

**FOREIGN POLICY OF BANGLADESH
DURING KHALEDA ZIA PERIOD
1991-96**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled FOREIGN POLICY OF BANGALDESH DURING KHALEDA ZIA PERIOD, 1991-96, submitted by Sanjay Kumar Bhardwaj in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University and this is his own work.

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INTRODUCTION

George Modelski says foreign policy is "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment". Foreign policy is never uniquely determined by any one factor or a set of factors, but is the result of the interplay of a large number of factors that affect the formulation of policy in different ways in different circumstances. The basic determinants of a foreign policy are geography, economic development, political tradition, domestic milieu, international milieu, military strength, national character, institutional and personal factors.

The foreign policy of Bangladesh is also determined by the above basic factors. The major domestic determinants of foreign policy in the case of Bangladesh are geographical setting, historical legacy of anti-imperialism, the changing nature of political leadership and the people of Bangladesh. The major external determinants are: role of major powers in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh, Islamic factor and regional environment.

The foreign policy of Bangladesh like that of any other country in the world is influenced by the nature of its political leadership. It began with the Awami League leadership under the inspiring personality of Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman. The historical legacy of anti-imperialism was the cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy during his regime. He was deeply committed to the objectives of the national liberation struggle like secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism, which brought both the leadership and the country closer to India and the non-aligned camp, and foreign policy was used to realise these objectives in the international arena.

The assassination of Mujib-ur Rahman marked a complete reversal of his foreign policy. The successive military rulers, both Zia-ur Rahman and Ershad, lacking legitimacy, turned towards religion both in their internal and external policies. Both the leaders looked towards Islamic countries including Pakistan in order to gain international support for their regime. In the process, both the leaders moved Bangladesh closer towards the West, United States in particular. This shift in their foreign policy, made Bangladesh to drift away from India and the former Soviet Union. In

the process, the military regime was able to establish a good rapport with China. Thus by the end of the 1980s Bangladesh became pro-West, pro-Islam, pro-China, and anti-India and anti-Soviet Union.

The later part of the 1980s witnessed the re-establishment of democracy in Bangladesh. The 1991 elections in Bangladesh saw Begam Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh National Party capturing power and establishing parliamentary democracy. Begam Khaleda Zia, the first democratically elected leader of Bangladesh since the assassination of Mujib-ur Rahman, however, did not deviate much in the foreign policy pursuits, from the earlier military rulers. Her external relations with the Islamic countries, U.S.A. and other western countries, China and various other countries remained the same. Towards India, Begam Zia continued the same hostile policies of the previous regimes.

Khaleda Zia's government opted for market economy and liberalisation. These developments added extensive economic content in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. More importance was attached to trade in the foreign policy. A roving trade representative of the country was appointed for the enhancement of trade. All these developments brought a shift in the diplomacy from aid to trade in the foreign policy of Khaleda Zia.

Importance of the Study

Khaleda Zia's period assumes importance in the history of the politics of Bangladesh, because since the assassination of Mujib-ur Rahman, Khaleda Zia was the first 'elected' ruler of Bangladesh. Her previous rulers, being not elected, had to follow certain policies to legitimise their rule. The anti-Indian policy and Islamic policy were based on this. But Khaleda Zia, being an elected ruler did not have any hurdles in framing her foreign policy. With cold war coming to an end, any policy that Bangladesh pursued should have been really independent. Hence the foreign policy of Bangladesh during her period would have been based on the real national interests of Bangladesh.

The Objectives of the Study

- i) Basic principles and objectives of the Khaleda Zia's foreign policy.
- ii) The impact of domestic problems and national character on the foreign policy.
- iii) Khaleda Zia's foreign policy in order to bring out the difference between the policies of the previous ruler and the newly installed democratic government.
- iv) The impact of economic liberalisation in the foreign

v) The successes and failures of the foreign policy of Khaleda Zia.

Hypothesis

I. The Khaleda Zia government being a civil, elected democratic government followed the foreign policy framed under the previous authoritarian regimes.

II. Khaleda Zia government though an elected government did not introduce any democratic innovation in the foreign policy of Bangladesh.

Methodology

This work will be analytical in approach and historical and descriptive. It will be based on the published sources available in the libraries in Delhi.

CHAPTER - I

**FOREIGN POLICY : MEANING,
DEPTRMINANTS AND OBJECTIVES**

CHAPTER I
FOREIGN POLICY: MEANING,
DETERMINANTS AND OBJECTIVES

In this world of interdependence, no country, large or small, powerful or weak, can afford to live in isolation. In the course of interaction, nations are constantly changing and are influenced by each other. All nations, therefore, participate in the interplay of international political activities. Through such interaction, each state pursues a broad range of policies in order to create an environment in which its interests can be preserved. Foreign policy becomes a crucial instrument to operationalise these objectives in the international arena. Foreign policy is primarily a projection of a country's socio-economic and political compulsion in international politics.¹

The objective of a country's foreign policy is to influence the behaviour of other countries in its favour. It can be defined as the basis and framework of a country's relations with other countries.

1. S.R. Chakravarty, Bangladesh Under Mujib, Zia and Ershad, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publication, 1995, p.113.

George Modelski describes foreign policy as "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and adjusting their own activities to the international environment"¹. According to Prof. Joseph Frankel, "Foreign policy consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others".

In the international arena where sovereign states interact, some sort of foreign policy becomes inevitable for a state. Feliks Gross writes that even a decision to have no relations with a state is a foreign policy, which implies that even not to have a definite foreign policy is also a foreign policy.²

Foreign policy appears to be a series of responses made by the official decision makers to the international conditions. But contrary to the appearance, it is a much complex process. Peter Calvert points to this fact by saying that policies are not simply any decisions taking place within the organised structure of the state.³ Similarly Rosenau makes it clear when he notes, "the foreign policy of a

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1. George Modelski, A Theory of Foreign Policy, London, 1962, pp.6-7.
 2. Feliks Gross, Foreign Policy Analysis, New York: 1954, pp.47-48.
 3. Peter Calvert, The Foreign Policy of New States, Sussex: Wheatsheat Books, 1986, p.1.

government is more than simply a series of responses to international stimuli".¹ An indepth analysis of foreign policy reveals a number of factors besides the international stimuli which contribute substantially in the making of foreign policy. Other sources, i.e. domestic sources of foreign policy are not less crucial of its content and conduct than are the international situations towards which it is directed.²

✓However, it is extremely difficult to establish link between the domestic sources and its outcome - foreign policy. One main reason is that their role is hardly explicit unlike the international event or the role of decision makers. However, in order to understand foreign policy of a given nation, it is equally important to comprehend the domestic determinants as it is to know the international condition.

