

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Solicited Sovereignty

Essays on Bangladesh's National,
Foreign and Maritime Affairs

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Essays on Bangladesh's National, Foreign and Maritime Affairs

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Solicited Sovereignty

Essays on Bangladesh's National, Foreign and Maritime
Affairs

To the Martyrs

Who laid down their lives for freedom and justice—

This book, *“Solicited Sovereignty: Essays on Bangladesh’s
National, Foreign, and Maritime Affairs,”*

It is a humble tribute to your valour, your sacrifice,

and the radiant dream of a sovereign Bangladesh

That you carried into eternity!

Acknowledgements

The journey of bringing Solicited Sovereignty to fruition spans nearly four decades, reflecting the evolution of thought contained within these forty-four essays. Such a sustained endeavour is never solitary, and it is with profound gratitude that I acknowledge the many individuals and institutions whose support made this collection possible.

First and foremost, my most profound appreciation goes to Dr. David Brewster, a Senior Research Fellow at the National Security College (NSC) of the Australian National University (ANU). His insightful and generous Forward, penned from the perspective of a leading maritime expert, provides invaluable context and significantly elevates the work. Similarly, I am deeply honoured by the thoughtful Preamble contributed by Mr. Mahfuz Ul Hasib Chowdhury, Executive Editor of the Daily Asian Age. His esteemed perspective as a key figure in national journalism lends crucial weight and resonance to this collection.

My sincere thanks are extended to the editors and publishers of the numerous renowned journals, magazines, and national dailies where these essays first found their audience over the years. Your platforms provided the essential space for these ideas to be tested, debated, and refined in the public sphere. Revisiting them for this volume has been a rewarding process.

I am profoundly grateful to my colleagues, whose intellectual engagement, constructive criticism, and unwavering encouragement have been a constant source of motivation. Your

insights, offered both formally and informally, have sharpened my thinking and sustained my commitment to writing. To my many well-wishers and friends—your belief in this project, often expressed through enthusiastic feedback and thoughtful discussion of the individual essays, provided the essential fuel to see it through.

A special acknowledgement is reserved for the discerning readers who have engaged with my work over these many years. Your responses, critiques, and affirmations have been invaluable, reminding me constantly of the purpose behind the pen. This collection is, in many ways, a testament to that enduring dialogue.

Finally, while the professional journey documented here is public, the personal one relies on steadfast private support. To my family, whose patience, understanding, and quiet encouragement formed the bedrock upon which decades of writing could rest, I owe a debt beyond words. This book stands as a collective achievement, and I am humbled by the contributions of all who have played a part in its long journey from individual essays to this unified volume.

Commodore Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad, Retd

Author, Solicited Sovereignty
April, 2025

Foreward by Dr David Brewster

Australian National University (ANU), National Security College
(NSC), Canberra

Commodore Misbah is one of Bangladesh's leading thinkers about Bangladesh and its maritime future. This volume of his collected writings is a treasure trove of diverse subjects, with an underlying theme of Bangladesh's future.

Commodore Misbah states that at its core, "this book is about the sovereignty of thought, the autonomy of ideas, and the necessity of wisdom in shaping the world around us." This is a hugely ambitious task, but one that he acquits well.

This book provides a veritable smorgasbord of musings about Bangladesh's place in the world, maritime affairs and many other things. It takes us from Antarctica's ice sheets to Brazilian trade treaties to Gen Z street art. He draws from a host of great thinkers and strategists around the world, ranging from Sun Tzu and Hannibal, Shakespeare, Kant, Jefferson, Atatürk, and Hassan al-Banna, just to name a few. Several of the collected papers explore different aspects of the Islamic faith and what it means for Bangladesh. Misbah even teases us with some papers written with the assistance of AI!

Through this wonderful collection of writings, a consistent theme emerges. How should Bangladesh engage with the world, drawing from its own culture and traditions? This is a powerful idea.

In recent times the Bangladesh people have embarked on a new trajectory of democracy and development. The historic changes in the governance of the country create new opportunities to redefine Bangladesh's place in the region and the world. What will Bangladesh's emergence as middle power (or as Misbah describes it, 'a middle-power maritime nation') mean for its future?

For many years Bangladesh has understandably looked inward focusing on its own economic and social development. But this also meant that Bangladesh played a lesser role than it might otherwise have in contributing to the region.

As Bangladesh graduates to a middle-income country, its friends and partners around the world hope to see Bangladesh playing a more active role in promoting regional stability and exerting its influence across a broader canvas. This starts with its key role in strengthening security in the Bay of Bengal, particularly in neighbouring Myanmar, which threatens to implode and 'Balkanise' the area. But Bangladesh can also play an even more prominent role in bringing together the wider Indian Ocean, possibly the most diverse region in the world.

