



Boat Bridge Diplomacy: Redefining Statecraft through Domestic Consolidation

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: January 27, 2025
Revised: February 26, 2025
Accepted: March 01, 2025
Available Online: March 04, 2025

Keywords:

Boat Bridge Diplomacy, Anshan Model, internal consolidation, global diplomacy, strategic governance, economic resilience, soft power, diplomatic leverage, international engagement, geopolitical strategy.

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ABSTRACT

Boat Bridge Diplomacy presents a transformative approach to international relations by shifting diplomatic strategy from an outward focus to an inward one. This concept, operationalized through the Anshan Model, asserts that a state's global influence is directly proportional to its internal strength. Unlike conventional diplomacy, which prioritizes external engagements, Boat Bridge Diplomacy emphasizes domestic stability, economic resilience, governance, and social cohesion as prerequisites for effective global positioning. The model draws inspiration from historical boat bridges, where individual boats are securely tied together before they are launched into the water. Similarly, states must first consolidate their internal foundations—governance, economy, human rights, rule of law, security, and soft power—before engaging in international diplomacy. This strategy enables states to reduce vulnerabilities, enhance their bargaining power, and cultivate stronger alliances without over-reliance on external actors. Boat Bridge Diplomacy challenges traditional diplomatic models by arguing that a state struggling with internal instability cannot sustain credible international engagements. By fostering economic reforms, strengthening institutions, and ensuring political stability, states can attract foreign investments, secure favourable trade agreements, and assert their geopolitical influence. Furthermore, this approach mitigates the risks of external manipulation, as a well-governed state is less susceptible to coercion or economic dependencies. The Anshan Model provides a structured framework for implementing this strategy, guiding states through internal reforms before they step onto the global stage. This model does not advocate isolationism; rather, it promotes strategic and well-prepared engagement. By ensuring all domestic elements are interconnected and resilient, states can navigate global challenges with confidence, creating a foundation for sustainable diplomatic success.



1. Background and Context

In the international arena, State tends to engage in diplomacies and shape their foreign policies to counter another rival. There is a tendency of an outward focus in diplomacy, either using centuries-old methods of developing allies or embracing new cooperation (Khalid and Ahmad 2024). States normally engage with each other in the international space by taking direct positions on areas of joint or collective significance. This external engagement can take the shape of bilateral negotiations, international organizations and alliances to protect its own interests. These conventional diplomatic techniques largely favour attempting to change the behaviour of others, whether through persuasion, coercion, or negotiation. Although these outward-looking strategies have conditioned global order, they tend to neglect the extent to which a state's internal equilibrium and advancement are significant to a state's balance. The external ambitions if disconnected from domestic realities, may make it difficult for a state to achieve lasting diplomatic success. States may make a lesser impact on the international stage, struggle to win allies, and have difficulty garnering ongoing respect as they continue to grapple with unanswered domestic questions. Vulnerability in one part of a state leads to vulnerability in its external projection of power, especially if the internal maladies have deep origins in the economy, politics or social structure (El-Dessouki 2018). Thus, the outward looking in foreign affair has left a gap where the internal shortcomings are neglected. States tends to form alliances and develop their international relations without putting their own houses in order. The need to rush to respond to external threats or external opportunities takes higher precedence for most states than addressing fundamental failures at home (Head 2022). While this methods yields short term benefits, it does not serves to provide a long term stronger base of inter connectivity, cooperation and better opportunities.

