Emon

Abstract:

This paper examines how technologically dependent states can exercise meaningful digital sovereignty when they lack the capacity to produce or control the technologies on which their digital transformation depends. It addresses the question: How can Bangladesh exercise meaningful digital sovereignty over technologies it does not produce or fully control? Bangladesh provides a relevant case, as its digital transformation remains dependent on foreign platforms, technological infrastructure, cybersecurity systems, artificial intelligence technologies, and technical expertise. Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative case-study approach, combining documentary analysis of Bangladesh's data-protection and cybersecurity frameworks, the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence 2019–2020, the draft National AI Policy Bangladesh 2026–2030, relevant policy documents, and secondary literature on digital governance and technological dependence. The paper conceptualizes meaningful digital sovereignty through four mechanisms: regulatory authority over foreign technologies, bargaining capacity within asymmetric technological relationships, diversification of critical technological dependencies, and preservation of domestic policy autonomy despite limited technological control. The analysis argues that these dimensions are unevenly attainable under technological dependence. Regulatory authority is comparatively more attainable because states can regulate technologies and firms operating within their jurisdiction without possessing the underlying technologies. In contrast, bargaining capacity and diversification remain constrained by limited domestic technological capabilities and dependence on external providers. Bangladesh's experience also demonstrates a gap between policy ambition and implementation. Although its 2019–2020 National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence developed detailed policy roadmaps, much of the intended agenda remained unimplemented, highlighting the importance of institutional capacity in translating regulatory ambition into effective governance. The paper therefore argues that technological dependence does not eliminate digital sovereignty; rather, it transforms its substance and limits how sovereignty can be exercised. The critical distinction is not between technological self-sufficiency and dependence, but between dependence that remains governable and dependence that becomes politically constraining. For Bangladesh and other small states, digital sovereignty should be assessed not primarily by what they can produce, but by what they can regulate, negotiate, diversify, and ultimately govern.

Drivers and Barriers of IoT Based GPS Fleet Tracking Adoption: Managerial Decision Making in Bangladesh's Logistics Sector

Sumiya Binta Afsar, Fairiza Islam, Md. Iestiaque Alam

Abstract:

Fleet operations across Bangladesh regularly face high fuel inefficiency, inaccurate mileage tracking and a lack of real time information about vehicle location. Inappropriate driver behavior like misinformation, fuel theft and random routing making it difficult for managers to control cost and respond quickly to the problems. Previous studies on IoT based GPS fleet tracking largely focuses on technical implications such as route optimization and fuel efficiency measured by quantitative methods. However, very few research analyzes how managers experiences the drivers and barriers of decision making adopting this technology specially in a developing country context like Bangladesh. This study asks how fleet managers in

Bangladesh experience the drivers and barriers of adopting IoT based GPS tracking systems in their daily decision making. To bridge this gap, semi structured interviews were conducted with seven senior professionals across six organizations. Data was analyzed by using Braun and Clarke's theoretical thematic analysis driven by the Technology Organization Environment framework (TOE) and Bounded Rationality. The findings suggest that managers' adoption driven by precise distance, controlled fuel cost and enhanced security against fuel theft. On the other hand, barriers such as network connectivity gap, billing issues and lack of organizational controllability demotivate adoption. After these hurdles, managers have to make judgement calls and manually handle them without a standardized process. It offers qualitative insights into a research field that is being dominated by developed countries, in which technology-based research is being carried out.

RCASBC-2026-223

Governing Artificial Intelligence in a Small-State Context: Digital Sovereignty, Regulatory Capacity, and Responsible AI in Bangladesh

Md. Tasin Kadir, Md. Nazim, Farjana Sharmin Anika, Anika Akter Aki, Rahikul Makhtum

Abstract:

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been widely heralded and worried about as rapidly remaking public services, education, trade, media, and security, as well as raising profound concerns about data dependence, algorithmic opacity, bias and discriminatory outcomes, misinformation produced by AI systems, cybersecurity and unequal distributions of technological power. Small, digitally developing states like Bangladesh - operating within an increasingly contested and competitive global technology order - must contend with the governance of artificial intelligence not as a purely technical-regulatory question, but as a complex strategic question about digital sovereignty, rights, state capacity, national security, and policy autonomy. This study critically analyzes Bangladesh's emerging AI-governance architecture - particularly its draft National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2026-2030, its existing data-governance and cybersecurity arrangements, and the remit of its key institutions - with specific focus on mechanisms and safeguards against AI-generated information harms, to evaluate whether this evolving policy framework can balance entrepreneurial ambition with human rights, inclusivity and responsible domestic oversight over strategic data and digital infrastructure. The study follows a qualitative policy and document analysis design, comprising systematic reviews of draft policy documents, existing legal texts, regulatory instruments, organizational publications, and key relevant international normative benchmarks like the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the OECD AI Principles. Based on these, the paper organizes the analysis along a structured thematic framework covering the dimensions of digital sovereignty, data governance, risk-based regulation, rights and accountability, institutional capacity, and platform governance. The analysis suggests that, despite its foundational support in the idea of risk-sensitive regulation, strengthened oversight of high-risk AI application deployment, requirements for algorithmic assessment, and acknowledgement of AI-generated information harms, the proposed Bangladesh AI-governance architecture's effectiveness may be undermined by a lack of robust statutory authority, insufficient regulatory independence and expertise, uneven stakeholder coordinated input and capacity, lack of public and parliamentary deliberation, and unanswered questions of platform liability. It concludes by outlining a Small-State Responsible AI Governance Framework centered on legal enforceability, independent regulatory supervision, auditable algorithmic accountability, sovereign data stewardship, public AI literacy, and a strong, globally-oriented regional policy voice. It offers an innovative contribution to the Global South digital-governance scholarship.

Federated Intelligence for Digital Sovereignty: A Privacy-Preserving Intrusion Detection Framework for Distributed Banking Infrastructure

Protik Das, Md. Rakibul Islam, Iftekhar Hossen Jihad

Abstract:

As financial systems become increasingly interconnected and dependent on data-intensive artificial intelligence, cybersecurity is no longer solely a technical concern but also a question of digital sovereignty, institutional resilience, and control over critical digital infrastructure. Conventional intrusion detection systems often rely on centralized collection of network traffic, creating privacy risks and requiring sensitive operational data from distributed financial institutions to be transferred to a central location. For middle and small states, such architectures can create additional governance and dependency concerns when critical financial data and security intelligence are concentrated outside individual institutions. This paper presents a privacy-preserving federated intrusion detection system (IDS) designed for distributed banking environments, where participating branches collaboratively improve a shared detection model without transferring their raw network traffic. The proposed architecture combines local model training, federated aggregation, classimbalance handling, and decision-threshold optimization to enable collaborative cyber-threat detection while retaining sensitive traffic data within its originating institution. The framework is evaluated in a multi-branch banking network setting and compared with a centralized baseline. The global federated model achieves 87.71% balanced accuracy, 0.89 ROC-AUC, approximately 90% attack recall, and approximately 84% benign recall, while maintaining only a 1.5 percentage-point accuracy difference from the centralized model. Beyond detection performance, the paper examines federated cybersecurity as a practical mechanism for strengthening digital sovereignty and resilient financial infrastructure. By keeping raw security data local while enabling collective threat intelligence, the framework demonstrates how AI can support institutional autonomy without requiring technological isolation. This is particularly relevant for middle and small states, where financial institutions may depend on external technologies while simultaneously facing growing cybersecurity and data-governance pressures. The paper argues that privacy-preserving federated intelligence can provide a practical pathway toward more distributed, accountable, and resilient digital infrastructure, connecting technical cybersecurity design with broader debates on digital sovereignty and AI governance.

Digital Sovereignty and Trust in AI-Enabled e-Tax Systems: A Primary Data Study of Privacy, Security, and Algorithmic Governance in Bangladesh

Al Abdullah, Prof. Dr Kazi Abdul Mannan

Abstract:

The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into digital public services is transforming tax administration while simultaneously raising critical concerns regarding digital sovereignty, data privacy, cybersecurity, algorithmic transparency, and public trust. These concerns are particularly significant in developing countries, where rapidly expanding digital infrastructures often coexist with gaps in technological capacity, regulatory preparedness, and digital inclusion. This study examines the factors shaping trust and acceptance of AI-enabled e-Tax systems in Bangladesh, positioning digital taxation as a critical domain of AI governance and citizen-state data interaction. The study draws on primary quantitative data collected from 400 individual taxpayers in Bangladesh through a structured survey and complementary qualitative evidence from key stakeholders involved in taxation, policymaking, technology,

and digital governance. The quantitative analysis examines user perceptions and behavioural intention through technology-acceptance dimensions, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions, while the governance analysis focuses on privacy, data security, algorithmic transparency, accountability, and institutional readiness. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression are used to evaluate relationships among the principal constructs, complemented by thematic interpretation of stakeholder perspectives. The findings indicate generally positive attitudes toward AI-enabled digital taxation, particularly regarding efficiency, reduced processing time, ease of access, and improved service delivery. Performance expectancy and facilitating conditions emerge as important determinants of behavioural intention. However, technological acceptance alone does not ensure sustainable public trust. Concerns surrounding the protection of sensitive financial data, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, opaque algorithmic decision-making, unequal digital capabilities, and insufficient regulatory safeguards remain significant barriers. The findings therefore suggest that digital sovereignty in AI-enabled taxation depends not merely on technological infrastructure but also on the state's capacity to ensure secure data governance, transparent and accountable algorithms, meaningful human oversight, and protection of taxpayer rights. The study contributes to emerging debates on AI governance by connecting digital sovereignty with citizen trust in a high-stakes public-sector information system. It argues for a human-centred governance framework for AI-enabled taxation in Bangladesh that integrates cybersecurity, privacy-by-design, algorithmic transparency, accountability, and inclusive digital access. The findings offer implications for policymakers, tax authorities, system developers, and researchers seeking trustworthy and sovereign AI-enabled public infrastructures in developing economies.

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Exploring the Perceptions of Cybersecurity and Cyber Harassment among Public Universities Students in Modern Age: A Study on Selected Public Universities of Bangladesh

Sumaiya Sharmin Shimo, Jeba Tahseen

Abstract:

This research investigates the thriving issues of cybersecurity and cyber harassment among public universities students of modern age in Bangladesh. The objective of this study was to explore the perceptions of cybersecurity and cyber harassment among tertiary levels students in public universities of modern age in Bangladesh. The examiners engaged a mixed-method approaches, including surveys, in-depth case studies, and semi-structured interviews of 150 students from selected universities. This study was fallen under the Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16 (SDGs), core alignment with gender equality and peace, justice & strong institutions with specific key issues. It prevails the impact of cybersecurity and cyber harassment, shedding light on the contributing major factors. The intervention found that 79.3% of the respondents were aware of cybersecurity and cyber harassment and also 71.3% of them experienced these problems personally and mentally. The findings showed that a significant influence of a lack of moral values and psychological factors in perpetuating these issues. Finally, the research concludes that to prominence the urgency of addressing these problems to make a friendly digital environment for public universities students in Bangladesh. By unveiling the unique confrontations and obstacles faced by the population of this study, we hope to explode a broader dialogue and cooperative efforts to ensure a safer online scenery and platform, where public universities students can pursue their academic ambitions with great hardship and endurance.

The Politics of Digital Repression and Backfire Dynamics: A Comparative Analysis of South Asian Uprisings

Pratik Roy Shanta, Nafizul Islam

Abstract:

This paper examines a paradox at the intersection of digital authoritarianism and social movement theory: why does state-backed digital repression sometimes amplify protest rather than suppressing it? Between 2022 and 2025, South Asia experienced a series of Gen-Z led protest movements that successfully toppled established governments within compressed timeframes. Using evidence from the comparative analysis of Sri Lanka (2022), Bangladesh (2024) and Nepal (2025), this study proposes a Digital Repression Mobilization (DRM) framework which argues that repression backfire is conditional rather than inevitable. The paper claims that the effects of digital repression intensify depending on the interaction of three variables: The presence of catalytic moral shock, prior structural grievance fueling dissent and the role of transnational diaspora communities that help sustain communication when domestic channels are disrupted. Methodologically, the paper uses a qualitative comparative case study design based on secondary data from human rights reports, verified social media documentation, NGO reports, Google transparency data and peer-reviewed literature. Finding reveals both patterns and divergence across three case studies while economic collapse in Sri Lanka served as immediate trigger with limited digital repression, Bangladesh's movement was result of catalytic moral causing a reactive digital repression strengthening movement, whereas Nepal demonstrated distinct trajectory where digital repression itself operated as the main cause. More specifically, the paper draws a distinction that the existing literature has largely undermined. It separates the transnational dimension of contentious politics into two distinct mechanisms: Diaspora amplification and transnational learning, rather than treating them as one undifferentiated process. Building on this it develops an account of digital backfiring situated within the literatures on authoritarian resilience, networked protest and transnational movement. Ultimately, states may repress digitally to suppress protest, but under certain conditions, they may instead strengthen mobilization and expand the diffusion of protest narratives across borders.

Rethinking Digital Sovereignty: A holistic governance framework for South Asian middle and small states to safeguard civilian digital rights against AI generated deepfake disinformation.

Rehnuma Tabassum, K.M. Ihteshamul Hoque

Abstract:

Deepfake disinformation is considered as one of the most crucial threats to civilian digital rights in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Deepfake contents, such as non consensual voice and face alterations or fabricated statements of public figures, violate the digital rights protection mentioned under the UDHR and the ICCPR, undermines the right to information by Complicating differentiation between authentic and fabricated media which unequally affects women, journalists and marginalized communities. The existing governance frameworks address the critical threats, unfairly defined by the enforcement capabilities of powerful jurisdictions, creating an uneven global focus. Global mechanisms, including UNESCO's Ethics on AI Recommendations, the UN Global Digital Compact, the EU AI Act and national frameworks of China, Singapore, are consistently limited by jurisdictional fragmentation, weak enforcement and political

interference. Significantly, less scholarly attention has been paid to how these governance failures unfold within South Asian Middle and Small states, where economic, institutional and political constraints differ sharply from the jurisdiction where these existing frameworks originated. This paper addresses the gap by examining why global, regional and national governance mechanisms fail to protect civilians in South Asian Middle and Small states, specifically Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives; and by proposing a governance framework appropriately adjusted to the region-specific constraints. Using qualitative comparative case study method, the paper conducts a comparative analysis of legal frameworks of Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, including India's IT Rules Amendments 2026, Sri Lanka's Online Safety Act and Bangladesh Cyber Security Law, placed against the global, regional and national governance mechanism identified above. The analysis reveals a frequent regional failure pattern. South Asian regulatory measures are frequently too vague to counter deepfake disinformation effectively. Also the systematic challenges compound by resource constraints, inadequate forensic infrastructure and low public trust in enforcing institutions. To address these challenges, this paper proposes a four-pillar regional framework consisting of a narrow technology-based definition, a shared regional detection and verification facility, a two-track judicially checked enforcement process and low-cost literacy programmes associated with existing institutions, deliberately regulated to the economic and institutional realities of South Asian Middle and Small states rather than adopted blindly from high capacity regions. Theoretically grounded with data colonialism and human security framework, this paper explains why regional or national governance mechanisms fail and suggests a pragmatic way towards civilian digital rights protection in an increasingly precarious environment of AI generated synthetic media.

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Evaluating Customer Satisfaction in Bangladesh's E-Commerce Sector: The Role of AI Integration, Data Privacy, and Digital Sovereignty at Daraz Limited

Steve Oscar D Rozario, Shafaitun Nahar, Naima Nazneen Chowdhury

Abstract:

This study evaluates customer satisfaction in Bangladesh's e-commerce sector through the case of Daraz Bangladesh Limited, while extending conventional service-quality analysis to the emerging issues of artificial intelligence (AI), data privacy, and digital sovereignty. The empirical component uses a survey of 100 Daraz users, covering 19 service dimensions and overall satisfaction, analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, simple linear regression, and multiple linear regression in IBM SPSS Statistics. To examine the digital governance dimensions without treating them as directly measured survey constructs, the quantitative results are triangulated with documentary evidence on Daraz's AI-enabled services, public privacy policy, and Bangladesh's 2026 data-governance framework. Overall satisfaction is high ($M = 4.19/5$). Delivery timeliness is the strongest bivariate predictor ($r = 0.617$, $R^2 = 0.381$), while delivery-personnel professionalism has the strongest positive standardized coefficient in the multivariate model ($\beta = 0.533$). Return policy or refund policy is both low-performing ($M = 2.96$) and highly important, and complaint handling records the lowest mean ($M = 2.95$). The six-predictor model explains 71.3% of the variance in overall satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.713$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.694$). Daraz's deployment of AskDaraz through Microsoft Azure OpenAI demonstrates that AI is already part of the platform's customer experience architecture, while its privacy policy documents extensive data collection, automated decision-making, personalization, third-party processing, and cross-border data transfers. The findings suggest that AI can improve discovery and responsiveness when supported by reliable fulfillment and service recovery; privacy

and security operate as trustenabling conditions; and digital sovereignty is strategically relevant because customer data may move across jurisdictions while Bangladesh is strengthening national data-protection and data-governance rules. AI integration, privacy, and digital sovereignty were not directly measured as separate latent constructs in the survey, so their role is interpreted through theoretically linked service indicators and documentary evidence rather than claimed as direct causal effects.

RCASBC-2026-270

Sovereignty on Lease: Compute Dependence and the Enforcement Gap in Middle-Income Digital Governance

Tanvir Ahmed, Sharmin Jahan Shithy, Shahriar Sadib

Abstract:

Debates on digital sovereignty have largely been conducted in the register of law. States pass data localization statutes, publish national AI strategies, and assert jurisdiction over foreign platforms, and scholars read these texts as evidence of sovereign capacity. This proposal argues that the reading is misplaced. For most states outside the two compute superpowers, the binding constraint sits upstream of law: in accelerator supply, in the geography of cloud regions, in the licensing terms attached to foundation model weights, and in the ownership of subsea cable landing stations. A government may legislate freely over an AI system it cannot host, audit, or switch off. The study develops the distinction between regulatory reach, what a state claims in statute, and infrastructural reach, what it can materially enforce, and treats the space between them as an enforcement gap that can be measured rather than asserted. Methodologically, it combines a structured comparison of six middle-income states across 2022–2026 with a compute dependency index built from procurement records, export-control filings, hyperscaler region announcements, and cable landing licences. Roughly forty elite interviews with regulators, telecom operators, and national data-centre operators supply the causal mechanism that documents alone cannot. The expected finding is that high dependence produces declaratory sovereignty: ambitious legal text paired with enforcement that quietly relocates to instruments the state actually controls, chiefly public procurement, spectrum and landing-rights licensing, and conditions on state cloud tenancy. If so, the practical lever for sovereignty is not another AI act but regional compute pooling, route diversification, and coordinated bargaining over model access terms. The contribution is to recast digital sovereignty as an infrastructural variable, and to give smaller states a diagnostic for distinguishing sovereignty they hold from sovereignty they rent.

RCASBC-2026-274

Deepfake Evidence, Real Convictions: Rethinking Criminal Procedure in the Age of Synthetic Media

Dr. Surbhi Wadhwa

Abstract:

The rapid growth of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) has fundamentally altered the nature of digital evidence. Deepfakes can now produce highly realistic audio, images and videos that may be difficult to distinguish from authentic recordings, creating a novel challenge for criminal justice systems that increasingly rely upon digital material to investigate and prosecute offences. This paper examines whether existing criminal procedural and evidentiary frameworks remain capable of safeguarding the integrity of criminal adjudication in an environment where the appearance of authenticity can itself be artificially manufactured. Using India's emerging framework for electronic and digital evidence under the

Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 as its principal legal context, the paper distinguishes between admissibility, authenticity and reliability of digital evidence. It argues that conventional approaches to electronic evidence largely presume that a digital record represents a pre-existing event that can subsequently be authenticated. Synthetic media disrupts this assumption by making it possible to manufacture apparently probative evidence without any corresponding underlying event. The paper therefore identifies a developing “synthetic evidence paradox”: as AI-generated media becomes increasingly indistinguishable from genuine recordings, visual or auditory appearance becomes progressively less capable of establishing authenticity. The paper further situates this evidentiary challenge within the broader transformation of global digital governance. For middle and Global South states, verification of synthetic evidence may increasingly depend upon foreign technologies, proprietary AI-detection systems, private forensic providers and cross-border digital infrastructures. This raises questions not only of fair trial and due process, but also of digital sovereignty and technological autonomy in criminal justice. The paper asks whether a State can meaningfully retain control over its criminal adjudicatory process when the technologies used to determine the authenticity of evidence are themselves externally developed or controlled. The paper proposes a provenance-centred model of digital evidence authentication, based on four requirements: provenance, authenticity, reliability and explainability. It argues that criminal procedure must move beyond a primarily admissibility-focused approach towards procedures that permit meaningful adversarial testing of the origin, integrity and technological verification of synthetic media. The paper concludes by considering how middle and Global South states can develop technologically autonomous and rights-compatible mechanisms for addressing synthetic evidence while preserving the foundational principles of presumption of innocence, fair trial and proof beyond reasonable doubt.

RCASBC-2026-282

The Impact of Generative AI Literacy on Career Readiness among Business Students in Bangladesh: The Mediating Role of Digital Competence

Kazi Sadia Sultana Nishat, Maliha Intisa, Shameema Ferdousy

Abstract:

Research Purpose: Guided by Human Capital Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, this study examines the impact of Generative AI literacy on career readiness among business students in Bangladesh, with the role of digital competence as a mediating variable. The study investigates students' knowledge and effective use of Generative AI tools contribute to their digital competence and support their preparation for future careers.

Research Methods: The primary data were collected from business students of public and private universities in Bangladesh using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. A convenience sampling technique was employed to collect 163 responses. The questionnaire was measured using Generative AI literacy, digital competence, and career readiness through multiple items. For data analysis, SPSS and SmartPLS was used to assess the relationships among the constructs and examine the mediating effect of digital competence.

Findings: The study indicates a positive and significant relationship between Generative AI literacy and digital competence, as well as between digital competence and career readiness. Furthermore, Generative AI literacy have a positive direct effect on career readiness. The study also shows digital competence to mediate the relationship between Generative AI literacy and career readiness.

Implications: The findings of this study will help universities, researchers, and policymakers understand the importance of developing Generative AI literacy and digital competence among business students. The

ultimate result will improve Generative AI use and digital skill development into business education for preparing the business graduates for the technology-driven workplaces.

Limitations: The present study is confined to business students of public and private universities in Bangladesh, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The use of convenience sampling and a close-ended questionnaire limits the depth of the results.

Originality: This study will contribute to the emerging literature on Generative AI by examining the mediating role of digital competence in the relationship between Generative AI literacy and career readiness among business students, particularly in context of Bangladesh.

RCASBC-2026-294

Algorithmic Diplomacy and Digital Sovereignty: Rethinking Diplomatic Strategies for Middle and Small States

Durjoy Barua

Abstract:

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming not only technological systems but also the ways states interpret information, manage risks, negotiate interests, and exercise diplomatic power. Yet the implications of this transformation for middle and small states remain insufficiently explored. This paper conceptualizes “algorithmic diplomacy” as the use of AI, machine learning, natural language processing, predictive analytics, and algorithmic decision-support systems to augment diplomatic decision-making. It asks a central question: Can AI help middle and small states overcome their informational and resource constraints while strengthening their diplomatic capacity and strategic autonomy? Drawing on a qualitative analysis of emerging scholarly literature, policy research, and comparative cases, the paper examines nine interconnected dimensions of algorithmic diplomacy through four major pillars. The first pillar, AI-Enhanced Diplomatic Intelligence, encompasses early warning and risk prediction, strategic intelligence and geopolitical forecasting, and historical treaty and agreement analysis. The second pillar, AI-Augmented Diplomatic Decision Support, focuses on negotiation support, economic diplomacy, and diplomatic resource efficiency. The third pillar, Digital Sovereignty and Diplomatic Resilience, examines data sovereignty and information security, resource efficiency, and dependence on AI infrastructure. The fourth pillar, Information and Cyber Diplomacy, addresses disinformation and propaganda detection, cybersecurity, and cyber diplomacy. The paper argues that AI can provide resource-constrained states with greater analytical capacity by processing large volumes of information, identifying emerging risks, modelling diplomatic scenarios, supporting negotiations, detecting information manipulation, and strengthening strategic intelligence and cyber-risk assessment. In this sense, algorithmic diplomacy may function as a form of “digital strategic leverage,” enabling smaller states to partially compensate for conventional asymmetries in diplomatic resources and information-processing capacity. However, the paper also recognizes that the adoption of AI introduces new strategic challenges related to data governance, technological dependence, information security, algorithmic bias, accountability, and control over critical digital infrastructure. Therefore, digital sovereignty should not be understood as complete technological self-sufficiency, which is largely unrealistic, but as the capacity to retain meaningful control, strategic flexibility, and bargaining power over critical digital dependencies. The paper ultimately argues that the future of middle and small-state diplomacy will depend not on competing with AI superpowers at scale, but on strategically deciding where to build, where to cooperate, where to specialize, and where to manage dependence. Algorithmic diplomacy, therefore, represents both an opportunity for diplomatic empowerment and strategic autonomy and a new arena of digital sovereignty and technological competition.

Digital Dependency and Sovereignty at Stake: How Technological Standards Are Reshaping Foreign Policy Choices of Small States

Ramim Hossain, Jannatun Nayeem, Mariya Islam

Abstract:

The contemporary international order is now being influenced not just by military or economic power alone, but also by technology standards that set the rules for data flows, infrastructure development and digital governance. For small states, this shift presents a critical challenge. Their traditional strategies of balancing between major powers through diplomatic neutrality are becoming outdated. Technological dependency is pushing them into actual alignment. This paper will look at how technology standards set by the United States and China limit the foreign policy options for small states in the Indo-Pacific region and the Bay of Bengal. Drawing on dependency theory by Andre Gunder Frank (1967), the way we choose 5G network options, the money we put into semiconductor companies and the rules we make about where to store data say a lot about which countries we want to work with and which ones we do not. The study will carry out a systematic qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed journals, official government policy documents, international technology standards reports, and digital governance publications alongside primary data will be collected through key informant interviews with experts in foreign policy, diplomacy and geopolitics. The paper will argue that small states are losing their strategic autonomy as their digital infrastructure connects closely with the technological systems of great powers. The findings will suggest that the time of flexible hedging is changing, replaced by a new situation of forced alignment due to technological dependence. This research will contribute to ongoing discussions about the role of middle and small states in international relations.