A key element of this will be Bangladesh's ability to look outward to the seas as a major source of economic development through resources and trade, but also a source of a myriad of threats. History teaches us that an emerging power like Bangladesh needs to engage with the oceans as an essential part of its future trajectory.

Misbah's writings provide an important start in addressing some of these questions. But just as importantly, his ability to combine questions of grand strategy with humanity and compassion makes it a great pleasure to read.

Dr David Brewster

**Australian National University (ANU), National Security College (NSC)
Canberra**

May 2025

Preamble by Mahfuz Ul Hasib Chowdhury, Executive Editor Daily Asian Age

Sailing through formidable sea waves with military sapience and toiling through bleak and blithe episodes in academic ambiances—Commodore (Retd) Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad has dexterously juggled with both these sturdy endeavours for last nearly four decades. His scintillating accomplishments wearing the venerated uniform of Bangladesh Navy and his scholarly triumphs in the field of authorial prowess have placed him on a pervasive height with a broad range of rare capabilities in tested and proven terms.

The book ‘Essays on Bangladesh’s National, Foreign and Maritime Affairs’ is a sizeable compilation of 44 (forty four) write-ups on variegated terrains including domestic issues, international panorama, geopolitical vistas, nautical lineaments, literature, language sciences, theology, artificial intelligence, philosophy and spiritual disquisitions. This substantial book is a convergence of different texts and contexts for inquisitive readers to be provoked to exercise their thinking faculty and to explore a wide and resplendent meadow of knowledge.

Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad’s articles in this book introduce us to sages and heroes, military strategists and statesmen, governing perceptions, diversified economic thoughts, vital historical flyspecks, moral regeneration, enlightenment and certain alarming dimensions of degenerated cultures and aggravated spectacles that have made the postmodern world a convoluted labyrinth to

live through. But a glint of hope is always there on the horizon. Some light can be seen at the end of the tunnel in all these essays which bolsters us to regain confidence to move forward and to pick up the grit to hack our way out of the dense chaparral.

I have been acquainted with Commodore (Retd) Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad for quite a long time by means of my own affiliation with reading and writing habits which come upon me as an obligatory part of the job I have been doing for over a decade. A universal maxim says that to become a competent writer, it's an indispensable prerequisite for anyone to read voluminously. Reading and writing are so closely bonded with one another that it's an undying synthesis to obtain when it comes to gaining success in the true sense of the word on any professional terrain. Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad is an omnivorous reader which has endowed him with the attributes of being able to write in a prolific style.

I extend my best wishes for this authorial drive from Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad so that his essays light up the way ahead of us and enable us to make amends to the errors we made along the way while leading our lives through different vicissitudes and thus to persistently proceed for an affluent and rewarding future.

Mahfuz Ul Hasib Chowdhury

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April 2025

PREFACE

Knowledge is a light that Allah places wherever He wills.

-Imam Malik

Over the past decade, my writing journey has involved deep inquiry, passionate reflection, and an unwavering quest to understand the nation's history and heritage, drawing lessons that connect the present with a forward-looking endeavor for the future yet to unfold. *Solicited Sovereignty* is the culmination of that journey—a collection of essays that seeks to unravel the intricate connections between geopolitics, maritime strategy, climate resilience, technology, spirituality, good governance, and the enduring quest for peace—a peace that is a prerequisite for the prosperity of the little speck of land, dearly called Bangladesh.

These essays were originally published in peer-reviewed journals, magazines, and national dailies, engaging a diverse audience across academic, strategic, and public spheres. The singular purpose of this volume is to provide readers with a comprehensive and accessible collection that reflects the breadth and depth of these discussions in one place.

At its core, this book is about the sovereignty of thought, the autonomy of ideas, and the necessity of wisdom in shaping the world around us. The discussions range from Bangladesh's maritime ambitions and the strategic significance of a strong navy to the transformative role of emerging technologies. Yet, beyond the tangible forces shaping our world, this collection also delves into the intangible—the spiritual dimensions of

governance, the moral imperatives found in sacred scriptures, and the role of faith in fostering global harmony.

In an era of uncertainty, conflict, and rapid transformation, we must engage with reason and faith, strategy and morality, power and responsibility. This book advocates for a holistic approach to national and global affairs that acknowledges the interplay between material progress and ethical foundations. The thoughts on perpetual world peace remind us that true sovereignty is not just about territorial integrity or economic strength but also about moral leadership, the pursuit of justice, and the ability to inspire hope in a fragmented world.

As I present this collection, I do so with the understanding that no single perspective can capture the full complexity of our reality. Rather than offering definitive answers, these essays aim to provoke thought, ignite debate, and encourage meaningful discourse. This endeavor will have been worthwhile if it catalyzes deeper reflection and constructive dialogue.

I invite readers to engage with these writings as observers and participants in the ongoing conversation about our shared destiny. May this book inspire a renewed commitment to faith, wisdom, strategy, and peace—values that are as crucial to individual fulfillment as they are to the prosperity of our beloved nation, Bangladesh.