With stable domestic politics and secure base as the bedrock a state can leverage on global events effectively (Brand Finance 2020). Stability provides a safe climate for governance and economic growth, tend to be attract partners for investment. A strong economy and an investor-friendly environment backed by economic reforms, reduced bureaucratic inefficiencies, and innovation bring regional and global economic dominance helps to improve a state's international image when (Sarwar 2024). The institutional competence in enforcing international norms generates trust with foreign investors and international allies, being key to long-stable economic and diplomatic partnerships (Abbott & Snidal, 2021). In addition investments in human capital, governance, infrastructure, Education, maintenance of human rights and rule of law improves states' soft power and value of credibility in diplomacy which also have a determined impact on global governance and sustainable development (El-Dessouki 2018). A stable governance system encourages active presence and participation in multilateral organizations, which in turn reinforces a nation's stance in the configuration of transnational and global standards, without compromising its strategic position (Zumkeller, Chlond and Manz 2004). Germany, for example has set an ideal model of rising economically through a series of mammoth reforms in the internal locus, thus representing how the stable in-house ecosystem converts itself into diplomatic luminescence, thus underscores the indispensable role of domestic dynamism in international amphitheatre (Butcher 2024).

Hence, in the modern world also called global village will the domestic issues can be observed globally manifolds. The internal vulnerabilities and shortcomings of a state will have a negative impact on its global standing. For example, the state having Human Rights abuses or internal stability issues, a state cannot have strong voice in the international affairs (Express Tribune 2013). So, internal situation has a direct impact on a countries international standing and addressing these loopholes should be the cornerstone of a countries foreign policy. Thus, a new form of diplomacy will focus inwards rather that outwards. The concept introduces putting own house in order before

engaging at global stage. State like a magnified man (Murley 1941) will earn his respectable position amongst the locality (Global Politics) by correcting its own self rather than targeting vulnerabilities and weaknesses of others. By ensuring a strong domestic environment, the state shall have less vulnerabilities, stronger voice and better standing on international podium. This concept will be known as **Anshanism**¹, the model will be called Anshan Model and the diplomatic approach used as a foreign policy will be called **Boat Bridge Diplomacy** and that will ensure all preparation completed before sailing the bridge into water.

2. Boat Bridge Diplomacy

2.1. Description

Boat bridges are a historical way of crossing water obstacle by building a bridge through tying boats to each other on the home bank before sailing them into the water to form a passage to the other end. The aim would be achieved by careful preparation and tying all knots together before the boats were sailed into the water at home bank. Any untied knot or a damaged boat would have impact and thus jeopardising the ultimate goal. Similarly, boats have been referred to internal vulnerabilities and tying them together to form a bridge are the step to address these weakness at home end. By addressing the weakness before sailing water (global politics), a state can achieve its ultimate goal of maintain a stronger foreign policy, Loud voice and firm standing at the international rostrum. The boats required for formulating the bridge may include attraction through Soft power, governance, Internal Stability, Rule of Law, Human Rights, Strong economy, ease of doing business, standard education system and a strong hard power. This does not mean isolationism or retreat from the world stage rather, it calls for a gradual and cautious approach where a state builds favourable domestic environment which provides a platform of stability, credibility and attraction for it to project its influence offshore. Hence facilitating a more pronounced status in the international system and assuring stronger international relations.

2.2. Implications on Internal Affairs

2.2.1. Governance and Political Stability. A solid governance framework forms the basis of stability and state a state to play a role in international affairs (Ivanyna and Salerno 2021). The Boat Bridge Diplomacy highlights institutional robustness being a prerequisite for sound foreign policy. Political stability depends on the presence of transparent legal systems with systems equipped with the efficiency to serve citizens and accountable leadership. A state that concentrates on domestic governance to reduce corruption, mismanagement, and political instigation will ultimately supports national unity and validates state authority (Cheema 2005). Such a state has a better reputation internationally, which increases the leverage of its multilateral negotiations (Tocci 2017).

2.2.2. Economic Growth and Resilience. A strong economy sets the stage for a state's global influence (Pereira 2005). The investor-friendly environment of a country provides opportunities for foreign investments thus ensuring good economic relations. This can be achieved by overcoming bureaucratic inefficiencies, enacting economic reform, and encouraging industrial development work to diversify the economy, thus reducing vulnerability to global financial crises (Abdelkawy 2024). In addition, economic independence allows a state to enter trading partnerships on more favourable terms, rather than seeking external economic support that usually carries diplomatic restrictions. A booming domestic economy fuels technological innovation and

¹Name is an acronym derived from initials of author's father (Anwaar) and mother (Shahnaz) names.

industrial development, decreasing dependence on foreign expertise and increasing a state's global competitiveness (Gyamfi, Q. Agozie and Bekun 2022).