✓Actually foreign policy is an exercise in the choice of ends and means on the part of a nation state in an international setting.³ This exercise involves two plains. On the

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1. James N. Rosenau (ed.), Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy, New York: The Free Press, 1967, p.2.
 2. Ibid., p.7.
 3. J. Bandyopadhyay, The Making of India's Foreign Policy, New Delhi, 1979, p.I.

first, i.e. the national plain, the community presents the resources, opportunity and limitations for the exercise of foreign policy. Secondly, on the international plain, a state seeks the adjustment of the actions of other state in its own favour. This adjustment may be sought through change or even no change in the actions of other state. It depends on what position, change or status quo, suits a particular state. The link between these two plains is provided by the official decision makers. They translate the interactions of the community to the policy makers who have their significance only in relation to the community. They do not have any independent significance. That is the reason why foreign policies are considered more in terms of nations than in terms of individuals.¹ Thus, (i) the foreign policy is decided and pursued by the official decision makers, (ii) but they work within the parameters provided by the community, and (iii) they seek to influence the foreign policy of other states in their own favour and also adjust their own foreign policy to the international environment.

~~The~~ The Republic of Bangladesh which emerged as an independent nation in 1971 has developed its foreign policy

1. Mahendra Kumar, Theoretical Aspects of International Politics, Agra Publications, 1978, pp.321-33.

keeping in view its national interest to move towards progress and development. In its endeavour to make a mark in the international arena, Bangladesh has framed its foreign policy following the dynamics of international relations.

DETERMINANTS OF FOREIGN POLICY OF BANGLADESH

A foreign policy is not formulated or executed in vacuum. A country has to develop its foreign policy in the light of certain basic factors such as the geopolitical realities of the region in which it is located, its search for security, its need in terms of economic development, its ideological and historical background and its religious affinities. Policy makers thus need to formulate foreign policy in terms of the independent variable conceptualised as "policy inputs" or "the flow of actions coming from the community."¹

Major Determinants

Formulation of foreign policy is influenced by a number of determinants emanating both from the domestic milieu and international environment. In the case of Bangladesh,

1. George Modelski, A Theory of Foreign Policy, Praeger, New York, 1962, p.5.

major domestic determinants of foreign policy may be identified as: (i) geographical setting, (ii) history, (iii) nature of leadership, (iv) the people.

In the international context, the major factors that influence the foreign policy of Bangladesh are: (i) global political scene especially the role of major powers, (ii) the Islamic factor and (iii) regional environment.

I. GEOGRAPHY

(i) Location:

South Asia, which comprises seven nations, including three core countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) has been subject of interest and target of influence of the super powers. Home to one-fifth of the world's population, its size, population, military and scientific establishment and its geographical position between the oil rich Persian Gulf and dynamic economics of East Asia gives the area great geopolitical importance.¹ The location of Bangladesh in the region, is important because it was one State before partition in 1947. Now there are many things that all of them share in the geographical context, and the commonali-

1. "South Asia and US Foreign Policy", Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State, Washington DC, an address given by Michael H. Armacost, Under Secretary of State, 12 December 1984.

ties cannot be ignored by them while formulating their foreign policy. The subcontinental geographical oneness is therefore a crucial determinant of Bangladesh foreign policy as it is for India and Pakistan.

The location of Bangladesh is strategically significant since it lies in the close proximity of the Chinese-Tibet border in the north, although separated from it by narrow elongated Indian territory. In the eastern region and on the other two sides, east and west too, it shares borders with India. It has a common border with Myanmar (Burma) in the south-east and is situated on the mouth of the Bay of Bengal. The Chittagong Hill Tracts separate it from Myanmar on the one hand and India's Tripura and Mizoram on the other. North-east regions of India lie on Bangladesh's periphery while borders with Indian states surrounding it viz. West Bengal, Tripura and Mizoram on the other are easy to cross. Once being part of united India, its communication links, although disrupted during Indo-Pakistani tensions, are easily accessible and it is indeed difficult to prevent, to and fro movement of the people between the two countries. This physical proximity with India is an important factor which works as a major determinant of Bangladesh foreign policy.

(ii) Social Geography:

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The Indian sub-continent as earlier called Jambudvipa has always been perceived as a model of unity in diversity is amply reflected in terms of language, dress, eating habits etc. And this model of diversity has continuously passed from generation to generation. And this fact was even recognized by various dynasties and rulers. This unique sense of belonging to what is known as India has been beautifully captured in the following words of Jawaharlal Nehru.

"It is fascinating to find how the Bengalis, the Marathas, the Gujaratis, the Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Kannadese, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs and the great central block comprising the Hindustani speaking people, have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years, have still more or less the same virtues and feelings of which old tradition or record tells us, and yet have been throughout these ages distinctively Indian with the same national heritage and the same set of moral

1. A.L. Bashm, The Wonder that was India, Rupa Publication, Calcutta, 1967, p.1.

and mental qualities."¹ This tag of unity in diversity was broken by the British in the later half of 19th century, when for the first time Lord Eliphinstone introduced the policy of 'Divide eat Impera' as he said, 'it has been old Roman motto, and now onwards it will be ours'.²

The final culmination of Lord Eliphinstone policy came in the form of partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan, pointing to the fact that Hindu and Muslims are not two religion or communities, but two different nations which have different ideologies, goals etc.³

As Historians often say history repeats itself, it came to be true in the case of Pakistan, when one of its provinces called East Pakistan declared its independence on 6 December 1971. The basic cause which scholars point out is the repressive policies and lack of development which finally led to the emergence of Bangladesh.

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1. Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, p.61.
 2. B.L. Grover, A Modern History of India, S. Chand and Company, Delhi, 1982, p.vii.
 3. Abul Kalam Azad, India Wins Freedom, Penguin, Calcutta, 1948, pp.69-73.

(iii) Geo-politics:

No one geographical feature dominates over the others, and none are entirely persistence in their influence. The degree of geographical influence is highly variable. For these reasons the analysis of geographical influences on history, society and polity is contingent upon changing technological, cultural, economic and political conditions.¹

East Bengal geographically shows a natural alliance with the Indian state of West Bengal. This can be described as the part of legacy as earlier Bangladesh formed a single unit with West Bengal. It was the political factors which bifurcated this unit.

Pakistan after its independence neglected the regional development of East Pakistan. This neglect led to the start of a political movement² which was supported by India. Thus geographical reasons became the prime factor in East Bengal's struggle, against Pakistan, therefore foreign policy of Bangladesh had to take 'cognizance of geopolitical

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1. Quincy Wright, Study of International Relations, p.340.
 2. As six points of the Awami League contained mainly the economic indices, as to promote the development of Bangladesh.

factors'¹ in India, making it the focal point for determining its nature and contents.

