



Research Paper

## Bangladesh India Relations and Look East Policy of Bangladesh to China.

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### ABSTRACT:

What are the recent issues in Bangladesh-India bilateral relations? And Bangladesh is developing relations by the name of so called "Look East Policy" with Asian Giant People's Republic of China. This paper is an effort to investigate these topics. It argues that there are a number of interconnected issues that determine the nature of Bangladesh India relations. In this perspective, trade, border killing, border dispute, smuggling, water dispute, security, power, connectivity remain as vital issues. It is the age of shared peace, security and prosperity between Bangladesh and India but India is not concern about it. To avoid Indian dominating trend, Bangladesh is strengthening "Look East Policy" to explore and utilize untapped potentialities.

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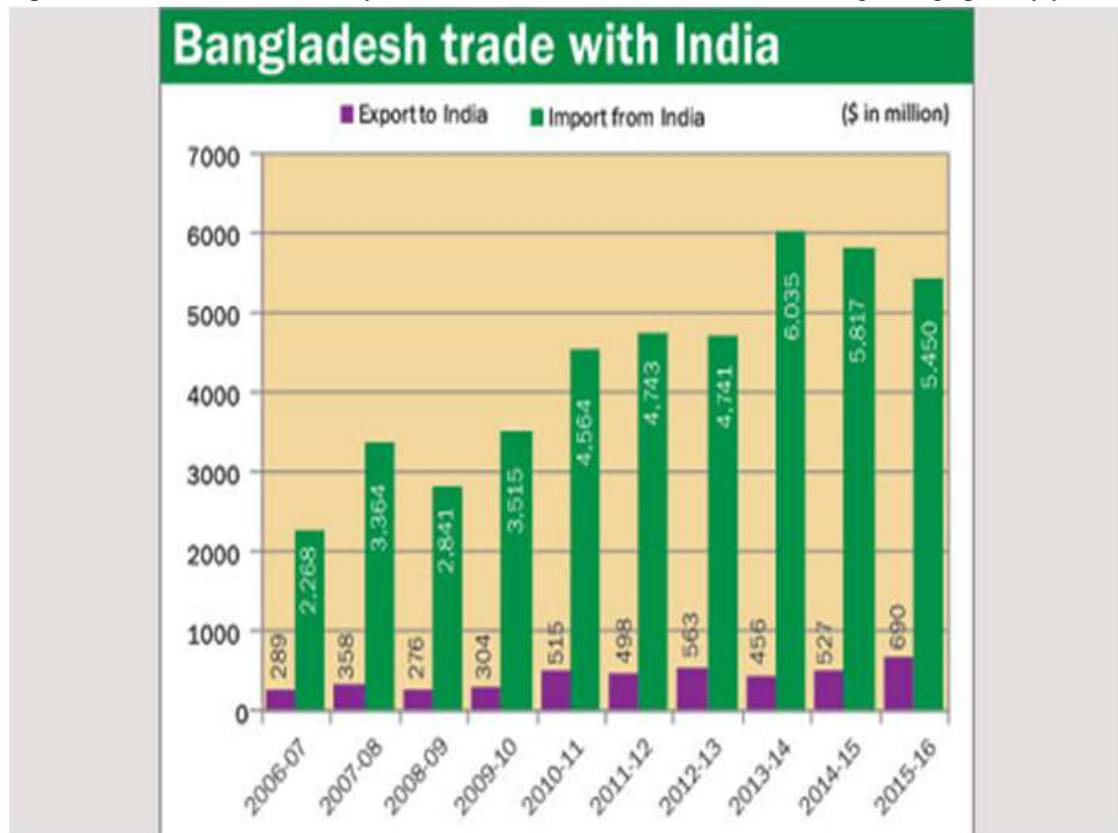
### I INTRODUCTION:

Bangladesh and India two countries have a shared largest boundary and some common traditional, linguistic and cultural similarities. Two countries also have a little history of struggle for freedom. But these similarities should not hide the prevailing problem of bilateral issues and crises. Border and Water sharing are the most contentious problems plaguing the relations. Border problem is not unique in India-Bangladesh relations as most of the countries have border problem in form or another. Bangladesh-India relation is multi-dimensional and shaped by dynamics and pattern of internal politics of two countries. The border problem is not only confined to the issue of demarcation, it also involves other issues such as cross-border smuggling, terrorist

activities, border fencing, human trafficking, illegal immigration and so on. Now Bangladesh is building strong relationship alternative to India in trading, economic, linguistic and diplomatic fields.