Commodore Syed Misbah Uddin Ahmad, Retd

Author, *Solicited Sovereignty*

April, 2025

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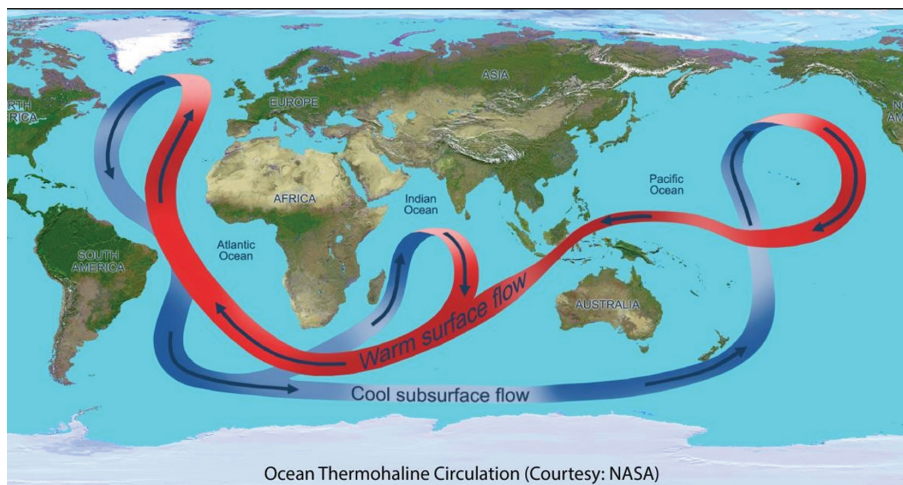
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Chapter *One*

*Global Environmental Change
and Climate Diplomacy*

Climate Change: Can Antarctica Be a Barometer and A Ratnakara for Bangladesh?



Abstract

This essay explores the critical yet overlooked relevance of Antarctica to Bangladesh's climate resilience strategy. It posits that while Antarctica is geographically distant, its rapidly changing ice sheets and ecosystems are of immense significance for global climate patterns, with direct implications for low-lying deltaic nations like Bangladesh. The author frames Antarctica not only as a barometer—reflecting the global climate's state—but also as a potential Ratnakara (ocean of treasures), with its untapped reserves of strategic resources. The article argues for Bangladesh's proactive scientific engagement with Antarctic research and urges policymakers to initiate accession to the Antarctic Treaty. It highlights how sea-level rise, melting glaciers, and changes in ocean currents driven by

Antarctic transformations pose existential risks to Bangladesh, a country already ranked among the most climate-vulnerable globally. Moreover, it advocates for BIMRAD (Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development) to become a central knowledge platform in this strategic pivot, fostering collaboration across sectors. Through scientific literacy, treaty participation, and environmental diplomacy, the essay envisions Antarctica becoming integral to Bangladesh's sustainable development and long-term climate resilience agenda.

“Climate experts posit that climate change impacts pose a formidable challenge to Bangladesh's development efforts, human security, and the future”. (Syed, M. 2022). Antarctica, specifically science in Antarctica, has global significance, unlike many other areas of the planet, and Bangladesh is no exception. Bangladesh is situated in the low-lying deltaic plain, becoming one of the first victims of the melting glaciers, rising temperatures, and eventually inundation from increasing sea levels. However, for most of Bangladesh's history, the Antarctic has been ignored, which is a dominant actor, responsible for global climate change, and could also be a barometer.

A humble attempt is made in this article to help us understand firstly why Antarctica, essentially the science of Antarctica is important, its influence on climate change, and secondly the furtherance of the initiative the government can take to keep Antarctica at the focus when preparing to combat climate change challenges for the sustainable development of Bangladesh. Thirdly, the article aims to make BIMRAD (Bangladesh Institute

of Maritime Research and Development), a Bangladesh Navy-patronized charitable research organization, a common platform to become a bridge connecting maritime scholars, stakeholders, think tank organizations, print, electronic, and social media, and most importantly, our community. It's with firm conviction that together we can and will make a difference to sail safely through the vicissitudes of climate challenges that threaten the 'little speck of land we lovingly call Bangladesh'.

In recent years, ordinary citizens and researchers alike in Bangladesh and elsewhere across the globe have begun to recognize the different ways communities are impacted by climate change. A few of the impacts are visible, such as drought, cyclonic storms, heavy rainfall, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, etc. Some other effects remain obscured to the average eye. Though there's no crystal ball to look into the future, policymakers can best predict, and prepare to respond in areas yet to identify or gear up already taken adaptation- mitigation - funding to potential climate change impacts through the effective use of scientific research and observations to make informed decisions. Besides, it is also significant for Bangladesh to initiate the accession process to the Antarctic treaty to benefit from the 'Ratnakara' – the Antarctic.