A Middle-Power Regime for Verifying Military AI in a Declining Rules-Based Order

Joonho Choi, Yesun Kim

Abstract:

The post-Cold War rules-based order faces significant challenges where military artificial intelligence (AI) is diffusing faster than the arms control, humanitarian, and legal institutions built for human-centered warfare. States adopting military AI cite improved judgment, accuracy, and reduced civilian harm to justify its use, yet no international institution independently verifies these claims once wars are fought. Existing initiatives such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW-LAWS), the U.S.-led Political Declaration on Responsible Military AI, and REAIM have each advanced ex ante norms, but none investigates, after the fact, how AI contributed to a specific attack or instance of civilian harm. This gap is most consequential where the great power projecting the most military force faces the least external scrutiny. This paper proposes the International Monitoring Regime for Weaponized AI (IMRWA), an institution designed and led by middle powers to fill this accountability gap. Rather than relying on superpower self-regulation or binding treaty ratification, IMRWA adopts a low-entry-barrier structure modeled after the Proliferation Security Initiative's steering-committee format and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification's (IPNDV) think-tank secretariat model, allowing a small coalition of committed middle powers to begin verification immediately. The regime's core contribution is a method called reverse testing. Rather than presuming AI involvement in a contested strike

or pattern of civilian harm, IMRWA reconstructs the incident and operational environment from public data, setting AI-related premises (e.g., sensor misclassification, correlated model error, automation bias) against non-AI explanations (human misjudgment, faulty intelligence, time pressure) as competing hypotheses. It then converts the incident's core conditions into an executable simulation and tests multiple comparable AI systems, varying environmental, informational, and temporal conditions to determine which pathways reproduce similar failures. Rather than asserting that a specific classified system caused a specific incident, this yields an independent, reproducible safety finding. When a meaningful failure signal emerges, the mechanism escalates to black-box testing and, only if necessary, limited managed access. Findings escalate through a staged ladder, from confidential advisories and retesting requirements to public findings and coordinated sanctions such as suspended assurance recognition or export-control cooperation. We situate IMRWA within a broader argument central to this conference's themes: middle and small powers, rather than remaining passive recipients of great-power AI governance choices, are structurally best positioned to build the institutions great powers most resist yet most need to legitimize. This paper contributes to debates on institutional innovation, coalition-building, and strategic autonomy in an AI-mediated security order.

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Sovereignty in the Cloud: Public Perception, Digital Trust, and AI Governance in Bangladesh

Atasy Aranya, Md. Jihad Ali

Abstract:

Small and middle states are increasingly caught between the promise and the pressure of digital technology. As companies like Meta and Google come to shape national data infrastructure and public discourse, developing countries face a genuine dilemma: how do you protect citizens and preserve sovereignty while still relying on foreign platforms for everyday digital life? This study looks at that dilemma through the eyes of ordinary citizens in Bangladesh, asking how they understand digital sovereignty and AI governance, how much they trust the state versus foreign tech platforms with their personal data, and what kind of regulation they actually want to see. Using a structured survey of 129 respondents from varied age groups, occupations, and residential backgrounds (48.1% aged 20–29, 45.7% students, 60.5% urban), the study measured digital habits, awareness, institutional trust, and regulatory preferences on 5-point Likert scales. The results point to a clear paradox. People rely on foreign platforms constantly, yet 67.4% believe these companies hold too much influence, and 75.2% feel their daily lives are shaped by decisions made outside their control. At the same time, 76.0% want the state to invest more in home-grown AI, and 60.5% already trust Bangladeshi-made tools more than foreign ones. But trust in the government's ability to regulate is shaky: 59.7% doubt its capacity to rein in foreign tech giants, and only 16.3% think current digital laws actually protect citizens. On who should govern AI, opinion is split rather than settled, with 41.9% backing the government, 31.8% preferring independent experts, and the rest unsure or favoring other actors, showing that citizens have not landed on one trusted authority. Taken together, these findings suggest Bangladeshis want technological independence, but not blind faith in any single institution to deliver it.

Two Roads to Digital Sovereignty: Declaratory and Capability-Based Hedging in South Asian Data Law

Ishrat Jahan Nila

Abstract:

As the old rules-based global order breaks down, technology has become a new battleground for power between major states and smaller countries are being forced to find their own ways to protect their independence. Most research on how countries "hedge" between rival powers focuses on military and trade strategy and tends to assume every country pursues "digital sovereignty" in more or less the same way. This paper questions that assumption. We compare Bangladesh's Personal Data Protection Act with India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023), closely examining how each law handles cross-border data transfers, data localization, and government access to personal data, using the EU's GDPR as a reference point. What we find is not a shared approach but a real split. Bangladesh's law defaults to restriction, giving the statewide and vaguely defined powers to access data or block it from leaving the country in the name of national security. India's law defaults to openness, allowing data to flow freely unless specifically blocked, while India instead pursues sovereignty through investment in its own AI and semiconductor industries. We call these two approaches declaratory/security-driven hedging and capability/economic-driven hedging, and argue the difference comes from real gaps in state capacity and security priorities, not simply from copying international legal models. Based on this, we propose an early framework for understanding how countries hedge digitally, offered not as a final answer but as a starting point to test on other small and middle powers. We end by asking what this split means for whether a truly shared, rule-based digital order is even possible.

Artificial Intelligence Governance in Bangladesh: Navigating Global Standards and National Priorities

Ayesha Akter Tumpa, Md. Rezaur Rahman, Nusrat Jahan Joithi

Abstract:

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in public administration, governance, and public service delivery is reshaping contemporary government practices. However, concerns about justice, ethics, accountability, transparency, privacy, and human rights are raised by the technology's increasing use. Governments and international bodies have produced a number of frameworks to encourage ethical AI, but how these ideas may be implemented in developing countries such as Bangladesh remains unclear. Most existing studies discuss AI governance from international or developed-country perspectives. However, there is still limited understanding of how these approaches fit the institutional and policy realities of Bangladesh. In particular, the relationship between international AI governance principles and Bangladesh's national priorities, existing regulations, and institutional capacity has not received sufficient attention. The ethical aspects of AI governance also remain underexplored in the Bangladeshi context, especially regarding transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy, and human rights. This research examines the alignment of existing policies in Bangladesh with international AI governance standards and national priorities. Moreover, it identifies key ethical and governance gaps and considers the challenges of implementing international standards within Bangladesh's existing institutional and policy context. The study adopts a qualitative research approach with comparative policy and document analysis. Cross-comparison analysis of international AI governance frameworks with Bangladesh's relevant laws, policies,

strategies and official documents will focus on AI ethics, transparency, accountability, privacy, fairness, human rights, safety and institutional capacity. The study will analyze where Bangladesh's legal and regulatory structures and the principles of global AI governance align, as well as where there are still substantial disparities. The research will further examine the applicability of global AI governance principles in Bangladesh and identify ways to adapt these principles to the country's specific institutional and policy context. The findings will be utilized to suggest potential policy alternatives to enhance the ethical and responsible governance of AI in Bangladesh.

RCASBC-2026-333

Automated Decisions, Constitutional Silence: Algorithmic Accountability Gaps in Bangladesh's Data Protection Act, 2026

Md Jihad Ali, Atasy Aranya

Abstract:

Article 43 of the Constitution of Bangladesh protects the privacy of correspondence and communication, and the Personal Data Protection Act, 2026 now extends this right into the context of automated decision-making, granting data subjects a right to refuse decisions made without human involvement. This right, however, stops short of imposing any duty on the state to justify the use of such decisions, and no independent body currently holds power to review them outside government itself. The stronger safeguards Bangladesh has proposed, including mandatory algorithmic impact assessments and a multi-body oversight architecture, exist only in the draft National AI Policy 2026-2030, a soft law instrument with no binding force. No study has yet examined this gap between Bangladesh's binding data protection statute and its non-binding AI governance proposals, or asked whether the appellate tribunal under the ICT Act, 2006 offers genuine independent review or merely an internal administrative appeal. This paper conducts a doctrinal analysis of the Act's automated decision-making provisions, benchmarked against the necessity and proportionality standards found in GDPR Article 22 and the risk-based obligations of the EU AI Act, and evaluates whether the AI Policy's proposed mechanisms can meaningfully close this gap absent legislative force. The analysis points toward specific reform: converting algorithmic impact assessment from policy aspiration into statutory duty, and expanding the tribunal's review power to meet a genuine independence standard. This matters directly for SDG 16, since accountable institutions cannot exist where algorithmic decisions escape both legal duty and independent review, particularly in a public sector where corruption risk remains high. It also carries an SDG 4 dimension: legal education in Bangladesh must equip graduates to make exactly this kind of constitutional and administrative law argument, rather than leaving algorithmic governance to policy analysts alone.

RCASBC-2026-337

Digital Sovereignty in the Global South: Bangladesh and the Challenges of AI Governance

Sarmita Chakma, Sayma Maliha, Sheikh Himel

Abstract:

Artificial Intelligence is playing a pivotal role in the development of society, the state, and the economy. A crucial question arises here: who exactly controls the technology and information, and who makes the decisions in this digital world? This issue is particularly relevant for countries in the Global South, as they rely on developed nations for advanced technology, digital infrastructure, and new governance frameworks. Bangladesh is no exception to this. The country is advancing towards digital transformation and implementing AI across various sectors. Yet, it still faces challenges regarding data insecurity, reliance

on foreign technology, a lack of control, and institutional technological hurdles. The existing research on AI in Bangladesh has mostly focused on topics like ethical AI, privacy and data security, responsible use of AI, and creating regulations. While these studies give valuable insights into the developing landscape of AI governance in the country, there is relatively little research that has focused on these concerns from the perspective of digital sovereignty. This opens up promising avenues for future research, as the sound governance of AI is inextricably linked to a nation's power regarding its own data, technology, digital infrastructure, and policy decisions. The primary objective of this study was to examine pathways for strengthening Bangladesh's digital sovereignty without isolating the country from the broader global AI governance framework. The study explicitly examined the challenges that could affect the techno-political autonomy of Global South nations such as Bangladesh. This study employed a qualitative, exploratory study employing the case study method. The primary approach was policy and document analysis, involving a review of relevant policies, laws, and regulatory documents in Bangladesh, as well as selected international governance initiatives. Following the document analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant experts to gain practical insights into issues concerning AI governance in Bangladesh. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The research was guided by dependency theory and the theory of digital sovereignty, enabling an examination of both the structural sources of technological dependence and the dynamics of digital sovereignty in Bangladesh. The findings demonstrated that the challenges regarding AI governance in Bangladesh stem from more than just regulatory limitations; they are also linked to technological dependency, data governance, institutional capacity, and the country's ability to make independent policy decisions. The study examined how Bangladesh is engaging with emerging global AI governance while also addressing the significant challenges faced by smaller nations within the Global South.

RCASBC-2026-347

Technological Soft Power: State of Cyber Security and Human Rights of Bangladesh

Munni Akhi, Sharif Noorjahan

Abstract:

Digital infrastructure, connectivity platforms and cyber-governance support are not only part of economic diplomacy, but are also emerging as tools of soft power in the hands of global powers of technology. This article explores the intersection of the Digital Silk Road of China, the Cyberdiplomacy Architecture of the United States and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) diplomacy of India in Bangladesh. The study places this competition in the context of the worsening governance and human rights situation in Bangladesh. In this article, the dependency theory is coupled with a constructivist interpretation of soft power, suggesting that the digital modernization of Bangladesh has created a type of dependency in which the reliance on external actors is related to loss of sovereign governing system. The information of citizen and confidential data of economic sector, government documents are no longer secured in national cyber space. Bangladesh has promulgated the Digital Security Act (2018), its replacement in 2023, The Cyber Security Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance of 2025. But gradually, cyber security and human rights have become a concerning issue for the government of Bangladesh. Based on the qualitative documentary research developed from peer-review literature, governmental strategy documents, and international human rights reporting, the study concludes that although technological soft power is being implemented in tandem in Bangladesh as development assistance, strategic leverage, and as a tool for state surveillance within the country, the dependency on soft power is creating internal crisis. Finally, the article offers the following policy recommendations for Bangladesh: diversifying technological partnerships, enhancing data protection and cyber-governance laws and regulations, and placing digital diplomacy within a rights-based institutional framework.

Perceptions on the moral use of Artificial Intelligence and the digital divide among AI users in Bangladeshi university students for academic purposes: Quantitative and Kantian analysis.

Md. Najemul Alam, Akir Hossen Sumon

Abstract:

Although the increasing use of artificial intelligence in education has brought about revolutionary benefits as well as ethical risks, existing studies have not adequately explored the ethical concepts and attitudes of Bangladeshi students, as they are largely technology- and developed-countrycentric. In addition, students' autonomy and dignity have not been given much importance in these previous researches. This study examines the ethical aspects of the use of artificial intelligence in higher education in Bangladesh in the light of Kantian deontological ethics. We, using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, conduct this study based on online survey responses from 224 undergraduate and postgraduate students from public, private, and national universities in Bangladesh. The main objective of this study is to identify the patterns of students' ethical concerns, perceived reliability, critical thinking, digital divide, and attitudes toward institutional control in the use of AI. For this purpose, descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, crosstabulations, and necessary analyses were performed on the collected data using SPSS. The results of the study indicate four interrelated issues; first, 62.9% of students believe that an ethical framework for the use of AI is morally essential, which is consistent with Kant's categorical imperative. Second, 91.07% of students expressed concerns that the use of GenAI reduces intellectual thinking and creativity; which raises questions about the erosion of rational autonomy. Third, significant gender-based differences were identified in the perception of the trustworthiness of AI ($\chi^2=17.208$, $p=.009$), with female students demonstrating greater critical scrutiny. Fourth, the rural-urban digital divide; 78% of urban students use AI, compared to 32% of rural students – which violates Kantian human dignity. We propose a Kantian ethical framework for the governance of AI in universities in Bangladesh; which argues that technology must be a support for student autonomy, not a substitute. Our research findings contribute to a much-neglected intersection of moral philosophy and AI, especially in the context of the Global South.

Is AI Governing Us? A Deep Dive into the Regulatory Gaps in Bangladeshi AI Governance

Tanjila Chowdhury, Assadeka Tabassum Jaman

Abstract:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is widespread worldwide and is being used, knowingly and unknowingly, because of its rapid services. People live under an illusion about AI's advancement, which creates profound barriers to human security in the digital world and harms people in the real world, also creating risks to fundamental human rights. Concerning this risk, the European Union is taking continuous and significant regulatory model such as Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 (EU AI Act). Significantly, the EU AI Act restricts AI models for certain activities, including the manipulation of human fragility, and provides a risk-based framework for AI activities with transparency and accountability, creating an intersection between AI consumption and human affect, safety, security, and fundamental rights. However, some incidents regarding the manipulation of AI took the stage with the violation of the right to life of a child, and many other incidents are taking place, especially for vulnerable AI users, due to a lack of binding legal protection in many countries. Legislation for AI from the governments of the respective states is not limited to

technological innovation but also to human security, transparency and accountability. With these protections in mind, Bangladesh launched its National AI Policy 2026- 30, which promises data protection, digital legislation, and cybersecurity for human lives, with a focus on Bangladeshi culture and discouraging foreign influences. However, this policy focuses on public services, different innovations, and economic growth in Bangladesh primarily to fulfil the technological ambitions of Vision 2041 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, human security and its protection from AI remain an option rather than a primary goal in the policy's promises. Not only in Bangladesh, but most South Asian countries also lack protection from AI manipulation for humans, especially for the vulnerable. Thus, this qualitative legal research scrutinizes the adequacy of AI governance and enforcement in Bangladesh in protecting digital security and fundamental rights. Through comparative insights from the EU AI Act, this research examines gaps in Bangladesh's digital legislation and institutional practices and identifies best practices. This research also compares practices in neighbouring countries, including India and Pakistan, to assess Bangladesh's current position within South Asia's regional AI governance framework. Examining primary and secondary sources, this research finds that all three countries have initiated policies but lack strict laws and enforcement governing AI technologies, leaving people living blindfolded.

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Small States, Digital Dependence, and Sovereignty: Challenges in the Emerging Digital Order

Md Abdul Jabbar Abdullah, Muhammd Mustafiz, Yeakut Fatemi

Abstract:

The rapid expansion of digital technologies is shaping state relations within the international system. While major countries increasingly pursue technological autonomy through investments in newer technology such as artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity, and data capabilities, small and developing state entities often depend on foreign technologies, companies, infrastructures, and technical expertise. This asymmetry raises an emerging issue of sovereignty: how can states exercise meaningful control over critical digital infrastructures and national data when the technologies on which these systems depend are developed, owned, or managed beyond their borders? This paper examines the relationship between digital dependence and sovereignty in small states, using Bangladesh as a case through which to explore broader challenges facing technologically dependent states on the emerging digital order. It conceptualizes digital dependence as structural reliance on external technological actors for critical digital infrastructure, software, cloud, and data services, cybersecurity systems, and technical expertise. The paper argues that such dependence introduces a new dimension of sovereignty that extends beyond conventional territorial and political autonomy. A state may retain formal legal authority over its institutions and data while possessing limited practical control over the technological infrastructures through which information is stored, processed, authenticated, and exchanged. The Bangladesh case illustrates this tension. The state's expanding shift toward digital systems across government administration, national identification, financial services, and other critical infrastructures has created opportunities to strengthen state capacity and public service delivery. Meanwhile, dependence on foreign technologies and technology providers raises questions concerning data security, technological autonomy, institutional capacity, vendor dependence, and the state's capability to handle technological and cybersecurity risks. These concerns become particularly significant when critical systems involve sensitive citizen, financial, or governmental data. Rather than stating foreign technological involvement as inherently threatening, this paper proposes a more nuanced

understanding of digital sovereignty. For small states, sovereignty in the digital age may not require complete technological self-sufficiency, which is often economically and technically unrealistic. Instead, it may depend on the capacity to operate technologically dependent systems through regulatory oversight, domestic technical expertise, diversified technological partnerships, security standards, institutional accountability, and greater control over critical data infrastructure. By connecting digital dependence with sovereignty, the paper contributes to emerging debates on technology, global governance, and the changing international order, while highlighting how small states can negotiate technological interdependence and pursue meaningful digital autonomy.

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Digital Sovereignty and Gender Based Harm: Evaluation of Bangladesh's capacity to govern AI-generated synthetic media against women within the context of transnational platforms' power

Tasnim Zaman, Umme Habiba Ishme, MD Imtiaz Ahmed, Samira Sifat Swarna

Abstract:

The advancement of generative Artificial Intelligence has ushered in a new realm of gender based digital harm against women, such as deepfake pornography, non consensual synthetic intimate imagery, impersonation, and digitally fabricated sexual content. While these harms are gaining traction among women in Bangladesh, the technology platforms where these contents are developed, spread and deleted, are largely controlled by transnational corporations, a challenge to Bangladesh's digital sovereignty and ability to protect its women in its digital space. This paper examines the extent to which Bangladesh can exercise digital sovereignty to defend women against the harms of synthetic media in an era of transnational technology platforms and regulatory frameworks from the major AI powers. The study examines three specific aspects of Bangladesh's sovereign power, namely legal, jurisdictional and regulatory. The first component is to assess if the current legal and regulatory landscape in Bangladesh is sufficiently robust to deal with the use of AI generated synthetic media and the gender based harms women experience. Secondly, it explores the potential for Bangladesh to exercise jurisdiction and hold accountable actors whose operations cross borders from perpetrators to content distribution networks, platforms to data infrastructure, and women as primary victims. Thirdly, it reviews and examines if the current policies and practices of major technology companies are sufficient in addressing the legal, regulatory and cultural interests and concerns of Bangladesh as a country on synthetic media targeting female victims. Methodologically, The study adapts a doctrinal legal approach, where Bangladesh's relevant laws, regulations and policy instruments are examined alongside the content governance policies, safety standards enforcement mechanisms and transparency practices of major transnational technology platforms. It also relies on secondary literature, policy documents and relevant international regulatory frameworks to explore the role of the state and platform governance. The study finds that Bangladesh's formal sovereignty does not necessarily translate into effective digital sovereignty. Furthermore, it reveals that the State has limited ability to regulate synthetic media and to safeguard women due to trans border jurisdictional issues and the private governance authority of transnational platforms. Such limitations leave a divide between the legal power and the capacity of Bangladesh to address the harming impacts of AI on women. Lastly, the study examines the role of women in this sovereignty gap and suggests that there is a need to enhance Bangladesh's own regulatory capacity, and to create mechanisms to shape platform practices that impact women in the country's virtual environment, if it is to protect them effectively.

Financial Cyber Warfare and State Sovereignty: Revisiting the Bangladesh Bank Reserve Heist a Decade Later

Afshara Tasneem Zoa, Md Golam Mubasshir Rafi, Nishat Jahan Nowshin

Abstract:

How can an ordinary looking technical failure become a major cyber trap in a cyber strategy capable of moving millions of dollars across international borders, with consequences that continue for years? In the 2016 Bangladesh Bank cyber heist, that failure was a jammed printer, the small malfunction that delayed detection of an attack already moving hundreds of millions of dollars through the global financial system. The heist demonstrates that the greatest danger to financial systems may not lie in a single technological weakness, but in the ability of attackers to combine compromised technology, human assumptions, institutional procedures, trusted financial infrastructure, and strategic timing. In February 2016, attackers infiltrated Bangladesh Bank's internal network, gained access to systems connected to its SWIFT payment environment, and issued fraudulent payment orders totaling nearly US\$951 million. Most were blocked, but roughly US\$101 million was transferred, including US\$81 million to the Philippines and US\$20 million to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan transfer was later recovered, while most of the Philippine funds were dispersed through multiple accounts and laundering channels. This study reconstructs the cyber strategy underlying the attack using a qualitative single-case study and process-tracing methodology, examining the sequence from initial compromise and credential exploitation to fraudulent payment orders, concealment, cross-border fund movement, and recovery. The analysis draws on legal and institutional documents, cybersecurity investigations, threat-intelligence reports, and publicly available evidence. The study argues that the heist succeeded because attackers exploited a chain of trust and vulnerabilities rather than a single technical flaw, revealing how trusted digital and financial systems become attack surfaces when technological security is separated from human behavior, institutional controls, and international coordination. Framed through the lens of financial statecraft and digital sovereignty, the case shows how a state-sponsored cyber intrusion can directly challenge a small state's control over its own financial infrastructure, a vulnerability that recent scholarship links to growing dependence on externally interconnected digital systems. It also warns that emerging technologies, including AI-driven social engineering, synthetic identities, and deepfake-enabled impersonation, may allow future attackers to exploit trust at even greater speed and scale. The paper recommends treating cybersecurity as a continuous institutional and international responsibility, calling for stronger transaction verification, behavioral anomaly detection, cyber resilience, employee awareness, and coordinated cross-border mechanisms for tracing and recovering illicit funds. Ultimately, the Bangladesh Bank heist shows that a small, overlooked weakness can become a lasting threat to a state's financial sovereignty, and that the next generation of cyber threats may weaponize not only technology, but the trust placed in it.

The renewed technological reliance of global south: The revival of structural dependency in the age of green technology

Md. Mohidur Hassan Moin

Abstract:

Background: Green technology and artificial intelligence are increasingly promoted as development solutions for the Global South. While traditional dependency theory documents how resource extraction has perpetuated the subordination of the Global South, current research has not adequately analyzed whether similar asymmetric relationships are being reproduced through the ownership, intellectual property control,

debt-driven financing, and information extraction of green technology and AI supply chains.

Objective: This study systematically examines how green technology and AI adoption reproduce technological dependency for the Global South, investigating: (1) ownership and value distribution in green supply chains; (2) how green finance conditionalities repeat debt-driven technology adoption patterns; (3) data extraction embedded in AI systems; and (4) barriers to technological sovereignty.

Methods: The study follows a secondary-data-based comparative research design, combining a systematic review of academic and policy literature, comparative case studies, and analysis of policy and supply chain documents for the period 2015–2026. Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Indonesia, and Vietnam will be analyzed as comparative cases, and China will be considered as a key technology-producing and exporting case. Data sources will include international trade databases (UN Comtrade, World Bank WITS), foreign direct investment and international investment data (UNCTAD), company reports on supply chains and technology value chains, government and policy documents, research and development and patent data (WIPO, UNESCO), and green technology and finance data (IEA, IRENA, World Bank). The supply chain analysis will use published company data and relevant secondary documentation to identify the structure of technology ownership, production, value addition and dependency. The collected data will be synthesized through thematic analysis, comparative case matrix, and supply chain and value-distribution analysis.

Results: The study expects that Concentration of green technology ownership in the Global North/China sustained technology import dependency; FDI with foreign ownership majorities; concentration of green technology ownership and production in a few advanced economies and China; Inequality of data extraction and value creation in AI systems constrained domestic R&D and patents; and limited technological sovereignty. The study will assess whether these processes are creating structural similarities with historical resource extraction-based dependencies.

Conclusion: The research will assess whether these processes are creating structural similarities with historical resource extraction-based dependencies. Local manufacturing, South-South cooperation, strong data governance, fairer intellectual property regimes and favorable frameworks for technology transfer and conditionality-free technology adoption. This research updates dependency theory for the digital era and provides evidence-based frameworks for technological autonomy in the Global South.

RCASBC-2026-409

The interconnection between Artificial intelligence and Political Propaganda on Social Media in Bangladesh: Challenges for Democratic Governance.

Samarpita Gain

Abstract:

Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized the way of expressing ideas in demonstrated ways. Despite having lots of benefits, AI has produced several challenges throughout the system. Politics is not alienated from the negative impact. Specially, Bangladesh has been going through a transitional period since the July Movement of 2024. and artificial intelligence also drastically improved during this phase. Almost every political party have been identified to utilize AI generated contents to vilify the opponents, which is politically incorrect and ethically wrong. This study shows how political propaganda and disinformation are affecting netizens' perspectives on certain issues. Artificial intelligence does a lot smarter job in content writing compared to most of the humans, which is being negatively implemented to generate disinformation in a structural framework and make believable to most of the laypersons. A whole narrative can be built from a false information using AI, which not only builds online narratives but also increases offline mobilization, contradictions, and violence. The 2025 national election's scenario can be analyzed for instances. As a result, the government has to take actions in many cases, which in another way lessen the range of freedom expression. This study aims to explain the causality behind those acts, the challenges government faces, and later it will prescribe some recommendations examining the circumstances.

When AI Reframes Experience: Generative Linguistic Mediation and the Reorganisation of Psychological Meaning

Nabila Rahman

Abstract:

Conversational artificial intelligence increasingly provides a distinctive setting in which individuals disclose personally meaningful experiences and immediately encounter machine-generated reformulations of those experiences. Existing research has documented relationships among conversational AI, self-disclosure, anthropomorphism, trust, reflection, and relational engagement, while emerging scholarship examines AI-assisted self-understanding and psychological reflection. Yet these literatures remain fragmented around a central explanatory problem: what occurs between an AI generated representation of experience and subsequent changes in how that experience is understood? Existing accounts often examine disclosure, perceived understanding, reflection, insight, or psychological change as outcomes without adequately specifying how AI-generated language may become psychologically consequential. This paper addresses that gap through a framework of generative linguistic mediation, proposing that the psychological significance of conversational AI need not depend on the system possessing human-like understanding, intentionality, consciousness, or an unconscious. Instead, AI transforms self-disclosed experience into a new linguistic representation that may become a second-order object of human self-interpretation. Individuals may evaluate, accept, resist, modify, or incorporate this representation, potentially altering the meanings through which they understand their original experience and themselves. The framework therefore distinguishes self disclosure, AI reformulation, perceived understanding, reflection, self-understanding, insight, and psychological meaning reorganization, treating durable reorganization as an empirical outcome rather than an assumed effect. It also considers competing explanations including linguistic externalization, ordinary reflection, cognitive offloading, suggestion, expectancy, and anthropomorphic or relational response to determine whether apparent psychological change is specifically attributable to AI mediated representation. Psychoanalytic concepts such as projection, resistance, desire, fantasy, and transference-like dynamics are selectively incorporated as interpretive resources to examine forms of human engagement with AI-generated representations that may not be fully captured by cognitive and social accounts, without attributing these processes to AI itself. The framework consequently proposes a comparative mixed-method research programme capable of distinguishing AI-specific effects from reflection and interpretation more generally, while examining whether apparent changes persist beyond the interaction. By shifting attention from whether AI can understand a hidden human psyche to how humans interpret themselves through, against, or beyond AI-generated representations of their own experience, the paper develops a theoretically differentiated and empirically testable account of AI-mediated self-understanding at the intersection of language, cognition, affect, and psychodynamic interpretation.