**Trade Issue:**

Trade relationship is an effective way of bilateral relationship. As neighbouring country, Bangladesh and India has made each other trading partner. This trade relation started in 1971 just after the liberation of Bangladesh. From the beginning bilateral trade deficit of Bangladesh with India is a matter concern. It has been increasing rapidly on an average 9.5% annually. In fiscal year 2015-16 Bangladesh imports 21.97 billion USD and export 14.37 billion USD. In this year trade deficit is 7.60 billion USD and it is growing up every year.



**\* Figure: Bangladesh India Trade Deficit.**

Now India is the largest source of Bangladeshi imports. Bangladesh and have huge trade gap. Bangladesh is facing a lot of trade and non trade impediments exporting to India. According to Bangladesh foreign ministry, Thenon trade impediments are:

→Mandatory laboratory test of food, cosmetics, leather and textile products.

→Special packaging conditions.

→Lack of sufficient infrastructure facilities like proper shipping , one stop service, ware house, security.

→Indian custom bribery.

**II WATER DISPUTE:**

Bangladesh and India share 54 small and big rivers after the independence. There are many water sharing river disputes between Bangladesh and India. I am trying to show two major dispute here:

**(A) Farakka Barrage:**

Bangladesh founding leader and Prime Minister Sheikh MujiburRahman and IndianPrime Minister Indra Gandhi signed a treaty of friendship on March 1972. As per the arbitration, the two nations put a joint River Commission to work towards the common interest and sharing of water supply floods and water resources. According to treaty, Farakka Barrage was built on Ganga river in 1972, it was 16 km far from Bangladesh border. But unfortunately, India diverted water into a feeder canal linking the Hooghly River to keep salt free. Then the Farakkabarrage failed to live up to its professed goals. By contrast, the damage done to Bangladesh by Farakka is huge. It has dried up most of the rivers of southeast area of Bangladesh, harming

ecology and economy of the entire region. By reducing flow of fresh water and aggravating salinity ingress, Farakka has harmed the health of Sundarbans in Bangladesh. Farakka Barrage also damaging the ecology of northwest of Bangladesh. It has been the main reason for the drastic drop of the sediment carried by the rivers to the Bay of Bengal from the annual about two million tones to only about one million tones. For this, the coastal land elevation and normal delta formation processes have been thwarted to a significant extent. Bangladesh is going to be more vulnerable to the sea level rise caused by global warming.

### **III TEESTA RIVER DISPUTE:**

Teesta River is the Trans Boundary River between Bangladesh and India. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanged a draft agreement on the Teesta River Sharing issue 10 January 2010. Bangladesh presented a draft on an interim agreement and India presented a draft of a Sediment of Principles on the sharing of River water during the dry season. After a long discussion two countries came to a decision, within a year an agreement over the Teesta River water sharing would be signed. At last India did not sign the agreement showing some provincial rules. Recently, in rainy season, India opens the Teesta Barrage and Bangladesh suffers a lot of flood.

#### **Current Border Issues and Problems:**

Arms, harmful drug trafficking, smuggling of commodities are a common phenomena into Bangladesh. Frequent and unprovoked firings on Bangladeshi people living near to the border are main issue of concern. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has identified the following as being the main causes of enmity among the two frontier forces.

→Traffic in illegal arms.

→Unauthorized access of person across the border.

→Smuggling of products.

→Lifting cattle in border.

→Possibility of clash between the border forces of two countries, when both border forces come to the boundary line at a time.

→Land cultivation in a boundary when part of an individual's land is on the side of the river owned by the other countries.

#### **Border Killing of Bangladeshi Citizens:**

Killing of Bangladeshi citizen in border become one of the worst experience between two nation's bilateral relations at present. Border security forces follow "Shoot to Kill" policy in Indo-Bangladesh border. According to Human Rights Watch Report, Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) killed nearly 1500 Bangladeshi people from 2001 to 2017. Indian foreign minister and BSF chief vowed to stop border killings but they have continued yet.

#### **Smuggling Across the Border:**

Along with shooting of innocent people, smuggling is on the rise as well. Dal, sugar, onion, garlic, cloths, hard ware products and millions of currencies are smuggling into Bangladesh. As per Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad Report, on an average commodities worth Bangladeshi taka 832.2 million smuggled every month into Bangladesh.

#### **ILLEGAL-MIGRATION:**

Illegal migration is one of the major bones of the contention of these two nations, Since the 1971 war of liberation that created the state of Bangladesh, millions of Bangladeshi people immigrants (the vast majority of them illegal) have poured into neighboring India. While the Indian govt has attempt to exile some of these migrant, the mere number of them, as well as the leaky border between the two nations, has made like an enterprise unattainable.

Illegal migration appears in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country from neighbouring Bangladesh, threat to India's internal security, from Bangladesh is impacted on communal, political, social and economic tensions and conflicts in several areas of the northeast of India.