(iv) The People:

The development of society is determined not by outstanding personalities but by the masses. The very existence of the exploiting system is conceivable only if politics is determined by the exploiting classes and not by the masses. The role played by the masses grows immeasurably in the most decisive period of history namely social revolution.² And this happened in the case of Bangladesh, where authorities neglected the regional development, which forced the common masses to rise under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman and finally led to the formation of Bangladesh.

K.N. Brutents writes that every revolution is carried out primarily in the interests of a definite class or forces which give a lead in the revolution and carries to the seat of power.³

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1. Virender Narain, Foreign Policy of Bangladesh (1971-81), Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1987, pp.20-31.
 2. Georgi Arbatov, The War of Ideas in Contemporary International Relations, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, pp.52-53.
 3. K.N. Brutents, National Liberation Revolution, Vol.I, pp.34-35.

According to scholars, population is an element of foreign policy. In the case of Bangladesh, the role of the people as a determinant is important because the country gets liberation from the Pakistani domination through a mass movement. The post-liberation phase in Bangladesh is characterised by a continuity in popular movement restricting if not preventing decision makers propensities to deviate from the nationally accepted policy objectives.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic aspect is the key factor in determining the foreign policy of any country. A foreign policy garners resources for socio-economic development. Economic geography means economic resources within the national territory which need to be exploited and augmented for economic development. Bangladesh had completely stagnated under the Pakistan rule due to their skewed and exploitative policies. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League emphasised on economic development in their famous six point programme.¹ It was realized that it was not possible for East Bengal to develop as a part of Pakistan, separated as it was by more than a thousand miles of Indian territory. Economic geogra-

1. Six points of Awami League.

phy of Bangladesh makes it a part of the eastern region of the Indian subcontinent. The decision-makers in Bangladesh can ill-afford to ignore this significant geographical reality particularly in view of the fact that in terms of the natural resources, the country does not have much to rely upon. It has jute and natural gas. In terms of minerals, it is very poor: for coal, oil and iron it is thoroughly dependent on others.

Economic constraints arising out of economic geography of the country play a deterministic role in the formulation of foreign policy. Bangladesh's relations, after independence, with the world have greatly been influenced by this important economic factor.

III. Political Tradition

History also forms an influencing factor, while determining the foreign policy of a government or a nation. And this too stands true in the case of Bangladesh.

Going back to historical past, Bangladeshi contribution in the first war of independence in 1857 was not noteworthy but still there is substantial evidence to show that the imposition of British rule was resisted by native rulers as well as the people. Even saffron clad sadhu's revolt popu-

larly called as 'Sannyasi revolt' provided a heroic resistance to British authorities.

Further historians point out in spite of the formation of Muslim League, "the anti-imperialist stand did not get totally blunted, as there was, "strong trend in the Bengal Muslim League, which while supporting the demand for Pakistan, was opposed to British imperialism".¹ In fact as the struggle against Pakistani domination got momentum in East Bengal, the anti-imperialist edge became sharper since the general belief among the leadership of the struggle was that Pakistan's military dictatorship was being sustained by the imperialists - the USA and other western powers.

Historically, therefore anti-imperialism could be an important determinant of the foreign policy of Bangladesh. In other words, Bangladesh was expected to bear in mind that by pursuing an anti-imperialist foreign policy, she would be acting in conformity with a historical legacy.²

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1. Abul Hashim and his friends represented this trend in the Bangladesh Muslim League. Quote from Virendra Narain, Foreign Policy of Bangladesh (1971-81), 1987, p.37.
 2. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har-Anand Publications, 1994, p.38.

IV. DOMESTIC MILIEU

The foreign of Bangladesh like that of any country in the world is influenced by the nature of its political leadership. Much depends on the leadership's perceptions about international politics, though it has to reckon with other determinants like geography and historical legacies. It began with the Awami League leadership under the inspiring personality of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The historical legacy of anti-imperialism was the cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy during his regime. He was deeply committed to the objectives of the national liberation struggle like secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism, which brought both the leadership and the country closer to India and the non-aligned camp,

Foreign Minister Kamal Hussain reiterated Bangladesh's faith in non-aligned foreign policy, in his speech, delivered at the UN General Assembly on 17 September 1974. Bangladesh has consistently pursued an independent non-aligned foreign policy.¹

But 1975 saw a change in the foreign policy of Bangladesh and for the first time, the seeds of anti-India senti-

1. Dilera Chowdhury, Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, 1992, p.7.

ments began to grow at the cost of its drift to USA, China and the Islamic world. However, this radical change in its foreign policy was related to the political development which took place in 1975, that is military coup. This coup brought Zia-ur Rahman, as the new president, who was quite anti-Indian in his political stance. The policies of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, non-alignment, close friendship with India underwent a tremendous change. After his assassination successive regime established good relations with Pakistan and other Islamic countries at the cost of its good relation with India. Because Zia-ur Rahman did not have the people's direct support he decided to use the religion - Islam, to legitimise his rule in Bangladesh.

In 1980s, H.M. Ershad used foreign policy of Bangladesh to get both military and economic aid from USA and China. He maintained an anti-India and anti-Soviet plank. Mujibur Rahman's foreign policy was pro-India but non-aligned and was directed towards achieving self-reliant Bangladesh whereas the military rulers' basic thrust was how to appease the western bloc in general and USA in particular.

The overthrow of H.M. Ershad was a result of mass movement launched by Sheikh Hasina Wajid and Begam Khaleda Zia. Begam Khaleda Zia became the Prime Minister of Bangla-

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desh in February 1991. The foreign policy of Khaleda Zia resembled the foreign policy which was formulated after the 1975 coup. Most of the policies of Khaleda Zia, seemed to resemble the policies of her previous military rulers. The basic frame of Khaleda Zia's foreign policy was based on Islamic socialism like that Zia-ur Rahman and H.M. Ershad who used Islam as a factor to save their political ends. This trend continued even after the restoration of democratic rule.

Further, Begam Khalida Zia tilted her foreign policy towards China and the Islamic world and looked towards USA for economic aid. Khaleda Zia's government opted for market economy and liberalisation. These developments added extensive economic content in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. More importance was attached to trade in the foreign policy. A roving trade representative of the country was appointed for the enhancement of trade. All these developments brought a shift in the diplomacy from aid to trade in the foreign policy of Khaleda Zia.