Metageopolitics of Artificial Intelligence: Assessing Bangladesh's Digital Sovereignty amid Sino-US Competition

Masrur Mahmud Khan

Abstract:

The new 'great game' in the 21st century has metamorphosed from a purely geopolitical contest among great powers into one where geopolitical rivalry increasingly converges with competition for technological supremacy. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as the foremost arena of this contest, with the United States (US) and China pursuing AI dominance to secure strategic, economic, and military primacy. This

great-power lens, however, leaves the smaller states' efforts to safeguard their autonomy and national interests—situated at the techno-geopolitical crossroads of this rivalry—underexamined. Bangladesh offers a particularly instructive case: located at the strategic confluence of the Bay of Bengal and navigating through the Sino-US techno-geopolitical competition while pursuing its own vision of digital sovereignty. This ambition has been formally articulated in 'National AI Policy Bangladesh, 2026-2030', which identifies digital sovereignty in AI as one of its core principles. This article, therefore, asks: how does Bangladesh's pursuit of digital sovereignty in artificial intelligence both reveal and deepen structural asymmetries in its national capacities amid the intensifying geopolitics of AI between the US and China? To answer this question, the article draws on the 'metageopolitics' framework of state capacities. Metageopolitics, as introduced by Nayef Al-Rodhan, offers a 'multidimensional view of power', incorporating seven dimensions or capacities of power through which state power can be assessed: social and health issues, domestic politics, economics, environment, science and human capital, military and security issues, and international diplomacy. The advantage of this framework is that these capacities can determine not only the traditional geopolitical apparatus but also apply to the cybersphere. This framework is well-suited to examining Bangladesh's pursuit of digital sovereignty, as it captures the intersection of geopolitical determinants and technological developments. This article adopts a qualitative research approach and draws on open-source materials such as policy documents, government statements, academic literature, and media reports. The analysis finds that Bangladesh's digital sovereignty claims are strongest in the domain of international diplomacy, where it can seek to maximize gains from the US- and China-led AI cooperation initiative—Pax Silica and WAICO—while avoiding overt alignment with either. Yet, Bangladesh shows deeper weaknesses in science, human capital, and economic capacity, reflected in its high dependency on foreign infrastructure and technical expertise. The study concludes that Bangladesh's pursuit of digital sovereignty rests on bounded autonomy: an ability to extract opportunities from competing global initiatives, coupled with persistent dependency at the infrastructural and capability levels.

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The Digital Truth Architecture: The Importance of Policy Development and Implementation in Countering Sensationalism in Bangladesh's Online News Media

Prashanta Kumar Shill, Barsha Dey

Abstract:

According to a survey conducted in 2026, the vast majority of Bangladeshis (80%) choose to read news articles online, while only a small fraction (11.4%) prefers to read traditional print media. This statistical analysis illustrates how news channels have developed in the modern era of digital technology. According to research conducted by the World Health Organization, between eighty five and ninety-four percent of the news reports that are published online contain sensationalism that is biased. The information that has been provided here suggests that reading the news on social media or other online platforms is a widespread practice in the modern world; nevertheless, doing so may be a time-consuming agony that is loaded with risk due to the prevalence of sensationalism and fake news. In spite of the fact that Bangladesh has a media policy and a policy that is specifically designed for digital media, it is important to investigate the reasons for the increasing prevalence of sensationalism in the country. It is necessary to make a policy change that is both immediate and suitable in order to enhance news reporting and reduce sensationalism. There are a number of elements that contribute to the emergence of sensationalism in Bangladesh, and the objective of this research is to identify those factors and explain how Bangladesh's media policies differ from those of other countries across the world. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to provide evidence that

attempts to explain the reasons behind the tendency of online news media to resort to sensationalism. In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to investigate potential methods for preventing sensationalism in Bangladeshi digital media. The objectives of this study are accomplished by the utilization of qualitative research analysis, which draws from a wide range of sources, such as articles, journals, and papers that have been published online. Additionally, this research provides recommendations for the future of media policy as well as potential avenues for collaboration between the government and the general public in order to reduce the spread of fake news.

RCASBC-2026-465

Small-State Digital Sovereignty from Below: The Legitimacy Paradox of Platform Regulation and Gen Z Counter-Power in Nepal, 2023-2025

Tahmida Khanam

Abstract:

The digital sovereignty of a country depends on the ability of the state to control the collection, storage, and use of all information of its citizens, institutions, and government. In other words, digital sovereignty does not primarily refer to technological capabilities, but rather to the ability of the state to enforce its own provisions on social media, internet infrastructure, and foreign technology institutions (Pohle and Thiel 2020; Fratini et al. 2024). That is, the state is the main actor in the concept of digital sovereignty. However, it is worth noting that it is not possible to get a complete picture of digital sovereignty by analyzing state control power alone. Because, in addition to the state's control power over digital platforms, whether that power is being democratically and legitimately exercised also needs to be examined (Couture and Toupin 2019; Lehuedé 2024; Grohmann and Barbosa 2026). Currently, the Gen-z generation is likely connected to each other through digital platforms. These digital communication modes play an important role in communicating, expressing political opinions, exchanging information and developing a collective political voice. As a result, the control of digital communication by the state also controls the rights of the citizens of that country. In this context, self-determination develops among citizens by protesting against the control of rights. In this case, two forces stand in a confrontational position - From above: State → platform regulation → control From below: Citizens/Gen Z → digital communication → mobilisation → challenge to state authority. That is, digital sovereignty means- not exclusive control of the state, but also the exercise of selfdetermination (Couture and Toupin 2019; Lehuedé 2024) In this study, 'small state' refers to digital power relationships and 'from below' refers to citizens, youth, activists and networked publics. This study examines the context of government bans on digital platforms in Nepal in 2023 and 2025 and the mass mobilisation in response. Nepal 2023: Government → TikTok ban → public dissatisfaction/adaptation → but no regime-threatening mass mobilisation. Nepal 2025: Government → major social-media restrictions → Gen Z resistance → broader anti-corruption grievances → mass mobilisation → state legitimacy crisis. The question of this study is - The Nepal government's attempt to establish control over digital platforms in 2023 fail to generate large-scale political resistance. On the other hand, the 2025 digital Control over the platform enabled Gen Z mobilization and created a political legitimacy crisis. Why did Nepal's control over digital platforms produce different political responses in 2023 and 2025, and what circumstances were the catalysts for Gen Z mobilization and the political legitimacy crisis in 2025? This is a qualitative comparative case study. Theory-building process tracing will be used here. 'Digital Sovereignty from Below' will be examined through newer popular-digital-sovereignty scholarship.



Sub-theme – 04:
**Human Security and Climate
Diplomacy**

Beyond the Silos: Climate-Induced Security Risks and Inter-Agency Coordination in Small and Middle States

Shaad Warsi

Abstract:

Climate change has fundamentally shifted from a peripheral environmental issue to a core national security imperative. In small and middle states across the Global South, climate-induced disasters, resource scarcity, and coastal displacement increasingly trigger domestic instability and exacerbate state fragility. However, national security architectures in many non-hegemonic states remain structurally designed around traditional twentieth-century threat models, creating profound operational friction between civilian disaster management authorities, military establishments, and local administrative bodies. This paper investigates the governance mechanisms required to bridge this institutional divide, focusing on the political economy of inter-agency coordination in climate-vulnerable states. Applying a critical security governance framework, the study examines how ad hoc institutional patchworks and agency rivalries undermine crisis response, resource allocation, and long-term strategic resilience. It argues that effective human security cannot be achieved through reactive military deployments or fragmented civilian mandates alone; rather, it requires a structural integration of climate intelligence into national security planning. By evaluating comparative mechanisms of inter-agency coordination—ranging from unified disaster command centers to cross-ministerial climate security task forces—the paper highlights how small and middle powers convert domestic institutional coherence into strategic diplomatic leverage. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that internal governance resilience is a primary prerequisite for non-hegemonic states seeking to execute effective climate diplomacy, secure international climate adaptation funding, and maintain sovereign strategic autonomy in an increasingly unstable global order.

RCASBC-2026-62

Climate Change, Human Security, and Statelessness: Rethinking Climate Diplomacy through the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in South Asia

Arijit Biswas

Abstract:

The enduring Rohingya refugee emergency represents one of the most complex humanitarian and geopolitical dilemmas in South Asia. Since their forced expulsion from Myanmar in 2017, over a million displaced Rohingya have resided in the Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh, forming one of the densest refugee populations globally. While existing literature extensively analyzes this crisis through forced displacement, human rights, environmental degradation, and emergency management, the intersection of statelessness with climate diplomacy and environmental governance remains underexplored. As global warming intensifies regional vulnerabilities, this analytical gap bears profound consequences for refugee protection policies and regional climate strategies. This study explores the interplay between climate disruption, human security, and legal disenfranchisement within the refugee settlements of Cox's Bazar. It contends that changing climate conditions function as a risk multiplier, compounding the severe economic, physical, health, and social insecurities inherent to statelessness and prolonged exile. Although South Asian climate diplomacy increasingly promotes cross-border cooperation and adaptation strategies, existing institutional architectures remain strictly nation-state-centric. Consequently, stateless populations are systematically excluded from shaping the climate policies that impact their survival. Instead, their needs are indirectly conveyed via international aid groups, local consultation channels, and joint management efforts

between the Bangladeshi government and global humanitarian agencies. Employing a qualitative case study design grounded in secondary research, this paper synthesizes official reports from humanitarian entities—including UNHCR, IOM, and the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)—alongside Bangladeshi governmental policies and peer-reviewed scholarly literature. The analysis uses the Human Security framework to assess how climate hazards disrupt the Rohingya's environmental, physical, economic, and social well-being. By prioritizing person-centered security over traditional border defense, this framework highlights how climate fragility intersects with legal exclusion and political marginalization. Ultimately, this paper identifies a critical disconnect between international climate governance and humanitarian protection frameworks. While modern adaptation models frequently cite "vulnerable groups," stateless refugees are functionally locked out of formal policy-making due to their lack of legal citizenship. Consequently, their agency is mediated entirely through humanitarian entities rather than recognized within sovereign governance structures. Focusing on Bangladesh, this study advocates for a paradigm shift in South Asian climate diplomacy toward a human-security-driven model that actively integrates the rights, adaptive capacities, and voices of stateless and displaced peoples. By synthesizing climate policy, migration studies, and human security, this research advances broader debates on environmental displacement and the changing obligations of states and international bodies in an era of climate instability.

RCASBC-2026-93

A Voice Designed to Serve: Gendered Design and the Social Sustainability of AI in I'Isle-Adam's The Future Eve

Afiya Jahin Esha

Abstract:

Feminist and posthumanist scholarship has read Hadaly as a manufactured ideal of femininity and traced her continuity with feminized AI. Yet it has not sufficiently theorized the sequence through which patriarchal expectations become design requirements and are then normalized through routine technological service. This paper addresses that gap through the Hadaly Conversion Model: Desire-to-Design and Design-to-Discipline. The analysis treats this conversion as a problem of social sustainability, arguing that innovation cannot support sustainable futures when it conceals labour, removes meaningful refusal, and makes unequal gender relations operational. The paper combines literary close reading with a feminist genealogy and an interface discourse analysis of published studies documenting female-coded assistants like Siri, Alexa, or Cortana's voices, service roles, and responses to harassment. Cyborg and posthumanist feminism examines Hadaly's unstable position between woman, machine, and male fantasy. It also shows that humanmachine hybridity is not inherently liberating: technological embodiment can reproduce domination when its form, voice, and agency are controlled by others. Feminist technology studies explains how these gendered values enter design, labour, and technical authority. The analysis argues that Ewald defines the social demand, Edison grants it scientific authority, and Hadaly embodies its technical solution. Her apparent autonomy depends on Alicia's appropriated likeness, recorded female voices, Sowana's concealed animating presence, and the restriction of her capacity to refuse. Sowana nevertheless introduces an agency that Edison neither designs nor fully controls. Hadaly's destruction further dramatizes the failure of technology to resolve a conflict produced by patriarchal expectation. The paper argues that female-coded AI assistants extend this logic when femininity is designed as available, accommodating, and compliant. The movement from Hadaly to female-coded assistants therefore marks more than representational continuity; it shows how feminized voice, availability, and compliance can turn gender hierarchy into scalable service infrastructure. Technical discovery becomes sustainable progress only when innovation protects agency, consent, labour visibility, gender equality, and accountability.

Climate Change, Displacement and the Criminalisation of Survival: A Human Security Perspective

Md. Mehedi Hasan, Mojammel Hossen Rumman, Galib Safatul Huda, S M Shafeeul Islam

Abstract:

Climate change is increasingly recognised not only as an environmental challenge but also as a significant driver of human insecurity, particularly among populations whose livelihoods and social protection systems are disrupted by environmental hazards. This study examined how climate-induced displacement creates conditions in which displaced populations become vulnerable to criminal exploitation and, in some circumstances, engage in illicit activities as strategies of survival. The study aimed to explore how displacement-related livelihood loss, socioeconomic marginalisation, institutional exclusion, and precarious living conditions shape displaced people's exposure to criminal networks and the criminalisation of survival. The study was theoretically informed by the Human Security Approach, particularly its emphasis on freedom from fear, freedom from want, and protection from interconnected forms of insecurity. An interpretivist paradigm and qualitative phenomenological research design were employed. The study was conducted among climate-displaced populations in Khulna, Bagerhat, and Satkhira, three climate-vulnerable areas of southwestern Bangladesh. Using purposive and snowball sampling, the study involved 35 climate-displaced adults who had experienced environmental displacement and subsequently migrated to urban or peri-urban locations. In addition, five key-informant interviews were conducted with community leaders, NGO practitioners, and social workers familiar with the experiences of displaced populations. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and key-informant interviews and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality, anonymisation, voluntary participation, and secure handling of sensitive data. The findings revealed that climate-induced displacement did not inherently produce criminal behaviour; rather, it functioned as a risk multiplier, intensifying livelihood insecurity, unemployment, social exclusion, precarious housing, and weakened community networks. These conditions increased participants' vulnerability to trafficking, drug networks, illicit labour markets, and other forms of criminal exploitation. Some participants also reported circumstances in which involvement in illicit activities emerged as a constrained survival strategy in the absence of secure livelihoods and institutional support. The findings further demonstrated that displaced populations could become simultaneously victims of insecurity and subjects of criminalisation, reinforcing stigma and social exclusion. The study contributes to human-security scholarship by connecting climate mobility with the criminalisation of survival and challenging simplistic representations of displaced populations as security threats. It highlights the need for integrated climate governance, livelihood restoration, social protection, safe migration pathways, and preventive mechanisms against criminal recruitment. The study has implications for climate governance, disaster diplomacy, migration policy, humanitarian interventions, and transnational crime prevention in climate-vulnerable contexts.

Exploring the North–South divide in the Global Carbon Market System

SHLOK SAMANT

Abstract:

In contemporary international climate governance, carbon market systems have emerged as a central instrument, facilitating cost-effective greenhouse gas reduction. While there has been immense disarray regarding the operations of a full-fledged global carbon market system, certain countries have taken initiatives at the national and regional levels, laying the groundwork for a future global carbon market system. This paper critically examines how global or regional carbon markets, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol and the European Union's Emission Trading System (EU ETS), reproduce and challenge existing asymmetries between the Global South and the Global North. The paper builds upon the theoretical framework of the 'dependency theory', which states that resources flow from periphery countries to core countries, helping the latter enrich at the cost of the former. Furthermore, the paper employs a qualitative methodology that takes primary and secondary sources into account. The paper seeks to identify how notions of "equity," "efficiency," and "common but differentiated responsibilities" are operationalised or sidelined within global climate governance, especially between the core and periphery. The paper furthermore takes case studies of active or planned domestic carbon market systems in the Global North and Global South nations to assess the ideological and operational differences between the systems. In the contemporary period, we have seen a power tussle between the Global South and the Global North, especially over accountability for climate change and global warming, which has led to significant disagreements over a full-fledged carbon market system. While researchers largely focus on how these systems operate and contribute to climate governance, our paper establishes and analyses a strong negative construct that lies between the Global North and South in terms of carbon markets. Through this, we aim to understand and argue for a reoriented carbon market system that ensures inclusivity, transparency, and equity among all stakeholders.

Agriculture and Human Security in Bangladesh: Emerging Challenges and Future Pathways

Jiban Krishna Biswas

Abstract:

Bangladesh agriculture is entering a period of major transformation. The central challenge is no longer simply to increase rice and other food production. The country must simultaneously secure sufficient and nutritious food for a large population, protect farm profitability, adapt to floods, cyclones, salinity, drought and heat, reduce agricultural greenhouse-gas emissions, improve water and nutrient efficiency, conserve soil and biodiversity, respond to changing diets and markets, and ensure that technological progress benefits smallholders, women and youth. These pressures are unfolding in a country with very high population density, limited cultivable land, intensive rice production, groundwater dependence in the dry season, rapid urbanization and increasing integration with regional and global markets. Global evidence remains relevant because Bangladesh is affected by food, fertilizer, energy and trade shocks, but national policy must be shaped by local production systems and institutions. The paper argues that Bangladesh should move from a narrow emphasis on output growth toward optimizing multiple outcomes: productivity, profitability, nutrition, resilience, resource-use efficiency, low emissions, environmental integrity and equity. This implies a gradual transition from input-intensive agriculture toward knowledge-intensive, climate-resilient, diversified and progressively lowemission agrifood systems.

Rohingya refugee crisis: Community perspectives and comparative global experiences

Mohammed Rejaul Karim, Mohammed Mamun Rashid, Md Anamul Hoque

Abstract:

The brutality and persecution experienced by the Rohingya people, a Muslim minority in Myanmar, constitute one of the most severe humanitarian injustices in contemporary refugee discourse. This study explores the long-standing deprivation and persecution endured by the Rohingya in Myanmar prior to their forced displacement to Bangladesh. It further examines the current living conditions of Rohingya refugees in camps, perceptions of the host community towards refugees, opinions regarding safe and voluntary repatriation to Myanmar, and global experiences of refugee repatriation. A qualitative research design was employed, with in-depth interviews conducted among 10 Rohingya refugees and 10 members of the host community selected through purposive sampling. Findings indicate that the Rohingya have experienced prolonged political, social, and economic deprivation, followed by systematic state-led persecution that ultimately forced them to flee to Bangladesh. Although humanitarian agencies provide essential services and meet basic needs, refugees continue to live in overcrowded camps under uncertain and challenging conditions. Meanwhile, members of host community expressed growing frustration over perceived deterioration in law and order, increased socio-economic pressures, and environmental challenges associated with prolonged refugee presence. Many respondents viewed the refugee situation as a potential threat to national security and social stability in Bangladesh, with possible implications for regional peace and security. Both the Rohingya refugees and host community perceived little meaningful progress towards safe, voluntary, and sustainable repatriation. Drawing on global experiences of refugee return, the study argues that durable solutions continue to be hindered by inadequate international coordination, weak political commitment, and absence of effective collective action among key stakeholders. The study underscores urgent need for strengthened international cooperation and comprehensive policy interventions to facilitate safe, dignified, and sustainable solutions for the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Human Insecurity among Climate Migrants in Khulna City: Implications for Climate Diplomacy and Urban Governance

Seemanto Das, Khondoker Mahmud Parvez

Abstract:

Climate change has emerged as one of the most concerning global issues and non-traditional security threat worldwide. Bangladesh is one of the most climate vulnerable countries around the world, and the Khulna regions are considered the ground zero of climate induced problems. Where recurrent River erosion, salinity intrusion, flooding and cyclones forced coastal peoples to move on urban centers especially in Khulna city. Previous studies on climate induced migration in Bangladesh focused on displaced patterns, livelihood loss and adaptation strategies but impart limited attention to the multidimensional human insecurity experienced by climate migrants after forcefully displaced in urban areas and how those vulnerable peoples inform climate diplomacy and urban governance. This study aims to explore the multidimensional human insecurity developed by climate migrants in Khulna city. Besides this it also investigates how those insecure peoples can inform climate diplomacy and urban governance for climate resilient management. To achieve the objectives this study uses a mixed methods approach with a structured questionnaire survey of 100

different climate migrants living in Khulna city. The findings highlight thousands of migrants came from the different disaster prone upazilas from Khulna district in Bangladesh. They face interconnected forms of economic, food, health, environmental, personal and community insecurity after relocating in Khulna city. These insecurities are intensified due to government limitations, insecure housing, limited livelihood opportunities and inadequate urban services. The findings emphasized that climate migration is not only an environmental challenge, it also a multidimensional security issue that requiring integrated policy responses. This study contributes to the growing literature on climate migration and human security by connect local evidence with broader debates on climate diplomacy. This study emphasize that inclusive migration policies, urban governance and international climate cooperation can enhance the protection of climate migrants in Khulna city, where human security as a framework to analyze multidimensional climate induced vulnerabilities, that also supporting Bangladesh's agenda of climate diplomacy.

RCASBC-2026-128

Economic Insecurity and Household Resilience in Chattogram, Bangladesh: A Human Security Perspective on the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Tahmina Ahmad Tasnia

Abstract:

The rising cost of living has increasingly affected household economic security, particularly among low- and modest-income families in rapidly growing urban areas. This study examines how households in Chattogram, Bangladesh experience cost-of-living pressures and how they cope with and respond to economic shocks from a human security perspective. The study draws on a field survey of 50 households conducted in different parts of Chattogram, covering respondents from service, business, self-employment, and other informal or small-scale occupations. The survey considers household income, rent, changes in expenditure, perceived pressure from food, housing, healthcare, education and non-essential spending, coping strategies, debt, and household resilience to income loss and future shocks. The findings indicate a broad pattern of heightened economic insecurity. Food prices emerge as a particularly strong source of pressure, while rent, healthcare and education costs also place substantial burdens on household budgets. Many respondents reported reducing food quality or quantity, cutting transportation or healthcare spending, delaying major purchases, using savings, borrowing money, or taking additional work to manage rising costs. For several households, these coping mechanisms appear to weaken their capacity to absorb future shocks. Qualitative responses further illustrate how stagnant or unstable incomes, rising rents, higher business and transport costs, and increasing prices of essential goods interact to reduce purchasing power and constrain household choices. The study argues that the cost-of-living crisis should be understood not only as an economic issue but also as a human security concern. Persistent pressure on food consumption, healthcare access, education, savings and livelihood stability can increase household vulnerability even in the absence of an immediate income loss. The Chattogram case demonstrates how wider economic pressures translate into everyday household welfare and resilience. By connecting household-level evidence with the broader human security framework, the study highlights the importance of policies that strengthen livelihood security, access to essential services, and household resilience in times of economic uncertainty.

Human Security and Climate Diplomacy: Strengthening Community Resilience and Climate Adaptation in Disaster-Prone Bangladesh

Md. Nayem Hossen, Md Mojhahedul Islam Emon

Abstract:

Climate change has emerged as a major challenge to human security in Bangladesh, where recurrent floods, cyclones, riverbank erosion, sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, changing rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures increasingly threaten human lives, livelihoods, health, and well-being. These climate-induced risks disproportionately affect vulnerable communities in disaster-prone regions and require responses that extend beyond disaster management toward comprehensive climate adaptation, resilience-building, and cooperative climate governance. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the relationship between human security and climate change adaptation in Bangladesh, with particular attention to the role of community awareness, participation, social work, and climate diplomacy in strengthening community resilience. The study employs a systematic literature review to examine existing evidence on climate change adaptation and mitigation in disaster-prone regions of Bangladesh. Relevant literature was identified through structured searches of Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, and other reliable sources, following predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The review focuses on the ways climate-related vulnerabilities affect human security and how community-based approaches and broader institutional cooperation can contribute to effective adaptation and resilience. The findings indicate that community awareness plays a significant role in strengthening human security by improving disaster preparedness, facilitating access to and dissemination of early warning information, promoting climate-resilient livelihoods, encouraging sustainable environmental practices, and increasing community participation in disaster risk reduction. However, limited access to reliable climate information, poverty, low educational attainment, inadequate institutional support, and insufficient community engagement continue to constrain effective adaptation efforts. From a human security perspective, these challenges demonstrate the need to place vulnerable communities at the center of climate policy and adaptation strategies. The paper further highlights the importance of climate diplomacy and multi-level cooperation among governments, international actors, NGOs, local communities, and civil society in supporting climate resilience and interconnected dimensions of climate insecurity. The study concludes that integrating human security with community-based adaptation and cooperative climate diplomacy can provide a more inclusive and sustainable approach to strengthening climate resilience in Bangladesh.

The Impact of Flood and River Erosion on Household Savings Behavior: A Microeconomic Study on Households Settled on the Jamuna Riverbank, Pabna, Bangladesh

Md. Pias Hossain, Kazi Newaz Mostafa

Abstract:

Floods and river erosion are always a threat to people's lives, their ability to save money, and their financial security, especially for those living near rivers. This study aims to examine the effects of floods and river erosion on households' saving behaviours along the Jamuna Riverbank in Pabna, Bangladesh. It will specifically investigate their coping strategies, financial decisions, resilience, asset choice, savings mechanisms, microfinance participation, forms of savings, availability of aid, and perceptions of disaster

risk. The research involved random sampling of 202 participants, complemented by 6 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). An explanatory mixed-method approach was employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, specifically utilising binary logistic regression and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that household income positively and significantly affects saving behaviour, while expenditure negatively and significantly affects saving behaviour. Displacement and riverbank erosion are linked to changes in both household savings levels and the composition and patterns of asset holdings. The estimated models suggest that involvement in MFI/NGO programs and the possession of formal bank accounts both exhibit positive, statistically significant effects on current saving behaviour. Furthermore, households that indicate saving for specific, clearly defined objectives tend to be more likely to sustain consistent saving practices over an extended period. The results indicate the necessity of integrating savings support and protective measures into disaster recovery efforts and fundamental financial services within riverbank regions. The research indicates a shift from credit-centric initiatives to straightforward, savings-oriented instruments designed to help families rebuild and safeguard their savings, thereby enhancing their long-term financial stability.

