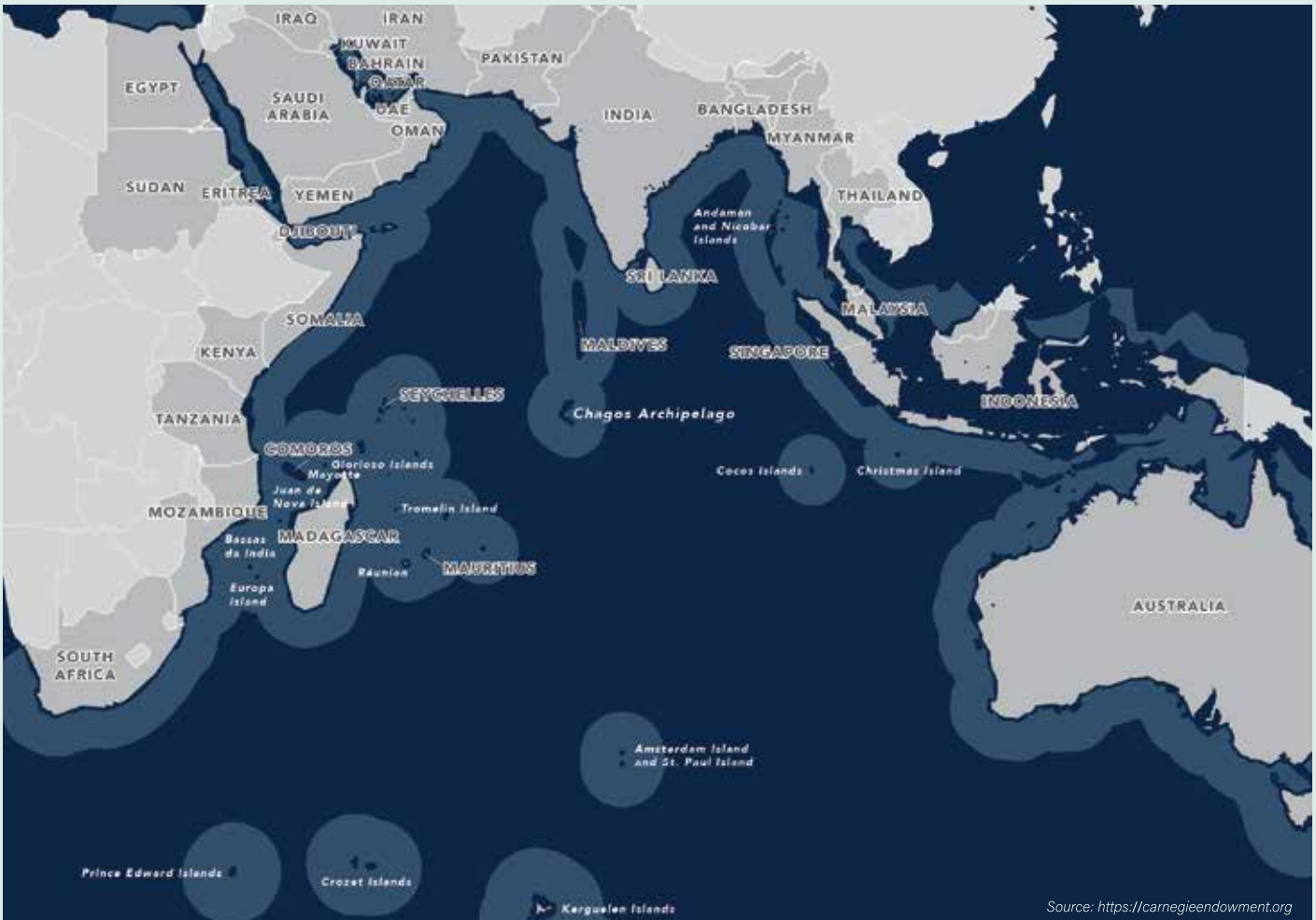


Maritime Realpolitik, the Role of Language as a Strategic Instrument and Blue Economy

"The strategy of blue economy is blue economy."