V. INTERNATIONAL MILIEU

Talking of the external or international determinants of Bangladesh's foreign policy, one can name three major

factors. These are as following.

i. Role of Major Powers:

The international political scene, in 1971, when Bangladesh gained her independence, was marked by antagonism and confrontationism between the major powers of the world because of its strategic location.¹ Bangladesh believing strongly in anti-imperialism, was much concerned not to be subjected to any of the imperialist demands of the western world which had also opposed her (Bangladesh) emergence as an independent sovereign entity. As a consequence of this, she made her commitment towards non-alignment,² supported anti-colonial struggles in different parts of the world and increased and strengthened its past ties of friendship with the erstwhile Soviet Union and India, who themselves were very much active in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. Also the relations with China and Pakistan were determined by their attitude towards Bangladesh. Thus, the

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1. See "South Asia and US Foreign Policy", Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State, Washington DC, and address given by Michael H. Armocost, Under Secretary of State, Political Affairs on 12 December 1984.
 2. Foreign Minister Kamal Hussain reiterated Bangladesh's faith in non-aligned foreign policy in his speech delivered at the UN General Assembly on 17 September, 1974, "Bangladesh has consistently pursued an independent non-aligned foreign policy. Dilerala Chowdhury, Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p.7.

major powers played a significant role in determining the foreign policy of Bangladesh.

(ii) The Islamic World:

Though Bangladesh in her initial stage as an independent and sovereign country believed strongly that religion in no way should colour the country's foreign policy. Yet after the country's reign went over to the military, i.e. from 1975 onwards, Bangladesh's constitution, has said "...in the name of all mighty Allah..."¹ Her rulers since 1975 have given more emphasis on Islam as a factor to serve their own political ends and this trend continues even though the democratic rule of the state has been restored. Hence, we can say that since 1975, Bangladesh's foreign policy has certainly been influenced by the Islamic factor.

(iii) Regional Environment:

Although Bangladesh is part of the South Asian region, it is also on the periphery of both the South and South-east Asian regions. Bangladesh's concern for South Asian region is evident in the initiative, she took for the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p.42.

(SAARC).¹ Promotion of South Asian Identity helps Bangladesh to minimise the consequences of India's perceived domination in the region. This also ensures the development of intra-regional economic cooperation which benefits smaller states like Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's foreign policy has to take note of the developments in the neighbouring Myanmar (Burma) which has substantial Muslim population known as Rohingees. Of late there has been tension on Bangladesh-Myanmar border and Rohingees have been crossing over to Bangladesh as refugees. Myanmar's internal political situation too has contributed to the deterioration in relation with Bangladesh.

Main Objectives and Principles of Bangladesh Foreign Policy

The most important objective of any foreign policy is to promote national interest and in this context the foremost interest lies in protecting nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty. An analysis of Bangladesh's foreign policy unfolds the consistency inherent in it, though there have been changes in the regimes, in the attitudes of the super powers, patterns of alignment in the subcontinent,

1. Shah Alam, SAARC in the Foreign Policy Objectives of Bangladesh, p.137.

inter-state relations in South Asia, historical experience and the trauma of Bangladesh's birth, international as well as regional political structures.

Following are the consistent features of Bangladesh's foreign policy.

- 1) National security and territorial integrity.
- 2) Good neighbouring relations - seeking closer ties with India, Pakistan, China and South East Asia.
- 3) Promoting and maintaining, because of religious affinities of Bengali Muslims, fraternal ties with Muslim countries, including Pakistan.
- 4) Seeking stability and peace to promote international cooperation in order to maintain the flow of financial assistance which is needed for Bangladesh's economic development.
- 5) Support for a new international economic order which would be beneficial for a developing country like Bangladesh.

Another major objective of Bangladesh's foreign policy has been the concern for economic development. Bangladesh had inherited a shattered economy, without an industrial base and poor national resources. Economic development is a

major part of overall nation-building. It has sought economic aid both from the western and non-western world and also from Islamic countries. These objectives emanating from the experiences of the national liberation movement and socio-economic realities in the country had led to certain characteristics features of the foreign policy of Bangladesh which are as follows.

(i) Non-Alignment

Bangladesh emerged as a separate nation after the struggle of national liberation movement, it was not possible for it to understand the nature of international political system divided as it was into antagonistic power blocs. Race for armament and stock piling of nuclear weapons kept the world at the brink of catastrophe. There was also great disparity between the rich and poor.

The North always tried to extricate maximum political advantage from the South. Bangladesh belonging to the south and being one among the least developed nations of the world, had no option but to be non-aligned as it gave her the freedom to act in accordance with her own national interest. Non-alignment was also supportive of Bangladesh's national liberation movement and had played a role in her quest for national identity. Non-alignment thus became a

characteristic feature of the foreign policy of Bangladesh, though adherence to this principle was dependent on the nature of political leadership at home.

(ii) Attitude towards India

India had played a pivotal role in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. Being surrounded by Indian states, the foreign policy of Bangladesh always contained the India factor. In the first five years the Bangladesh officials remained extremely friendly with India despite quite a few unresolved bilateral problems, most important among them being the Ganges water dispute.

The Indo-Bangladesh relations underwent a complete metamorphosis after the 1975 military coup. Anti-Indianism characterised the foreign policy and at the official level India was projected as a hostile neighbour, though at the popular level India continued to be popular.

(iii) Islamic Power

Islamic ideology played a negative role in the national liberation movement of Bangladesh and formed an important ingredient of it. The role of a majority of Islamic countries led by Saudi Arabia was extremely hostile to Bangla-

desh since its emergence was perceived as a block to Islamic solidarity.

Sheikh Mujib was highly critical of these Islamic nations, though he expressed his willingness to forge friendly relations with them as a part of larger policy of friendship with all and enmity with none. Islam therefore was not a factor in determining the nature of relationship with the Islamic world during the Mujib period. The coup of 1975 was hailed as reassertion of Islam in Bangladesh. The situation took a pro-Islamic turn and development of friendly relations with the Islamic world. Islamic solidarity became the cardinal principle of the foreign policy of Bangladesh. However, Islamisation of Bangladesh's polity and society have met with popular resistance thus signifying deep commitment of the people of Bangladesh to the concept of secularism.

(iv) Orientation towards Major Powers

Since its inception, Bangladesh as a member of the non-aligned movement had sought to develop friendly relations with all major powers of the world with the exception of USA and China which were hostile towards her from the time of national liberation struggle. China did not recognise Bangladesh and opposed her entry into the United Nations,

while the USA sought to influence the foreign policy of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Mujib tried hard to get economic aid from the USA on his own terms without compromising the basic objectives of national liberation movement, but after the coup of 1975, Bangladesh tilted towards USA and China. Dependence on foreign aid pushed Bangladesh into a situation wherein pro-West orientation became a characteristic feature of its foreign policy.