2.2.3.Social Cohesion and Human Capital Development. Social stability is an essential component of national strength. Addressing social disparities, improving access to quality education, and ensuring equitable economic opportunities foster national unity and resilience (F. Runde, Bandura and McLean 2023). By investing in education, vocational training, and healthcare, states can develop a skilled and productive workforce, which in turn strengthens their soft power and diplomatic credibility (Asad Ullah, et al. 2024). Countries with strong human capital are better positioned to compete in the global knowledge economy and attract high-value industries. Additionally, states that focus on social justice and equality prevent internal divisions that could be exploited by external actors, reducing risks of foreign interference (Ivanyna and Salerno 2021).

2.2.4.Security and Internal Stability. Internal security is directly linked to a state's ability to maintain sovereignty and project power internationally. By strengthening law enforcement agencies, intelligence operations, and legal frameworks, states can prevent internal unrest, insurgencies, and organized crime. A stable internal security environment reduces the likelihood of foreign interventions, as external powers often exploit internal conflicts and governance failures to advance their own interests (Cheema 2005). Moreover, a secure environment encourages economic growth, as businesses and investors are more likely to operate in politically and socially stable regions (Sarwar 2024). States that achieve internal security can allocate more resources to strategic global engagements rather than domestic crisis management.

2.3. Implications on External Affairs

2.3.1.Diplomatic Strength and Credibility. A state's influence in global affairs is often dictated by its internal stability and governance capacity. When a country has a strong domestic foundation, it is better positioned to take an active role in international organizations, trade negotiations, and global security arrangements (Duncan Snida, et al. 2024). The ability to maintain a firm stance on international policies without external pressure increases a state's diplomatic credibility. States that fail to resolve internal issues often find their diplomatic positions weakened, as their global counterparts may question their reliability and governance strength (Weiss 2022). Thus, Boat Bridge Diplomacy ensures that a nation enters the global stage from a position of strength, rather than vulnerability.

2.3.2.Global Economic Standing and Trade Relations. A state that has successfully strengthened its economy domestically is more likely to become a preferred trade partner in the international market. Stable financial policies, clear-cut trade regulations, and strong industrial bases provides competitive bases to a nation in global market. (Bertrand, et al. 2024). A diversified economy would safeguard states from relying on the other nations and organisations for economic survival where aids comes from compromises, thus reducing its external vulnerabilities and providing a strong economic platform to enter trade agreements with others (Till Schöfer and Clara Weinhardt 2022).

2.3.3.Military and Strategic Security. A stable governance system paired with a strong economic base enables increased investments on defence forces modernization, cyber security and intelligence operations (Tocci 2017). It improves national defence system thus ensuring strength of a state to maintain its order in regional and global security issues. A state that has managed to resolve internal conflicts and governance failures is less vulnerable to foreign meddling or military intervention (Rohner 2024). Such a state can speak from a position of strength and

contribute in global affairs. The advancement in armaments can enhance economy and provide good opportunities for investment as well.

2.3.4. Multilateral Engagement and Global Influence. States with greater domestic stability, economic resilience, soft power and hard power are in a stronger position to engage with multilateral institutions, trade organizations, and international forums (Abdelkawy 2024). A strong domestic environment will enable a state to have a meaningful role in shaping global policy, maintain peace and developing global norms. In addition, investment in soft power factor such as culture, education and innovation extends influence even without military supremacy (Brand Finance 2020).