#### **Transit:**

India has been guiding control Bangladesh to take steps rail and road transit to associate with its north-eastern states. Technically narrate, the issue of transit was determined in 1972 when both sides accepted on a mutually favorable layout for the use of their waterways, railways and roadways for commerce between two nations and for promotion of goods to places in one country by the locality of the other. Inland water transit has been functional.

Bangladesh's initial obstacle to deliver India rail and road transit was on the course that transit facility once given was grievous to receive back and such a facility may embolden terrorism. It ranges from 500 crore BDT to 4,666 crore BDT. The mutual transit will also give Bangladesh a much shorter route to China and an initiative to link Chinese province of Yunan with Seven Sisters of India, Myanmar, Thailand and Bangladesh.

#### **Land Boundary Agreement and Bangladesh-India relations :**

Afterwards dilly dallying for 41 years, the Indian Parliament finally passed the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) Bill on May 7, 2015. The Agreement is now ready for signature and ratification. Hopefully when Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes to Dhaka in June the Agreement will be signed. Ratification and implementation will then follow.

Why did it take 41 years for India to come around and dispose this nagging problem?

The LBA was signed in May 1974 between Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi..

Although repeated assurances were made by Delhi, the trust deficit manifested in different forms – court cases against the LBA, opposition from state governments and of course power politics in Delhi. Delhi, it appears, was never serious to resolve the dispute. The so-called 'illegal immigration', 'security' and 'economic' issues seem to have motivated Delhi to conclude the LBA.

It was following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in January 2010 that the Congress-led UPA made a sincere effort to resolve at least two outstanding issues – the LBA and the Teesta Water Sharing Treaty.

Sherpas (expert political aides) of both countries met several times to find a solution to demarcate the border which was an extremely complex job. When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Dhaka in September 2011, the Protocol related to the LBA was signed. Unfortunately UPA lacked the numerical strength in the Lok Sabha. When it planned to place the Bill in the Parliament, the BJP, then in opposition, stiffly opposed the move.

When the BJP-led NDA swept to power in 2014 with two-third majority, Narendra Modi was faced with the daunting task of passing the LBA Bill in Parliament. BJP leaders in Assam, which is one of the four states involved with the Agreement, opposed the bill stating that it would erode its chances in the state elections in 2016. At that point Delhi tinkered with the idea of leaving out Assam and passing a truncated Bill. The Congress-led Assam government however strongly opposed BJP's move. Congress, the main opposition party in the Lok Sabha, also put its foot down and warned that it will oppose Assam's exclusion. After bickering for weeks, a compromise was achieved between the BJP and Congress and finally the Bill went through unopposed in both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.

It was interesting what Sushma Swaraj, Indian External Affairs Minister, said while presenting the Bill in the Lok Sabha. She said it would be beneficial for both countries. Though India think to be ceding land to Bangladesh, it was “notional” as these region were dense Bangladesh.

Swaraj, refuting allegations of India's “big brotherly” attitude towards South Asian neighbours, said, “One is 'big brother' which symbolises arrogance. But there is also the 'elder brother' who is caring. Ours is a caring attitude. India will set the act of the 'elder brother' with our neighbors.” Bangladesh does not need 'elder' brothers – Bangladesh needs 'equivalent friends' in the neighborhood.

Fencing the border is India's right, but is it really a 'friendly' gesture? Indeed it is a 'big brotherly' attitude. It may help in curbing smuggling and infiltration of Indian insurgents into Bangladesh from North East Indian States. With a stable and fenced border, Bangladesh should rightfully hope that BSF shooting of Bangladeshis on the border will now come to a complete halt.

On the humanitarian side, the people living in the enclaves had no clear identity so far. They enjoyed none of the basic amenities and facilities such as schools, hospitals, electricity, pure drinking water, etc. With the implementation of the LBA, these people will now have a proper nationality and access to state provided benefits.

According to a joint survey (2007), the total number of people living in the enclaves is 51,549, of which 37,334 are in Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh. According to the LBA Protocol, these people will be allowed to stay on and become citizens of the country in which the enclave is located or they can opt to migrate. What is interesting is that Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, has pressurised Delhi to give her Rs 3,008 crores for the rehabilitation of the people who will migrate to India. Earlier Mamata had openly opposed the LBA bill. But with Delhi's money she came on board to support the Agreement. One wonders how many of these people who have lived in their homes for generations will actually migrate.

Some have described the passage of the Bill in the Indian parliament as a victory of Indian democracy. It is not quite true. If BJP had controlled the Rajya Sabha then the LBA Bill would probably have been passed in a manner unacceptable to Bangladesh. Whatever the background, Bangladesh must give credit to Dr Manmohan

Singh for his personal initiative to bring the negotiations to a conclusion during his tenure. Credit now goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for passing the Bill.