CAPTER - II

**EVOLUTION OF FOREIGN POLICY
OF BANGLADESH, 1971-1990**

CHAPTER II
EVOLUTION OF FOREIGN POLICY
OF BANGLADESH, 1971-1990.

The origin of Bangladesh can be traced back to the partition of India in 1947 when Pakistan came into existence.¹ Bangladesh was then known as East Bengal and afterwards when the first Constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1956 as East Pakistan. East Pakistan was formed by combining together eastern part of Bengal and Sylhet district of Assam, two provinces which were a part of undivided India.

Pakistan then had two wings East and West which were separated by 1600 kms of the 'hostile' territory of India. East and West wings of Pakistan had fewer similarities but more dissimilarities. Soon there arose deep dissension between them over the issues of establishing democracy, according to national language status and distribution of the national revenue. The eastern wing wanted a democratic system of government, recognition of its language - Bengali, as one of the national language of Pakistan and proportion-

1. Choudhury, Subrata Roy, The Genesis of Bangladesh: a study on International Legal Means and Permissive Conscience, Allied Publishing House, New Delhi, 1972.

ate share of national revenue for its development. But its demands met with stiff resistance from the western wing and in course of time eastern wing was reduced into an internal colony of the West Pakistan.¹ The situation gave birth to a national movement in the Eastern wing. The movement was led by Awami League (AL) which was founded in 1949 by a faction of the Muslim League (ML) which had inherited power during the foundation of Pakistan. The faction left the ML after it had failed to democratise the parent body. The national movement gradually developed into the war of Independence.

The freedom struggle since its inception had been debating and demanding a foreign policy based on world peace, non-alignment, and anti-colonialism for the country. The political movement in the then East Pakistan strongly opposed Pakistan's participation in the US led military blocs, SEATO and CENTO.² The movements unequivocally supported the struggle of all freedom loving people against the vestiges of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The movement also talked about self-reliance, close friendship with all

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1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har-Anand Publications, 1994, p.12.
 2. Kamal Hossain, "Bangladesh Sovereignty and Independent Non-aligned Foreign Policy", Australian Outlook, Vol.7, No.4, December 1985, p.69.

neighbouring countries in general and with India in particular.

Foreign Policy of Bangladesh during
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1971-75)

The architect of independent Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the chief decision-maker in the realm of foreign policy. The basic tenets of his foreign policy were non-alignment, peaceful co-existence and opposition to colonialism, racialism and imperialism in all its manifestations. He was deeply committed to anti-imperialism and had clearly seen the game of the imperialist powers on whose military and political support Pakistan had carried out economic and political exploitation of Bangladesh. For him national liberation meant not only freedom from foreign exploitation but also from internal reactionary elements. It was on internal obscurantism and reactionary feudal elements that foreign imperialist influence had thrived. Sheikh Mujib explored the linkage between domestic, political and socio-economic scene and international politics, and embarked on using the foreign policy to his advantage in the massive task of nation building.

Sheikh was consistent with his declaration that the foreign policy of Bangladesh would be guided by the principle of "friendship with all and malice towards none". He

therefore sought to fight reactionary and obscurantist forces at home, and forge an anti-imperialist unity abroad.

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The Sheikh's concerns were:

i) The diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by the independent states of the world and the acceptance of Bangladesh as full member by the UNO and other such international organizations.

ii) Withdrawal of Indian troops and settlement of many vexed bilateral issues.

iii) Speedy recovery of war torn economy of the country.

Since non-alignment, as a policy, had enabled the third world countries to defuse international tensions thus creating conditions for their socio-economic development, the Sheikh made it the cornerstone of his foreign policy.² Further in keeping with the objectives of national liberation movement i.e. nationalism, socialism, secularism and democracy, Bangladesh government recognised the provisional

1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), , p.16. (n.I, p.N.32)

2. Dilara Chowdhury, The Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p.48.

revolutionary government of South Vietnam and announced in unequivocal terms, its resolve to support liberation movements in other parts of the world. It opposed racial discrimination and upheld African people's right to root out colonialism from the soils. The Sheikh supported the Arab cause in the West Asian crisis and developed very close relations with the Soviet Union. India occupied a place of honour in Bangladesh as she was looked upon as the mainstay of Bangladesh's liberation struggle. One of the first acts the Mujib government was to enter into a 20-year treaty of peace and friendship with India on 19 March 1972.

Bangladesh was recognised by most of the sovereign states of the world including Pakistan by the end of 1974. China and Saudi Arabia were only among the important countries which formally recognized Bangladesh after the assassination of Sheikh. Bangladesh was enrolled as a member of the UNO in 1974¹ though much before that the UN had started extending economic assistance for the reconstruction of the war ravaged economy. The NAM and the Commonwealth accepted it as their full member.

1. S.R. Chakravarti (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har Anand Publications, 1994, p.16.

Even the organization of Islamic states accorded full membership to Bangladesh in 1974.

Bangladesh-Soviet Union Relations

Bangladesh had close relations with the USSR during the early years of its existence and later on pursued strong anti-Soviet policies vis-a-vis the Afghan and Kampuchean issues because the ultra-leftists saw it as "a sinister design" of the "social imperialists" and denounced Sheikh¹ for his "subservience" to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union's approach in aiding the new nation was guided by her perception about international politics in general and developing power alignment in South Asia in particular. She wanted Bangladesh to be in the anti-imperialist² fold in order to defeat the Sino-US scheme in South and South East Asia. The Soviet economic aid in terms of outright grants and loans was not enough, was obvious in view of stupendous requirements of a backward Bangladesh. At the economic level, the perceptions of the USA were

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1. G. Mostafa, National Interest and Foreign Policy: Bangladesh Relations with the Soviet Union and its Successor States, South Asian Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p.107.
 2. Virendra Narain, Foreign Policy of Bangladesh (1971-81), Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1987, p.116.

sought to be realized by taking advantage of the contradictions in the leadership of the national liberation movement. The Soviet Union helped Bangladesh with economic aid to rehabilitate the country's shattered economy. Soviet help was also forthcoming in clearing the mine infested Chittagong port. Sheikh Mujib was however accused by his detractors, of being under the "Indo-Soviet hegemony".¹ The pro-Chinese and pro-US elements in Bangladesh continued with their anti-Soviet tirade. After the assassination of Sheikh, the foreign policy was given an anti-Soviet turn by the military rulers of the country.

Bangladesh-India Relations

All the countries desire close and friendly ties with their neighbours. In case of India and Bangladesh both geography and history render this imperative. The two nations have been bound by history, geography, kinship, religion faith, culture, legacy and linguistic affinity.² Mutual cooperation between India and Bangladesh is an emphatic demand of the geopolitical realities of the two countries.