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History of strategy covers wide stretch of human striving. The history of strategic thinking brings about diverse strategies; illustrates, appealing and insightful account of how strategy influences every aspect of human lives. The way the range of strategic narratives spans from pre-biblical period to the present, the strategic instruments used have also evolved through the ages. Through meticulous analysis of the political, military, maritime, business, and all other forms of strategies, one can find that the instruments applied to effectively translate the adopted strategy to bring victory varies in their application. They vary, for instance, due to the factors of time, space, and forces of such strategies. Interestingly one strategic instrument, the "language" is either ignored or forgotten though, according to Thucydides, perhaps it is the most important of the strategic instruments (Freedman, 2013).

An English professor of history and foreign policy John Bew has traced the term "Realpolitik" to the mid nineteenth century writings of a German journalist and politician, August Ludwig von Rochau. In 1853, Rochau, referred "Realpolitik" as the *Grundsätze der Realpolitik, angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands* (Practical Politics: An Application of Its Principles to the Situation of the German States) (Bew, 2017). Realpolitik is becoming more important than ideologies because post "Westphalia" states want to defend their national interests first (Chaturvedi, 2007).

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines *Realpolitik* as "politics based on practical objectives rather than on ideals. In diplomacy it is often associated with relentless, though realistic, pursuit of the national interest." The phrase *Realpolitik* is commonly referred

today as “power politics.” The term appears to be understood, and also misunderstood when used loosely without connecting to the context. It may be understood most correctly as the realist approach to foreign policy. Many historians and International Relations (IR) gurus consider foreign policy of a nation to be a revered tradition that stretches from the antiquity, era before “written history and diplomacy” of the Peloponnesian war by Thucydides.

Thucydides was one of the Athenian *strategos*. After he failed to prevent a Spartan invasion of Amphipolis, he was exiled for twenty years. He utilised his time in exile to get to know Spartans as well as Athenians and their affairs to a certain degree. Thucydides, a former *strategos* morphed to be a historian is also considered as one of the founder of realism. Thucydides admired Pericles, writes Lawrence Freedman in his book, *Strategy A History*, due to “his ability to manage the Athenian political system by using his authority and eloquence to appeal to reason and persuade the crowd to adopt sensible policies...” (Freedman, 2013). Analysing Thucydides, it can be argued that the significance of persuasive arts clarifies why “language” the vehicle of speeches and dialogues is important. Pericles, the hero of Thucydides, had to be much more than a persuasive orator, for his speeches were strategic scripts. Another character, Diodotus reflected on the essential role of speech-making. According to him, in a democracy decent citizens should make cases based on rational arguments honestly expressed.

In the annals of human history, the Prophets of God (peace be upon them all) were the most eloquent of the people of their times. People, especially the downtrodden of the societies rallied behind them, not for their riches, for most of the Prophets were not wealthy, but for the superb eloquence they used in their speeches to inviting them to the truth. The main sources of their knowledge and wisdom were the revelations compiled as sacred scriptures. Of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the Bible, of its many versions, the old and new testaments, and especially the miraculous Qur’an are full of literary wonders. They are terse, yet full of metonyms, analogies and inspiring phrases to rouse the believers to confront the evils.

For instance, one of the chapters of the Bible states, “For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name be proclaimed in all the earth” (Exodus 9: 14-16). Verse 4, chapter 55 of the Qur’an mentions, “He has taught him an intelligent speech.” Almighty Allah has given human being the power of expression: the ability to understand clearly the relations among things and the capability to explain them. The messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself said, “I have been sent with the *jawami al kalim*” (Bukhari), i.e., comprehensive but concise language that is able to express host of meanings in a few words. He was known to keep himself to brevity and non-superfluous speech. Each word of these is a gem worthy of being written in gilt (Bulandshahri, 2005).

In the history of the Arabs, in futile efforts, to match the miraculous literature of the Qur’an and to out manoeuvre the eloquence of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the pagan Arab leaders, as part of their strategy, used to hire the best poets, oracles or orators available. Since strategy, as some school of thoughts conceive, equals to achieving the “ends,” through effective utilisation of correct “ways” and “means.” They, the pagan Arab military commanders, even strategize to include in their logistics singers, and poetess to employ them to use poems to ignite and instigate warriors to fight.