RCASBC-2026-138

Gendering Bangladesh's Blue Economy: Women's Participation in Maritime Environmental Governance

Atia Ibnat Rifah, Azizul Hakim Rakib, Parimal Kumar Roy

Abstract:

Bangladesh's growing engagement with the Blue Economy has positioned the Bay of Bengal as an increasingly important arena of economic development, environmental governance, and strategic policymaking. Maritime governance discourses emphasize sustainable use of marine resources, marine spatial planning, fisheries and economic growth through oceans, while literature has begun examining gender within ocean governance. Yet women's participation in maritime governance institutions in Bangladesh remains largely unexamined. This paper examines the extent to which women are meaningfully represented and involved in Bangladesh's emerging maritime environmental governance and identifies the institutional barriers constraining their participation. The study adopts a qualitative research design combining policy and institutional analysis with a gender-sensitive governance framework. It examines national policies and institutional frameworks, including the Blue Economy Cell within the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, alongside maritime governance mechanisms, Blue Economy strategies, marine spatial planning initiatives, and secondary literature on women's participation in coastal and marine resource governance. The analysis transcends the existing perception of women as vulnerable coastal population and conceptualizes them as governance actors, knowledge holders and stakeholders in maritime decision-making. The paper argues that Bangladesh's Blue Economy discourse is predominantly economic, ecological, and technocratic, while the gender dimension of maritime governance receives limited institutional attention. The analysis shows that there is a mismatch between the recognition of women's roles in coastal livelihoods and their substantive participation in formal decision-making of marine resources and environmental management. Women's participation may remain consultative or indirect rather than constituting meaningful influence over maritime policy priorities, resource allocation, and environmental decisions. The paper concludes that a sustainable Blue Economy requires not only ecological protection and economic growth but also gender-responsive and participatory maritime governance. Integrating women's knowledge, representation, and decision-making authority into Bangladesh's maritime institutions could strengthen environmental legitimacy, social equity, and the human-security dimensions of Blue Economy development.

Green Banking as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development: Mapping the Contribution of Bangladeshi Banks to the SDGs and Climate Action

Richard Sagor Mitra, Dr. Abhishek Mendiratta, Dr. Sujata Umesh Bolake

Abstract:

Green banking has emerged as an important mechanism through which financial institutions can support sustainable development and respond to growing climate-related challenges. In Bangladesh, the banking sector has increasingly been encouraged to direct finance toward environmentally responsible activities and integrate sustainability considerations into banking operations. However, the presence and volume of green financing do not necessarily demonstrate the extent to which such activities contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or climate action. A key concern, therefore, is whether reported green banking activities represent meaningful contributions to sustainable development or primarily demonstrate alignment with the SDGs without sufficient evidence of measurable outcomes. This study addresses this issue by systematically mapping the green banking and sustainable finance initiatives of Bangladeshi banks against the SDGs and examining the economic and environmental mechanisms through which these initiatives may contribute to sustainable development and climate action. The study will gather secondary data and conduct structured content analysis, drawing on Bangladesh Bank's sustainable finance and green banking reports, annual and sustainability reports of selected commercial banks, green finance and ESG disclosures, SDG-related disclosures, Bangladesh's SDG progress reports, national climate policies, bank-level green finance data, and relevant international datasets. The study will identify the SDGs most directly supported by banking-sector initiatives, examine the pathways linking green finance with economic and environmental outcomes, and assess the institutional, regulatory, financial, and implementation challenges that may limit their effectiveness. Particular attention will be given to the distinction between SDG alignment and demonstrable SDG impact. The study's central argument is that Bangladesh's green banking system can serve as a domestic financial mechanism for translating global sustainable development and climate commitments into economic activity. The study will recommend policy and institutional pathways for strengthening the ability of Bangladesh's banking sector to support SDG implementation and climate action.

RCASBC-2026-146

The Human Cost of Climate Change: Resilience, Health and Economics in Bangladesh

Dr. Md. Ahsan Habib, Dr. Liton Baron Sikder, Md. Abdullah Al Mabud

Abstract:

Bangladesh stands at the epicentre of the global climate crisis. Despite generating less than 0.3% of global greenhouse emissions, it consistently ranks among the most vulnerable nations worldwide. While macroeconomic projections quantify climate impacts through GDP loss and damaged infrastructure, the human cost- encompassing physical disease, mental trauma, and micro-level livelihood loss- remains underrepresented in global policy discourse. This paper explores the multidimensional influences of climate change on deltaic populations in Bangladesh. It assesses the compounding effects of sea-level rise, coastal salinization, heat stress and cyclones across three interconnected pillars. Firstly, Physical Health: Surging vector-borne diseases (dengue), heat stress and hypertension connected to high drinking-water salinity.

Secondly, Mental Well-Being: Overlooked psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression and PTSD driven by displacement and chronic loss. And thirdly, Socioeconomic Stability: Crop failures, soil degradation and forced rural-to-urban migration that strain social safety nets and perpetuate poverty. This study also highlights aboriginal knowledge and locally-led adaptation (LLA) strategies that establish Bangladesh as a global pioneer in disaster management. By embedding health considerations, economics and human dignity, this paper claims that national policies and international Loss and Damage mechanisms must prioritize human-centric solutions over purely structural remedies. Eventually, it offers a practical framework for deltaic nations turning vulnerability into transformative resilience. This abstract serves as a blueprint for deltaic nations striving to convert vulnerability into transformative resilience.

RCASBC-2026-155

Vulnerability as Leverage: Bangladesh's Dual Track Climate Diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal and Global Governance

Proshanti Rana Rojoni, Tanvir Hossain, Nafisa Tasnim

Abstract:

As climate change accelerates throughout the Global South, conventional assessments of power built around military strength and economic weight increasingly fail to explain why highly vulnerable states are still able to shape international outcomes. This paper focuses on the highly vulnerable coastal zone of the Bay of Bengal to analyze how Bangladesh, despite standing among the countries highly exposed to salinity intrusion, coastal displacement, and recurring extreme weather events, also occupies a geostrategic location at the meeting point of South and Southeast Asia, a maritime corridor of growing importance to India, China, and the wider Indo-Pacific order. The paper states that Bangladesh leverages both of these conditions, severe environmental vulnerability and strategic geography, into diplomatic influence. Rather than relying on the narrower lens of small state norm entrepreneurship, the study draws on the concept of vulnerability as moral leverage in small state diplomacy, which explains how acute exposure to climate risk can be converted into moral authority and coalition strength in international negotiations, and combines this with a structural power perspective centered on Bangladesh's geostrategic location along the Bay of Bengal, to show that the country's influence rests on both its vulnerability and its underused positional value. The study traces Bangladesh's dual track diplomatic strategy, combining a regional operational channel through the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) with a global advocacy channel led through the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the Vulnerable Twenty (V20) group. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative comparative case study design, combining process tracing of Bangladesh's climate diplomacy since 2009 with a content analysis of key policy instruments, including the National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023 to 2050) and the country's positioning within Loss and Damage negotiations, alongside a review of BIMSTEC's institutional and summit level documentation. Based on this analysis, the paper upholds how Bangladesh has sought to shift global discourse away from passive portrayals of climate vulnerability toward an active narrative of resilience leadership, while offering a critical assessment of the operational friction within BIMSTEC's climate architecture, where implementation continues to fall behind regional discourse. The findings recommend that multilateral coalitions give Bangladesh high visibility norm projection and a stronger role in setting the international financing agenda, while regional functional cooperation remains constrained by geopolitical rivalries among member states and persistent institutional deficits within BIMSTEC itself. The paper concludes by examining what this gap between global recognition and implementation at the regional level means for the wider study of small state agency in climate diplomacy.

Climate Change as the Defining Human Security Threat of the Twenty-First Century: Displacement and Vulnerability in Bangladesh and South Asia

Jannatul Adon

Abstract:

For decades, security studies treated climate change as a secondary concern, something to be managed alongside military threats, economic crises, and political instability. This paper challenges that ranking. It argues that climate change is not one security issue among many but the foundational threat of this century, because it directly determines whether a state and its people can survive at all. Without land, without population, and without stability, no other national goal, development, sovereignty, or diplomacy, is achievable. Bangladesh and South Asia illustrate this urgency clearly, through five interconnected pressures. First, rising sea levels are steadily consuming coastal land, threatening to displace millions in low-lying areas within decades. Second, riverbank erosion, a chronic but underreported crisis, destroys homes and farmland inland, proving that climate insecurity is not limited to the coastline. Third, cross-border vulnerability along the shared frontiers with India and Myanmar means displacement pressures ripple across national boundaries, turning a domestic issue into a regional one. Fourth, displaced populations face compounding human security risks beyond loss of land, including unemployment, exposure to disease, and loss of social stability as they migrate toward overcrowded urban centers. Fifth, existing legal and policy frameworks remain unprepared, offering no formal recognition or protection for those displaced specifically by climate change, leaving them in a protection vacuum. Together, these five pressures demonstrate why climate change cannot remain a peripheral policy issue. This paper concludes that human security in Bangladesh and South Asia depends on repositioning climate change at the center of regional and international security policy, alongside stronger legal recognition and cooperation for climate-displaced populations.

The Politics of Exclusion and Genocide: Understanding Rohingya Statelessness and Cross-border Forced Migration from Myanmar

Dr. Mohammad Mohiuddin

Abstract:

The paper aims to address the politics of Rohingya exclusion, persecution, and genocide leading to the cross-border forced migration. Rohingyas are the ethnic minority who have faced systematic historical exclusion and marginalization in the history of Myanmar. The paper reveals the exclusionary policies of the Myanmar authorities through a systematic study of historical and archaeological records and an analysis of the literature and published documents. The analysis also answers the more critical question about the Rohingya's originality when it shows that the Rohingyas are descendants of ancient Arakan, originating from the Indo-Aryan group that arrived in Arakan around 3000 BC from the Ganges Valley. British historian Wilson, Australian Historian Gutman, Scottish traveler Francis Buchanan, and hundreds of British reports and ancient scriptures demonstrated that 'Rooinga' is the ancient ethnic community of Arakan; however, modern Burma began to believe that the Rohingyas are foreigners who migrated from India. Consequently, Rohingyas were not registered as citizens in the 1947 constitution and issued a non-national 'Foreign Registration Card' (NRC) in 1974. The Burmese Citizenship Law (1982) declared Rohingyas 'Bengalis.' On the contrary, the Buddhist extremists' movement 969 and MaBaTha promoted anti-Rohingya and anti-

Islam messages throughout the country. They propagated against the Rohingyas as militants and connected to the Al-Qaeda networks. Through this exclusionary process, the Rohingya experienced indiscriminate violence, persecution, mass killing, rape, torture, and arson in the history of Myanmar. Over the decades, particularly from the 1990s to 2018, thousands of persecutions were executed against the Rohingyas. This externalization mechanism made millions of Rohingyas stateless and refugees, whilst the 2017 genocidal event forced the one million Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Following the ongoing persecution and civil war in Myanmar, around 500,000 Rohingya crossed the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and took shelter in Bangladeshi refugee camps.

RCASBC-2026-179

"Beyond Policy Frameworks: Environmental Constitutionalism and TWAIL Perspectives on Climate Governance in Bangladesh"

Rabaya Hossain, Tanvir Ahmed Tusher

Abstract:

Bangladesh's climate governance is largely guided by executive policy frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP), and Delta Plan 2100 that treat climate displacement and ecological degradation as administrative rather than root constitutional injustices. This paper critically analyses the existing state strategies within the framework of both Environmental Constitutionalism and Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) to address the problem of lawlessness faced by vulnerable communities from the lack of enforceability of policy instruments. The study adopts a critical socio-legal perspective, integrating policy ethnography from vulnerable zones (Satkhira, Kurigram and informal urban neighbourhoods in Dhaka) with comparative constitutional analysis of precedents from Ecuador, Colombia, Kenya and South Africa and an evaluation of domestic and international climate finance structures. The study concludes that the continued recourse to non-justiciable constitutional guidelines (Article 18A) and donor-driven and debt-inducing finance regimes are leading to systematic legal marginalisation and institutional fragmentation in Bangladesh. Crucially, the study shows that recognition of environmental rights as justiciable fundamental rights leads to a justiciable state liability, ensures statutory protection for climate displaced persons and provides a TWAIL-based legal framework for Bangladesh to engage with predatory global climate finance regimes. In the end, this study shows that climate justice in Bangladesh will not come about thru a reactive, policy-driven apparatus but thru an enforceable, constitutionalised regime based on ecological accountability, community-led adaptation and redistributive rights.

RCASBC-2026-182

Salinity Hazards and Human Security: Assessing Water Security and College Infrastructure in the Sundarbans Fringe, Bangladesh

Md. Abu Raihan

Abstract:

Salinity intrusion is a growing climate-related hazard in coastal Bangladesh, particularly in the Sundarbans fringe. It affects freshwater availability, health, livelihoods, and community wellbeing (Alam et al. 2017; Chakraborty et al. 2019; IPCC 2022). While salinity intrusion is a growing climate-related threat across major deltaic regions such as the Mekong and Nile Deltas (Smaigl et al. 2015; Tran et al. 2021; Hassaan et al. 2022), its institutional-level impacts on educational settings remain comparatively underexplored. Previous studies have examined salinity-related water insecurity, health risks, livelihoods, and household

vulnerability in coastal Bangladesh (Rahman et al. 2017; Roman et al. 2021). However, less attention has been given to the relationship between water insecurity and infrastructure degradation in coastal colleges. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence on salinity-related water security and college infrastructure vulnerability in the Sundarbans fringe. These issues are also relevant to human security because climate-related environmental risks can affect health, access to essential resources, livelihoods, and everyday well-being (Adger et al. 2014; IPCC 2022). A quantitative empirical approach was used with 96 participants ($N = 96$), including faculty members, staff, and students. Primary data were collected using a structured 5-point Likertscale questionnaire. The instrument showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.949$). The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated significant departures from normality ($p < .001$). Spearman rank correlations were therefore examined as a non-parametric approach, while Pearson correlations were also assessed for comparison. Photographic documentation of salinity-related infrastructure deterioration was also collected to support the survey findings and provide visual evidence for the full article. Descriptive results showed a high level of perceived institutional vulnerability, with mean scores ranging from 3.99 ± 0.88 to 4.41 ± 0.91 . Participants showed strong agreement regarding structural corrosion, drinking-water shortages, and disruption of normal institutional activities. Correlation analyses showed significant positive associations across the study measures. Pearson's r ranged from 0.423 to 0.777, while Spearman's ρ ranged from 0.312 to 0.610 ($p \leq .002$). The findings indicate that salinity is not only an environmental hazard but also an institutional and human-security concern. The study highlights the need for salinity-resilient infrastructure, sustainable freshwater solutions, and locally targeted climate-adaptation measures to strengthen institutional resilience and protect the everyday well-being of people in vulnerable coastal communities.

RCASBC-2026-184

Can Clean Energy Access Reduce Income Inequality? The Role of Natural Resource Dependence in Asia

Jannatul Nayem Naisha, Myne Uddin, Mymuna Akter Nipu

Abstract:

Ensuring equitable access to clean energy while managing natural resource dependence has become increasingly critical for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in Asian countries. Understanding how these factors influence income distribution is crucial for designing effective energy, resource, and social policies aimed at reducing inequality. However, limited empirical evidence has examined the heterogeneous effects of clean energy access and natural resource dependency on income inequality across different points of the income inequality distribution in Asia. This study investigates the impact of clean energy access and natural resource dependency on income inequality in Asian countries from 2000 to 2024 using the Method of Moments Quantile Regression (MMQR) and Driscoll–Kraay standard errors (DKSE). The results reveal that clean energy access increases income inequality at the lower quantile (10th) and becomes insignificant at the 20th and 30th quantiles. However, it reduces income inequality from the 40th to the 90th quantiles, with the inequality-reducing effect becoming progressively stronger at higher quantiles. Similar findings are observed for both rural and urban clean energy access. Natural resource dependency increases income inequality across all quantiles, with its inequality-increasing effect becoming stronger at higher quantiles. These findings suggest that policymakers should promote inclusive clean energy expansion by ensuring that low-income and vulnerable groups can afford and benefit from improved clean energy access. At the same time, Asian economies should reduce excessive dependence on natural resources through economic diversification, stronger resource governance, and more equitable distribution of resource revenues to mitigate income inequality.

Awareness, experiences and expectations of Bangladeshi low-skilled migrant workers in Gulf countries regarding the diplomatic services

Shahriare Ibne Hasan Nehal

Abstract:

Labor Migration to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has one of the key livelihood strategy for millions of Bangladeshi people which started in 1976 with just six thousands workers and it has grown up to approximately more than ten million – mostly are from rural areas and low skilled to unskilled whose remittances now anchor a substantial share of the national foreign exchange earnings. Despite their immense contribution to the economy, they face several challenges including wage theft, deception, job limitations, unsafe working conditions, passport issues, verbal or physical abuse, poor reintegration support and arbitrary deportation. Diplomatic mission's has the responsibility to identify and solve these challenges and discrimination. They have provided various services such as documentation and protection regarding migrants, but most low skilled migrants have limited knowledge of and access of these services and most of the migrants who have received these services were not satisfactory. This study examines measuring migrants' basic awareness of consular services, recording their experiences when looking for these services, comprehending core expectations and exploring the primary gaps between consulate officials and migrants. This paper asserts efficient consular services not rely official responsibilities but on how swiftly and accurately officials respond, how decision are made at service level and how easily migrants can get information. Using a mixed-methods approach and incorporates snowball method and purposive sampling with primary and secondary data. These findings also explore the comparative studies of Philippines, India and Pakistan's migrant experiences in the same region. This study finds the gaps among underlying structural, legal and bureaucratic obstacles that cause these expectations to go unmet, suggests ameliorating diaspora diplomacy and draws out policy recommendations that make the services more effective. This study concedes its limitation in focusing only on low skilled migrants in Gulf countries and excluding skilled and non-gulf countries.

When Disasters Cross Borders: Bangladesh-India Flood Diplomacy and the Human Security of Border Communities

Azizul Hakim Rakib, Atia Ibnat Rifah, Atkia Anjum Fariha

Abstract:

Bangladesh and India share a complex network of transboundary rivers, making recurrent floods a shared environmental and human-security challenge — as the 2024 floods, and the diplomatic tension that followed accusations of unwarned dam releases, made clear. Transboundary water relations between the two countries have largely been examined through the lenses of water diplomacy, river politics, and resource management, and disaster diplomacy scholarship has typically asked whether disaster-related cooperation shapes interstate relations. Comparatively underexplored is whether such cooperation reaches the communities it is intended to protect. This paper examines how Bangladesh-India cooperation on information sharing, early warning, and disaster preparedness and response shapes the human security of border communities, and how institutional barriers limit that cooperation. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on document and policy analysis. It examines bilateral agreements and institutional mechanisms — including the Joint Rivers Commission — alongside regional frameworks, policy

documents, and relevant secondary literature concerning transboundary rivers, flood management, disaster cooperation, and human security. A human-security framework is employed to assess cooperation regarding livelihood, food, health, environmental and personal security. The paper argues that although Bangladesh-India cooperation offers substantial possibilities to address transboundary flood risks, a significant gap remains between interstate disaster cooperation and community-level human security. Existing mechanisms largely prioritize technical information exchange and institutional coordination, with limited attention to timely, locally accessible disaster information and response. Consequently, diplomatic cooperation does not automatically translate into equitable protection for border communities, particularly those whose livelihoods and mobility are highly dependent on transboundary river systems. The study recommends strengthening Bangladesh-India disaster diplomacy through community-centred earlywarning systems, timely cross-border information sharing, coordinated local disaster preparedness, and greater inclusion of vulnerable communities in transboundary disaster governance. Reframing flood cooperation from a predominantly technical and state-centric process toward human-securityoriented disaster diplomacy can enhance both regional cooperation and the resilience of communities living along the Bangladesh-India border.

RCASBC-2026-222

Gendered Vulnerability to Climate Change: Role of Non-State Actors in Community-Led Climate Adaptation Plans in Hatiya, Bangladesh

Aysa Siddika

Abstract:

In Bangladesh's remote char islands, climate change is not merely an environmental crisis, it is a deeply gendered human security emergency. Women in Bhurirchar and Kalirchar unions of Hatiya Upazila bear disproportionate burdens as intensifying cyclones, flooding, and salinity intrusion intersect with patriarchal norms, geographic isolation, and governance failures. This study centers women's lived experiences to examine how climate-induced vulnerabilities are produced, experienced, and navigated in everyday life, and how non-state actors shape the community-led adaptation processes that are meant to address them. Drawing on feminist political ecology and narrative analysis, the research analyzes 25 life-history interviews, five focus group discussions, and 15 key informant interviews with representatives from five NGOs (DUS, BRAC, ASHA, RIC, BURO Bangladesh) operating in the study area. Findings reveal a paradox: while non-state actors provide essential services, including early warning systems, microcredit, reproductive health awareness, and crop insurance, their interventions remain fragmented, inadequately gender-transformative, and weakly coordinated with Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Women's unpaid care work intensifies during and after climatic shocks, embodied health risks such as saline-water related reproductive illnesses go largely unaddressed, and systematic exclusion from local decision-making structures perpetuates cycles of vulnerability despite ongoing community-led adaptation efforts. The study further finds that adaptation programming often treats women as passive beneficiaries rather than as knowledge-holders capable of shaping resilience strategies suited to their own contexts. The paper argues that building genuine resilience in marginal char contexts demands moving beyond technical fixes toward gender-equitable climate governance. This requires institutionalizing women's knowledge in adaptation planning, earmarking dedicated funding streams for remotechars, and mandating robust coordination between NGOs and local government under the NAP framework. By amplify in marginalized women's narratives and situating them within broader debates on human security and climate diplomacy, this study demonstrates how power relations and structural inequalities shape adaptation outcomes in climate-vulnerable small states like Bangladesh, offer in lessons relevant to comparable coastal and island contexts across the Global South.

Understanding Environmental Degradation as a Human Rights Concern: Groundwater Depletion in Tanor Upazila, Rajshahi (Barind Tract) Bangladesh

Nousin Islam, Md. Bariul Islam

Abstract:

Groundwater depletion has become a major environmental concern in northwestern Bangladesh, especially in the Barind area, where irrigation-dependent agriculture is the main source of rural livelihoods. This research investigates the impact of groundwater depletion in Tanore Upazila on the realization of human rights and analyzes how political economic variables and socio-economic features influence vulnerability. It applies environmental human rights theory, environmental justice, and critical political economy. This study frames groundwater depletion as a cause of distributive and systemic injustice rather than only a hydrological problem. A Human Rights (HR) Index was developed using 100 respondents' survey data from Tanore Upazila, Barind Tract, Rajshahi to assess the impacts on the rights to water, food, health, and livelihood. Multiple regression analysis indicates that political-economic factors substantially account for differences in human rights vulnerability ($R^2 = 0.281$, $p < 0.001$), with agricultural water scarcity identified as the most robust predictor. Conversely, opinions of governance and irrigation management are not statistically significant, indicating that economic reliance on agriculture is the key factor connecting groundwater depletion to human rights outcomes. The findings of the one-way ANOVA indicate substantial differences across landholding and occupational categories. Marginal and small farmers have increased susceptibility compared to landless families, while farmers and agricultural workers are more adversely impacted than nonfarm groups. These data confirm environmental justice theory by illustrating disparate socio-economic effects. The research indicates that groundwater depletion is an environmental, economic, and human rights challenge inherent in the agricultural political economy. It adds to extensive discussions on environmental justice and human security in the Global South.

Beyond the 99% Recovery: How Programmable CBDCs Can Break the Climate-Debt Trap in Bangladesh

Dorjoy Acharjee, Mir Istiak Uddin

Abstract:

The landscape of international financial systems is undergoing swift transformation, yet conventional microfinance approaches continue to leave smallholder farmers in delta regions like Bangladesh highly exposed to climate change impacts. Although official data often reports a formal microfinance repayment rate exceeding 98%, this statistic conceals a hidden "repayment paradox." During intense climate disruptions, such as seasonal floods in the Haor basin, farmers with limited liquidity tend to redirect their fungible fiat loans toward immediate household needs. To avoid formal default and social shaming from NGOs, they become trapped in overindebtedness, quietly liquidating productive assets or resorting to high-interest informal loans from "mohajons" i.e. local creditors. This paper argues that middle and small powers can actively reclaim economic sovereignty and climate resilience by transitioning from traditional fiat micro-credit to programmable Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). We propose a "closed-loop" Purpose Bound Money (PBM) framework, accessible via low-bandwidth feature phones and authenticated through national digital identity (NID) infrastructure. Rather than simply digitizing cash, this model embeds

smart contracts that restrict loan expenditure exclusively to authorized agro-dealers for climate-resilient inputs, such as submergence-tolerant seeds. The cycle automatically settles the debt at local harvest depots, dismantling the shadow market while issuing algorithmic yield rewards to compliant farmers. To validate this approach, we developed an Agent-Based Model (ABM) simulating 10,000 farming cycles under stochastic climate stress. To ensure our model reflects reality rather than theory, we designed the simulation to account for how people actually behave under stress, including the likelihood that some farmers will still find loopholes. Despite that, the CBDC model still functions as intended about 90% of the time during major floods. That's enough to halt the quiet buildup of household debt that traditional microloans leave behind. Ultimately, this research shows that smaller countries can use their own digital tools to defend their agriculture against climate shocks, giving the Global South a realistic way to adapt today.

RCASBC-2026-239

Governance Accountability and Water Justice: A Qualitative Case Study of the Buriganga River, Bangladesh

Israt Jahan Tithy, Israt Jahan , Farzana Nusrat

Abstract:

The Buriganga River in Bangladesh is widely recognised as one of the most polluted and environmentally threatened rivers in the country. Years of rapid industrial growth, unregulated waste dumping and poor coordination among government agencies have severely damaged the river's ecosystem. These environmental problems have not only harmed the natural balance of the river but have also deeply affected the daily lives, health and livelihoods of the marginalised communities who depend on it. Their close proximity to the polluted river forces them to face the worst consequences, making the Buriganga a strong example of water injustice. This study uses a qualitative case study method to understand how weaknesses in governance contribute to the ongoing pollution of the Buriganga. By reviewing policy documents, government reports, and existing research, the study explores how ineffective enforcement of environmental laws, overlapping responsibilities between different institutions and continuous non-compliance by industries worsen the situation. These governance failures allow pollution to continue unchecked, despite the existence of laws meant to protect the river. Through thematic analysis the research identifies several important patterns of injustice. These include unequal exposure to toxic water, the lack of meaningful participation of local residents in river-related decision making and weak accountability within government agencies responsible for river management. As a result, vulnerable groups face greater health risks and have limited power to demand change. The study argues that reviving the Buriganga River requires more than technical solutions such as waste treatment plants or cleaning operations. A long-term improvement can only occur if governance becomes more transparent, participatory and accountable. By presenting the Buriganga as a focused case, this research contributes to broader discussions on water justice and offers practical insights for policymakers who aim to ensure fair and sustainable water governance in Bangladesh.