1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.) (h.L.P.N.32), p.50.

2. Virendra Narian, Foreign Policy of Bangladesh (1971-81), Aalesh Publishers, Jaipur, , p.72.

India has played a very important role in the creation of Bangladesh as an independent nation. On the battle front India helped Mukti Bahini¹ to make a clean sweep of the Pakistani forces with a view to handing over the reign of administration to the leaders of Bangladesh people.

During Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman period (1971-75) a very intimate cooperation existed between two countries in the field of trade, science, cultural and educational spheres. During this period two countries worked together and made substantial progress in all spheres of their relations. It was a time of expressing sentiments of brotherly cooperation and 'irreversible'² ties between the two.

In 1972, framing the foreign policy of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman told the newly independent nation that "Friendship with India is a cornerstone of foreign policy of Bangladesh."³

Since the emergence of Bangladesh, the Prime ministers

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1. Mahiruzzaman Talukder, The Bangladesh Revolution and its Aftermath, Bangladesh Book International Ltd., Dhaka, 1980.
 2. The Patriot (New Delhi), 6 January 1972.
 3. Bangladesh Progress, Department of Publication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of People of Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, p.5.

of two countries have made constant contacts and signed a number of agreements from time to time. Prime ministers of both the countries signed on 19th March 1972, a twenty-five¹ years Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace and on 2nd March 1972 India and Bangladesh initiated three-tier agreement providing for trade of the appropriate value of Rupees 100 crores. Both the countries have also signed many cultural, trade and Border demarcation agreement during 1973-74.² The two countries agreed to set up a ministerial level commission for closer cooperation in production, trade technical development, manufacture and promotion of jute etc. The settlement of the border dispute was hailed tremendously. It sorted out a pattern of co-operation between the two countries as this agreement was bilateral in nature.

Bangladesh-US Relations

As for the USA her hostility towards liberation of Bangladesh was well understood by the leadership, but owing to socio-economic situation, the US-Bangladesh relations acquired critical dimensions and the US role in destabilising Sheikh Mujib's government was not insignificant. USA

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1. Asian Recorder, Vol.XVIII, No.16, 15-21 April 1972, pp.107-117.
 2. Foreign Affairs Record, Vol.XX, No.5, May 1974, pp.92-96.

came forward with massive economic aid to influence political developments in Bangladesh.

To begin with, however, the leadership, with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the helm embarked upon the course of economic development with self-reliance as the ultimate objective. The key industries and banks were nationalised¹ to increase the role of state power and give the desired shape to the economy. Foreign aid with strings was spurned, while disinterested financial support was willingly accepted. While India and the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union, came forward with aid and loans in conformity with the objectives of national liberation, the western powers led by the USA looked with suspicion at the economic policies of Bangladesh government. They gave enough financial support for relief and rehabilitation purposes but deliberately avoided substantial aid as to promote independent economic development in the country.² This was in keeping with their general policy to keep the economy of the developing world perpetually underdeveloped.

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1. Delara Chowdhury, "Bangladesh and the South", Asian International System, p.76.
 2. Rahman Sobhan, The Crisis of External Dependence, The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1982.

Economic aid at the level, where it directly affected the common man viz. in the sphere of relief and rehabilitation, too, was a part of a deliberate policy to penetrate at the local level and gradually affect the psyche of common man in a manner as to make him vulnerable to anti-government propaganda and thus become an easy prey to subversive activities of the reactionary communal elements. In other words, the entire approach of the imperialists in the sphere of economic aid to Bangladesh was a part of their grand design to destabilize the political countries who were entering their second phase of socio-economic emancipation.

The need for economic aid compelled Sheikh Mujib to accommodate pro-US elements in his cabinet while persons like Tajuddin, a leader, committed to the objectives of national liberation movement, was eased out under US pressure.

Thus the role of the USA during the Sheikh's regime was not conducive to the stability of Bangladesh as an independent entity,¹ USA finally succeeded in her policies towards Bangladesh was largely due to shadows of impending disaster which ultimately struck the country in August 1975 when

1. Dilara Chowdhury, Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992.

forces inimical to Sheikh Mujib and his foreign policy perception physically eliminated him from the political scene of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh-China Relation, 1971-75

During the Mujib era, Bangladesh's relations with China were not cordial. Due to the hostile role of China during the liberation war, it was not unreasonable on the part of the leadership of Bangladesh to treat China as unfriendly.¹ G.W. Chowdhury ascribes Chinese hostility to the liberation struggle to the Maoist view,² according to which "the rebels in East Pakistan were not part of a genuine national liberation movement but a bourgeois movement sustained by "reactionary India" and "social imperialist Russia". China regarded Sheikh Mujib as anti-Chinese.³

The Chinese hostility in fact emanated from the distortions of its own revolutionary movement and its ideological commitments which had led China directly into a collabora-

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1. Iftekhar A. Chowdhury, Bangladesh External Relations - The Strategy of Small Power in Sub-System, Bangladesh Book International Ltd., Dhaka, 1980, p.209.
 2. Virendra Narain, Foreign Policy of Bangladesh (1971-81), p.137.
 3. G.W. Chowdhury, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Power, Politics divided Sub-continent, The Free Press, London, 1975, p.211.

tive relationship with the imperialist, and it sided with the USA and her ally, Pakistan, against the national liberation movement in Bangladesh. Ultra-leftist elements in Bangladesh taking a clue from China, created destabilising conditions in the country. Relations with China improved only after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Relations with Muslim Countries

Diplomatic support during the Bangladesh liberation war was given to Pakistan by Iran and Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and the Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf, while the rest of the Arab states, Egypt, Iraq, Algeria and India, remained comparatively silent.¹ After the emergence of Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia were the first Muslim states to recognise Bangladesh on Twenty-fifth February, 1972.

Among the Arab states Iraq, Egypt, Algeria and Syria were willing to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country. Leaving these countries aside the other Arab countries, even after the visit of Bangladesh's foreign minister continued their negative stance. Bangladesh avoided any link with Israel even after not having any positive

1. Asghar Ali, "Bangladesh and the Muslim World", United Asia (Bombay), Vol.23, no.3, 1971, p.193.

relation with the Arab countries. A senior career diplomat was appointed as special envoy of Bangladesh to the region¹ shortly after the independence was established.

Bangladesh expressed solidarity with Arab countries vis-a-vis Israel and upheld the Palestinian cause. In 1973 Arab-Israel war of 1973 Bangladesh strongly supported Arabs. Most Arab and Islamic countries excluding Saudi Arabia and Sudan recognised Bangladesh during Mujib time.