The ***Boat Bridge Diplomacy and Anshanism*** introduces diplomacy by concentrating internally rather than externally for a strong foreign policy and global standing. While ***Anshan model*** will provide a guidelines for its implementation. This will allow states to consolidate their diplomatic leverage, economic resilience, and projection of power by maximizing their governance, economic, social, and internal security strengths. It does not call for isolationism but for careful, prudent global engagements premised on a solid domestic foundation. A state, which is internally cohesive, economically robust, and institutionally strong is enabled to manage international affairs with confidence, credibility and strength.

3. Application of Boat Bridge Strategy – The Anshan² Model

The purported Anshan Model, of both rallying inwardly and engaging diplomatically with an outward focus, provides an overarching strategic imperative for states looking to fortify their status along the geopolitical plates. The model is structured so that strong internal development (of governance, economy, soft and hard power, social stability, etc.) precedes international engagement. This model offers a long-term plan for sustainable diplomatic success which ensures that a nation's global engagements are impactful, durable and strategically advantageous.

3.1. Steps for Implementation

The successful operationalisation of the Anshan Model of Boat Bridge Diplomacy requires states to follow a phased and systematic pursuit of internal consolidation. Internal reform: Identify weaknesses, rank which reforms will bring the most growth, and ensure they are effectively implemented; establish international relationships of mutual benefit.

3.1.1. Assessing Internal Weaknesses. Some suggest these weaknesses will include political instability, weak governance, an underdeveloped economy, and impoverished infrastructure, underperforming education systems, violations of human rights or inadequate defence capabilities. Assessing the state's strengths and weaknesses through an internal diagnostic is key in pinpointing the gap between where the state is and where it aspires to be and what areas it needs to focus on for improvement. Internal assessments can be conducted through national audits, consultations and expert opinions, as well as compared with the best practices from other states. Key areas to assess include:

3.1.1.1. Political stability: Evaluating the quality of governance, accountability, and the rule of law.

² Name is an acronym derived from initials of author's father (Anwaar) and mother (Shahnaz) names.

3.1.1.2. Economic performance: Measuring growth, market efficiency, trade policies, investment climate, and joblessness.

3.1.1.3. Human capital: The affordability and quality of education, healthcare and social services, and the availability of skilled labour.

3.1.1.4. Security framework: Internal defence capabilities and security machinery.

3.1.1.5. Cultural and diplomatic relations: Those means tested in terms of how the state is perceived overseas, its relationship with the diaspora and productive cultural projection.

3.1.2. Setting Priorities. After completing the assessment, a set of priorities must be established. Therefore, some prioritization of sectors that need reform badly may be necessary as it may not be feasible to address all at once. A state grappling with corruption may seek political and governance reforms; a state facing needless economic deprivation might focus on improving factors in its market and attracting foreign direct investment.

3.1.3. Reformation. Once priorities have been established, the Anshan Model calls for targeting reforms in specific sectors that were identified in the assessment. These reforms must be designed to reduce the volatility, opacity and dysfunction of the domestic field and provide the necessary groundwork for future international engagement.

3.1.3.1. Governance Reforms: Boat Bridge Diplomacy is all about governance. However, proactively strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring accountability, and promoting transparency can enhance a state's soft power immeasurably. States facing with problems of corruption, ineffective bureaucracy or lack of public trust needs to resolve the issues first.

3.1.3.2. Economic Reforms: So a strong and competitive economy is required to execute influence on a global scale. Markets must open for foreign investment, infrastructure must be developed, and entrepreneurs must be encouraged.

3.1.3.3. Social Reforms: In order for Boat Bridge Strategy to work its magic, a state must care about the quality of life of its people. This also means guaranteeing access to quality education, healthcare and social services. States can better position themselves to become attractive trade partners for their foreign counterparts by specializing in social welfare and human capital.

