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## **India Bangladesh relations in the Post Cold War Period: a study of conflict and cooperation**

Dr. Anil Kumar Sarowa  
Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Government Arts College, Sikar (Raj )

### **Abstract:**

*Despite the fact that geographically India and Bangladesh have the neighboring region's longest border, the two countries' bilateral relations have, over the course of the last four decades, experienced a variety of highs and lows. They were able to prevail through a period of turbulent circumstances to emerge as close partners on the way to advancement and development. Today, they are in a position where they are poised. India and Bangladesh are both politically indispensable to each other due to the historical and cultural ties, economic interdependence, and geostrategic interests between the two countries. Since the beginning of the new phase in January 2010, the trajectory of the two countries has been shifting toward one of increased collaboration.*

**Keywords:** Bangladesh, India, Relations

### **Introduction**

During the time of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, when the Awami League was in power in Bangladesh (between 1972 and 1974), ties between Bangladesh and India reached their best point. Since that time, these ties have been lurching from one extreme to the other for a variety of reasons, including shifts in Bangladeshi political leadership and political climate, as well as India's uncooperative stance toward Bangladesh. On the other hand, due to the fact that both nations' prime ministers have been to the territory of the other in recent years with the intention of fortifying their bilateral ties, relations between the two countries have significantly improved over the last decade (during the two terms of Awami League administration between 1996-2001 and 2009-2015). Because of the collaborative efforts made by both parties during this time period, previously unresolved issues such as land enclaves, marine borders, and boundary delineation have been brought to a successful conclusion. In this study, a critical analysis of the future relations between Bangladesh and India is conducted by investigating the obstacles and possibilities that will play a role in determining the trajectory of the connections between the two nations. In it, the history and current state of relations between Bangladesh and India are analyzed, and appropriate solutions to unresolved problems, such as trade imbalances, disagreements over water sharing at the Farakka and Teesta Barrages, and problems with transit and transshipment, are suggested. This is done with the goal of enhancing the bilateral ties between the two nations for the sake of future mutual benefits. This report will limit its focus to

significant concerns that remain unsolved for both nations throughout its whole. By "signing a treaty of friendship, peace and co-operation with India on March 19, 1972," Bangladesh acknowledged India's involvement for its active military assistance during the Liberation War of 1971. This was done in appreciation for Bangladesh's ability to maintain continuing cordial ties. The killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975 marked the beginning of the decline in relations between Bangladesh and India, which manifested itself in the form of open conflicts and distrust as a result of political shifts in both countries. Therefore, controversial problems like as trade imbalance, transit and transshipment concerns, water sharing disagreements at Farakka and Teesta Barrages, delineation of maritime boundaries, and border conflicts have not been resolved. However, since Bangladesh's Awami League (AL), which is currently led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was elected in 1996, ties between Bangladesh and India have significantly improved. However, "the entire spectrum of relations between the two countries has significantly deteriorated" since the election of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) in 2001. In spite of this, since Sheikh Hasina came to office in 2009, these connections have seen a major improvement and have taken on a new dimension. The fact that Bangladesh is hemmed in on all three sides by India is a consequence of the country's location, as seen in the map below. It has been suggested that India's status as a regional superpower will give it a domineering position over Bangladesh, which might have repercussions for the country's economy, national security, and other concerns.

### **India-Bangladesh Relations**

India was the first nation in the world to recognize Bangladesh as a distinct and independent state. In addition, India was the first nation to instantly establish diplomatic ties with Bangladesh when the country gained its independence in December 1971. India and Bangladesh have many things in common, including their histories, cultures, and languages, as well as their commitment to democratic ideals and secularism, which forms the basis of their relationship. It goes much beyond the concept of a strategic partnership since it is founded on sovereignty, equality, trust, mutual understanding, and win-win partnerships. Over the course of the past several years, the connection has become even closer thanks in large part to increased collaboration in emerging and cutting-edge technological fields.

### **High Level Visits and Exchanges**

There have been frequent visits and conversations between officials from both nations at the highest levels. In addition to this, there have been a number of frequent visits at the ministerial level, as well as regular visits between top officials. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Made a State Visit to India on April 7-10, 2017. During the course of the visit, 36 bilateral documents were signed in a variety of fields, including high-technology fields such as Civil Nuclear Energy, Space, Information Technology, Defense, and Capacity Building, amongst

others. Another line of credit (LOC) in the amount of 4.5 billion US dollars was made available to Bangladesh. During a memorial service held in honor of Indian soldiers who died during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the two Prime Ministers presided over the event. Before making this trip, Prime Minister Hasina had previously traveled to India on October 16-17, 2016, in order to take part in the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit. On June 6 and 7, 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi traveled to Bangladesh on an official state visit. During the visit, an exchange of instruments of ratification for the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) and a 2nd Line of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 2 billion were among the 22 bilateral papers that were finalized. External Affairs Minister of India Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for External Affairs Lt. Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh have undertaken their first standalone overseas trips to Bangladesh on June 25-27 and August 24, 2014, respectively, after taking over their respective positions. The former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, made his first journey outside of India after being sworn into office in March 2013 when he traveled to Bangladesh. After a gap of 42 years, Bangladesh's "ceremonial Head of State," Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, visited India in December 2014. This was the first time that Bangladesh's "ceremonial Head of State" had traveled to India.