Beyond Sovereignty: A Human Security and Gender-Sensitive Analysis of the Teesta River Dispute in Bangladesh-India Relations

Md. Abdul Kader, Tahira Mehjabin, Rukaya Zaman

Abstract:

The Teesta River dispute remains one of the most persistent, unresolved challenges in Bangladesh-India relations, predominantly framed within the realms of interstate sovereignty, volumetric water allocation, and hydro-political bargaining. This state-centric discourse often overshadows the profound, differentiated human consequences of transboundary water insecurity. This research reframes the Teesta dispute through the interconnected lenses of human security, gendered vulnerability, and multi-track diplomacy. It examines how the absence of an effective watersharing arrangement exacerbates rural economic instability, food insecurity, and environmental stress, creating disproportionate burdens for women in Teesta-dependent regions. The study argues that prevailing diplomatic approaches fail to prioritize the gendered dimensions of water-related crises, rendering women's experiences of "slow-onset" disasters and daily struggle for survival invisible in formal negotiations. Methodologically, this qualitative study utilizes thematic analysis of secondary data, including policy reports, bilateral agreements, and academic literature, to map the intersection of climate-induced water scarcity and gender inequality. The paper contends that a sustainable resolution necessitates a paradigm shift from traditional, top-down state diplomacy toward inclusive, multi-track diplomatic frameworks that incorporate grassroots, gender-sensitive, and human-security-oriented perspectives. By bridging feminist International Relations (IR) theory with transboundary water governance, this study contributes to a reconceptualization of the Teesta dispute, advocating for a holistic approach that centers the security of vulnerable populations—specifically women—at the heart of regional water diplomacy.

Beyond LDC Status: Bangladesh's Energy Transition and Small-State Climate Diplomacy After Graduation

Sidratul Muntaha

Abstract:

Bangladesh is about to graduate from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November 2026, a transition that will reduce its chance to access low-cost loans and climate finance from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In parallel, the country faces a growing challenge to expand renewable energy and meet its climate commitments under the Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) which aims for 40% clean energy capacity by 2041. Indonesia and Vietnam secured deals worth billions of dollars through the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), while Bangladesh has yet to secure a similar arrangement. This creates a critical post-graduation financing gap which may constrain the ability of Bangladesh to meet its energy transition goals. Existing literature often portrays Bangladesh's energy transition and its graduation from LDC status as separate policy events, but it pays limited attention to the fact that these two events intersect within the broader framework of climate diplomacy. Very few studies examine how a climate-vulnerable state can use coalition-based diplomacy to influence financing outcomes from global platforms such as the UN Climate Change Conference (COP). This paper addresses that gap by asking: how can Bangladesh, a small climate-vulnerable state, use coalition-based climate diplomacy and the collective bargaining power of small states to secure financing for its energy transition after LDC

graduation. Using a qualitative, document-based method, this paper examines Bangladesh's energy policy, LDC graduation process, and JETP experiences in Indonesia and Vietnam. It reviews UNFCCC documents, government policies, and multilateral development reports to evaluate Bangladesh's negotiating position ahead of COP31 in Antalya, Turkey, in November 2026. This paper also analyzes how Bangladesh can collaborate with the LDC group, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and other 2026 LDC graduates such as Nepal and Laos to strengthen its collective bargaining position. This paper argues that Bangladesh's post-graduation climate diplomacy offers a case study of how middle and small states can exercise their influence within the rule-based international order. It contributes to the discussion of global governance reform and how small states can exercise collective agency within the rule-based global order.

RCASBC-2026-271

The Broker as Adaptation Policy: Recruitment Debt, Gendered Migration, and the Hidden Ledger of Climate Loss in Coastal Bangladesh

Tanvir Ahmed, Sharmin Jahan Shithy, Shahriar Sadib

Abstract:

Adaptation finance is counted in embankments, cyclone shelters, saline-tolerant seed, and the slow machinery of multilateral funds. This proposal examines what households do when that machinery does not arrive, and argues that the answer has been misfiled as a migration question rather than a climate one. In the salinity-affected southwest of Bangladesh, the instrument families reach for after embankment failure or repeated crop loss is frequently a loan taken against a daughter's placement abroad, arranged through a chain of village-level sub-agents and licensed recruiters. That loan performs the function of adaptation finance. It appears in no adaptation ledger. The study develops the concept of shadow adaptation cost, the privately borne, gendered, and interest-bearing expenditure that substitutes for absent public adaptation, and asks whether climate exposure measurably shifts households toward high-cost intermediated female labour migration. It pairs a household survey across exposed and comparable inland unions with roughly fifty interviews among returned women workers, sub-agents, licensed agencies, and district officials, and adds an analysis of how recruitment has migrated onto messaging platforms and informal digital listings. The expected finding is twofold. Exposure raises the likelihood of debt-financed female outmigration through the channels offering least legal recourse in destination states. And digitisation, often presented as formalisation, compresses search time without weakening intermediary control or improving avenues for redress, so the recorded transaction looks cleaner while the underlying dependency does not change. The contribution is to move recruitment regulation and consular practice into the adaptation policy conversation, and to offer diplomacy a costed argument: the gap left unfunded at the negotiating table is being repaid, with interest, by women who never appear in the negotiation.

RCASBC-2026-280

Climate Change Interferes with Traditional Knowledge, Which in Turn Adversely Affects Human Security

Tapas Ranjan Chakraborty, Anusree Ghosh

Abstract:

Climate change affects nearly every aspect of life, including the traditional knowledge systems that communities have developed through long-term experience. These indigenous beliefs and practices are increasingly at risk of being undermined. A significant gap exists in knowledge management systems, and many traditional practices are losing their functional relevance due to climatic and external pressures. The

growing involvement of external actors in climate action has further disrupted local self-confidence and community cohesion. As communities deviate from their traditional and indigenous knowledge, a culture of dependency has emerged, adversely affecting livelihood and food security. This study analyzed climate risk to the traditional and indigenous beliefs and their implications for livelihood and food security in the coastal Satkhira district of Bangladesh. Field research was conducted between July 2024 and June 2026 in the villages of Munshiganj, Harinagar under Munshiganj Union, and Assasuni and Goalchamot under Assasuni Union. Data were collected through community consultations, key informant interviews, and regular field observations. The findings reveal that climate change has pushed communities into survival risks. Additionally, the absence or limited application of systems thinking has resulted in many climate actions being unsustainable. Indigenous and traditional knowledge capacities were neither adequately considered nor addressed in climate action planning, despite their recognized importance in both theory and practice. The study suggests that integrating indigenous knowledge into development and climate action could reduce migration risks by strengthening livelihood and food security. Climate change has also heightened the vulnerability of marginalized communities dependent on the Sundarbans mangrove forests. A new trend of community fragmentation into smaller, isolated groups was observed, yet no development intervention was found to address this emerging social consequence. Furthermore, isolated development initiatives, often referred to as "islands of development" have amplified risks to traditional knowledge and practices. The study identifies several missing links in the development support provided to climate-vulnerable coastal communities. These gaps could be effectively addressed through locally led adaptation approaches and the application of systems thinking.

RCASBC-2026-284

Policy Implementer to Strategic Policy Proposer: Bangladesh's Way Forward Beyond Compliance in the Governance of Bioprospecting Under Nagoya Protocol

Tahsin Imtiaz, Dipta Debnath

Abstract:

The existing international governance mechanism around bioprospecting unveils a central tension within the contemporary rule-based global order. Although bio-sovereignty is legally protected and formally recognized for biologically resource-endowed countries, absence of proper and sufficient technological, financial, and institutional capacities which are required to transform those resources and associated traditional knowledge into viable and accessible mass-innovation remain concentrated within more industrialized states, pharmaceutical corporations and bio-farms. These results in absence or inadequate authorization, application and equitable benefit-sharing of genetic resources, commonly termed as biopiracy. This paper evaluates whether multilateral rules can reduce this asymmetry for capability-constrained states like Bangladesh by focusing its affiliation with Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing. The paper questions: How far the capacity of Bangladesh has strengthened as a signatory of Nagoya Protocol to govern international bioprospecting, secure equitable benefits, prevent and protect the misappropriation of indigenous genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge? It states that policy implementation means successful coordination, execution and supervision of existing rules and regulations established within the formally recognized institutional framework which narrows down the scope of exploring objectives beyond that. While, by being a strategic policy proposer, Bangladesh can navigate deeper to employ multilateral rules, information systems, compliance mechanisms, and diplomatic coalitions to advance community, national, regional, and international interest. By examining existing documents qualitatively, the paper inquiries into Bangladesh's progression from signing the Nagoya

Protocol in 2011 to ratifying it in 2023. It is leveraged on treaty records, national biodiversity reports, policy documents, Convention on Biological Diversity materials, and publicly available records from the Access and Benefit- Sharing Clearing-House. Bangladesh's Strategic Policy Proposing capacity is assessed through five indicators: domestic implementation capacity, institutional autonomy, coalition engagement, bargaining power, and representation of traditional knowledge holding communities. The paper argues that even though Bangladesh's formal position within global biodiversity governance has been strengthened through ratification, it has not automatically generated effective diplomatic agency. Meaningful community participation in policy formulation, cooperation with other provider states, active use of international transparency and compliance mechanisms, stronger inter-ministerial coordination, and sustained diplomatic specialization are what governing bioprospecting equitably requires. The study contributes to debates over whether the rule-based global order empowers capability-constrained states or merely formalizes their participation in structurally unequal systems by distinguishing treaty membership from strategic institutional use.

RCASBC-2026-291

Beyond Migrant Smuggling: A Stage-Based Analysis of the Bangladesh–Libya–Italy Irregular Migration Route as a Transnational and Organized Crime Ecosystem

Md. Mahamudur Al Saharear Akash, Prakash Chandra Roy

Abstract:

The Bangladesh–Libya–Italy route has emerged as a significant corridor for irregular migration from Bangladesh to Europe, yet the criminal processes underlying this movement extend beyond the conventional facilitation of unauthorized border crossing. Scholarly attention to migrants smuggling from Bangladesh to Italy has emerged more recently and has largely focused on analyzing the conventional context of irregular migration, where the Bangladesh–Libya–Italy route is primarily considered a transit pathway operated by human smuggling syndicates. Challenging this narrow framing, this qualitative study analyzes the route as a stage-based transnational organized-crime ecosystem in which criminal actors, activities, and profit-seeking strategies evolve and intersect across the migration process. The study draws on 22 in-depth interviews with smuggled migrants and family members of migrants who died or went missing during the journey, alongside 10 key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders. The findings reveal that the Bangladesh–Libya–Italy route is not merely a channel for transporting migrants but a shifting criminal ecosystem in which diverse transnational and organized-crime actors coordinate, compete, and exploit migrants at successive stages of the journey. These actors include local recruiters, dalals (smuggling facilitators), stage coordinators, mafias, human-trafficking groups, Libyan associates, and officials from law-enforcement agencies, who operate independently or in association with one another and profit by exploiting the vulnerabilities of migrants attempting to arrive in Italy irregularly. As migrants progress through the route, their increasing dependence and vulnerability create opportunities for the convergence of smuggling with kidnapping, detention, extortion, ransom demands, forced labor, trafficking-related exploitation, violence, and other forms of coercive control. These overlapping activities enable criminal actors to extract additional illicit profits beyond the initial smuggling transaction and to exploit migrants at successive stages of the journey. The findings of the study contribute to the criminological and migration scholarship by shifting the analytical focus from the conventional smuggling context and the Bangladesh–Libya–Italy route merely as a pathway for migrant smuggling to a broader understanding of the transnational organized-crime ecosystem in which criminal actors, markets, and activities converge, adapt, and expand throughout the migration process.

Institutional Bottlenecks in Water Governance: Addressing Challenges to Drought Resilience and Safe Water Access in Northwestern Bangladesh

Annisa Shahid

Abstract:

Northwestern part of Bangladesh faces increasing drought risk as climatic variability intensifies, threatening agricultural livelihoods and safe water access for under developed urban areas and rural populations (Shahid & Behrawan, 2008; Alam, 2015). While national policy frameworks such as the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and the Bangladesh Water Act (2013) articulate long-term integrated water management strategies, significant implementation gaps persist at regional and local levels, limiting adaptive capacity and equitable water governance (Government of Bangladesh, 2018; Benneyworth et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2020). This paper evaluates the institutional bottlenecks, particularly fragmentation, implementation deficits, accountability challenges, and under-recognized water justice inequities that constrain drought resilience and safe water access in northern Bangladesh. Using exclusively secondary data, including policy and legal documents, government and donor reports, national surveys, and recent climate and remote-sensing studies, the study employs governance mapping, document analysis, and comparative policy review. The analysis examines how institutional arrangements, and socio-political norms shape resilience outcomes and identifies pathways through which governance reforms can strengthen drought adaptation and water security with a view of water justice in mind (Sultana & Loftus, 2019). Particular attention is given to Nature-Based Solutions (NbS), which are increasingly recognized as cost-effective approaches for enhancing water resilience under climate uncertainty (Cohen-Shacham et al., 2019; Seddon et al., 2020). The paper further compares Bangladesh's experience with drought governance practices in Australia and Spain, where integrated basin management, stakeholder participation, and adaptive governance mechanisms have improved resilience to water scarcity (Ross & Martinez-Santos, 2010; Garrick et al., 2018; Sultana & Loftus, 2019; Pahl-Wostl, 2019). Recommendations emphasize institutional coordination, capacity building, participatory governance, water justice, and Nature-Based Solutions (NbS). The study advances climate governance scholarship by diagnosing implementation barriers and proposing scalable pathways for equitable and resilient water governance in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Digitalisation, Energy Use, Energy Intensity, and Economic and Structural Drivers of Carbon Emissions in South Asia: Evidence from a Panel ARDL Approach

Md. Roni Ahmed, Afrina Sultana, Sumaiya Amreen Akhand

Abstract:

Background: South Asia has experienced rapid digital transformation, economic expansion, urbanisation, and rising energy demand alongside persistent environmental challenges. While digitalisation can improve efficiency and support cleaner production, its growing energy requirements and digital infrastructure may also increase carbon emissions. Energy use, energy intensity, economic activity, and population dynamics further contribute to environmental pressure in the region.

Purpose/Objective: This study examines the effects of digitalisation, energy use, energy intensity, and key economic and structural factors on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions across eight South Asian economies. It particularly investigates whether digitalisation affects CO₂ emissions in the short and long run.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employs a Panel Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) framework using the Pooled Mean Group (PMG), Mean Group (MG), and Dynamic Fixed Effects (DFE) estimators to distinguish short-run and long-run effects. FMOLS and DOLS are used for robustness, while the Dumitrescu–Hurlin panel causality test examines causal relationships among the variables.

Findings: The results show that energy use and energy intensity have positive and statistically significant long-run effects on CO₂ emissions, while GDP and population density are also important long-run drivers. Digitalisation has a positive and significant short-run effect on CO₂ emissions, indicating that digital expansion may initially increase environmental pressure through higher energy demand and digital

infrastructure. Although digitalisation is insignificant in the long run under the baseline PMG model, FMOLS and DOLS confirm a positive and significant long-run effect. The negative and significant error correction term confirms a stable long-run relationship. Bidirectional causality is also found among digitalisation, energy intensity, economic activity, and trade openness.

Policy implications: The findings raise environmental concerns because digitalisation increases CO₂ emissions in the short run, while energy use, energy intensity, GDP, and population density also increase emissions. South Asian countries should therefore promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, low-carbon digital infrastructure, and greener production systems to ensure that digital and economic development supports sustainable growth.

RCASBC-2026-321

A Systematic Review on How Climate Policy Assumptions Impact Gender Inequality in Bangladesh

Anika Tahsin Sami

Abstract:

Climate change has significantly affected South Asia overtime and the situation slides further each day. The link between gender and environmental issues has been a crucial discussion since the 1970s, but it was only in the mid 1990s that this sector attracted significant academic interest. Gender as an aspect has disproportionately shaped the experience of people in this region due to systemic inequalities. Bangladesh also continues to be profoundly impacted by the compounding effects of global climate change leading to considerable environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Bangladesh has one of the most comprehensive climate governance infrastructures in the region that complies with gender responsive international frameworks. But, there are evident inconsistencies between policy rhetoric and implementation. Studies show few policy commitments given thorough stages of institutional translation and program implementation during their trajectory, most lose their transformative potential before generating impactful community outcomes. Moreover, gender stereotypes and assumptions in climate policy implementation hinder progress towards equality. Consequently, community based adoption initiatives often limit inclusion of women to mere participation, without addressing power dynamics and distribution of resources, while doing little to alleviate women's "triple burden" of productive, reproductive and community labor. This paper highlights the necessity to recognise and to critique these biases, as without proper identification and elimination of them, climate initiatives of Bangladesh will remain "Symbolic Adoption". To explore the intersection among gender, power and climate issues and to analyse how social inequalities, assumptions shape environmental vulnerabilities, this research applies Feminist Political Ecology framework. This paper provides a systematic literature review of these assumption's essentialised impacts of climate policy on inequality from a gender perspective in Bangladesh. The study

adopts a mixed-method approach, combining national climate policy documents, qualitative trend evaluation and secondary data review. This study aims to analyse how Bangladesh's climate governance literature has viewed gender issues in climate initiatives, employing four analytical pitfalls, drawing from works of Lau et al. (2021)- gender as women's issue framing, homogeneity bias, focusing on participation counting and essentialist stereotyping. This study will offer a more comprehensive view to pursue gender equality in climate policy adoption and practice for Bangladesh.

RCASBC-2026-378

Navigating Climate Diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal: Planetary Realism and Bangladesh's Approach to Maritime Environmental Governance

Tahsin Binte Hasan, Dr Sufia Khanom, Jannatul Ferdous

Abstract:

As the impacts of climate change intensify, traditional concepts of national security are increasingly reshaped by environmental and economic interdependence. The theoretical framework of "Planetary Realism" suggests that shared ecological stability should be recognised as a fundamental condition for national security, economic prosperity and international cooperation. This ecological stability is crucial as conventional military capability, trade systems, critical infrastructure and economic growth depend on a stable and habitable environment. However, aligning this shared vulnerability with adequate international support remains a challenge, as the \$100 billion annual climate finance pledged to developing nations at COP15 has yet to be fully realized. This paper explores a constructive diplomatic strategy for Bangladesh, focusing on the intersection of "Maritime Environmental Governance", economic interests and climate diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal. As South and Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific increasingly engage in the Bay of Bengal for trade routes, ports, energy connectivity and blue economy resources, Bangladesh holds a strategic opportunity to shape regional geopolitical and economic priorities. To operationalize this approach, the paper provides actionable solutions for integrating climate demands into regional geopolitics. Specifically, it proposes that Bangladesh leverage its leadership in regional institutions and coalitions, such as BIMSTEC and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), to establish a "Climate-Maritime-Economic Security Nexus." The central argument posits that ecological stability of the Bay of Bengal is inseparable from maritime security, supply chain resilience and the long-term economic viability of the region. A stable maritime environment also creates resilient coastal economies and reduces social and political instability. Therefore, by embedding climate finance dialogues directly into these regional maritime agreements, Bangladesh can shift from a vulnerability-based diplomatic narrative to one of shared regional stability and strategic cooperation.

RCASBC-2026-391

Green Colonialism and the Global South: Critical Minerals and Rare Earth Elements Extraction in the Age of Energy Transition

Misbah Uddin, Tanvir Alam Rifat

Abstract:

The demand for critical minerals and rare earth elements (REEs), which are crucial for electric vehicles, batteries, and wind turbines, is growing as a result of the global transition to renewable energy. A significant amount of this extraction is performed in the Global South, where mining frequently has negative consequences on society and the environment. In the context of the green energy transition, this paper explores these dynamics using the theoretical framework of "green colonialism," which can be defined as the continuation of colonial relations of resource extraction, dispossession, and unequal control over nature.

The framework demonstrates how the pursuit of decarbonization can sustain an uneven global distribution of costs and benefits: local communities keep bearing most of the environmental and social costs, while resource-rich but marginalized regions are drawn into global supply chains as sites of extraction. Methodologically, the study uses a qualitative multiple-case study design, following Yin's replication method, to study three different regions across the Global South: the Lithium Triangle (Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile), cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and rare earth extraction in northern Myanmar. The study asks how energy transition supply chains systematically reproduce unequal ecological exchange by displacing extraction costs onto marginalized regions under diverse political conditions. All three regions demonstrate a consistent pattern of unequal costs and benefits. Water depletion, biodiversity loss, land conflicts, and disagreements over Indigenous participation are all caused by extraction in the Lithium Triangle. Cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo results in unsafe working conditions, labor exploitation, land dispossession, and environmental degradation. With almost no regulatory oversight, rare earth mining has spread all over the conflict-affected borderlands in Myanmar, affecting local populations and the environment while feeding supply chains linked to China. Across all three cases, regardless of state capacity or conflict levels, marginalized communities bear the socio-ecological burdens of mineral extraction for external low-carbon growth. Consequently, global decarbonization reproduces colonial sacrifice zones, proving that a just transition must move beyond carbon reduction to resolve unequal resource relations.

RCASBC-2026-418

Investigating Women's Economic Security and Empowerment Amid Everyday Discrimination: A Conservation of Resources Perspective

Kazi Sakiya Tabassum, Md. Sahidur Rahman

Abstract:

Purpose: Guided by Conservation Resource Theory and a human security lens, this study investigates how Everyday Discrimination influences women's Economic Security and Psychological Empowerment while considering moderating role of Financial-Self Efficacy. Everyday Discrimination is conceptualized as a persistent threat to women's psychological resources, whereas Financial Self Efficacy is positioned as a protective capacity that may buffer the adverse effects of resource loss.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 207 young women professionals. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test direct and moderating relationships among everyday discrimination, psychological empowerment, financial self-efficacy, and economic security.

Findings: Results indicate that Everyday Discrimination significantly undermines Economic Security and Psychological empowerment. Economic security, in turn, enhances psychological empowerment suggesting that discriminatory experiences compromise security partly. Importantly, financial self-efficacy moderates the pathway between everyday discrimination and economic security, attenuating the negative impact and underscoring its role as a critical resilience factor.

Implications: The study highlights the need to address everyday discriminatory experiences while simultaneously strengthening women's psychological and financial capacities. Organizations and educational institutions should foster inclusive environments, empowerment-oriented practices, financial literacy initiatives, and mentoring programs to help women safeguard economic security under discriminatory conditions.

Originality: This study enriches gender and human security research by integrating everyday discrimination, psychological empowerment, financial self-efficacy, and economic security within a COR

framework. It moves beyond psychological outcomes to show discrimination's economic impact, identifying empowerment as a mediating mechanism and financial self-efficacy as a moderating resilience resource.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation of the relationships among everyday discrimination, psychological empowerment, financial self-efficacy, and economic security. In addition, the sample concentrating on young women professionals, may restrict the generalizability of findings to broader populations and diverse contexts.

RCASBC-2026-422

Women's Health And Climate Constitutionalism: Strengthening Legal Framework With Gender Consideration In Bangladesh

Syed Tanvir Azam Taif, Nishat Tasnim

Abstract:

Bangladesh is the seventh most climate-vulnerable country in the world, according to the Global Climate Risk Index 2021. Women are disproportionately affected by climate-induced challenges due to this vulnerability. The impact of climate change on sexual and reproductive health, lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, food insecurity, and nutritional challenges are added to the existing health hazards women are facing in Bangladesh and worldwide. Although Bangladesh has implemented numerous policy frameworks to address climate change in the face of the climate justice movement, it lacks right-based legislation to ensure its citizens environmental and fundamental rights, which are violated by the adverse impact of climate change. The existence of right-based legislation is crucial for potential donors and policymakers to evaluate whether the country's current legal framework can support vulnerable communities like women to ensure health security. Climate constitutionalism refers to the establishment of protection mechanisms from the adverse impacts of climate change as a fundamental constitutional right. Although Bangladesh's constitution already contains a non-binding environmental provision under Article 18A of the Fundamental Principles of State policy, it remains judicially unenforceable and offers no rightbased remedies to its citizens. Bangladesh is currently undergoing a broader process of constitutional reform following the July Uprising 2024. This research will advocate for the inclusion of climate constitutionalism while reforming the constitution and will discuss how the integration of gender considerations into climate change policies can address the climate rights of women. To answer the question, we will perform a comparative study of Bangladesh with countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Zambia, Venezuela, Vietnam, Nepal and other countries that have adopted climate change clauses in their constitutions as a fundamental right, addressing the opportunities and challenges of climate constitutionalism. This paper will lay the groundwork for future research by examining whether the country's current constitutional framework and state mechanism are enough to ensure the climate-induced health hazards faced by women in Bangladesh. It will evaluate how national laws and policies reflect global commitments, like UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, particularly in the context of addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women's health. The research will be conducted in a qualitative manner.

Displacement, Identity Crisis, and Cultural Security: A Policy Analysis of Bangladesh's Vanishing Rengmitca Community

Emu Moni

Abstract:

This study aims to examine the connection between involuntary displacement, cultural assimilation, and the human security of the indigenous language. The Rengmitca language is one of the vanishing languages spoken by an indigenous community residing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. Rengmitca belongs to the greater Sino-Tibetan language family and is at severe risk of disappearing, as fewer than ten elders still speak it proficiently, unlike the younger generations. This study adopts the societal security framework and argues that the extinction of a distinct language directly challenges the cultural survival of an indigenous group. The study uses a qualitative method to explore the idea that losing one's language threatens cultural security and accelerates the erosion of minority identity. Due to extreme geographical constraints and the scarcity of surviving speakers, field interviews with remaining Rengmitca language speakers were not feasible. For this reason, this study employs an expert interview method. Methodologically, the study utilizes expert triangulation, gathering data through semi-structured interviews with multiple expert witnesses. The expert witnesses consist of professional linguists, anthropologists, and policy analysts who have documented the ethnolinguistic characteristics of minority populations in the region. The interviews will focus on mechanisms by which the Rengmitca people have been historically incorporated into a dominant ethnic community. Preliminary data analysis will illustrate how the Rengmitca population was incorporated into a larger regional ethnic group following several social disruptions, including eviction from villages, epidemics, and census-driven demographic surges. The paper will highlight the existing policy gaps at both the national and international levels. Finally, the research will propose a multi-faceted policy solution that will serve as a conceptual framework for future studies. It is expected that community-based initiatives designed to promote local preservation and strengthened through national policy alignment are the most effective in securing long-term safety for indigenous populations and promoting human security at the local level.

RCASBC-2026-438

Scrutinizing Climate Vulnerability: Human Security Rhetoric and Its Legal Limits in Bangladesh's Climate Diplomacy

KHADIJATUL KUBRA

Abstract:

Essentially, Bangladesh is changing up its macroeconomic strategy and international positioning in climate diplomacy from passive vulnerability to an assertive prosperity-stability-human security investment framework. It harms lives, health, food and safety making climate change a human security crisis. Traditional geo-geography of diplomacy tends to disregard daily perils, which environmental threats propel hunger, impoverished lifestyles through gendered dangers and migration. Formulating environmental policy into diplomatic action gives nation states the tools necessary to shield vulnerable populations, suppress violent conflict and collaboratively respond to global climate migration. Ecological degradation serves as a catastrophic threat multiplier throughout the country, exacerbating human security threats. Salinity intrusion, a slow-onset killer of arable land, biodiversity and drinking water, has hit coastal regions particularly hard. Seasonal droughts destroy millions of hectares of rice every year as riverbank erosion leaves 64 000 to 100 000 people without a home each year. This pushes as many as 2,000 eco-migrants into

Dhaka each day, overburdening services and ensnaring these uprooted people in a vicious cycle of poverty and health emergencies which also leads to trafficking. Natural Disasters It has been shown by history that cumulative economic losses from natural disasters have cost \$5 billion, about 1.81% of the annual GDP. A one-meter sea-level rise is expected to flood 18% of coastal land by 2050, displacing 20 to 30 million people permanently. Bangladesh contributes less than 0.47% of global greenhouse emissions, which makes it all the more unfair as a developing country. Its diplomatic apparatus has swung in the other direction. The government does not present climate resilience in terms of operational cost, but as a macroeconomic necessity for attracting foreign capital, geopolitical power and choosing partners. Ministries, municipalities, academia, the judiciary and defense forces have been united towards presenting a unified front for its international position in domestic or home policy formulation. Bangladesh has been very active lobbying the UN Security Council and the Climate Vulnerable Forum to entrench legal movement of people displaced due to climate change through the UN Global Compact for Migration. Local execution and human security capacity remains under severe strain due to persistent administrative bottlenecks, erratic donor funding and the continued presence over one million Rohingya refugees in host communities.

