

To,

National Security Advisor of Bangladesh

Summary

2025 IISS Shangri-La Dialogue Session 2 titled Regional Crisis-Management Mechanisms is particularly relevant for Bangladesh for two reasons. One, Bangladesh is currently facing a dilemma over the humanitarian corridor issue in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Two, one of the speakers in this session is General Mirza, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Pakistan Armed Forces, who addressed South Asian issues with the overall security dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region.

I found some ideas discussed in this session highly relevant to the current context of Bangladesh. The first idea is "strategic understanding must come before crisis management." Bangladesh needs to fully understand the possible impacts before opening a humanitarian corridor. Instead of rushing, Dhaka should carefully evaluate how the corridor might affect regional politics (especially with India and China), relations with Myanmar, national security, and long-term possibility of all Rohingya refugees going back to Myanmar.

The second concept "inclusion is not optional" is closely relevant to the politics of Bangladesh. The political parties are concerned that the corridor will make the country weak. I noticed there is a big scepticism towards this interim government about their legitimacy to finalise this critical issue. General Mirza mentioned that engagement with all political forces increases the chance of any critical policy being accepted. He also mentioned that sensitive issues do not succeed when there is skepticism.

My recommendation is that after discussing with all major political parties, Bangladesh could accept the humanitarian corridors with three conditions. Dhaka should push for drone-based aid delivery systems, independent monitoring systems, and weekly crisis communication procedures as conditions. The conditional acceptance creates space for supporting immediate humanitarian needs and can possibly position Bangladesh in a leadership role in South Asia's crisis-Management space.

Relevant Takeaways for Bangladesh

The discussion in session 2 highlighted the constraining nature of regional approaches. Speakers pointed out regional crisis management mechanisms as "fragile, reactive and unevenly institutionalized." This has effects for Bangladesh's corridor options by limiting mechanisms of support and advice. Unlike the Pacific Islands Forum, where "when someone is in need everyone comes to their aid", South Asia lacks the same kind of frameworks. Now, this leaves Bangladesh to take corridor-related choices with little regional input.

Another important takeaway is, the session mentioned possible technological advancements that can be directly applied to Bangladesh's corridor planning. Minister Beck explained the use of "uncrewed systems for humanitarian delivery in inaccessible areas." Using drone technology it is possible to deliver supplies to inaccessible communities in a safe

way. This kind of technology was initially developed for military use in Ukraine and can be successfully "translated into civilian response" for delivering supplies. The case in Ukraine is especially relevant to Myanmar's situation, as both entailed the delivery of relief in conflict areas where traditional ground access is interrupted by military barriers.

Policy Recommendations

Bangladesh should implement a three level strategy. Firstly, Bangladesh should support the UN Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian corridor, but with the condition of technological safeguards. Its implementation should be done with drone-based delivery systems, adopting Canada's successful model of uncrewed systems used in humanitarian interventions in inaccessible regions. This approach ensures that aid is provided to targeted recipients with minimal direct dealing with Myanmar's military government.

Second, Bangladesh should push for a robust regional crisis communication framework. The framework should incorporate multilingual hotline mechanisms modeled after the Pakistan-India Director General Military Operations communication protocol.

Finally, Bangladesh should leverage this corridor experience to lobby for comprehensive South Asian crisis management capacity. This initiative directly addresses General Mirza's quote's that "South Asia does not have this luxury available" regarding a gap of robust regional cooperation framework. Bangladesh can position itself as the regional leader for crisis response coordination.

These recommendations can possibly transform Bangladesh's obligation or dilemma into intelligent opportunities. This may place Dhaka in a position of leadership in South Asia, while effectively balancing trust issues from domestic political parties.

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