



RCAS Commentary

Toward Shared Prosperity for Bangladeshs

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About RCAS

香港亞洲研究中心| The Hong Kong Research Center for Asian Studies (RCAS) is a nonprofit research organization focusing on Asian affairs. It is a newly established institution founded in February 2022 by Dr. Nian Peng in Haikou and subsequently moved to Hong Kong in September 2023. We currently have an international research team with nearly 100 resident/nonresident researchers from China and other countries.

RCAS aims to become a leading research institute and think tank on Asian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. To date, RCAS has conducted research programs on maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS), China's relations with the Indo-Pacific states, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), terrorism/counterterrorism in the Afg-Pak region, and so on. It is committed to promoting maritime cooperation, regional integration, and regional peace in the Indo-Pacific region at large.

RCAS has published nearly ten books in Chinese and English and more than 20 papers in SSCI/SCOPUS/CSSCI-indexed journals. Recent English publications include *Populism, Nationalism and South China Sea Dispute: Chinese and Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2022); *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Contemporary Developments and Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2022); *Crossing the Himalayas: Buddhist Ties, Regional Integration and Great-Power Rivalry* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *The Reshaping of China-Southeast Asia Relations in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021); *Territorial Disputes, The Role of Leaders and The Impact of Quad: A Triangular Explanation of China-India Border Escalations* (2023); *Managing the South China Sea Dispute: Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches* (2022); *China-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan: Assessing Key Interests and Implementing Strategies* (2022); *Hedging Against the Dragon: Myanmar's Tangled Relations with China since 1988* (2021); and *China-Pakistan Conventional Arms Trade: An Appraisal of Supplier's and Recipient's Motives* (2020).

RCAS has also published hundreds of articles, and its researchers have been interviewed in various local and international media outlets, such as *The Diplomat* in the United States, *East Asian Forum (EAF)* in Australia, *Bangkok Post* in Thailand, *Jakarta Post* in Indonesia, *Lian He Zao Bao*, *Think China* in Singapore, *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, *China-US Focus* in Hong Kong, *CGTN*, *Global Times*, *World Affairs* in China. RCAS researchers have actively participated in international conferences or study visits in the United States, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other places.

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China-proposed initiative can serve as a platform for the Asian country to learn from and engage in sustainable development and poverty eradication.



▲ Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Tarique Rahman arrives in Beijing, capital of China, after he attended the 2026 Summer Davos forum in the city of Dalian, on June 24, 2026. Tarique Rahman is in China for an official visit from June 24 to 26. (Xinhua/Jin Liangkuai).

With the rise of geopolitical competition and emerging economic fragmentation in a world of climate change, food insecurity and rising inequalities, the challenge is not just about growth, but about growth in a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient way. China's Global Development Initiative needs to be infused with renewed vigor in this context, particularly in Bangladesh.

The initiative was proposed by President Xi Jinping at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021, calling for improving the global development process and helping the UN achieve its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Importantly, the Global Development Initiative is not an attempt to replace or reword the SDGs. Rather, it seeks to advance their on-the-ground work through international cooperation, focusing on priority areas, including poverty eradication, food security, public health, development finance, climate change and green development, and industrialization and digital connectivity.

In recent years, China has evolved its Global Development Initiative from a proposal into a comprehensive international development cooperation agenda. To understand the importance of the GDI for Bangladesh, it is essential to identify concrete areas of cooperation between China and Bangladesh. The projects supported by China have improved infrastructure connectivity, expanded energy supply and created employment in the country. Besides, cooperation in agriculture, disaster management, health and green development can increase the possibilities for improving local livelihoods.

This is an important space of potential synergy in the field of poverty reduction and inclusive development. Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in reducing poverty in the past few decades, yet inequality, informal employment, regional disparities, vulnerability to economic shocks, and climate change remain. China's poverty alleviation efforts have been a success, sparking international interest. In a white paper titled "Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution" released by China's State Council Information Office, it stated that by the end of 2020, all 98.99 million rural people — as defined by the then-current standards — had been lifted out of poverty. Some of the experiences in rural development, agricultural productivity, vocational training, infrastructure development, digital public services and poverty reduction that have been successfully implemented in China could be beneficial for Bangladesh.

Another promising area could be food security, a persistent national issue given Bangladesh's large population, small arable areas and exposure to floods, cyclones and other climatic hazards. Technology cooperation in agriculture, irrigation, food processing, the cold chain, improved seeds, agricultural mechanization, and other areas of digital agriculture can boost Bangladesh's food systems. More broadly, the learning and poverty-reduction practices promoted in China can be shared with other developing countries through South-South learning and cooperation.

Public health is also crucial. Though there is significant improvement in health indicators in Bangladesh, urbanization, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, environmental challenges and humanitarian crises remain ongoing. Medical technology, pharmaceutical manufacturing, health infrastructure, disease surveillance and digital health could help create more robust health systems through collaboration. The provision of food assistance to around 45,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar through the World Food Programme in 2025 is one example of China's humanitarian engagement in Bangladesh. Development financing is one of the most critical areas of

cooperation to consider in this context of the Global Development Initiative. Bangladesh requires huge investment to enhance its transport, energy, water management, industrial infrastructure and climate-resilient infrastructure.

In Bangladesh, green development and climate resilience are significant issues. Bangladesh is one of the most climate-sensitive countries in the world and requires substantial investment in flood management, river restoration, renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure development and disaster preparedness. China also welcomed the feasibility study work on the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project in Bangladesh.

Another area of natural convergence is industrialization. The country's efforts to attain upper-middle-income status and graduate from the category of least developed countries call for a shift in the economy from relatively low-cost manufacturing to high-productivity, technology-intensive industries. Possible Chinese support includes technology transfer, industrial supply chains, vocational education, manufacturing investment and integration into regional production networks.

One of the most future-oriented parts of the partnership seems to be the digital economy. Bangladesh has developed a digital economy at a fast pace, and China has developed capabilities in electronic goods, electronic payments, telecom, AI and smart infrastructure. Cooperation can drive Bangladesh's knowledge economy toward greater competitiveness through digital connectivity, fintech, artificial intelligence and digital skills. This can help boost financial inclusion, enhance digital services, create technology-based jobs, and enable small and medium-sized enterprises to reach broader markets and boost the local economy. More technology transfer and the development of local skills are needed, and digital cooperation should involve Bangladeshi companies, thus helping establish sustainable capacities within the country.

During the China visit of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in June 2026, the two sides agreed to further strengthen ties in connectivity, technology innovation, information and communications, green energy, the photovoltaic industry, disaster mitigation and climate change.

China's Global Development Initiative can serve as a platform for Bangladesh to learn from China and engage in sustainable development and poverty eradication. It most clearly holds the promise of linking infrastructure to human development, economic development to environmental sustainability and bilateral cooperation to the global agenda of shared prosperity. Now the challenge for Bangladesh is to translate this potential into inclusive, transparent and sustainable outcomes with Bangladesh's development interests at the heart of international cooperation.

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About Author



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