RCASBC-2026-441

Migration Trends in Bangladesh: Historical Perspectives and Their Impacts on Environmental Change, Administrative Reform, and Sustainability

Ektiar Uddin Mahmud Baktiar, Dr. Kh. Lutful Elahi, Md. Abdul Kader

Abstract:

Bangladesh presents a distinctive case for understanding how the intersection of migration, environmental changes, human security, Sustainable development and governance in a changing global order. As a densely populated deltaic country, Bangladesh has experienced successive waves of population mobility shaped by political instability, economic transformation, environmental hazards, and international labor markets, notably the remittance economy. This paper explores how this migration trajectories have evolved from politically driven displacement during the 1947 Partition and the 1971 Liberation War, to contemporary internal mobility increasingly associated with riverbank erosion, coastal salinity, cyclones, and other environmental stresses. It further examines the implications of these dynamics for human security, Sustainable development, as well as how state institutions have responded through administrative and policy reforms. The study utilizes a systematic narrative synthesis of peer-reviewed literature, Bangladesh government documents, and reports from international organizations, such as the World Bank, International Organization for Migration, and United Nations agencies, explicitly integrating Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics census data with global climate displacement projections. Using a driver-interaction framework, the paper conceptualizes migration not as an automatic consequence of climate change but as an outcome produced through interactions among environmental stress, economic opportunity, land-tenure insecurity, social networks, and governance capacity. Special emphasis is placed on the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and its capacity to transform migration governance from reactive displacement management to anticipatory and adaptive planning. The analysis finds that environmental change is emerging as a more important driver of migration in Bangladesh, but its effects are still conditional rather than deterministic. Migration can be simultaneously an adaptation strategy and a new source of vulnerabilities, especially when displaced populations are concentrated in informal urban settlements with limited access to housing, water, sanitation, employment and social protection. The study also finds an implementation gap between national policy ambitions and local administrative capacity. It argues that strengthening decentralized governance, secondary cities, displacement monitoring and migration-sensitive climate policies are key to promoting

human security and sustainable development, with direct implications for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The paper concludes that Bangladesh's experience offers broader lessons for how climate-vulnerable states can embed migration governance, environmental adaptation and human security within evolving regional and global governance frameworks. Bangladesh's domestic policy experiments as a state navigating transnational climate impacts demonstrate how middle and small powers can exercise agency and lead adaptive strategies in response to systemic global challenges.

RCASBC-2026-445

Monsoon Floods and Dry Season Scarcity: An Environmental Justice Perceived on Bangladesh-India Water Sharing

Israt Jahan, Md Rahatul Mowla Rahat, Mahammad Sohel

Abstract:

India is the nearest neighboring country of Bangladesh. India bound Bangladesh on three sides. They share over fifty transboundary rivers, but the water management issue is critical for both nations. However, there is a clear disproportional water distribution. India frequently releases their excess water when they get too much water which causes downstate flooding in Bangladesh. That damages our agriculture, fisheries, livestock sectors, breaches and infrastructures and displaced communities. In the dry season, they reserve the water. As a result, Bangladesh's agriculture, fisheries and all other activities are badly affected. This disproportional water distribution is undoubtedly an injustice for Bengali people. The study shows an environmental justice perspective to explore the effects of imbalanced water circulation. This paper uses both the qualitative and quantitative methods. It analyses hydrological data, policy documents and case studies from recent floods in Feni, Cumilla, Brahmanbaria district. Findings of the study shows how people especially small farmers, fisherfolk, children, old and women are the worst sufferers. Existing treaties like Ganges water sharing treaty, Teesta River agreement, Kushiara river agreements are not properly executing the purpose. Still, Bengali people are suffering during the monsoon and dry season. This research emphasizes that only negotiations are not enough to solve this problem. Actual implication of the treaties, fairness in transboundary water distribution, shared responsibility is must from both sides. That's how the people of that affected area can get equality, sustainability and dignity. India is the nearest neighboring country of Bangladesh. India bound Bangladesh on three sides. They share over fifty transboundary rivers, but the water management issue is critical for both nations. However, there is a clear disproportional water distribution. India frequently releases their excess water when they get too much water which causes downstate flooding in Bangladesh. That damages our agriculture, fisheries, livestock sectors, breaches and infrastructures and displaced communities. In the dry season, they reserve the water. As a result, Bangladesh's agriculture, fisheries and all other activities are badly affected. This disproportional water distribution is undoubtedly an injustice for Bengali people. The study shows an environmental justice perspective to explore the effects of imbalanced water circulation. This paper uses both the qualitative and quantitative methods. It analyses hydrological data, policy documents and case studies from recent floods in Feni district. Findings of the study shows how people especially small farmers, fisherfolk, children, old and women are the worst sufferers. Existing treaties like Ganges water sharing treaty, Teesta River agreement, Kushiara river agreements are not properly executing the purpose. Still, Bengali people are suffering during the monsoon and dry season. This study focuses on solving this problem peacefully, as India is the most important neighboring country of Bangladesh. This research emphasizes that only negotiations are not enough to solve this problem. Actual implication of the treaties, fairness in transboundary water distribution, shared responsibility is must from both sides. That's how the people of that affected area can get equality, sustainability and dignity.

Post-COVID-19 Mental Health Challenges among University Students

Md Mahabube Alahi, Md. Touhiduzzaman

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way universities work how students interact and how people live every day. This change created problems for the mental health and social life of students. Even though universities are going back to classes many students still feel stress, worry, loneliness, pressure from schoolwork and confusion about their future. These problems show that the effects of the pandemic are not just from the time when the virus was spreading. They are still important when looking at health safety and how people feel about their lives. With this in mind this study is looking at the mental health problems that university students face after the pandemic. It also looks at the academic things that affect how students feel mentally. The study has three goals. First to find out what the main mental health problems are for university students after the pandemic. Second to look at how school pressure, money problems being alone help from family, friendships and not knowing what the future holds are connected to students mental health. Third to see what strategies students use to deal with problems and how they get help from friends and from the university. The study will use a way of doing research that looks at data from a group of people at one time. Data will be gathered from 150 to 250 university students in Bangladesh. The students will be chosen by convenience and by asking others to join. A questionnaire will be used. It will ask about details, school and social experiences things that cause stress how much help students get from others and signs of mental health problems. A mental health test that has been tested and is known to be good will also be used. The data that is collected will be analyzed with ways that look at numbers and find out if things are connected. This study is expected to show that after the pandemic the mental health problems of university students are not because of what happens to them as individuals. They are also because of school, money, family and social situations. By looking at these things the research wants to help people understand more, about the health and safety of students after the pandemic. The results could help universities, people who make rules and laws and groups that help students create mental health services stronger support networks and better ways to make students feel better.

From Educational Vulnerability to Educational Security in Climate-Vulnerable Coastal Regions: A Systematic Review through Human Security and Climate Justice Lenses

Dilara Zahid, Tahmina Hoq

Abstract:

Climate change increasingly threatens human well-being through interconnected impacts on livelihoods, health, displacement, economic stability, and community life. Yet its implications for education remain comparatively under-recognized within Human Security and climate governance, where educational disruption is often treated as a secondary consequence of broader environmental and socio-economic pressures rather than as a security concern. This study examines how climate-related vulnerabilities shape educational access, participation, continuity, and opportunity in climate-vulnerable coastal regions and reinterprets these vulnerabilities through the complementary lenses of Human Security and Climate Justice. A systematic thematic review, informed by PRISMA and JBI principles, synthesized 34 publications representing diverse geographical contexts across South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, North

America, and South America. Inductive thematic analysis identified six interconnected dimensions of educational vulnerability: geographical and climate-related exposure; economic and livelihood insecurity; socio-cultural and motivational barriers; physical and health-related vulnerability; policy and institutional constraints; and gender-specific vulnerability. The synthesis demonstrates that educational disruption is rarely produced by climate exposure alone. Rather, climatic hazards interact with livelihood insecurity, poverty, health risks, displacement, socio-cultural conditions, gender inequality, and institutional capacity to produce cumulative and potentially persistent educational disadvantage. Human Security reveals how these vulnerabilities intersect with environmental, economic, health, personal, and community insecurities, while Climate Justice highlights how educational risks, adaptive capacities, participation, and recognition are unevenly distributed. Building on this synthesis, the paper proposes Educational Security as an education-specific analytical lens, nested within and informed by Human Security, concerned with whether people's capability to access, participate in, continue, and meaningfully benefit from education is sufficiently and equitably protected against acute, recurrent, chronic, cumulative, and structural threats. Educational Security is distinguished from educational resilience, Education in Emergencies, and climate-resilient education by shifting attention from whether learners or systems can cope, recover, or maintain provision toward whether educational capability itself remains secure, for whom, and under what conditions. The synthesis further suggests a reciprocal relationship in which multiple forms of Human insecurity can produce Educational Insecurity, while Educational Insecurity may weaken future capabilities and contribute to subsequent Human insecurity. Rather than presenting Educational Security as a fully developed theoretical category, the paper advances it as a conceptual proposition requiring further theoretical and empirical development. This perspective broadens climate adaptation and governance beyond infrastructure and immediate disruption by positioning the equitable protection of educational capability as integral to longer-term Human Security and just climate adaptation.

RCASBC-2026-467

Climate Diplomacy and Human Security: Rethinking Global Governance in an Era of Environmental Crisis

Prof. Dr. Salma Naz

Abstract:

The rising effects of climate change—rising sea levels, extreme weather incidents, resource scarceness, and population dislocation—have uncovered the restrictions of traditional, state-centric approaches to international security. For most of the post-war period, security in international relations has been considered mainly through the lens of territorial sovereignty, armed competence, and interstate war or conflict. This study claims that climate change is basically a human security crisis, one that surpasses conventional concepts of national sovereignty and armed threat to include the survival, dignity, and welfare of people and communities, mostly in the Global South. Focusing on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of 1994 human security agenda and critical security studies—consisting securitization approach from the Copenhagen School—this research analyzes how climate diplomacy, historically designed around interstate negotiating, Carbon footprint calculation, and technocratic discussions, has struggled to effectively report the existed realities of climate-vulnerable people. Whereas institutions for example the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Loss and Damage Fund development have made gradual improvement on emissions goals and monetary promises. This research alongside case studies of climate-vulnerable areas, elucidates that such actions persist mostly state-centric in strategy, often addressing affected people as inactive recipients of

diplomatic results instead of as active stakeholders whose primary security is directly at risk. It additionally discovers the strains between sovereignty and human-centered governance, the dangers of securitizing climate approach, and determined power unevenness between the Global North and South in climate discussions. The study concludes by suggesting a reoriented model for global climate governance—one that focuses human security as both a normative objective and a practical measured for diplomatic achievement, and calls for more comprehensive, multi-level, and equity-driven approaches to climate diplomacy in an age of extending environmental crisis.



Sub-theme – 05:
**New Perspectives on International
Relations**

International Cooperation for Blue Economy Development: Opportunities and Future Pathways for Bangladesh

Md. Shariful Islam

Abstract:

Blue economy holds the future of Bangladesh for several reasons whether from food and nutrition security to energy security to maritime trade. However, given the interconnected nature of oceans, international cooperation is essential for the success of the Blue Economy. In fact, international cooperation promotes diplomatic relations and collaborative efforts to address shared challenges like illegal fishing and marine pollution. The article argues that Bangladesh cannot address challenges faced by Blue Economy sectors, such as marine fisheries and maritime trade on its own. For example, challenges like climate change, piracy, armed robbery against ships, ocean pollution or acidification would require regional and global cooperation. Against this backdrop, this article investigates the role of international cooperation for Bangladesh's Blue Economy development. The opportunities and future pathways have also been investigated. More specifically, this article focuses on Bangladesh's blue economy cooperation with India, China, Japan, EU, USA and international financial institutions. The article uses the framework of Blue Economy Diplomacy to map out Bangladesh's Blue Economy cooperation.

The Evolution of Digital Registers among Bangladeshi University Students

Orpa Saha

Abstract:

The process of digital communication has nowadays become a very significant part of the everyday lives of university students. In this regard, digital communication influences both the methods of communication and the types of language used. In this research, we will consider the development of different digital registers used by university students in Bangladesh with a focus on students' ability to change the language according to the audience, the purpose of communication, and the platform where communication takes place. We will investigate the variety of registers used for academic, friendly, technical, gaming, and social media communication and the usage of Bangla-English code-mixing, abbreviations, emojis, and internet expressions in the language of university students in their digital communication. The data will be collected through questionnaires and interviews as well as selected messages of university students in Messenger, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other online communities within the university, having received all necessary permissions. Moreover, in this research, we will analyze the difference between online and offline communication of university students, considering the impact of the academic department, the nature of the relations with the audience, and the situation in the communication. Comparing university students with different backgrounds of study, especially those from English.

Minerals, Margins, and Middle Powers: Bangladesh's Strategic Positioning in the Global Rare Earth Rivalry

Aishwarya Sanjukta Roy Proma

Abstract:

Rare earth elements (REEs) have moved to the center of the rivalry between the United States and China. That rivalry is now reshaping global supply chains, with real consequences for small and middle-income states. This article examines how Bangladesh, a country often reduced to its garment sector in discussions of development, may occupy a consequential, if underexplored, role in this emerging resource order. The evidence for this comes from three sources: geological surveys of monazite-rich placer deposits along Bangladesh's southeastern coastline (the Cox's Bazar–Teknaf–Moheshkhali corridor). The February 2026 US–Bangladesh Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART), which opens the country's critical mineral sector to American investment, and Bangladesh's deepening yet asymmetric engagement with China. Taken together, these give Bangladesh real, though limited, room to maneuver. Bangladesh is not merely on the receiving end of great-power pressure here. It has latent potential for mineral diplomacy that could move it from the periphery toward a more active role in regional and global mineral supply chains. But Dhaka would need to manage this rivalry carefully. The paper introduces the concept of 'mineral hedging' as a distinct subtype of small-state hedging theory, applicable to resource-endowed but processing-deficient states in the Global South. It further proposes a three-pronged strategic framework, built around Diversified Engagement, Sovereignty-Preserving Conditionality, and South–South Processing Coalitions, as the most viable pathway for Bangladesh's mineral diplomacy.

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in South Asia: Re-evaluating Historical Perso-Bengali Relations in a Changing Global Order

Mizanur Rahman, Md. Abu Salah

Abstract:

In the contemporary era of geopolitical shifts and the transformation of the conventional international system, the role of small and middle-power states is no longer confined to that of passive participants; rather, it has become deeply intertwined with multilateral interaction and cultural diplomacy. This paper analyzes the profound historical, linguistic, and cultural relations between the Persian-speaking world, specifically Iran and the Bengal region, spanning from the thirteenth century to the present. It reviews the continuity of this relationship from the introduction of Persian civilization and language into the Indian subcontinent during the thirteenth-century Turkic rule down to the present day. The presence of over ten thousand Persian words in the Bengali language, historical written traditions, the activities of cultural institutions such as the Cultural Center of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and academic exchanges across four universities demonstrate how cultural diplomacy and soft power can serve as effective means to reconstruct regional relations, establish peace, and strengthen mutual coexistence within a changing global order. Although relations with Bangladesh experienced a temporary chill following the expressions of condolence over the deaths of Iran's Supreme Leader and other leadership figures amid the imposed US-Israeli war on Iran, this phase is currently dissipating. This relationship remains profoundly significant from a Muslim cultural perspective. However, the recent Mecca Agreement has raised a new question in this context.

How theatre festivals can help in cultural diplomacy

Roshan Kumar Yadav, Dr.Saravanan Velu

Abstract:

Theatre festivals can be important platforms for cultural diplomacy in today's world. The function of theatre festivals is not just entertainment, but they also become spaces where cultures meet, interact, and communicate with each other. This paper examines how theatre festivals can become a tool for cultural diplomacy through peaceful cultural exchange among nations. Theatre festivals are spaces where through their performances different artists from different countries not only represent their cultural identities but also get an opportunity to see, engage, understand and collaborate with diverse global perspectives. This research paper shows that theatre festivals can act as instruments of soft power, enabling countries to express their point of view without conflict. Performances from different countries, traditional and contemporary theatre practices, workshops, etc., create a shared aesthetic experience and make theatre festivals spaces for cultural negotiation. By studying selected international and Indian theatre festivals as case studies, this paper highlights how theatre festivals become mediums of cultural exchange and a tool to promote peace. The research concludes that theatre festivals play a significant role in strengthening intercultural relations and fostering cultural harmony in an increasingly globalized world.

Evolving Dynamics of Bangladesh-USA Relations (2001-2024)

Shuravy Zaman Moonmoon

Abstract:

The period of 2001–2024 is one that has seen a series of changes in the international landscape, including shifts in power, security, economic relations, development dynamics and democratic practice in the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States. The existing literatures have been confined to some specific aspects or some specific time periods in the relationship between Bangladesh and the U.S. The present research is carried out with an attempt to move beyond this by looking at the relationship from a strategic, economic, developmental and normative perspective and in a longitudinal manner. The study aims to understand how the strategic concerns and policy changes have influenced the Bangladesh–U.S. relations, the extent of cooperation in trade, investment and development, the main areas of the tension and how Bangladesh has handled its asymmetric relationship in the wake of shifting power dynamics in the region and globally. The research relies on the diplomatic documents, government documents, international databases, policy documents and scholarly works. Methodologically it is qualitative dominant mixed methods approach based on historical and documentary analysis, quantitative evaluation of bilateral trade, investment and other economic indicators. Moreover, a machine learning based forecast analysis is also incorporated to analyze the future trade dynamics between Bangladesh and U.S. based on the historic trade and macro-economic data. Sixteen models, from simple linear regression to more complex models based on neural networks are tested. According to the forecasting results, bilateral trade is likely to continue to be strong in 2025-2030 with some volatility. The lenses for the analysis of the dimensions of bilateral relationship are Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism. The findings indicate that the nature of Bangladesh–U.S. interaction has reinforced from development security driven interaction to more multifaceted and complex one. But the issue of democracy, human rights, removal of GSP and U.S. visa

restrictions has caused periodic diplomatic tensions. The study offers a multifaceted analysis of the evolving nature of Bangladesh-U.S. relations. It underlines foreign policy implications of Bangladesh, the strategic, economic and ethical aspect of national interests and gives emphasis to the balance of foreign policy strategies and economic dependence in the light of the changing foreign policy scenario in the South Asian region with the future course of U.S. engagement in the region.

RCASBC-2026-390

Content Creators as Digital Diplomats: Rethinking Public Diplomacy in the Age of Influencer Politics

Nishat Jahan Nowshin, Afshara Tasneem Zoa

Abstract:

Public diplomacy as a tool for state communication has also changed significantly with the emergence of digital content creators, and is moving from a broadcasting tool to one based on building narratives through influencers. Traditionally, public diplomacy has been based on the concept of a one-way communication, where policies are disseminated from a government to the outside world. But bureaucratic institutions are too slow to allow real digital conversations. As audiences increasingly turned to social media, states began seeking trusted digital voices to communicate with foreign audiences. Governments can work with influencers to avoid the traditional gatekeepers by sharing stories as “ordinary” content. This is a form of hybrid diplomacy that extends geopolitical soft power through viral trends and shifts influence from politicians to digital creators. This study examines how content creators shape public diplomacy through digital engagement, third-party credibility, and framing. Using qualitative content analysis and comparative case studies of state-sponsored influencer campaigns, it applies third-party credibility and agenda-building theories to assess how creators influence foreign audiences and shape diplomatic narratives. This study argues that foreign content creators can humanize state messaging and reach digital communities, but personal agendas may weaken their credibility. In South Asia, social media also serves as a key space for global cultural influence, communication, national image-building, and cultural representation. The Foreign Ministry has to do away with the rigorous control of messages. Rather than prescriptive scripts, governments should make access and give creators freedom for authentic narration, allowing real-world actions to complement images in digital media. The content creators and public diplomacy interface is an on-going transformation in the world of influence. In fact, governments have to share the power to tell stories with a network of vloggers. Basic objectives, such as cultural exchange, are still in place, but the modes have changed. It will not be cut anymore by official ambassadors, and now audiences are looking for authenticity. Through this lending of trusted creator voices, states maneuver the online space to gain authentic soft power, but this process also poses ethical problems with transparency. Consequently, the contemporary diplomat may increasingly need to evolve from a traditional state representative into a “network orchestrator,” combining conventional diplomatic practices with the reach, credibility, and narrative capabilities of digital creators.

Indigenous Diplomacy as International Relations: Transnational Networks and Alternative Governance in Southeast Asia

Md. Foysal Ahmmed Tusher, Sudip Sen Gupta Arka

Abstract:

The international system is primarily based on the 'Westphalian' concept of state sovereignty and multilateral diplomacy. The cross-border networks of indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia are an alternative mode of action that challenges this state-centric framework. This paper examines how indigenous societies operate beyond formal state structures and across borders, have emerged as a distinct diplomatic force, and how their engagement is reshaping our theoretical understanding of international relations. By drawing on examples of indigenous movements spanning Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and beyond, this research paper demonstrates the existence of these indigenous networks. Operating on the basis of kinship, culture, and environmental solidarity rather than institutional frameworks exposes the limitations of traditional international relations theories in the 21st century. Indigenous networks in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh are challenging state-centric diplomacy through crossborder cultural and political connections. Centred on indigenous perspectives, this research paper contributes to the broader intellectual endeavour of "reimagining the rules-based global order." This new perspective shapes our understanding of the future global order a system that recognizes indigenous societies not merely as internal or sub-national populations of a state, but as legitimate and significant actors in the international arena.



Sub-theme – 06:

Open Panel: Covers all aspects of Social Sciences

Uncounted Learning Loss: Educational Interruption in Bangladesh's Climate Adaptation Planning and Loss and Damage Claims

Md. Limon Sheikh, Md. Fajlay Rabbi, Md. Sefatul Islam

Abstract:

Climate diplomacy for vulnerable states rests on evidence of harm. Bangladesh has built much of its international negotiating position on documented losses in agriculture, infrastructure, coastal land, and displacement. Educational interruption does not appear in that evidence base, even though it is one of the most widespread consequences of climate shocks and among the most durable in its effects. This paper asks why learning loss remains uncounted, and what follows from counting it. The empirical picture is not in dispute. Nearly sixteen thousand educational institutions in Bangladesh were affected by climate-related hazards in 2023. In 2024, a nationwide heat closure was followed within weeks by Cyclone Remal, which struck the southwestern coast in late May, affected some 4.6 million people, and displaced around eight hundred thousand. Children in Khulna lost roughly six cumulative weeks of schooling across that year. Schools in the coastal belt serve simultaneously as classrooms and as cyclone shelters, a dual function that extends closure well beyond the event itself. Bangladesh's policy architecture acknowledges the problem without measuring it. The National Adaptation Plan 2023 to 2050 proposes climate-resilient school facilities and curriculum revision. The Education Sector Plan 2020 treats climate resilience as a cross-cutting concern, and the National Curriculum Framework 2021 lists climate and environment among its learning areas. Independent analysis nonetheless finds that adaptation is not systematically integrated into education planning, teacher development, or risk assessment. The paper argues that this gap is structural rather than accidental. Loss and damage claims require quantifiable, attributable harm. Damaged buildings can be counted; weeks of learning forgone cannot, because Bangladesh has no routine instrument for recording them. Education therefore enters adaptation planning as infrastructure and leaves it as absence. The study uses a qualitative design combining analysis of national adaptation and education policy instruments with secondary analysis of post-disaster needs assessments, supplemented by key informant interviews with teachers and local education officials in two coastal upazilas of Khulna district. The paper proposes educational continuity as a human security indicator, sets out what a national learning interruption record would require, and considers how such evidence might strengthen the negotiating position of climate-vulnerable small and middle states.

Society and Ethics in Persian Literature: A Critical Overview

Md. Akib

Abstract:

Persian literature, with its rich tapestry of poetry, prose, and mystical writings, has long engaged with questions of society and ethics. From the moral allegories of Saadi's *Gulistan* and *Bustan* to the ethical dilemmas in Rumi's *Masnawi* and the social critiques embedded in Hafez's ghazals, Persian texts reflect a deep concern for justice, human dignity and the struggle between self and society. This paper critically examines how Persian literary works negotiate themes of ethical conduct, social responsibility and the balance between individual freedom and communal values. Drawing on classical and medieval texts, the study highlights how Persian authors use literary expression not only to mirror societal norms but also to challenge, reshape and ethically elevate them. The paper argues that Persian literature offers a dynamic

ethical discourse that remains relevant to contemporary global discussions on morality, governance and social harmony. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the concepts of society and ethics in Persian literature. Data will be collected through an extensive review of primary and secondary sources and analyzed using textual and thematic analysis. The research examines classical Persian literary works alongside Islamic sources to investigate how ethical values, social justice, and moral responsibility are articulated in Persian intellectual and literary traditions. The study draws upon the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith as the primary religious foundations of ethical thought, together with a range of scholarly works, including *Bangladesher Samaj Kathamo* by Professor Fahmida Khatun and others, *History of Persian Literature* by Ahmad Tamimdari, *Introduction to Social Welfare* by Abdul Haque Talukdar, *History of Persian Literature* by Harendra Chandra Pal, *Fundamentals of Ethics* by Dr. M. Huda, the *Islamic Encyclopedia*, and other relevant books and academic publications. Through a critical analysis of these sources, the study seeks to identify the ethical principles and social philosophies reflected in Persian literary texts and evaluate their significance in both historical and contemporary contexts. The findings are expected to demonstrate that Persian literature offers a profound ethical framework capable of contributing to modern discussions on morality, social harmony, human values, and responsible citizenship.

RCASBC-2026-96

Negotiating Gender, Moral Order, and Emotional Labor in Transnational Labor Migrant Households: A Study in Rural Bangladesh

Jubayer Hossain

Abstract:

Transnational male labor migration has become a central livelihood strategy in rural Bangladesh, yet its implications for gender relations within migrant-sending households remain unevenly understood. Much of the existing literature frames migration either as a pathway to household and women's empowerment or as a reproduction of patriarchal dependence. Drawing on qualitative research conducted in rural Narsingdi, Bangladesh, this article examines how women experience and negotiate expanded responsibilities in the prolonged absence of migrant husbands. Based on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with women from migrant households and returned migrants, the study explores shifts in household authority, financial management, emotional labor, and moral expectations. The findings show that male out-migration leads to a significant reorganization of everyday household life. Women assume responsibility for managing remittances, overseeing children's education, maintaining kin relations, and making routine decisions. However, this expansion of responsibility does not translate into unconditional authority. Instead, women exercise what this article conceptualizes as conditional authority: functional decision-making power that operates within enduring patriarchal norms and moral expectations. The study further shows that gender transformations are negotiated and often reversible. Upon men's return, household hierarchies are frequently re-stabilized, although women's accumulated experience and competence may reproduce longer-term expectations. By foregrounding women's lived experiences, this article argues that transnational migration produces neither linear empowerment nor simple continuity, but a negotiated and reversible reconfiguration of gendered authority. In doing so, it contributes to feminist scholarship on migration, household dynamics, and the moral regulation of women in Bangladesh.