### **Bilateral institutional mechanisms**

Between India and Bangladesh, there are more than fifty bilateral institutional mechanisms covering a wide range of topics, including defense, science and technology, rivers and marine affairs, trade and commerce, electricity and energy, transport and connectivity, science, and more. In order to coordinate and monitor the execution of measures agreed between the two nations, as well as investigate fresh possibilities for collaboration, a Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) is in place. This commission is overseen by the ministers responsible for foreign and external affairs. On September 20, 2014, the Third Joint Coordinating Committee Meeting was conducted in New Delhi. It is anticipated that the 4th JCC will take place in Dhaka in the near future. On the website of the High Commission, you can find a list of some major bilateral procedures as well as a list of important bilateral papers that have been finalized between the two nations ever since 1971.

### **Security & Border Management**

India's land border with Bangladesh extends for a total of 4096.7 kilometers, making it the nation's longest shared land frontier with any of its other neighbors. Following the exchange of instruments of ratification in June 2015, the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) entered into force and became legally binding. On July 31, 2015, enclaves belonging to India and Bangladesh that were located in the territory of the other country were traded, and strip maps were signed. By the 30th of November in 2015, all of the former residents of these enclaves who had chosen to keep their Indian citizenship have relocated permanently to India. Both nations

have formalized their commitment to one another through the signing of a number of accords pertaining to the collaboration of their respective security forces. The Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP), which was signed in 2011, has the goal of bringing together the efforts of both the Indian and Bangladeshi Border Guarding Forces in order to curb illicit activities and crimes that occur over the border and to keep the peace and serenity along the border between India and Bangladesh. The conclusion of the maritime border arbitration that took place between India and Bangladesh on July 7, 2014, as determined by the UNCLOS award, has made it possible for this region of the Bay of Bengal to experience economic growth.

### **Sharing of River Waters**

There are 54 rivers that are shared by India and Bangladesh. Since June 1972, a binational Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) has been working to maintain interaction between the two nations in order to make the most of the benefits derived from their shared river systems. In addition to the meetings of the JRC, which have totaled 37 to this point, JRC Technical level meetings also take place on a consistent basis. The Ganga Waters Treaty, which was signed in 1996 with the purpose of sharing the waters of the river Ganga during the dry season (January 1st through May 31st), is operating effectively. The Joint Committee on Sharing of Ganga Waters gets together on a regular basis to assess how the requirements of the treaty are being carried out and to discuss any issues that arise.

### **Bilateral Trade and Investment**

In 1972, India and Bangladesh inked their initial Trade Agreement between the two countries. The India-Bangladesh Trade Agreement was most recently renewed in June 2015 during a visit by the Prime Minister of India. The agreement was extended for another five years and included a provision for automatic renewal. Both nations have also committed to a number of additional trade-related accords, which have been formalized by signing. Over the course of the past decade, there has been a consistent increase in the amount of commerce that takes place between India and Bangladesh. Over the course of the past five years, the total amount of commerce that takes place between the two nations has increased by more than 17%. The whole value of India's exports to Bangladesh from July 2016 to March 2017 was US\$ 4489.30 million, while the total value of India's imports from Bangladesh for the fiscal year 2016-17 was US\$ 672.40 million. You may get further information on the statistics of bilateral commerce on the website of the High Commission. As part of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), India began granting Bangladesh duty-free and quota-free access to all tariff lines in 2011, with the exception of those pertaining to tobacco and alcohol. In order to better serve the populations that are located along the borders of Tripura and Meghalaya, a total of four Border Haats have been created. The establishment of additional Border Haats along the India-Bangladesh border is now up for debate. The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) has received more than US\$

3 billion worth of investment offers from Indian companies interested in investing in Bangladesh. In the 2015-16 fiscal year, the level of Indian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Bangladesh reached \$88.0 million US. During the visit of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in April 2017, 13 deals totaling over US\$ 10 billion and mostly involving Indian investment were inked in the country's power and energy sectors.