As said to be the norm in democracies, be it in the ancient civilized world as was in the Athenian democracy, or in the current systems of nation states of the Westphalia model, strategy cannot be implicit and has to be articulated, vetted through intense deliberations, debates, discourses, arguments to convince others that this is it. Pericles, noted Thucydides, enjoyed the company of the intellectuals. Notable among them was Protagoras, a self-proclaimed sophist — a “wise man” of the Athenian democracy. He was famous for his explorations into the proper use of language!

The part of the *Art of War* in the Athenian society was also to develop and apply “persuasive arts” (Leith, 2011). During the early stage of the Peloponnesian war, around 427 BCE, Gorgias came to Athens, where he displayed “rhetorical virtuosity.” “He saw words as equivalent to physical force.” (Freedman, 2013). He demonstrated how it was possible to make a feeble argument forceful through careful construction. Words can hurt, bring happiness as well. Some words can strike fear, usher hope, yet some words can stir the listeners to boldness, and some can shock and bewitch the soul with even evil persuasion.

The first Gulf War was code named “Desert Storm” (1991). One of the phases of the Iraq war (2003) was named, “Shock and Awe”; perhaps copied from the Qur’an (The Holy Qur’an 8:12). Even a single word used as rhetoric has strategic outcome. The recent landslide victory of the Labour Party ended fourteen years rule by the Conservative Party in Great Britain. The event has been accrued to a large extent, to a single oratory, “change,” to convince the voters. The Language Movement of 1952 is unique to us the Bangla speaking people, and of course is a case in point. Another glaring example of “language” effectively used as “strategic tool” was the historic seventh March speech given by Bangabandhu. It was not only electrifying and blazing oratory, but like the “strategic scripts” of Pericles, has been accepted worldwide as a “strategic guidance” to prosecute the glorious war of liberation. It is also believed to have inspired the then Major Zia (Later President) to declare the independence on 26 March 1971. Furthermore, the literary contribution of *Choromprotro* to inspire the freedom fighters cannot sufficiently be emphasized. The 2nd liberation of Bangladesh on 5 August 2024 with the fall of Sheikh Hasina’s government is yet another example of ‘Reverse’ or ‘Invert’ use of language as “strategic tool” by the then Prime Minister against the “correct” use of the language by this revolutionary

youngsters. Thus, apart from being a strategic tool, use of language and literature can historically be seen even as one of the 'lines of operations,' so to say as 'ways' and 'means' to achieve the lofty 'ends.'

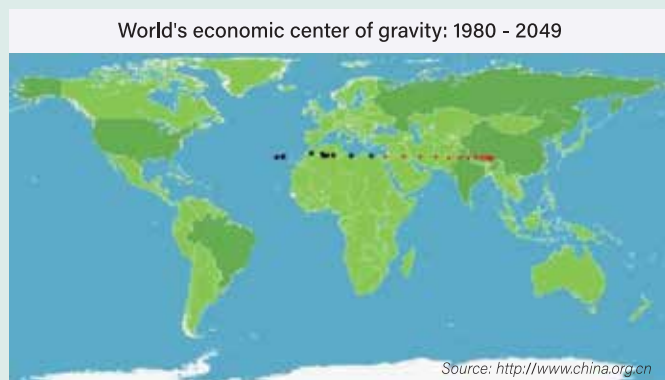


Figure 01: The World's Shifting Economic Center of Gravity. Black Dots Represent Movement from its 1980 Mid-Atlantic Position to the Present. Red Dots are Forward Projections to 2049

In, *The Future is Asian*, Parag Khanna visualizes "The Asianization of the World." Stipulating that diplomatic, economic and political leadership of the world for this century is shifting towards Asia. Likening him, this author specifies that "All our Fortunes are at Sea"; that "The Strategy of Blue Economy is Blue Economy." And that "Center of Gravity," (CoG) i.e., the *Schwerpunkt* as was coined by the Prussian born military theorist Clausewitz in his master work, *On War*, is the single most important 'Point,' the 'Hub of all Power' of a state must not be 'limited' in its understanding and application to the military affairs only, as some of the student of strategy inadvertently do. Rather it would be prudent to 'identify' all the ingredients of national power, and subsequently, 'select' the 'central' one as the CoG. To seize the initiative of the shifting from predominantly an agrarian economy, to an industrial economy mainly based on RMG, to a more sustainable 'Blue Economy.' Thus, the twenty first century maritime Bangladesh should select 'Blue Strategy' as the national strategy, where, the 'Blue Economy' is to be its CoG supported by 'Blue Diplomacy,' to secure 'Blue Security.'