Why Antarctica? Unfortunately, the effect of Antarctica's ecosystem in regulating the global climate remains terra incognita for most of us. Thus, understanding and examining the science of Antarctica is critically essential. Bangladesh and other nations vulnerable to such climate change effects may benefit from using the scientific study of Antarctica as a barometer!

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) believes that understanding climate change impacts on Antarctica is critical for the world and the continent itself. ASOC posits that the greatest threat to the world comes particularly from the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS). According to ASOC, if melted completely, the WAIS contains “sufficient ice to raise worldwide sea level by more than 60 meters”. Accordingly, notwithstanding the uncertainty, a modest disproportion between ‘input and output of ice’ might contribute grossly to the present-day rise in sea level by 1.5–2 mm/year. On the other hand, according to Germanwatch’s Global Climate Risk Index 2021, Bangladesh is the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change. Many researchers found that sea level rise is comparatively higher in the Bay of Bengal than in other regions because of its geophysical location.

While geographically distant, Antarctica is critical with its massive ice sheets, which perform as the Earth’s “freezer.” They reflect sunlight into space and keep the global temperature in control. However, climate change is accelerating the rate of ice melting and bringing a twofold effect.

The increase in temperature resulted in flooding in coastal areas of the littoral of the Indian Ocean. These, in turn, accelerate global warming and influence a vicious cycle of extreme weather. The recent records of 2024, observe the burning heatwave absorbing South Asia, with Kolkata (India) recording 43 degrees Celsius (the hottest day in 70 years), Bangladesh recording 43.7 degrees Celsius (the highest in 50 years), and Thailand experiencing similar heat wave, is a terrifying symptom of

climate change's escalating threat. The record-breaking heat across South Asia is a stark reminder of the need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to slow the rate of Antarctic ice sheet melting and reduce the risk of more frequent, severe heatwaves such as the one currently sweeping the region.

Antarctic as a Ratnakara. The area of Antarctica is 14 million km². Ninety-eight (98%) percent of which is covered by ice contains 90% of the world's ice. This continent is an extensive reserve of strategic mineral resources that remains unexplored. Experts have already mapped about 170 types of minerals (gold, silver, iron, natural gas, etc.), capable of serving the world economy for about 200 years. Professionals estimate that Antarctica may have a reserve of 200 billion barrels of oil, much larger than that of some countries in the Middle East, such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The exploration of these resources will be decided in 2048 when the consultative parties to the Antarctic Treaty System will meet to define the continent's future. (Syed, M. 2022).

Genesis of the Antarctic Treaty. On 01 December 1959, during the 1957–1958 International Geophysical Year (IGY), the Antarctic Treaty was signed by 12 countries in Washington, D.C., which came into effect in 1961. Since then, more countries have acceded to it, including India (consultative), Malaysia, and Pakistan (non-consultative). 56 Parties have acceded to the treaty (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty). Unfortunately, Bangladesh has yet to accede to the treaty.

As has been briefly mentioned, sea ice is one of Antarctica's main features that impacts the world's climate. It acts in several ways, such as:

1. Reflecting heat by the ice-albedo effect. The bright white surface of sea ice reflects the sun's light into space (albedo effect), which means less heat is absorbed into the ocean, helping to keep the planet cooler.
2. Supporting ecosystems. When formed, sea ice creates a solid structure, facilitating algae growth. Algae form an essential part of the food web. For example, krill, little crustaceans that support most of the ocean food web, feed on these algae. Krill populations have been declining as the sea ice has decreased. Researchers have found that ice loss is speeding up every year. The speed of ice loss in Antarctica has multiplied sixfold over the last 30 years.
3. Changing ocean currents. Sea ice is mostly freshwater. This process contributes to the global ocean conveyor belt, which drives ocean currents around the world, carrying heat and nutrients with it. It is a massive system. Scientists estimated that a complete conveyor belt circuit would take almost 1,000 years. Recent research by Australian scientists suggests a 40% slowdown in just three decades could alter the world's climate for centuries.

Climate experts predict that by 2050, rising sea levels will submerge about 17% of the nation's land and generate 20 million climate refugees. "Bangladesh needs to strategize future endeavors, balancing between harnessing additional resources while dealing effectively with climate change". (Syed, M. 2022). On this basis, before Bangladesh's leadership counters the realities of nature against rising waters, ozone depletion, etc., due to the melting of Antarctic Icebergs - global warming -

melting of Antarctic Icebergs, (the vicious cycle), it is imperative to know more about Antarctica, which remains, for many a terra incognita.

For the healthy future of planet Earth, especially to sustain Bangladesh's herculean development effort, scientific studies in Antarctica to combat climate change and make an official arrangement to accede to the Antarctic Treaty cannot be sufficiently emphasized.