Looking back, the Congress government did not give any major concession to Bangladesh despite the general belief that Congress favours the Awami League government in Dhaka. The 1977 water sharing agreement of the River Ganges was done by Morarjee Desai of the Janata Dal government. The 1996 Ganges agreement was under the United Front government of Deve Gowda. And now BJP has delivered on the LBA.

The LBA has put the Bangladesh-India relations on a higher trajectory. Now that a major dispute is resolved, Bangladesh will naturally focus on the Teesta Treaty. There are other issues and problems, as is normal between neighbouring countries. But with a 'friendly' attitude such problems can be resolved peacefully and quickly.

#### **IV EXTERNAL INFLUENCES:**

A major setback to the enthusiasm in India of Hasina's visit, came in the form of her visit to China immediately after that, wherein a communiqué was issued, consisting of similar transit facilities given to China as given to India. Bangladesh sought Chinese assistance in constructing a highway passing through Myanmar to Yunan province in China. A network passing through the same area has been proposed. Bangladesh was also reportedly engaged in persuading China to further develop and use the Chittagong port and develop a deep sea port at Sonadia Island. Bangladesh maintains a very close relationship with China for its economic and military needs.<sup>11</sup> Over the years, the two sides have signed a plethora of bilateral agreements including economic engagements, soft loans, social contacts, cultural exchanges, academic interactions, infrastructural development and military sales at reduced prices, with China emerging as the major supplier of arms to Bangladesh's armed forces. In addition to economic engagement, Bangladesh and China in 2005 signed the Bangladesh-China Cooperation Agreement on the Peaceful Usage of Nuclear Energy which aims to assist Bangladesh in developing peaceful nuclear energy for power generation and other developmental purposes and a Defense Cooperation Agreement with China in 2002.. Bangladesh tries to bargain between India and China, thus standing only to gain. Apart from that, Bangladesh's government over the years has been characterized by one favoring India, and one against it. Additionally, the Chinese quest for regional power and then global power should be taken into account. Therefore, Bangladesh has been an obvious choice for partnership.

#### **China Bangladesh Relations and "Look East Policy":**

China Bangladesh relation is going forward gradually for domestic politics and some international development during last 42 years. China is reliable friend of Bangladesh expanding economy, military and diplomacy.

Sino-Bangladesh diplomatic relation started on 4 October of 1975, just after four years of independent Bangladesh. August 1975 China officially recognized Bangladesh as a independent country.

"Look East Policy" was adopted by Bangladesh in 2002 to broader economic and strategic gains that could emerge from better relations with China.

#### **Bilateral Cooperation:**

October 2016 Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Bangladesh. It was a notable visiting for Bangladesh. Since 30 years it was the first visit to Dhaka by any Chinese President. About 40 billion USD of 21 agreements were signed in this visit. China also proposed to assist Bangladesh in the specialized field of nuclear power, training of police stuff, water management and forming Economic and Trade Commission.

#### **Economic Cooperation:**

##### **Ready Made Garments:**

Bangladesh contribute about 6% of global ready made garments market. Bangladesh is the second largest ready made garments exporting country just after China. Bangladesh imports garments raw materials from China. China Has invested 150 billion USD in Bangladesh garments sector and it will increase 750 billion USD by 2020.

##### **Defense:**

Bangladesh Navy got two types 0356 diesel-electric submarine from China. Bangladesh has taken 80% of military instruments from China, since 2004. This submarine attachment is said to have further deteriorated the balance of power in Bay of Bengal that is the matter of concern of India.

##### **Natural Gas:**

China invests first in energy sector not only in Bangladesh but also in South Asia. Chinese State owned company "Zhenhua Oil" aim of buying Chevron's natural gas fields in Bangladesh for price of 2 billion USD. These gas fields are located northeast area of Bangladesh.



**Belt Road Initiative:**

“Belt Road” initiative is an attempt to make China a ‘Superpower’. This project initially emphasizes on communication between China and other selected countries in the world. It comprises of two elements, the Silk Road Economic Belt(SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road(MSR). Land and sea route belong to this initiative. Bangladesh is closely related to both elements.

**V CONCLUSION:**

“Malice to none friendship to all”- It is the main principle of Bangladesh foreign policy. Bangladesh always maintains peaceful relation with other countries since 1971 after its independent. Indian foreign policy action since the beginning shows that India has always been concern about three kinds of threats of its security. A threat from the politics of cold war, a threat from the side of Pakistan and a threat from the side of People’s Republic of China. Chinese threat since 1962 has been nuclear and different dimensions. Status, power and influence in South and South East Asia are most of them. Bangladesh wants to keep friendly relation with other countries. At the eleventh hour, it can be said that Bangladesh wants to go out Indian circle.

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