Everyone needs a strategy, preached Freedman. The strategy of, if it can be said so, Blue Economy is tagged as part of "The Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP) 2100." The businesses originate from 'Blue Economy' are expected to overcome 'Red Queen Effect' and offer opportunities from the 'Blue Oceans' by maximizing 'Blue Profits' for sustainable socio-economic development of Bangladesh to achieve top priority agenda of the national interest, i.e., 'Blue Security.' On a brief analysis of the document, BDP 2100 appears that the policy laid and strategy articulated especially about the 'Blue Economy' sector deserves special mention. However, the timely implementation of the plan(s) remain a daunting task. Besides, Kim and Mauborgne advised that 'Red Oceans' are sometimes unavoidable, and 'Blue Oceans' might eventually turn Red! (Freedman, 2013). Therefore, this author suggests to add 'realism,' the 'realpolitik dimension

of the 'maritime security,' the 'maritime realpolitik' in the revised strategy paper of BDP 2100 within the broad framework to identify core national interests. Once added, the 'maritime realpolitik' in its spirit can address the current VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) international world order.

It may be strongly argued that the peaceful delimitation of the sea boundary with both Bangladesh's neighbours can be termed as a pragmatic realist approach to secure national interests. It was indeed a smart manifestation of 'Maritime Realpolitik.' The subsequent praiseworthy actions range from arranging an international seminar on Blue Economy in September 2014, to formation of the initiative named *Samudra Sampod Ahoron*, to establishing the Blue Economy cell, including crafting the BDP 2100. The 'Role of Language as a Strategic Instrument' – the 'Ocean Literacy,' to make 'Blue Economy' and its related diverse activities, more attractive and popular, especially to the general mass and entrepreneurs of different echelons appears to have underperformed. Native maritime experts posit that of the total Blue Economy prospect of about US \$24 trillion, only a meager 2.5% to 3.0% is currently being harnessed worldwide. Reaping proportionate benefits from such a great opportunity for our country is yet to be up to the mark. The present blue economic activities in Bangladesh need to be really revamped, and if needed restructured.

The crystalization of 'Blue Strategy,' 'Blue Economy,' 'Blue Profits,' 'Blue Diplomacy,' and 'Blue Security,' using the 'strategic instrument of language' needs to be professionally weighed using VMOSA (Vision, Mission, Objective, Strategy, Action Plan) template within the broader 'Maritime Realpolitik' framework of national interest. Maritimization of riverine Bangladesh seems to be the correct realist approach. Maritime Bangladesh of twenty first century must keep a lofty long term aspiration beyond the Bay of Bengal to secure all our national interest across the globe without losing medium and short term sight of the action plans to reap the 'Blue Profits,' of: 'longline tuna fishing,' 'marine plants,' 'offshore energy generation,' 'biotechnology,' 'sea weeds,' 'aquaculture,' 'shipping,' 'marine tourism,' 'shipbuilding,' 'shipbreaking' and many more.

In the fascinating New York Times bestseller, *Prisoners of Geography*, Tim Marshall considers Geography as a prison of sorts. "One that defines what a nation is or can be, and one from which our world leaders have often struggled to be free." (Marshall, 2015). Bangladesh is gifted with the heavenly bounty of the Bay of Bengal that not only saves Bangladesh from being imprisoned, but offers us all the resources to win over the primal competition breaking free from the "riverine and landlocked" shackles that still imprison our minds. As forward looking citizens, we must not lose hope, even to 'go in harm's ways' as was lamented by John Paul Jones.

Imitating Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate, let us embark on the strategic instrument, "language," to emphatically say in unison that Bangladesh is also very fond of the word "hope" for a golden Bengal. While the strategist aims for comedy but risks tragedy, and the dramatist knows from the

beginning whether (s)he is writing comedy or a tragedy: let the realist affirm that (s)he cannot be lover of wisdom “without sacrificng (wo)manly courage.”

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The Bible, KJV

The Noble Qur'an



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