### **India's Economic Assistance to Bangladesh**

Over the course of the last seven years, India has provided Bangladesh with three Lines of Credit totaling US\$ 8 billion. As a result, Bangladesh is India's greatest beneficiary of cash from a line of credit up to this point. During the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in January 2010, India made an announcement on a Line of Credit (LOC) for Bangladesh in the amount of one billion United States dollars. This LOC would support projects related to public transportation, roads, trains, bridges, and inland waterways, among other things. The majority of these projects have been finished, while the ones that remain are now in varying degrees of completion. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Bangladesh in June of 2015, India had already given the second line of credit for 2 billion US dollars. This line of credit will support 15 projects across a variety of industries, including roads, railways, power, shipping, special economic zones (SEZs), health and medical care, and technical education. During the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in April 2017, India provided Bangladesh with a third line of credit in the amount of US\$ 4.5 billion. The new line of credit will support projects in a variety of different industries, including Port Construction, Railways, Roads, Airports, Power & Energy, Telecommunications, and Shipping, among others. In addition to providing funding through LOCs, the Government of India also offers financial support to Bangladesh for projects that fall under the 'Aid to Bangladesh' umbrella. The Government of India has provided funding for a variety of different projects as part of this initiative. Some of these projects include the construction of new school and college facilities, labs, dispensaries, deep tube wells, community centers, and the rehabilitation of historical monuments and structures. In the cities of Rajshahi, Khulna, and Sylhet, there are now three Sustainable Development Projects (SDPs) being carried out. In addition to the expanded development work that is being done on RabindraNath Tagore's ancestral residence in Shilaidaha, Bangladeshis are also working on opening up 36 community clinics in various districts around the country. The Bangladesh portion of the Agartala-Akhaura rail-link is one of the most significant projects that is receiving funding from India's financial assistance program.

### **Power and Energy Sector Cooperation**



One of the distinguishing features of ties between India and Bangladesh is their collaboration in the power industry. At the moment, Bangladesh is getting around 660 megawatts worth of power from India. In March of 2016, the two Prime Ministers of Tripura and Bangladesh launched the export of power from Tripura to Bangladesh as well as the export of Internet bandwidth from Bangladesh to Tripura. Both of these exports were initiated simultaneously. It is anticipated that the supply of a further 500 MW will commence in 2018. The 1320 megawatt (MW), coal-fired Maitree thermal power station is currently being constructed near Rampal. This project is a joint venture (JV) between the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) of India and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). During the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in April 2017, agreements were struck between Indian public and private enterprises and the Bangladeshi side for the generation, supply, and financing of more than 3,600 MW of power. During the past two years, India and Bangladesh have made significant strides toward improving their collaboration in the energy sector. In the Bangladeshi oil and gas industry, several Indian public sector units, such as the Indian Oil Corporation and the Numaligarh Refinery Limited, are collaborating with their Bangladeshi counterparts. India has indicated that it will contribute financially to the building of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, which will run from Siliguri to Parbatipur and will be used to transport diesel from Numaligarh Refinery Limited to Bangladesh. ONGC Videsh Ltd., in partnership with Oil India Limited, has recently purchased two shallow water blocks and is actively conducting exploration inside these blocks. Additionally, research is being done to determine whether or not the two countries' gas grids may be interconnected for their mutual benefit.

### **Connectivity**

The connection between India and Bangladesh, which includes all forms of transportation, is an excellent example. Along the border there are a total of 38 operating Land Customs Stations (LCSs), as well as 2 Integrated Check Posts (ICPs). These are used to facilitate the transportation of goods by road. This includes the Petropole-Benapole International Cargo Port, which accounts for more than fifty percent of the total bilateral commerce. As a result of this, it was agreed on August 1, 2017, to begin operating these landports on a 24 hours a day, seven days a week basis. The Protocol on Inland Water Trade and Transit (PIWTT) has been in effect ever since it was established in 1972. It makes it possible for products to be transported on barges or other vessels from India to Bangladesh via the country's river systems via eight distinct routes. Under the PIWTT, the trans-shipment of products to the Northeastern States of India began in June of 2016, beginning at the river port of Ashuganj and continuing on by road through Akhaura and Gartala. The Coastal Shipping Agreement that was signed between the two nations during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh in June of 2015 made it possible for containerized, bulk, and dry cargo to transit directly between the two countries through sea. Under the auspices of this structure, container ship services began operating in February 2017