3.1.4. International Engagements by Building Alliances without Overreliance on External Forces: With reforms implemented and all knots tied at home the boat Bridge is all set to sail and reach the other end, at this point state can indulge into international politics by creating international alliances based on reciprocal privileges not by depending on outside forces. Although alliances and partnerships are indispensable tools for states to engage with the world, overdependence on any particular foreign power or coalition of countries threatens a state's independence and negotiating clout. This relationship is important because strategic partnerships are a key component of the Anshan Model which focuses on building and maintaining relationships with countries from different regions and different sectors. These partnerships must be based on shared values, interests, and economic complementarities. State with invested in renewable energy infrastructure, for instance, may establish partnerships with countries at the leading edge of climate technology. Analogously, a region that has a burgeoning tech industry can forge partnerships with global tech behemoths to share experience, human resources, and other assets. This will enable a state to ensure sovereignty and develop its diplomatic power by gaining partners through persuasion and strength thus playing an active, balanced role in the international system.

4. Challenges

Boat Bridge Diplomacy and Anshanism may face some challenges reroute. Conflict can arise from many sources to include domestic politics, costs of reform, and some foreign opposition from dominant states. A few challenges are as follows:-

4.1. Domestic Political Resistance and Inertia. The first challenge is domestic political resistance and inertia. Reformers often face resistance from entrenched elites within organizations who perceive reform as harmful to their authority, power, along with control on the system in place (Mortimer 2021). In numerous states, and especially those which are authoritarian or clientelist-driven, initiatives to establish transparency, accountability, and efficiency are vigorously resisted. Political actors who have benefited from the status quo may oppose reforms that curtail their discretion or expose historically harmful behaviour. Public scepticism can complicate reform efforts, especially in societies that have already witnessed broken promises of change. Consequently, political inertia becomes the most critical impediment to freezing or stalling any policy necessary for maintaining homeostasis and systemic growth.

4.2. Short-term Costs of Internal Reforms. The cost of reforms to the internal structure up front is one major obstacle. But even though long-term reforms deliver huge dividends they can also be costly and socially painful to implement in the short term and therefore test the limits of resources and people's patience (M. Ayhan Kose and Franziska Ohnsorge 2024). New arrangements could initially aggravate inflation, unemployment or temporary market fluctuations. It requires the establishment of some new oversight institutions, which is a prerequisite for implementing anti-corruption measures; costly in terms of time, money, and trained personnel, etc. Similarly, investing in infrastructure, education and healthcare requires long-term financial commitments that can burden national budgets. The lag between when changes are put in place and when they start to pay off is hard on public patience and support for the reform agenda, and political leadership is difficult at best.

4.3. Potential External Resistance to a Rising State. The final challenge is potential outside opposition to a rising nation. Any arrangement may not stand on contracts to give up internal strength but rather similar reference points at the international arena. Such external actors may utilize a host of methods to undermine the growing power of the state, be it through diplomatic isolation, economic embargoes, or assistance for the domestic opposition. But in geopolitically contested regions, rising states may be a target of disinformation campaigns aimed at weakening their domestic solidarity and international credibility. External resistance based on strategic rivalries and competition needs to be proactively managed by vying new diplomatic relations and building strategic partnerships.

5. Conclusion

The Boat Bridge Diplomacy concept, clear in the form of the Anshan Model, emphasizes the need for internal consolidation, representing the starting point for sustainable external impact. States aspiring for global stature will need to first address deficiencies in governance, economy, soft power, or social stability before assuming more activist positions in foreign policy realms. When a state turns inward, it builds a strong foundation which strengthens its global status and enhances the ability to coerce and forge international relations.

It stresses the importance of a period of internal stability and self-strengthening as a prerequisite for creating a global net of dependency. Countries that invest in effective governance, economic

diversification, military preparedness, and social development create a milieu in which the rest of the world is more likely to pursue positive, constructive relationships. When these internal improvements are done strategically, they place a state as an attractive partner for investment, trade and diplomatic cooperation.

Moreover Boat Bridge Strategy stresses that global relations should not be reactive or only based on external relations, but should be also based on solid internal platform. Actions in foreign diplomacy by the states, in spite of their internal weaknesses, may go a long way in undermining their credibility and image. This model from the Myanmar example highlights that internal reforms should be prioritized and necessary for the success and sustenance of diplomatic or economic engagement.

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