

ABSTRACT

In the history of world politics the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation state on 16th December 1971 was primarily an outcome of internal political conflict between East and West Pakistan over the issue of Bengali language, Bengali nationalism, and Bengali self-determination in response to West Pakistan's social discrimination, economic exploitation and political domination. After the transfer of power to the elected representatives of India and Pakistan from British India on the basis of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 'two nation-theory' under the framework of 'India Independence Act of 1947' there was the root of internal political conflict between the two wings. All the grievances against the indifference and negligence of West Pakistan towards the East enhanced to foster anti-Pakistani sentiment which led to the triumph of Bengali nationalism over Islamic nationalism. In the parliamentary elections of 1970, the Awami League party of East Pakistan achieved an absolute majority in the National Pakistan Assembly, the majority votes empowering it to lead the Pakistan Government. The then Pakistan president, Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, however, cancelled the East Pakistan election results, fearing the loss of Punjab political domination. To suppress the mass movement in East Pakistan the Pakistani military regime, under the orders of General Tikka Khan, took stern military action for almost a week to gain control of East Pakistan's largest city Dacca. There were merciless violence like genocide, gang rape, kidnap, sexual assault on women, brutal killings of opposition leaders, abduction, physical torture, and any sorts of human rights violation etc. in East Pakistan. Accordingly, unprecedented terror in the Eastern part of Pakistan prevailed. Consequently, an exodus of homeless, helpless refugees began to flow into India's bordering states. It created problems of rehabilitation and law and order in India. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Indian charismatic Prime Minister decided to intervene militarily on the humanitarian ground to solve the problem. When the Pakistani Air Force launched a preemptive air strike on eleven airfields in North Western India on 3rd December, 1971, India became directly involved in the Bangladesh Liberation War. With insurmountable losses, the Pakistani military gave up in less than two weeks. In this war India defeated Pakistan with the help of Soviet Russia.

Since then, India and Bangladesh have entered into a new phase in their bilateralism with a pragmatic and practical approach based on sovereignty, equality, friendship, trust and reciprocal understanding for the mutual benefit and welfare of their peoples. The first phase of bilateral relations started from 1972-1975 which relate to the pattern of Government in Bangladesh. At the outset, the introduction of socialist, liberal, secular and parliamentary form of Government in Bangladesh, led by country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, made the Indo-Bangladesh relations healthy, robust and amicable. During his regime India and Bangladesh tried to resolve each and every contentious issue amicably and accordingly signed 'Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty' in 1972. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman and the brutal murder of his family members except his two daughters in 1975 Bangladesh was under one or other military rulers between 1975-1990. The military dispensation in Bangladesh brought vast changes in its foreign policy in order to fulfill national interest as well as to come out of Indian domination. This shift in Bangladesh's foreign policy equally led to a paradigm shift in the dynamics of India-Bangladesh relations. During that phase Bangladesh's original constitution was reconstituted, with some of its most important principles were dropped, and its new structure was reframed along religious lines to gain legitimacy both inside and outside the country. Since then there was a gradual process of Islamisation in Bangladesh for establishing the law of Allah and principles of Quran and Shariat-as a weapon for capturing power. The diversion of Bangladesh from secularization to Islamisation was an alarming threat to India in her dynamics journey with Bangladesh. Under the tremendous pressure of Bangladeshi people and the joint leadership of all political parties the restoration of parliamentary democracy came in 1991. Khaleda Zia, widow of General Zia-ur Rahman, came out victorious with a thumping majority and became the first women Prime Minister in the history of Bangladesh. During the period of 1991-1996 the relations between India and Bangladesh were neither cordial nor cooperative.

India's relations with Bangladesh warmed up when Sheikh Hasina came to power first in June 1996. After winning the elections in 1996, Sheikh Hasina initiated all the necessary steps to restore true parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh and made the constitution with the principles of secularity, liberty, equality and justice. During her tenure two important agreements the '30-year Water Sharing Agreement of the Ganges' in December 1996 and the 'Peace Accord' signed in December 1997 with the Chakma

tribal dissidents of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), brought New Delhi and Dhaka closer to each other. But the phase 2001-2006 witnessed hardening of positions of both sides in resolving differences. The Khaleda Zia four party coalition Government largely ignored Indian security concerns, border infiltration and sheltered Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) based insurgent groups. During Khaleda Zia's tenure several state actors and non state actors like ISI, religious fundamentalist, religious political parties, foreign policymakers and pro Pakistani Bangladeshi army contributed to the Islamisation process in Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina came to power in second term in 2008 and adopted not only a pragmatic foreign policy but she also established a new era of friendship, cooperation and stability with India to be a model neighbour and economic partner for the sake of country's over all development. Since 1996- 1996, 2008-till date under Hasina's Prime Ministership economic and developmental cooperation, including border security, connectivity and infrastructure as well as cooperation in critical areas like enclave issues, counter terrorism, illegal migration, cattle smuggling, border fencing etc. have all improved as a result of the strengthening of bilateral relations.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India immediately sent External Affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj, to Bangladesh with a view to improve the friendly relations with its immediate neighbour. On 7th May, 2015 the Indian Parliament, in the presence of Bangladeshi diplomats, unanimously passed the Land Boundary Agreement (LAB) or Chhitmohal Agreement done following the 100th Indian constitutional amendment. It resolved 68 years old border disputes related to chhitmohal thus ended the dispute of British era.