The main problem between Bangladesh and Pakistan were as follows:

- i) Repatriation of Pakistani Prisoners of War (POWs) held in India.
- ii) Repatriation of Bengali military and civilian personnel held in Pakistan.
- iii) Repatriation of Pakistan personnel and Urdu speaking pro-Pakistani people residing in Bangladesh.
- iv) Division of assets and liabilities between them.

A final agreement about repatriation was signed between

1. Mizanur Rahman Shely, "Bangladesh: Quest for International recognition", Asian Affairs (Dhaka), Vol.5, no.4, October-December 1983, p.414.

India and Pakistan on 28th August 1973.¹ Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in 1974, during the Second Islamic Conference, respecting the 'unanimous opinion' of the Muslim leaders.² Iran, Turkey and Libya recognised Bangladesh after Pakistan.

Recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan did not result in establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states. During the tripartite negotiation between Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, Bangladesh announced its clemency to the 195 alleged war criminals.³

Foreign Policy of Bangladesh during Zia-ur-Rahman and H.M. Ershad

The Zia-ur Rahman Regime brought about significant development in political, economic and international arena. This government was a partner between the military and civil bureaucrats.⁴ In order to widen the bases of his authority he attempted a gradual transition from the martial law to a civilian rule. He consolidated his position by a country-

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1. Mouded Ahmed, Bangladesh: Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Dhaka, 1983, pp.195-202.
 2. Davis Wright, Bangladesh: Origin and Indian Ocean Relations (1971-75), New Delhi, 1988, pp.936-40.
 3. Foreign Minister Kamal Hossain.
 4. S.R. Chakravarty, Bangladesh Under Mujib, Zia and Ershad, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p.113.

wide referendum in which he obtained massive mandate.

Zia dropped secularism from the Constitution in favour of Islam. Socialism was redesigned to conform to the Islamic idea of social justice. Even in foreign policy the date was called upon to endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.

Islam gave a distinct identity to Bangladesh and erased the pro-India label that it had carved during the Mujib period.

Elements hostile to the national liberation struggle, after lying low for sometime had embarked upon the course of confrontation with the government accusing it of failure on all fronts owing to what they called Sheikh Mujib's "total subservience to Indo-Soviet hegemonistic¹ ambitious. Some leaders like Maulana Bhasani and Mohammad Toaha belonging to pro-Chinese ultra-left political fronts in association with reactionary communal forces created agitational climate in the country protesting against India's alleged interference in Bangladesh affairs and her belligerent attitude towards the Ganga-Water (Farakka) dispute.

1. S.R. Chakravarty, , p.50, (n.I, P.N.32)

policy of Khaleda Zia.

On the other hand ruling Awami League was afflicted with acute factional wranglings. A section led by Khondakar Mustaq Ahmed (a cabinet minister in Sheikh's Regime) had strong links with the USA sought to destabilise the Sheikh's government.

After the coup foreign policy of Bangladesh underwent a traumatic experience. International powers, which were hitherto reluctant to recognise Bangladesh, promptly came forward to help her in salvaging her economy and protecting her political independence from what they turned as threat from Indo-Soviet axis. Doors were open for unhindered flow of economic aid from the USA¹ and other western countries. China hailed the events of 1975 and promised whole-hearted support for Bangladesh's fight against Indo-Soviet hegemonism. The Islamic world saw in it the triumph of Islamic solidarity and came forward with large scale economic aid.

Thus the consequences of the coup of 1975 were qualitatively significant for the foreign policy of Bangladesh. While certain basic features, like non-alignment etc. were professedly accepted, their definitions underwent subtle changes. Opposition to imperialism and colonialism became

1. Virendra Narain, , p.121, (n. II, P.N. 36)

subdued and there was considerable reluctance to oppose the USA and her allies in the international fora like UN. Indo-Bangladesh relations, evidently nose-dived and bilateral problems between the two countries were sought to be internationalised and projected as evidence of India's alleged belligerent and expansionists policies.

Foreign policy under Zia-ur Rahman remained no longer wedded to the objectives of national liberation movement. The immediate task before the military ruler Major General Zia was to consolidate his national and international position. Even though Zia continued Bangladesh's association with NAM and kept speaking in support of anti-colonialism, friendship with all countries, world peace but amended the constitution by adding the clause which directed the government to strive for special relations with Islamic countries. Thus the country's basic foreign policy tenets now included religious inputs as well. Reliance on the countries of Western bloc who had opposed the liberation struggle in Bangladesh was emphasised.

Zia accepted the World Bank-IMF prescribed development strategy, denouncing the strategy which had evolved out of a national consensus during the freedom struggle. His policy was characterised by his anti-Indian and anti-USSR over-

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tures.

A notable feature of Zia-ur Rahman's foreign policy was the floating of the idea of regional cooperation which ultimately led to the emergence of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).² He also transformed his country's foreign policy into 'aid diplomacy' and went strongly for tied aid.

The second military ruler was General Ershad, who continued his predecessor's foreign policy. During Ershad's regime Bangladesh pursued the following:

- It underwent sea change in matters of perceptions about the role of major powers vis-a-vis Bangladesh's independence and integrity.
- It became heavily tilted in favour of USA, China and the Islamic world.
- It adopted hostile attitude towards Indian and the Soviet Union.
- It sought regional cooperation (SAARC).
- It depended heavily on foreign aid.

1. G. Mostafa, ... p.110, (h.I, P.N.36) .

2. S.R. Chakravarty, ... p.42, (h.I P.N.32).

However during Ershad's regime Indo-Bangladesh relations improved due to temporary settlement of Ganga water dispute and Teen Beegha controversy but his strong arm methods to crush democracy received widespread condemnation which ultimately became the cause of his downfall in 1990 after which democracy was restored.

Relations with US

The importance of India in Bangladesh policy calculations is primarily because of geo-political situation of the two countries. Bangladesh's identification with India and the Soviet Union had created difficulties for Mujib's government in establishing friendly relations with both US and China.

Within a year of Zia's installation, US indicated its willingness to consider export licence requests from Bangladesh for the cash sales of military equipments. It also showed greater interest in Bangladesh's affairs - a political and economic appraisal of the country was placed before the Congress on the eve of the presidential election in Bangladesh.¹

1. Department of State Bulletin, May 1978, p.50.

Mr. Tabarak Hossain, who was the Chief architect of the the country's foreign policy was appointed as ambassador to Washington.¹

The end of 1970 was the beginning of a crucial phase for US-South Asian relations. Due to deterioration of US-Pak relations, the US Bangladesh relations improved rapidly. Bangladesh indicated its tilt towards Washington by signing the controversial Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which India and Pakistan had refused. Zia's visit to US in August 1980 further strengthened their relations with an hour long talk with President Carter.²

US contributed to major economic development of the country. 104 million aid under PL480 was committed to Bangladesh.³ With rapid liberalization many US firms entered Bangladesh.