Foreign Exchange Regulation and Trade Competitiveness in Emerging Economies: Lessons for Bangladesh from Comparative Policy Experiences

Sifat Mahmudul Islam

Abstract:

Background: Foreign exchange regulation creates a persistent policy tension: measures used to stabilize the balance of payments — administering the exchange rate and rationing imports — also change relative prices and input availability, affecting trade competitiveness through price and quantity channels.

Objective: This paper studies that tension using Bangladesh's 2022–2024 experience, compared with eight emerging economies (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Malaysia, Turkey, Brazil, Nigeria).

Methods: The paper uses structured qualitative comparison, applying a consistent six-question framework to each country based on IMF and World Bank program documents, central bank records, and peer-reviewed studies, rather than a cross-country econometric model.

Findings: In Bangladesh, letter-of-credit margin rules from December 2022 cut imports by 18.2% over the first seven months of FY24, producing a current-account surplus that agencies attribute mainly to import compression, alongside documented shortages of intermediate and capital goods. A persistent gap between official and kerb rates (110.0 versus 120.5 BDT/USD by mid-March 2024) weakened formal remittances, while gross reserves fell from USD 46.4 billion (FY21) to USD 19.0 billion (FY24). The May 2024 crawling peg, paired with monetary tightening, is a transitional step toward a market-clearing regime. Comparators show Pakistan's nominal defense caused recurring crises without fixing export weakness; Vietnam combined gradual exchange-rate adjustment with export-oriented FDI and institutional coordination, avoiding reliance on a single large devaluation; and Nigeria's dual-rate system deepened parallel markets.

Policy Implications: Durable competitiveness depends less on the regime label than on sequencing market-microstructure development, remittance-channel formalization, and banking reform — an agenda made urgent by Bangladesh's exit from Least Developed Country status in November 2026.

Power vs. Law at Sea: A Comparative Study of China-Philippines and India-Bangladesh Maritime Dispute

Iffat Jahan Sharmin

Abstract:

As oceans acquire economic, strategic and environmental significance, they are also becoming crucial elements in world politics. There is a growing trend in maritime disputes primarily from resource rich and transit importance locations. The South China Sea and Bay of Bengal are two such cases of maritime border disputes, of which the former is one of the most contentious and dynamic maritime disputes in the world which is between China and Philippines and involves complex territorial disputes and strategic rivalry. It brings forth a crucial question of the role of international law in a strategically sensitive region and the efficacy of UNCLOS framework to address competing territorial claims. On the other hand the maritime dispute between India and Bangladesh is one of the unique successes for international law and legal mechanisms to resolve disputes peacefully. This paper tries to analyze and compare these two cases of maritime dispute, to find out why one has achieved resolution and compliance and the other is yet to resolve while the factors that play a role in these cases are discussed. It explores the impact of power politics, legal

frameworks and Geopolitical contexts on success and failure. The central proposition is that UNCLOS offers adequate technical and scientific basis, however, it is 'hegemon's choice' or the strategic choice that powerful regional players make-i.e. Whether to prioritize its normative legitimacy or territorial acquisition-which determines the efficacy of international arbitration in dispute resolution. Although both the disputes had similar roots and originated from competing territorial claims and competing interpretations of the international law, both the disputes followed different courses of development and achieved different outcomes. In contrast to the South China Sea dispute, which exposed the inability of the legal regimes to manage the disputes when great powers are involved, India-Bangladesh maritime dispute illustrated the efficiency of arbitration in resolving the disputes within the legal regime of UNCLOS.

RCASBC-2026-160

Forms of Cyberviolence Against Female University Students in Bangladesh: An Exploratory Study

Farjana Hridy, Md Mostafizur Rahman

Abstract:

Cyberviolence has become a pressing global issue. While much of the current literature reflects Western views, the socio-cultural realities of countries like Bangladesh show unique patterns of online harm that require localized study. The purpose of this study was to explore the diverse forms of cyberviolence against female students at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Researchers used a nonprobability purposive sample of 194 female students at the University of Rajshahi in Bangladesh. Data were collected through both online and offline questionnaires. The study primarily identified five types of cyberviolence among the respondents. The most common was the use of fake IDs. Cyberbullying was the least common type of cyberviolence. The most significant point is that Western perceptions of violence may not fully encompass the socio-culturally embedded online harm that characterizes the context in Bangladesh, such as ICT-related direct threats of physical violence and online sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children. However, the findings suggest that cyberviolence against women in tertiary-level education in Bangladesh is common in different forms. Therefore, a female centered policy for violence in the University of Bangladesh is essential for the betterment of women and the educational environment.

RCASBC-2026-161

Blue Economy Implementation Challenges in Bangladesh: Maritime Diplomacy and International Marine Technology Cooperation for Sustainable Economic Development

Ridoy Das, Md Badrul Islam

Abstract:

The Blue Economy has emerged as a key concept for achieving sustainable economic growth through the responsible use of marine resources while protecting ocean ecosystems. As a coastal country, Bangladesh gained sovereign rights over approximately 118,813 km² of maritime area following the settlement of maritime boundary disputes with Myanmar (2012) and India (2014), creating significant opportunities for fisheries, shipping, tourism, marine resources, and employment, highlighting the Blue Economy's importance for national development. Recognizing this potential, the government has introduced policy initiatives such as the Blue Economy Cell, the Maritime Affairs Unit, and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100. Despite these efforts, Bangladesh has not yet been able to fully utilize its Blue Economy potential. This study argues that the main challenge is not the absence of policy, but limited implementation capacity,

particularly in marine technology, scientific expertise, skilled human resources, and institutional capacity. While existing studies primarily focus on the economic potential, governance, and resource management of Bangladesh's Blue Economy, limited attention has been given to how maritime diplomacy through multi-alignment strategy can promote international marine technology cooperation to strengthen Bangladesh's national implementation capacity development. Addressing this research gap, this paper analyses this underexplored issue through the analytical lens of Complex Interdependence Theory. Using a qualitative approach based on secondary data, including government policy documents, UNCLOS provisions, reports of international organizations, and academic literature. By examining initiatives such as the FAO–Norway EAF-Nansen Programme and UNESCO-IOC regional cooperation initiatives, it demonstrates that how technology transfer, joint scientific research, technical training, institutional partnerships, and knowledge exchange can strengthen to Bangladesh's long-term national capability development. Moreover, the paper argues that international cooperation should be viewed not as a source of long-term dependence, but as a strategic investment in national capability. It emphasizes that maritime diplomacy through multi-alignment strategy, can expand international partnerships while combining international cooperation with sustained domestic investment in human capital and institutions offers a practical pathway for effective Blue Economy implementation and sustainable economic development in Bangladesh.

RCASBC-2026-164

What explains the variation in refugee return?

Md Matiul Hoque Masud

Abstract:

Existing explanations argue that an absence of violence in origin countries pulls refugees to return. However, statistical analysis of a global dataset covering the years from 1965 to 2024 shows that refugee return is more likely if the intensity of armed conflict in origin countries increases. Why does refugee repatriation occur during conflict in origin countries? I theorize that three actors asylum country, origin country, and refugees themselves- influence repatriation. Existing theories mainly concentrate on asylum country conditions and refugees' decisions. I hypothesize that origin-country willingness is a stronger predictor of refugee return. I argue that refugees return during conflict in origin countries because the governments of their home countries are willing to take them back. Domestically, origin governments offer freedom of return, and internationally, they use repatriation agreements so that refugee return may occur even during conflict. Origin country willingness induces more refugees to return when conflict continues. By building a novel dataset on refugee repatriation agreements, I test these hypotheses with a panel model that covers 415 origin-asylum dyads. I trace the mechanisms by studying the cases of (non) return of Burmese refugees from Bangladesh and Malaysia. This study encourages us to rethink the global humanitarian order, which was built to ensure safe and sustainable solutions to refugee problems, but much return occurs repeatedly during conflicts in origin countries rather than peace. While the global humanitarian order was primarily designed by powerful Western states to deal with individuals fleeing persecution, a significant portion of refugees originate from and take shelter in small and middle states as groups due to wider violence. The global humanitarian order has proven unable to protect the groups of refugees fleeing between small and middle states. Moreover, this study points to two crucial contradictions in the international order. First, sovereign states are expected to protect their own citizens without external interference, but many origin countries have not implemented the commitments made to returnees because of an absence of effective external pressure. Therefore, protection of citizens is sacrificed to uphold state sovereignty. Second, sovereign states have created international institutions to facilitate cooperation between states, but inter-state cooperation has pushed refugees to insecure origin countries.

From Legal Inclusion to Reparative Inclusion: Post-Statelessness Citizenship and Uneven Development in Bangladesh's Former Enclaves

Md Mahmudul Hasan

Abstract:

The 2015 India–Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) ended decades of defacto statelessness for residents of the former enclaves, locally known as chhitmahals. Although the agreement granted citizenship and territorially incorporated these communities into Bangladesh, the central question is whether legal recognition has produced substantive inclusion in everyday socioeconomic life. This paper examines the benefits residents associate with the LBA, the challenges that persist a decade after integration, and the policies required to advance socioeconomic development. Drawing on Galtung’s theory of structural violence, Sen’s capabilities approach, and Soja’s theory of spatial justice, it analyses how historical deprivation continues to shape access to opportunities, services, and political voice. Based on ethnographically informed qualitative research conducted across 13 former enclaves in Panchagarh, Nilphamari, and Kurigram, the study draws on 42 semi- structured interviews with residents, 13 key-informant interviews, field observations, and documentary evidence. The findings show that residents gained identity documents, voting rights, mobility, access to some welfare programmes, and greater political recognition. However, post-LBA development remains spatially uneven. Garati received greater benefits because of its proximity to administrative centres and the mainstream economy, while Dasiar Chara attracted attention because of its size, population concentration, and public visibility. Smaller and less visible enclaves continue to face unemployment, restricted credit, inadequate healthcare and education, poor roads, and limited representation in local decision-making. The paper conceptualizes this contradiction as “inclusive exclusion”: legal and territorial incorporation without equivalent inclusion in capabilities, markets, public services, and governing institutions. It argues that equal treatment cannot overcome inequalities accumulated through decades of statelessness. Substantive citizenship therefore requires reparative inclusion through targeted employment and credit, scholarships and market-linked skills training, service equalization, improved connectivity, and institutionalized representation. The study contributes to post- statelessness and borderland-development debates by showing that legal recognition is a threshold rather than the completion of integration.

A Theoretical Review of Political Gender Stereotypes and Voter Behaviors: Bangladesh Perspective

Ummey Habiba

Abstract:

For decades, theorists of American politics have been trying to understand why women lack equality in elected office (Center for American Women and Politics, 2011). Developed countries like America have never had a female president. Gender stereotypes have a substantial effect on females’ behavior and experiences in public and political life. In political gender role stereotypes, colleagues, media, and voters often observe women in electoral campaigns and political offices for their behavior. How people should think, feel, and act is connected to gender differences. These expectations are represented and reinforced in educational experiences, social interactions, workplace cultures, and other situations. Over time, men and women internalize features that correspond to their gender roles. Every community expects men and

women to behave in ways that match their gender roles. These gender stereotypes define generally how men and women behave. And what men and women should do. As a result, the belief that women are soft and sensitive becomes a prescription for women to be warm and caring. This paper investigates how gender norms, candidate gender identification, and gendered political platforms influence voter support for a political candidate. The article discusses different theoretical perspectives, including social role theory, role congruity theory, and cognitive miser theory. The paper also explains how political gender stereotypes and voter behavior operate in patriarchal societies. This article also discusses how gender norms shape political leadership in developing countries. It contributes to the larger discourse on gender and leadership. This is especially true in a third-world country like Bangladesh, where there are mostly patriarchal societies. In politics, gender stereotypes operate to a greater extent. Female politicians are often socially and culturally represented in a way that blurs gender stereotypes about women politicians compared to all other groups. This study emphasizes addressing gender hindrances in the process of taking effective public policies and initiatives. Finally, this study encourages a more inclusive political environment.

RCASBC-2026-199

Negotiating Bishnupriya Manipuri Identity through Everyday Cultural Practices: An Ethnographic Study in Shimultala, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Bangladesh.

Nazrul Islam, Md. Likhon

Abstract:

Bishnupriya Manipuri identity in Bangladesh is commonly discussed in relation to language, religion, festivals, and cultural heritage. However, identity is not expressed solely through formal cultural practices; it is also reproduced and negotiated through everyday household life. Although existing studies have documented important dimensions of Bishnupriya Manipuri cultural identity, comparatively less ethnographic attention has been given to the household as a site where cultural practices are transmitted, adapted, and renegotiated across generations. This study examines how everyday practices, including food habits, clothing, religious observance, language use, household practices, and family relationships, contribute to the reproduction and negotiation of Bishnupriya Manipuri identity amid changing educational, occupational, and lifestyle contexts. The study draws on qualitative ethnographic fieldwork conducted in July 2025 in Shimultala village, Kamalganj Upazila, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Bangladesh. Data were generated through participant observation, informal interviews, household conversations, and participation in everyday domestic activities across selected Bishnupriya Manipuri households, involving more than 20 participants. Particular attention was given to intergenerational interactions and to how culturally meaningful practices were incorporated into everyday domestic life. The findings indicate that cultural identity is embedded in ordinary household routines rather than expressed exclusively through festivals or formal cultural performances. Food practices associated with Vaishnavite beliefs, traditional clothing, religious observance, language use, and family relationships function as important sites of cultural transmission and belonging. At the same time, younger household members negotiate inherited practices within changing educational, occupational, and social environments. These interactions produce forms of selective adaptation in which some practices are retained, while others are modified or contextually reinterpreted. The study argues that Bishnupriya Manipuri identity is not a fixed cultural inheritance but an ongoing social process shaped through everyday practice and intergenerational negotiation. By foregrounding the household as a site of cultural reproduction, adaptation, and identity formation, the study contributes to anthropological understandings of how ethnic identity and cultural continuity are maintained and renegotiated amid contemporary social change in Bangladesh.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 1997: Road to peace or conflict? A Public Policy and peacebuilding analysis of accord implementation.

Tuhin Chakma

Abstract:

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 1997, signed by the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) on 2 December 1997, ended the long-term armed conflict and aimed to build sustainable peace in the three hill districts. The accord addresses regional governance, decentralization of power, land dispute settlement, security arrangements, rehabilitation of internally displaced persons, and socioeconomic development in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The study is analyzed from two perspectives: peace and conflict, and the Public Policy field. It analyzes the main documents of the accord, government reports, UN reports, stakeholder evaluations, and relevant academic studies. It examines the extent to which the accord has ended conflict, the structural reasons, and its contribution to peacebuilding. The core analysis focuses on formal implementation and peacebuilding outcomes of the accord. Primarily, the result indicates that the accord has successfully reduced large-scale armed conflict between indigenous groups and the army. However, conflict has shifted to intra-community tensions within the indigenous community. Although the accord achieved notable progress in building committed institutions, uncertainty remains about their effectiveness. In addition, some core parts of the accord remain unresolved, such as land dispute settlement, effective power decentralization, enhancement of institutional authority, and rehabilitation. The study suggests that partial implementation of the accord is not only a reason for the reemergence of conflict but also is interrelated with political competition, land-related disputes, institutional weakness, security concerns, and long-term uncertainty. Therefore, ensuring sustainable peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is necessary not only from a national security perspective. It is necessary to implement the accord effectively to support participatory policymaking, accountable institutions, effective resolution of land disputes, and trust building among local communities. This study calls for a re-evaluation of the necessity to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 1997 as an important post-conflict public policy and peacebuilding challenge in Bangladesh.

Security Narratives on Spanish Ceuta: A Cross-Country Study of Migration Framing in South and Southeast Asian Media (Bangladesh and Malaysia)

Dale Asa Roy, Gleb Trufanov

Abstract:

This paper will study the patterns of the discourse of security and border threat that Bangladeshi and Malaysian media seek to transfer into their domestic media discourse on distant migration challenges to legitimize local policy priorities. The study of the cross-country media coverage will be performed using advanced computational methods, specifically applying the Natural Language Processing (NLP) RoBERTa model combined with comprehensive sentiment mapping. These two countries were selected as the two structural parallels of refugee displacement in South Asia and Southeast Asia, as Bangladesh and Malaysia both have been a destination for a large number of refugees in their respective regions. This article focuses on the comparison of dominant frames in the media, strictly identifying what is common and what is divergent in terms of the frames of the immigration crisis in Spain. The methodological framework

uncovers the emotional and political weight of the vocabulary used to describe the Ceuta events across distinct political and informational landscapes, mapping varying degrees of hostility or empathy. This moment is especially relevant in light of the EU-South Asia and Southeast Asia political cooperation and the constant development of international legislation in media regulation, migration management, and global security. By utilizing RoBERTa sentiment mapping, the research exposes how the immigration crisis in Ceuta is utilized either as a cautionary tale of border vulnerability or as a critique of Western migration policies. By security in this case, the authors understand a set of analytical and policy measures to reduce informational polarization and the weaponization of migration discourses in domestic political arenas. Ultimately, this study analyzes how distant geographical crises are transformed into local strategic narratives, proposing a robust framework for future cross-country comparisons in the sphere of media discourse and global migration reporting.

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Beyond Migration Numbers: Mapping the Migration–Remittance Disconnect in Bangladesh

Ms. Rifah Tasfia Ishadi, Mst. Jannatun Ferdous Tima, Jannatun Noor Nafisa,
M Abeedur Rahman, Zonayer Ahammed

Abstract:

From 2004 to 2025, Bangladesh's overseas employment program has provided employment to over 13 million people, and remittance receipts increased from USD 3.6 billion to USD 26.9 billion per year. Most research on Bangladeshi migration has adopted the view that these are parallel series of migration and assumed that the more workers who migrate to a destination, the more remittances are created in that destination. This paper challenges that assumption and examines the hypothesis that the geographical distribution of migrants' deployment matches the geographical distribution of remittance inflows. The study estimates a destination-level migration-remittance gap (MRG) using deployment data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training and Bangladesh Bank country-level remittance statistics, which is the proportion of remittance flows received to the proportion of workers deployed. Seventeen destinations are analyzed for which there are compatible observations from both agencies. There is a significant difference between the two distributions. The index of dissimilarity is 29.6 percentage points, and nearly one third of the share of remittances would need to be redistributed among remittance destinations to ensure the same deployment distribution. Saudi Arabia receives 36.0 per cent of deployment (MRG = -15.5), while the United Kingdom receives 0.19 per cent of deployment and remits 13.5 per cent of remittances (MRG = $+13.3$). The gap is not homogeneous across Gulf corridors, with Kuwait ($+5.6$) and the UAE ($+2.1$) having positive gaps and Singapore (-3.6) and Oman (-6.4) having negative gaps, suggesting that contract migration regimes are not the only determinant of the gap. The migration–remittance elasticities are 0.511, and this is well below 1 ($p = 0.017$), showing that 34.5 percent of the variation in the total remittance inflows is explained by deployment. Concentration analysis reveals migration is more concentrated than remittance sources (HHI = 1,928 and 1,254 respectively), and remittance sources have been decreasing over time from FY2021-22 to FY2024-25. The results indicate that the type of a corridor is more important than the share of migrants for a middle-income state with external economic dependence. The paper advocates a portfolio policy on labor migration and places corridor concentration in the broader context of the economic fragility of small and medium-sized countries.

TruthWeb: a Holistic 4-Point Program towards the Sustainable Reconstruction of a Socially, Politically, Economically Democratic Nation – A Case Study in Bangladesh

Hossain Md Jihad Turjo, Kazi Farzana Hossain Rimi, Jarin Subha Sara Moni, Jannatul Adon.

Abstract:

Exponential technological advancement has been accompanied by exponential growth in the volume of information produced and communicated. So in tandem has risen the volume of misinformation. Arising from diverse sources and motivations, misinformation is effectively ubiquitous, with belief in and acting upon misinformation engendering immediate and longterm negative externalities and consequences in all sectors of civic and personal life. Given the incredibly varied nature and propagating power of misinformation, any parochial solution will be bottlenecked by the multidimensionality of the problem, one exponentially exacerbated by the contemporary spread of generative-AI, the propagation of which is in itself a masterclass in economic and socio-political disinformation. To scale up from the informed individual – at which level known practices of critical thinking and fact-based logical inquiry can stymie misinformation absorption and propagation – to the informed community, we propose TruthWeb: a four-point program that will build sustainable infrastructure against misinformation. One, information literacy through complete curricular reform and the application of critical pedagogy ala Freire and Dewey. Two, a community-based youth-mobilising grassroots campaign to provide points of contact between locale and governance, providing easy access to verified information and dynamic real-time warnings against known misinformation. Three, security measures against those propagating misinformation, both by inhibiting them in cyberspace and tracking them down in physical space. Four, widespread provision of action avenues so the public can actively act upon verified information once misinformation has been exposed. Although there will always be bad-faith actors who choose misinformation as a tool to further their own agendas, the development of TruthWeb will lay the foundations for a systemic framework against misinformation, implemented in collaboration with stakeholders from all walks of life, including government authorities, corporations, educational institutions, and nationwide youth. TruthWeb offers gainful employment to millions of youth via creating and arming platforms where young people can answer the call to protect and serve truth in their communities, paving the way for radical paradigm shifts in social organisation, collective action and political power. A functional TruthWeb has the potential to establish Bangladesh's global niche in the digital era as the nation that beat misinformation, serving as a leading blueprint for other small and developing nations in the not-unrelated struggles for truth and economic justice in an age of increasingly imminent existentially catastrophic challenges.

Bridging the Digital Consumer Rights Protection Gap : The E-Commerce Regulatory Framework of Bangladesh in the Light of International Law

Tanzila Ahmed, Najmul Alam Ashik

Abstract:

Internet has modified the procedure that consumers interact with one another while making purchases of goods and services. In this constantly changing era, going digital is the newest trend. The exponential expansion of e-commerce has transformed consumer interactions by making them more accessible, convenient, and facilitating cross-border business dealings. “E-commerce”, sometimes referred to as online shopping, it is a type of Electronic Commerce that enables consumers to transact directly with purchase products or services from a vendor online utilizing internet browser. Though, e-commerce has made us familiar to an easier way of shopping but it is incapable of giving proper protection to consumer’s right. On the other hand, new issues pertaining to consumer rights, deceptive business practices, product integrity, information and security of payment, contractual accountability, jurisdiction, and access to efficient remedies have all been brought about concurrently by the digital marketplace. In poor nations like Bangladesh, whose regulatory frameworks have not developed at the same rate as digital commerce, these issues are especially significant. This study assesses how well Bangladesh's current legal and regulatory framework safeguards consumers in online purchases and how well it complies with contemporary international legal and regulatory norms. In addition to Bangladesh's legislative structure, which includes consumer protection and digital commerce rules, the study looks at international guidelines pertaining to consumer security, electronic negotiating, confidentiality, privacy, assurance of product safety, and settlement of disputes. The empirical results show a substantial discrepancy between the availability of legal protections and consumers' capacity to make effective use of them. Notably, 92.5% of respondents stated that they had not sought governmental remedies after encountering issues with online transactions; major obstacles to access to justice included procedural complexity and delay, a lack of trust in complaint procedures, and insufficient awareness of available remedies. The technologically driven, contract-based, and jurisdictional complications of modern e-commerce cannot be adequately addressed through conventional legal mechanisms. Thus, the study prescribes, national rules are harmonized with pertinent international guidelines, technologically facilitated and accessible recourse systems be strengthened, awareness among consumers be raised, and that current commercial and consumer protection laws be reformed to specifically allow for online transactions. In the end, the article suggests a more logical and globally consistent regulatory framework that can close the gap between nominal consumer rights and their practical defense in Bangladesh's online marketplace.

Forming Marital Intimacy and Household Standing through Smartphones: Early Separated Wives of International Migrant Workers in Kishoreganj, Bangladesh

Saugat Sharmin Setu

Abstract:

International labour migration is a defining feature of Bangladesh's economy and family life. In 2025, more than 1.13 million Bangladeshis migrated abroad for employment. Kishoreganj provides an important setting for examining how overseas migration reshapes marriage and household relations. This research focuses on cases in which husbands migrate within six months of marriage, including cases in which the marriage arrangement and early communication occurred primarily through phone contact. These couples have limited opportunity to establish everyday familiarity before prolonged separation. A well established literature has examined left behind wives in Bangladesh and South Asia. It shows that women's responsibilities, mobility, decision making, and household standing may change after a husband migrates. A separate body of research on transnational families shows that mobile communication can sustain emotional closeness across distance while also enabling monitoring and control. However, less attention has been given to marriages in which migration begins within the earliest months of marriage. Existing research largely examines relationships in which couples have already developed shared routines and marital familiarity before separation. The situation is different when there is little shared married life to maintain. In such cases, trust and familiarity may need to be formed through smartphones rather than simply maintained through them. This research addresses that gap. The research is based in Bhairab, Bajitpur, Kishoreganj Sadar, and Kuliarchar upazilas of Kishoreganj district. It focuses on wives of international migrant workers whose husbands migrated within six months of marriage. It uses an interpretive qualitative multiple case study design and draws on semi structured interviews with an intended sample of fifteen to nineteen women. Most participants are expected to live with their in laws, with a smaller contrast group of women living independently or with natal family members where recruitment permits. The research examines how participants use calls, messages, and video communication to develop familiarity, trust, and marital intimacy. It also examines how in laws and other household members facilitate, restrict, monitor, or otherwise shape this communication. Particular attention is given to women's household standing, including their recognition, participation, and influence in household decisions. Communication, intimacy, trust, household standing, authority, and control are treated as distinct processes rather than assumed to produce one another. The research aims to contribute to scholarship on gender and migration by examining how marital intimacy and household standing are formed under very early transnational separation and by situating smartphone communication within the wider household structure.

Japanese Popular Culture in Bangladesh: A PLS-SEM Analysis of Manga Consumption and Cultural Diffusion

Zonayer Ahammed, Rufaida Ansaria, Taskia Newaz Mim, M Abeedur Rahman,
Md Ashiqur Rahman, Ruba Rummana

Abstract:

This study examines how exposure to Japanese manga and anime relates to the adoption of Japanese cultural practices among fans in Bangladesh and traces the psychological pathways that carry that influence. Survey data from 555 manga and anime fans in Bangladesh were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3. An extended Theory of Planned Behavior model linked cultural exposure to adoption behavior through cultural affinity, fan engagement, and perceived cultural value. Path significance was assessed with bootstrapping using 5,000 subsamples. Cultural exposure predicted both cultural affinity and fan engagement. Cultural affinity in turn predicted fan engagement and perceived cultural value. Fan engagement was the only significant direct driver of cultural adoption behavior, whereas perceived cultural value had no significant direct effect on it. Engagement also produced the indirect effects of exposure and affinity on adoption, while the routes that passed through perceived value were not significant. The study brings cultivation theory, soft power, participatory culture, and the Theory of Planned Behavior into a single tested model of cultural diffusion in a South Asian context that earlier work has seldom studied, and it separates an emotional-evaluative route from a participatory route to behavior. For cultural exchange bodies, the results suggest that participation, rather than perceived value on its own, is what converts interest into practice. Support for fan communities, events, and local translation may matter more than messaging about the cultural worth of manga.