between Kolkata and Pangaon, which is located around 20 kilometers from Dhaka. In the past, there were a total of six rail ties between the two nations; as of right present, only four of those linkages are broad gauge and cross-country connections. During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017, the Radhikapur-Birol train link was one of the most recent transportation connections to be reopened. The construction of the other two additional rail lines, which are not shown here, has not yet been completed. India is providing financial help in the form of a grant for the construction of the 7th new rail-link between Agartala and Akhaura. The 'Maitree Express' train service between Kolkata and Dhaka has been upgraded to include fully functioning air conditioning, and it currently operates four times a week. During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April 2017, the trial run of the second Maitri Express between Khulna and Kolkata was completed. The train would soon be operating between the two cities. It is possible to travel by bus from Kolkata to Dhaka, Shillong to Dhaka, and Agartala to Kolkata through Dhaka. These routes are serviced on a regular basis. During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017, a brand new bus service between Dhaka, Khulna, and Kolkata was introduced. It is anticipated that the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal – Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBINMVA) would greatly enhance connectivity via road. In August of 2016, a trial run of the movement of cargo on trucks was carried out between Kolkata and Agartala via Dhaka, as well as between Dhaka and New Delhi via Kolkata, Lucknow, and Kolkata. At the moment, there are close to one hundred flights that run each week between India and Bangladesh, linking several cities in India, such as New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai, to the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh. There are a number of airlines that provide service between India and Bangladesh, including US-Bangla Airlines, NOVOAIR, Regent Airways, and Biman Bangladesh from Bangladesh, as well as Jet Airways, Spice Jet, and Air India from India.

### **Training and Capacity-Building**

There are now a variety of training courses being offered to Bangladesh authorities and nationals who are interested in participating in them. These individuals include employees from the administration, police, judiciary, firefighting, drug officials, nuclear scientists, teachers, and others. In addition to being an essential ITEC partner nation, Bangladesh sends around 800 individuals every year to take part in the education and development opportunities provided by the ITEC program. In addition, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) awards scholarships on an annual basis to students from Bangladesh so that they can pursue general courses in the arts, sciences, and engineering as well as specialized courses in culture, theater, music, fine arts, and sports, etc.

### **Cultural Exchanges**

The High Commission of India in Bangladesh houses the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC), which functions as a Cultural Centre of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations of India in

Bangladesh. The International Game and Cultural Center (IGCC) has been in operation since 2010, and it frequently hosts events that include a diverse range of cultural pursuits. Yoga, Hindi, Manipuri Dance, Kathak, and Painting are among of the other art forms that are regularly taught at the IGCC, in addition to regular training sessions in Hindustani classical music. Students from Bangladesh show a significant amount of interest in the classes. The instructor of Hindi at IGCC also teaches the language at the University's Institute of Modern Languages. Since 2011, the ICCR has supported the establishment of a Tagore Chair at the University of Dhaka. In January of 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding was also signed for a 'Hindi' Chair at the University of Dhaka. Since the year 2012, a Youth Delegation consisting of one hundred people has been to India. The Bengali literary monthly magazine 'Bharat Bichitra' has been published by the High Commission of India in both print and internet editions for the past 43 years. The magazine is read by a large number of people in Bangladesh.

### **Visa**

When taken collectively, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and its two Assistant High Commissions in Chittagong and Rajshahi are responsible for issuing the most number of Indian visas of any Indian Mission. The numbers are multiplying at an exponential rate, with the total reaching 9.33 lakhs in the year 2016. There are a total of 12 Indian Visa Application Centres (IVAC) in Bangladesh, all of which are handled by the State Bank of India (SBI). These centres are located in the following cities: Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Motijheel, and Uttara in Dhaka; Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mynmensingh, Rangpur, and Barisal in Bangladesh; and Jessore.

### **Indian community in Bangladesh**

It is estimated that there is a community of Indians in Bangladesh numbering around 10,000 people. The Indian community in Bangladesh is flourishing both socially and commercially, and its members enjoy widespread regard for the diligence and management expertise that they bring to their jobs. The majority of Indians are either working in the Ready Made Garment (RMG) industry or as top experts for multinational corporations. Around three thousand students from India are now enrolled in various medical programs offered by Bangladeshi universities and institutions.

### **Conclusion**

Conducting an in-depth analysis of the future relations between Bangladesh and India by analyzing the opportunities and obstacles that lie ahead for the relationship between the two nations will help to predict the future of such relations. How India will handle the unresolved difficulties it has with Bangladesh will determine the future course of relations between that country and Bangladesh. Narendra Modi has stated his wish to have strong and stable relations



with Bangladesh on the topics of economic cooperation and shared interests. He based this desire on the fact that these two countries have a lot in common. The fact that the prime ministers of Bangladesh and India are visiting each other has a great deal of significance because it will allow the leadership to build trust and confidence. To be honest, the anticipation of a historic breakthrough might not entirely materialize, but Bangladesh is hopeful that India would sign the Teesta treaty in order to repay the vision and daring that Bangladesh has shown by proposing it. Over the course of its history and under a number of different governments, Bangladesh's perspective on and relationship to India have evolved over time. During the time that the Awami League was in power in Bangladesh, the country's ties with India were able to remain positive and cordial, despite the fact that past administrations have viewed India as a danger to Bangladesh's sovereignty and security. The BNP and other military administrations kept their relations with India on a more distant and hostile level, while their military and economic relationships with China and Pakistan were warm and cordial.

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