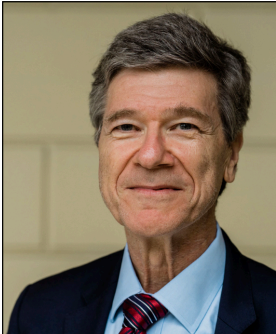


# Accusations of US Regime-Change Operations in Pakistan and Bangladesh Warrant UN Attention

The very strong evidence of the U.S. role in toppling the government of Imran Khan in Pakistan raises the likelihood that something similar may have occurred in Bangladesh.

by Jeffrey D. Sachs,\* USA



Jeffrey D. Sachs (Picture Gabriella C. Marino, 2019)

Two former leaders of major South Asian countries have reportedly accused the United States of covert regime change operations to topple their governments. One of the leaders, former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, languishes in prison, on a perverse conviction that proves Khan's assertion. The other leader, former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, fled to India following a violent coup in her country. Their grave accusations against the U.S., as reported in the world media, should be investigated by the UN, since if true, the U.S. actions would constitute a fundamental threat to world peace and to regional stability in South Asia.

The two cases seem to be very similar. The very strong evidence of the U.S. role in toppling the government of Imran Khan raises the likelihood that something similar may have occurred in Bangladesh.

## Pakistan

In the case of Pakistan, Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia and Central Asia, met with *Asad Majeed Khan*, Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., on March 7, 2022. Ambassador Khan immediately wrote back to his capital, conveying Lu's warning that PM Khan threatened U.S.-Pakistan relations because of Khan's "aggressively neutral position" regarding Russia and Ukraine.

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UN General Assembly. (Picture ma)

The Ambassador's March 7 note (technically a diplomatic cypher) quoted Assistant Secretary Lu as follows: "I think if the no-confidence vote against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington because the Russia visit is being looked at as a decision by the Prime Minister. Otherwise, I think it will be tough going ahead." The very next day, members of the parliament took procedural steps to oust PM Khan.

On March 27, PM Khan brandished the cypher, and told his followers and the public that the U.S. was out to bring him down. On April 10, PM Khan was thrown out of office as the parliament acceded to the U.S. threat.

We know this in detail because of Ambassador Khan's cypher, exposed by PM Khan and *brilliantly documented by Ryan Grim of The Intercept*,<sup>1</sup> including the text of the cypher. Absurdly and tragically, PM Khan languishes in prison in part over espionage charges, linked to his revealing the cypher.

## Bangladesh

The U.S. appears to have played a similar role in the recent violent coup in Bangladesh. PM Hasina was ostensibly toppled by student unrest and fled to India when the Bangladeshi military refused to prevent the protestors from storming the government offices. Yet there may well be much more to the story than meets the eye.

According to *press reports in India*,<sup>2</sup> PM Hasina is claiming that the U.S. brought her down. Specifically, she says that the U.S. removed her from

power because she refused to grant the U.S. military facilities in a region that is considered strategic for the U.S. in its “Indo-Pacific Strategy” to contain China. While these are second-hand accounts by the Indian media, they track closely several speeches and statements that *Hasina has made over the past two years*.<sup>3</sup>

On May 17, 2024, the same Assistant Secretary Liu who played a lead role in toppling PM Khan, *visited Dhaka*<sup>4</sup> to discuss the US Indo-Pacific Strategy among other topics. Days later, Sheikh Hasina reportedly summoned the leaders of the 14 parties of her alliance to make the startling claim that a “country of white-skinned people”<sup>5</sup> was trying to bring her down, ostensibly telling the leaders that she refused to compromise her nation’s sovereignty. Like Imran Khan, PM Hasina had been pursuing a foreign policy of neutrality, including constructive relations not only with the U.S. but also with China and Russia, much to the deep consternation of the U.S. government.

To add credence to Hasina’s charges, Bangladesh had delayed signing two military agreements that the U.S. had pushed very hard since 2022, indeed by none other than the former Under-Secretary of State *Victoria Nuland*,<sup>6</sup> the neocon hardliner with her own storied history of U.S. regime-change operations. One of the draft agreements, the *General Security of Military Information Agreement* (GSOMIA), would bind Bangladesh to closer military-to-military cooperation with Washington. The Government of PM Hasina was clearly not enthusiastic to sign it.

The U.S. is by far the world’s leading practitioner of regime-change operations, yet the U.S. flatly denies its role in covert regime change operations even when caught red-handed, as with Nuland’s *infamous intercepted phone call*<sup>7</sup> in late January 2014 planning the U.S.-led regime change operation in Ukraine. It is useless to appeal to the U.S. Congress, and still less the executive branch, to investigate the claims by PM Khan and PM Hasina. Whatever the truth of the matter, they will deny and lie as necessary.

### UN should step in

This is where the UN should step in. Covert regime change operations are blatantly illegal under international law (notably the Doctrine of Non-Intervention, as expressed for example in *UN General Assembly Resolution 2625*,<sup>8</sup> 1970),



and constitute perhaps the greatest threat to world peace, as they profoundly destabilize nations, and often lead to wars and other civil disorders. The UN should investigate and expose covert regime change operations, both in the interests of reversing them, and preventing them in the future.

The *UN Security Council* is of course specifically charged under Article 24 of the UN Charter with “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security”. When evidence arises that a government has been toppled through the intervention or complicity of a foreign government, the UN Security Council should investigate the claims.

In the cases of Pakistan and Bangladesh, the UN Security Council should seek the direct testimony of PM Khan and PM Hasina in order to evaluate the evidence that the U.S. played a role in the overthrow of the governments of these two leaders. Each, of course, should be protected by the UN for giving their testimony, so as to protect them from any retribution that could follow their honest presentation of the facts. Their testimony can be taken by video conference, if necessary, given the tragic ongoing incarceration of PM Khan.

The U.S. might well exercise its veto in the UN Security Council to prevent such an investigation. In that case, the UN General Assembly can take up the matter, under *UN Resolution A/RES/76*,<sup>9</sup> which allows the UN General Assembly to consider an issue blocked by veto in the UN Security Council.

The issues at stake could then be assessed by the entire membership of the UN. The veracity of

the U.S. involvement in the recent regime changes in Pakistan and Bangladesh could then be objectively analyzed and judged on the evidence, rather than on mere assertions and denials.

The U.S. engaged in at least 64 covert regime change operations during 1947-1989, according to documented research by *Lindsey O'Rourke*,<sup>10</sup> political science professor at Boston College, and several more that were overt (e.g. by U.S.-led war). It continues to engage in regime-change operations with shocking frequency to this day, toppling governments in all parts of the world. It is wishful thinking that the U.S. will abide by international law on its own, but it is not wishful thinking for the world community, long suffering from U.S. regime change operations, to demand their end at the United Nations.

Source: <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/regime-change-pakistan-bangladesh>, 19 August 2024

<sup>1</sup> <https://theintercept.com/2023/08/09/imran-khan-pakistan-cypher-ukraine-russia/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/sheikh-hasina-big-charge-against-us-in-undelivered-speech-message-to-students-2580591-2024-08-11>

<sup>3</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2024/08/the-bad-blood-between-sheikh-hasina-and-the-us/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/749258>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/565b5f2d38e3>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.commondreams.org/tag/victoria-nuland>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26079957>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1970/en/19494>

<sup>9</sup> <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/330/37/pdf/n2233037.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/Covert-Regime-Change-Americas-Security/dp/1501730657>