Paralyzed Peace: Overcoming UN Deadlocks in Humanitarian Crises

Meheru Mashtura Rahman

Abstract:

The veto power of the United Nations Security Council originates from the UN charter, which remains subordinate to peremptory norms of international law (*jus cogens*). In this hierarchy, procedural treaty provisions can not be interpreted or applied in such a way that would allow derogations from any of the non-derogable obligations under the higher human rights law. Hence the veto power exercised to either contradict or perpetuate violations of such norm may be unlawful and *ultra vires*. Furthermore, when a permanent member uses its veto power to block a ceasefire or humanitarian relief, it engages state responsibility for aiding or assisting in the commission of internationally wrongful acts which directly breach their positive duty to prevent genocide and grave atrocity crimes. Therefore, all charter provisions including veto power must be consistent with *jus cogens*. The Council is legally entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. From a philosophical standpoint, an obvious inconsistency is evident between the normative principles of global democracy and the centralised power that can obstruct urgent humanitarian action, including efforts to halt genocide. Recent occurrences further prove how the exercise of veto power has progressively reflected state power dynamics rather than committing to global peace, which was the main motive to constitute the United Nations in the first instance. When a major war breaks out or vital global trade routes are blocked, just one negative vote from

a powerful nation can completely paralyse the whole world's ability to keep the peace. Thus, each time the Council allows mass suffering to continue because of a single vote, it breaches its fiduciary duty with the rest of the world. Initially the power was given to the Security Council to secure world peace. In reality, it is being abused when one state misuses it for the protection of itself and its allies. This simply breaks the legal contract and destroys global trust in the UN. Hence the Security Council acts ultra vires, whenever political self-interest is allowed to override its primary function. Analyzing the current global dynamics and required legal response, it appears that the veto power should be subjected to limitations. A failure to act on the part of the Council creates a legal vacuum which the collective international community may fill with the underlying premise that law is for the people not for a handful of powerful nations.

RCASBC-2026-288

“The Social Effect of Blue Economy on Coastal Communities: Case of Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.”

Asma Akter Akhy

Abstract:

The concept of the blue economy has acquired growing significance in Bangladesh, a country distinguished by an expansive coastline and a heavy dependence on marine and coastal resources, which together render ocean-based development a central policy concern. Within this agenda, Cox's Bazar — home to the world's longest natural sea beach — occupies a pivotal position, standing at the center of Bangladesh's blue economy ambitions through sectors such as fisheries, tourism, coastal infrastructure, and an array of emerging marine-based livelihoods. Although these sectors hold considerable potential for economic growth and employment generation, their social effects on local coastal communities remain complex and unevenly distributed, warranting systematic scholarly scrutiny. This article examines how the blue economy has shaped livelihoods, social relations, and vulnerability in Cox's Bazar. The analysis draws on a synthesis of existing research, policy documents, and development reports to assess both the opportunities and the costs associated with marine-based development. The findings reveal a deeply ambivalent picture. On one hand, blue economy initiatives have created tangible employment and income opportunities that have expanded livelihood options for coastal households. On the other hand, the benefits of growth have not been shared equitably: the expansion has been accompanied by intensified inequality, heightened seasonal insecurity, mounting environmental stress, and deepening social marginalization among segments of the coastal population. These outcomes suggest that the developmental promise of the blue economy is conditional on how its benefits and burdens are distributed across communities differentiated by occupation, class, and access to resources. Against this backdrop, the paper argues that a people-centered and inclusive blue economy is essential if the gains of marine-based development are to be shared fairly among coastal communities. Achieving such an outcome requires situating local voices, livelihoods, and vulnerabilities at the heart of policy design and implementation, rather than treating social welfare as a by-product of economic growth. By foregrounding the lived experiences of coastal populations, the study contributes to ongoing debates on sustainable and equitable ocean governance in Bangladesh and beyond.

A Comparative Study on Representation of Rohingya and Gaza Crises in Bangladeshi Media

Tasnuva Khaled Niha

Abstract:

Gaza and Rohingya- these are two of the prolonged and significant humanitarian issues of recent time; both involve predominantly Muslim populations and have generated significant international media coverage. Despite their similarities, they occupy varying positions of concern when it comes to Bangladesh, a Muslim majority country that is hosting the Rohingyas and have shown historical solidarity with Palestine. Focusing on this distinction, this study examines the difference and similarities in how these crises are perceived in Bangladeshi context using the construction of these two crises in the country's domestic media. To do so, the study proceeds with a mix method approach to research design and combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative framing analysis. Single news stories published in 2023 by selected Bangladeshi newspapers of varying editorial affiliations covering the two issues are examined for visibility and prominence in addition to sources, major topics, frames and tone towards the affected groups. Attention is given to direct and indirect focus on the issues in news coverage. Quantitative analysis is used to examine the frequency and qualitative approach is applied to observe how the generic and issue specific frames construct the respective crises. The NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) concept was adapted in the study to examine if geographical and social proximity can impact visibility and representation in media. This study expands the concept of NIMBY to humanitarian context in order to examine the similarities and differences in media construction of geographically distant humanitarian issues and those that are of immediate national concern. Comparing the findings reveal significant differences and similarities between the coverages as well as between the newspapers. This study aims to address the gap in research regarding comparative media representation of the two said issues and the media construction in the host country's context. This study contributes to the broader scholarship surrounding media construction of humanitarian crises and their relation to distant and affected countries. In a broader theoretical sense, this study contributes to the use of NIMBY as a modified lens to observe the impact of media construction of international issues on national concerns and vice versa.

AI in Policing and Global Security: Chances, Hurdles and Ethical Suggestions for Developing Countries

Min Mukit Bin Mredul

Abstract:

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the police system. Artificial Intelligence helps police look at a lot of information and make decisions. However, using artificial intelligence in police work also raises concerns about human privacy and rights. This paper seeks on the way of artificial intelligence is used in policing in developing countries, like Bangladesh. The approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to capture a nuanced understanding of the subject to find out how artificial intelligence can help police to understand technological crimes. Artificial intelligence can also help police work better by predicting crimes and helping with investigations. Just because artificial intelligence can make people work more easily, it does not mean that it must be fair. If the artificial intelligence is misinformed, it can

lead to mistakes and unfair treatment of some people. The paper concludes that artificial intelligence should not replace judgment and oversight in police work. Instead, it should be implemented in a way that's fair, transparent, and respectful of people's rights. Developing countries can benefit from using artificial intelligence in police work if they have laws, trained personnel, and independent oversight. This way, they can use artificial intelligence to keep people safe while also protecting their rights and being in control of their technology.

RCASBC-2026-332

Digitalization, Industrial Labor Share, and Productivity: Heterogeneity across South Asian Economies

Hridoy Das, Md. Roni Ahmed

Abstract:

The digital economy has emerged as an important driver of productivity growth, while the structural composition of employment remains an important determinant of productivity performance. Despite rapid digital transformation, South Asian economies continue to experience relatively low labor productivity, highlighting the need to examine the roles of digitalization and industrial labor share. This study investigates the effects of the digital economy and industrial labor share on labor productivity in South Asia, with particular attention to heterogeneity across different structural and economic conditions. Using a balanced panel dataset of eight South Asian countries, the study employs a fixed effects model as the baseline estimator following a series of panel diagnostic tests. The robustness of the findings is assessed using Driscoll–Kraay standard errors, feasible generalized least squares (FGLS), panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE), and instrumental variable estimation. The empirical results indicate that the digital economy and industrial labor share are positively and significantly associated with labor productivity. Human capital and trade openness also contribute positively to productivity performance. Heterogeneity analysis shows that the magnitude and statistical significance of the estimated coefficients vary across subsamples defined by industrial labor share, trade openness, and digitalization. In particular, the positive association between digitalization and labor productivity remains statistically significant across both low- and high-industrial-labor-share groups and differs across low- and high-trade-openness groups. These findings highlight the importance of combining digital transformation with structural employment transformation, human capital development, and greater economic integration to improve productivity performance. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between digitalization, industrial labor share, and labor productivity and documenting heterogeneous patterns across South Asian economies.

RCASBC-2026-334

From Initial Cultural Challenges to Campus Belonging: A Process Model of Identity Reconstruction through Everyday Interaction among University Students

Roksana Ahmed Riya, Shahab Uddin

Abstract:

After entering into culturally and linguistically diverse environment, students often go through intense identity negotiations. Although previous studies have explored about the macro level causes of cultural dislocation, less attention has given to the field of how everyday communication helps students navigate with these challenges and build a sense of belonging. This qualitative study explores how students at the

University of Chittagong use everyday interaction to overcome cultural identity crises and cultivate a sense of belonging to a new environment. Drawing an insight of Noelle-Neuman's Spiral of Silence theory and Michel Hecht's Communication theory of Identity The study employed a qualitative design using three focus group discussion sessions (FGDs) with 22 participants from nine academic faculties selected through purposive sampling technique. With result of the findings, student's experiences follow a gradual three stage process: Stage 1- The Crisis and Alienation Phase; Stage 2- The Communicative Negotiation Phase; Stage 3- The Identity Reconstruction Phase. Where at the beginning many students struggle with language differences, unfamiliar cultural practices, fear of being judged, over time regular interaction with peers, hostel life, extra-curricular activities help them adjust to the new environment. Students also adopt communication strategies such as code-switching and adapting their behavior to build relationships. This leads to identity reconstruction phase, where regional boundaries fade into a shared sense of belonging, driven by an increased acceptance of diverse cultures. Based on the findings, the study proposes a process model of identity reconstruction through everyday interaction. Beyond its theoretical contribution to intercultural communication, the study highlights critical institutional gaps and emphasizes the necessity of cultural relativism in higher education to create more inclusive academic environments.

RCASBC-2026-381

The Politics of Promise in Post-2024 Bangladesh: The Expectation-Reality Gap and Authoritarian Risk

Md. Ibrahim Ali Raju, Md. Monir Hossin, Nupur Khanom

Abstract:

This study explores the gap between expectations and reality among Gen Z participants in the 2024 anti-discrimination movement in Bangladesh and their perceptions of the country's democratic future. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from 380 participants, and multiple linear regression models were applied. The relative deprivation theory, along with the framework of the politics of commitment, was also used to connect the results with theory-driven analysis. The gap between revolutionary promises and post-revolutionary reality (overall gap = 1.338, $p < .001$) indicates that participants' expectations exceeded their perceptions of the current reality by 1.338 points on a 5-point scale. This gap ($d = 1.131$) in corruption highlights that participants are deeply disappointed by the lack of real institutional reforms. Results also show that broken promises politically reduce democratic optimism ($\beta = -.278$) and increase the fear of a return to authoritarian rule ($\beta = .293$), fueling democratic disillusionment. This study contributes to democratization research by extending relative deprivation theory, aligning with quantitative evidence.

RCASBC-2026-405

Macroeconomic Growth, Urbanization, and Digital Adoption: A Trend Analysis of Bangladesh (2017-2025)

Antik Chakraborty

Abstract:

The current developmental studies on the evolving economy of Bangladesh often focus on macroeconomic growth, spatial urbanization and digital adoption paradigms separately without engaging with each other and the majority of studies that adopted contemporary empirical frameworks are based on pre-pandemic data ending before 2021/2022. Although past academic research has focused largely on traditional trade patterns, foreign remittances, and conventional fiscal inputs, this research piece offers important insights on

the post-2022 macroeconomic scenario through using the latest World Development Indicators (WDI) data from 2017 to 2025. In particular, this study examines the complex co-evolving dynamics between national wealth (represented in this study as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita), the spatial transformation that is the rapid pace of urbanization, and digital connectivity, as measured by high internet penetration. National wealth is measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and spatial transformation is operationalized as the rate of urbanization. Meanwhile, digital connectivity is captured in terms of widespread use of the internet. To this end, rigorous time-series trend analysis and pairwise correlations are conducted. Empirical evidence suggests that the unparalleled global crisis of the past few years was followed by a remarkably strong national economic recovery that started in 2022, at the same time that the national digital connectivity increased at a compounding rate without pause. However, the pairwise correlation analysis also shows a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between GDP per capita and urbanization ($r = 0.6647$, $p < 0.10$). This empirical evidence supports the theoretical foundation that spatial structural change and economic growth are not standalone processes in Bangladesh. Together, these insights constitute a significant indication that urbanization and digitalization are the main dual drivers of sustainable socioeconomic development in the coming decade and pose far-reaching policy implications for emerging market economies. Continuing this key developmental momentum, policy makers and institutional players need to move away from the sectoral paradigms to a more holistic and integrated approach. Such an approach needs to be systematic and requires an overall balance of national urban development needs and specific investments in digital infrastructure, and ultimately achieve inclusive, dense economic development in a rapidly changing global geopolitical-economical environment.

RCASBC-2026-408

Access, Assurance, and Compliance Friction in Formal Mobile-Wallet Remittance Adoption: Evidence from Bangladeshi Migrants

Md. Mahamudul Hasan

Abstract:

The remittance of Bangladesh is experiencing a major shift with inward remittances hitting a new record of US\$3.29 billion in March 2025, mainly on account of increased inflows through formal channels (Habib & Byron, 2025). Despite this momentum, migrant channel choice remains highly sensitive to perceived value: a 1% deviation between formal and informal exchange rates is associated with a 3.6% shift of remittance flows towards informal alternatives (World Bank, 2023). Policy instruments, such as the cash incentive introduced in July 2019, have helped sustain formal inflows, although their effects are heterogeneously felt across corridors (Farabi et al., 2025). Mobile-wallet payouts in the formal remittance architecture are bank-settled last-mile disbursement mechanisms under the Bangladesh Bank's (2022) MFS guidelines, and their use has grown significantly, with legal channels receiving BDT 107.86 billion in MFS in 2024 (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2025). However, scale does not equate to preference, as wallet payout also raises issues around trust, perceived risk, fee transparency, and compliance friction with MFS fees said to be higher than comparable bank charges in Bangladesh (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2025). The sender-side behavioural drivers of the choice of this specific formal pathway are still under-researched. This study examines the determinants of Bangladeshi migrants' intention to use formal remittance channels with mobile-wallet payouts based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012), combined with trust and perceived risk constructs (Gefen et al., 2003) and compliance friction in accordance with FATF

(2025). A PLS-SEM approach is used because it is an appropriate approach for prediction-oriented, multi-construct behavioral research (Hair et al., 2019). The present study aims to investigate the determinants of Bangladeshi migrants' intention to use mobile financial services (MFS) for formal remittance payouts using an extended UTAUT2 model. The framework is extended by constructs of trust, recipient accessibility, institutional assurance, price value and compliance friction. Data were collected from 416 Bangladeshi migrants from 14 host countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and the United Arab Emirates and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.

RCASBC-2026-420

“Gendered Vulnerabilities and Policy Gaps in Bangladesh's Gig Economy: The Case of Women Workers”

Sumiya Akter, Fatema Nur Mehjabeen, Sadia Afrin Anika, Tasnia Tanha

Abstract:

Bangladesh's rapidly expanding gig economy ranges from 1 to 3.2 million gig workers, varying by field. Among them, female workers cover around 40%, working in online freelancing, digital services, and other platform mediated works. Existing research in this field acknowledges that women face multifaceted barriers including societal expectations tied to motherhood, low wages, infrastructural disparities like sporadic internet access, and increased exposure to harassment and deception. Although Bangladesh's policy has reformed and recognised platform workers legally under Bangladesh Labor Act, expansion of section 2(65), female gig workers still remain exposed to severe operational vulnerabilities as well as a lack of intersectional policy analysis. Using a mixed-method approach, this study investigates structural implementation gaps and asks: How do job insecurity, household and family responsibilities, economic inequalities, and policy gaps shape the experiences and livelihood outcomes of women gig workers in Bangladesh, and what gender-responsive policy reforms are required? This study primarily examines why recent labor law reforms in Bangladesh still fail to protect female gig workers from gender-based violence and algorithmic penalties. It then evaluates the unique safety risks faced by women working in clients' private homes and the income loss experienced during maternity and accidental periods. Lastly, the paper argues that policymakers must operationalize ILO C190 by mandating NID client screening and real-time GPS tracking for home-service platforms to prevent gender-based violence. The government should require independent algorithmic audits to ensure a legally protected "maternity pause" option that shields women from rating drops. Also, by establishing a multi-platform social safety net funded by a 1–2% transaction micro-levy, the government can guarantee portable maternity benefits and health coverage across apps.

RCASBC-2026-446

AI Adoption and Critical Thinking Among Bangladeshi University Students: Using the TPB Model

Md. Mahamudul Hasan, Mahtab Uddin Mahim, Tanvir Ahamed Mahi

Abstract:

This study investigates the factors influencing artificial intelligence (AI) tool adoption among university students in Bangladesh and examines the relationship between this adoption and students' critical thinking engagement in learning. The study is underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), extended with contextual antecedents including accessibility, digital infrastructure and facilitating conditions, education and training, ethical considerations, cognitive development, and cultural perspectives on technology,

forming a framework that explains both behavior and cognition in an AI-integrated learning environment. This is a quantitative study employing a structured survey administered to 720 university students across public and private institutions in Bangladesh. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to validate the proposed eleven-construct model. The model examines how accessibility, digital infrastructure, training, ethical awareness, cognitive development, and cultural perspectives shape attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and how these in turn predict students' intention to use AI tools and their subsequent critical thinking engagement. Gender and university type (public versus private) are tested as moderating variables, with university type included to capture the digital divide between institution types that shapes students' access to and experience with AI tools. The findings are expected to identify the key predictors of AI adoption intention among Bangladeshi university students and clarify how adoption relates to critical thinking outcomes, while also indicating whether demographic and institutional factors meaningfully condition these relationships. The study aims to extend TPB into a South Asian higher education context by incorporating infrastructure- and integrity-related factors that are particularly salient in resource-constrained academic environments.

RCASBC-2026-447

Limitations and Challenges of Admiralty Court in Bangladesh

KHADIJATUL KUBRA

Abstract:

Bangladesh is a maritime country with a coastal line of 710 km and two major seaports in Chattogram and Mongla summarized as follows. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh serves as Admiralty Court in Dhaka under section 3(1) of the Admiralty Court Act 2000. It has original jurisdiction for all maritime claims such as marine navigation, commerce, pollution, salvage, collisions and towage (maritime liens and carriage of goods and passengers). You also govern marine business to land, including settlements in global marine insurance claims under the UK Marine Insurance Act of 1906. Common claims include collisions, ownership of seagoing vessels, salaries and wages claims by the crew, bunker supplier claims and ship arrest actions initiated by the mortgagee banks. This forum regularly sees disputes arising from claims regarding cargo damage, shortfalls, dead freight, unpaid hire and liens on cargo under charter parties heavily involving International P& I Clubs as well as commercial banks. Significantly, however, the wide jurisdiction of the Admiralty Court is bedeviled by real and serious difficulties in practice. The limiting factor is in its institutional form. Admiralty matters are heard by the High Court Division in a direct manner, which is burdened with an enormous backlog of constitutional, civil and criminal cases so proceedings take place few and far between. Maritime suits can take 10 years or longer to resolve. International maritime trade depends upon the speed and efficiency of resolving disputes: arrests on ships which operate as stores and floating businesses, prolonged delays in adjudications, along with what are effectively asset seizures run against national economic policy since they tie up either essential commercial assets for your economy or hurt litigants by forcing them to turn valuable vessels into a liability for easier access to more affordable shipping. It becomes necessary to set up a dedicated, separate admiralty court not clogging the general High Court Division docket. A dedicated court would expedite cases, slash systemic backlogs, woo foreign shipping investment and protect the nations burgeoning economy.

Structural Exploitation and Livelihood Vulnerability: Studying The Perpetuation of the Wage Gap & Its Impact on Bangladeshi Tea Labourers

Adhiraj Datta

Abstract:

Bangladesh's tea industry has been originated and thriving for over 150 years, with the beginning of commercial cultivation in Sylhet in 1857, under British colonial rule. The Labour system, wholly consisting indentured, marginalized and forcibly relocated population from present day – Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand. The whole process was executed under the circumstances of the lack of local labour, consequentially, the coercive recruitment of the migrated population (mostly susceptible Adivasis and lower-caste Hindus) for cheap labour. In the post-independence and contemporary time, the plantation structure largely remained identical, as the paternalistic labour relations strip of the workers, who are the descendants of forcibly migrated population, from their 'Decent Work', land rights and essential human needs; inevitably causing structural isolation and wage gap persistence. The Research intendsto broadly analyse the historical continuity of the structural exploitation to the present-day poverty crises that prevails in the Bangladeshi Tea Labourer community, along the impact of inequal provision of the rights required to obtain decent and dignified living standard of the population. Through the analytical study of how non-cash fringe benefits, quota system and asymmetrical bargaining stake is falling short against the marginalized tea labourer societies in Bangladesh, primarily inhabiting in the greater Sylhet Division. Researcher will provide an insight about the impact of persisting plantation system and it's wage distribution gap on the livelihood of the Tea Labourer population focusing on - healthcare, living condition (tied-houses), education and other civic participation, which are required for the inclusion of the community in the mainstream Socio-economic sphere. The comparative study of the daily wage of the labourers with the Standard ILO (International Labour Organization) 'Decent Work Deficit' will contribute in the findings of the derivatives that play a role in the lacking of essential human needs of the population. This analysis will further impart knowledge for policy prescription, economic and gender standardization of the labour rights for the betterment and equality of the Bangladeshi Tea Labourer Community. The Researcher aspires to build a narrative that would raise awareness about the community that needs urgent attention from a sensible and humanitarian lens. Hope the readers and inquisitive researchers would be pleased to study this critical take on the structure and emphasis on the equity.

Chinese and Western Discourses on Military Artificial Intelligence: A Comparative Review through Regime Complexity Theory

Dr. MD ARIFUR RAHMAN

Abstract:

This review examines how China and the United States approach the governance of military artificial intelligence (AI). It compares twenty-four Chinese-language sources with selected English-language scholarship and applies Regime Complexity Theory to explain differences in their institutional approaches. Chinese scholarship emphasizes the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), multilateral rule-making, and a future prohibition on the use of certain fully autonomous lethal weapons. U.S. and allied approaches, by contrast, rely more on domestic review mechanisms and voluntary international initiatives, including the Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of

Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy, REAIM, and NATO. The review argues that military AI governance has developed into a fragmented regime complex because the two sides favor different institutional centers. It further finds that the relationship between the CCW and the Political Declaration is largely conflicting on the issue of bindingness, with limited evidence of institutional deference between them. The study concludes by identifying limitations and proposing directions for future empirical research.

RCASBC-2026-473

Media Representation and Public Perception of Extrajudicial Killings in Bangladesh

Mahmudul Hasnat Mahi

Abstract:

Extrajudicial killings (EJKs) have remained one of the most persistent human rights concerns in Bangladesh, historically absorbed into public discourse through the state-sanctioned vocabulary of "crossfire" and "gunfight." Human rights bodies such as Odhikar have documented hundreds of such deaths annually. These figures, however, rarely translate into proportionate public outrage. This gap is attributed in part to how news media narrate the killings, and how such narration in turn shapes public understanding of the violence. This discursive terrain has not remained static. Crossfire narratives attributed to the state now increasingly share space with coverage of vigilante and mob-driven violence. The research examines two leading Bangladeshi newspapers of contrasting editorial orientation, The Daily Star and Inqilab, and how each has portrayed extrajudicial killings between 2021 and 2025, and how this coverage shapes public perception of state and non-state violence. Grounded in a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, it adopts a mixed-methods convergent design centered on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of newspaper representation, supplemented by in-depth interviews (IDIs) with media practitioners and civil society stakeholders to capture the perception side of this relationship. The CDA framework draws on the work of Fairclough, van Dijk, van Leeuwen, and Entman, and interrogates framing across five analytical levels, ranging from lexical choice and headline construction to broader ideological positioning. News articles are sampled using a constructed week technique, yielding thirty-five non-cyclical sampling dates across the study period, and are systematically coded for source attribution, terminology, tone, and dominant frame to trace how language legitimizes or contests lethal state action. Particular attention is paid to the discursive shift from institutionally sanctioned "crossfire" framing toward the growing normalization of mob justice within the study period, as well as to how editorial orientation shapes this framing across outlets and, subsequently, audience perception. By triangulating coded newspaper content with practitioner and stakeholder perspectives, the study aims to reveal how media representation reinforces or challenges impunity narratives, and to explain why the scale of extrajudicial violence in Bangladesh has not been matched by proportionate public contestation. It is expected to contribute an empirically grounded, corpusbased account of the relationship between media representation and public perception to Bangladeshi media scholarship, while extending Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool for examining how normalized framing of extrajudicial violence translates into public understanding within a transitional political context.

Building Capable States: A Comparative Analysis of Public Service Motivation in Civil Service Recruitment in Bangladesh, Rwanda, and the UK.

Md. Ijaz Mahmud

Abstract:

As the world becomes increasingly reliant on the internal competence and credibility of individual states, especially middle and small powers in a fragmenting rule-based order, the question of domestic bureaucratic recruitment takes on international, not just domestic, significance. This paper undertakes a comparative review of recruitment practices in Bangladesh, Rwanda, and the UK in terms of the extent to which they consider dimensions of Public Service Motivation (PSM) – attraction to public policymaking, civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Perry, 1996) as articulated in the foundational theory of Perry and Wise (1990). Specifically, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How do the recruitment frameworks in Bangladesh, Rwanda, and the UK differ in the extent to which they operationalize PSM dimensions, beyond knowledge and analytical competency? (2) What structural or historical factors explain said differences? (3) What do the recruitment reforms in Rwanda, as a post-conflict developing state, and UK, as a mature Western bureaucracy, mean for Bangladesh? The paper utilizes a primarily literature- and document-based comparative methodology. Publicly available recruitment guidelines and examinations, in addition to secondary literature reviews, are thematically analyzed through the lens of the dimensions of PSM articulated by Perry (1996) for Bangladesh's BCS, criticized by Kaiser (2015) as a "long, quota-ridden, and patrimonial" system in which the viva-voce has remained contentious, including the BPSC's November 2024 cancellation of an entire viva round; Rwanda's post-genocide, values-driven recruitment reform (Chemouni, 2014); and the UK's competency- and strengths-based "Success Profiles" model (Parry, 2020). This document-based analysis is supplemented by a few semi-structured interviews with BCS aspirants and newly appointed officers, offering indicative rather than representative insight. By way of application, the paper turns to the literature on motivated agents in public institutions by Besley and Ghatak (2005) to argue that institutional meritocracy demands not only examination performance but assessment of motivational congruence with normative expectations of public office. While not claiming that PSM assessment alone can address corruption or capacity deficits, it offers a cross-country comparative basis for articulating context-specific recruitment reform recommendations. The paper concludes by situating civil service recruitment reform in Bangladesh in the context of discussions of state capacity and the credibility of middle and small powers in an evolving international order.

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