Indo-Bangladesh bilateral relations with the issue of border security became serious since 1991 when Kheleda Zia took power in Dhaka. Border security has become one of the most serious challenges in South Asian countries especially India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh border. The India-Bangladesh Border traverses a range of natural and cultural landscapes, which pose a challenge to its effective border security management. The terrain along the border is a mix of hilly and jungle tracks, plains, riverside, and low-lying land. This diverse mix of topographical features makes the border extremely porous. The porosity and the various configurations of India-Bangladesh border, which stretches 4096 km, facilitates the movements of people

across the border, especially from Bangladesh, which is the main source of irregular immigrants in India. Following the Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan in 1999, the border management issue was brought to the force, and a report was provided by the Kargil Review Committee. In response, the Indian government established a 'Task Force' on Border Management in April 2000 under Madhav Godbole's leadership. Under his leadership a Group of Ministers (GoM) formed to examine the national security system as a whole and the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee specifically consider measures for border management. The goal of the Task Force in particular, was to consider the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and in this regard formulate specific proposals for the Group of Ministers' (GoM) consideration. The GoM's report, observed that the country's borders cannot be effectively managed because of certain inherent problems. 1. Most of the borders are either disputed or not clearly demarcated. 2. Many are artificial boundaries that do not run along a natural barrier, which makes them extremely porous. This gives rise to multiple problems like illegal migration, smuggling, drugs trafficking, and trans-border movement of insurgents etc. In addition, the multiplicity of forces employed to guard the same border, their repeated withdrawal from the borders on other duties, the lack of adequate infrastructures along the border, and so on deter from efficient guarding of the border. To remove all these problems, the Group of Ministers (GoM) broadly recommended that concerted efforts be made to settle border disputes and demarcate the limits at the earliest opportunity. It also recommended that a 'Department of Border Management' be created under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which would focus on border security issues. The GoM's Report also recommends that the entire length of the land border with Bangladesh should be fenced as a measure to secure the border against illegal migration and smuggling. The fencing project includes laying 3,286.87 km of fences, along with building roads and bridges, and installing flood lights. Border security management has mainly two major objectives – firstly, to facilitate the movement of legitimate goods and people across the border between two sovereign countries. Secondly to ensure the security of the country by restricting entry of illegal goods and those individuals across the border who might disturb the peace. For this purpose India involved multiple agencies like-border guarding forces (BSF), customs, immigration and local police.

Regarding the issues of connectivity, both the governments are undertaking various steps to restore the pre-1965 rail links and other connectivity links that existed between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) before partition of India. Rail connectivity is one of the most important forms of physical connectivity between different locations. This is also true for Bangladesh and India rail connectivity. Railways networks serve as an indispensable facilitators for trade and commerce as well as essential means of communication. The Maitree Express re-established this connection between Dhaka and Kolkata in 2008 after being closed for 43 years. In 2017, a second train service, the 'Bandhan Express', was inaugurated connecting Kolkata with the Bangladeshi city of Khulna, replicating the previous one. In October 2019 both the countries decided to start a new passenger train service named 'Mitali' via recently-restored Haldibari-Chilahati rail link to further strengthen people to people connectivity through Rail networks.

India and Bangladesh, waterway connectivity has enormous potential for economic and interpersonal connections. Some experts are hesitant to accept waterways as the cheapest mode of transportation when discussing India-Bangladesh protocol routes due to the fact that most rivers are not navigable throughout the year. In order to solve this issue, adequate dredging facilities were established but also made mandatory to enable the rivers navigable. It will greatly reduced time and cost for goods. The agreement states that the route will only be open for the movement of cargo. It does not cover the movement of passengers, warships, paramilitary forces, or oceanographic and scientific research vessels. A planned standard operating procedure (SOP) will be used to put the agreement into action. With automatic renewal provisions, the agreement will operate for a period of five years.

Regarding people to people connectivity a large number of patients are traveling from Bangladesh to India for various medical and surgical treatments as medical tourism grows rapidly.

Regarding infrastructure India–Bangladesh bilateral relation and the scale of cooperation is equally wide and touches every aspect—be it digital infrastructure, disaster management, education of students and other aspects of human resource development, training and capacity building, defence cooperation, rail infrastructure, border hatts infrastructure etc. Bilateral relations between the two countries since 1971

are in turmoil. The majority people of Bangladesh have been likely to be in the mindset of conceiving India as a constant threat to Bangladesh integrity and prosperity. There has been a phenomenon among the big countries to dominate small countries by hook or by crook in order to make their influence upon the smaller countries for the sake of their dominance upon the smaller one. Since the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 this country faced several tremendous problems to make her economy stable and politically strong to face outside challenges. The main reason behind this has been the fundamental attitude of regionalism among them which make this country to expand its wider vision of statism beyond its periphery.