Due to its contribution in UN for the third world countries it secured itself the prestigious security council membership.

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1. Bangladesh Observer, 19/9/78.
 2. Dilera Chowdhury, Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, Academic Publications, Dhaka, 1992, pp.78-82.
 3. Ibid.

Gen Ershad, a Zia loyalist took over the reins after the assassination of Zia in 1981. He followed the policy of his predecessor. The Bangladesh-US ties remained unchanged during his period. The contribution of Bangladesh in UN was praised during his tenure.

Bangladesh's Relations with India

India is the focal point of Bangladesh's foreign policy, some inherited from the undivided Pakistan and others created later. In fact in 1940, there were three main bilateral issues between India and Bangladesh viz.

- i) The water-sharing issue;
- ii) The boundary issue and maritime dispute;
- iii) alleged Indian interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs.

The economy of Bangladesh and for that matter, the very survival of its people is closely linked with the free flow of the water of its rivers. The diversion of silt-free water from the Ganges by India passed more silt into the Bangladeshi part of the Ganges, lifting the river bed and ultimately bringing drought in the dry season and flooding

in rainy season.¹ It also adversely affected the river systems in Bangladesh, and substantially decreased the capacity for irrigation. It furthermore affected the livelihood of thousands of fishermen, due to depletion of fish resources.²

Soviet geologist Valery Krashinnikov acknowledged that continuous interference in the normal flow of the Ganges water would upset the ecological balance of the Ganges-Brahmaputra Basin and the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, and that the cumulative effects of diversion of the Ganges water on Bangladesh would be disastrous.³

The Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC) was formed in 1972, with a view to working together in harnessing the rivers common to both the countries for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.⁴ No long term solutions were arrived at.⁵

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1. For effects of the Farakka dam on Bangladesh, see Hamidul Rahman Khan, "Effects of Farakka Barrage on Bangladesh", The Bangladesh Times, 11 April 1976.
 2. M. Rafiqul Islam, Bangladesh Liberation Movement, Dhaka University Press Ltd., 1987, Chapter II.
 3. The Bangladesh Times, 31 March 1976.
 4. Statute of Indo-Bangladesh Joint River Commission, 21 November 1972.
 5. M. Rafiqul Islam, n. **2**, pp.102-110.

After the political changes in August 1975, the military regime found it more difficult to reach an agreement with India on water sharing issue. The existing agreement expired in May 1975 and no new agreement was reached till 1977, with every successive attempts of reconciliation failing. Bangladesh proceeded to internationalize the issue, in 1976.

Bangladesh raised the issue before the OIC foreign minister conference in Islamabad in May 1976.¹ Later it was again raised in Nonaligned summit in Colombo. Finally, in desperation, Bangladesh took the issue to the 31st Session of the UN General Assembly in November 1976, hoping to get international support.² In November 1977, a five-year agreement was signed between Bangladesh and India which served the interest of both parties.³ A "memorandum of understanding" on the sharing of Ganges water was signed in 1982, which was temporary, also failed to meet Bangladesh's growing need and demand for water.⁴

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1. "Bangladesh in 1976, struggle for survival as an Independent State", Asian Survey, Vol.XVII, 1977, p.193.
 2. The Bangladesh Observer, 17 November 1976.
 3. M. Rafiqul Islam, n. **2**, pp.158-162.
 4. Ibid., Chapter I.

When Bangladesh raised the issue before the UN general assembly, the Soviet Union criticized the move and protested against the inclusion of a bilateral issue in general assembly agenda.¹

In 1947, India and Pakistan became two independent states carved out of British India, a number of territorial issues and disputes remained unresolved, which continued to poison their bilateral relations. Bangladesh as a successor state of East Pakistan, inherited most of the problems with India. In fact, the final demarcation of boundaries between India and Pakistan on East Pakistan was never completed. According to the land boundary agreement that was signed on 16th May 1974, the two sides agreed to expedite the process of solving other boundary issues, but the political events in 1975 changed the situation, and India refused to meet earlier commitments.²

As Bangladesh-India relations deteriorated in the late 1970s, boundary issues became serious. In the absence of clear boundary demarcation and good neighbourly relations, cross-border smuggling and clashes between the border security forces of the two countries became a regular phenome-

1. Talukdedr Maniruzzaman (h.I, P.N. 38) p.193.

2. Dilera Chowdhury (h.I, P.N. 41), pp.187-192.

non.

The issue of maritime boundary between India and Bangladesh assumed greater importance as a result of deteriorating relations between the two countries. A new island called South Talpathi, [which India called it as new Moore islan] in the waters of the Bay of Bengal, became a contentious issue. Both India and Bangladesh claimed the newly formed island when the dispute was going on between the two countries, according to Bangladesh, Mrs. Gandhi claimed the island unilaterally and anchored an Indian Naval ship on it. Further Bangladesh found "some huts and tents, one aerial mast and one pole bearing Indian flag were also seen erected in the Island."¹ USSR criticised Bangladesh's move to patrol the disputed land.

Although Bangladesh is the most homogenous society in South Asia, it experienced some ethnic problems with tribal peoples living in the CHT. The tribals were discontent with the intruding of non-tribals and continuous government harrassment.² They formed their own resistance force, the

1. Ibid., p.5.

2. Syed Nazmul Islam, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh", Asian Survey, Vol.2, No.12, December 1981, pp.1211-22.

Shanti-Bahini (peace corps). India was accused of insurgency in 1975.¹ There were reports that India provided assistance to such political dissident groups as the Swadhin Bangla (independent Bengal)² activists.

By the late 1970s, Bangladesh viewed the situation as Indian preponderance, with the full support of the Soviet Union, in the region. Further, Bangladesh treated this as India's hegemonic attitude towards neighbours and as a distinct threat. As a result, Bangladesh sought support from other external powers in order to counter 'Indian preponderance and hegemony' and to preserve and promote its national interests.

Relations with Islamic World

The Arab recognition of Bangladesh by the Islamic countries after Mujib's removal was not sudden, but culmination of Mujib's efforts.

Ershad visited Pakistan in July 1986 as the first Chairman of SAARC. Pakistan gave 40 discarded F-6, Chinese

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1. "Dealing with Bangladesh", Indian Express, 2 October 1992.
 2. Ibid.

fighter to Bangladesh.¹ Bangladesh, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Sultan Ahmed was awarded with the highest military honour of Pakistan in 1990, for his effort to improve relations between the two countries.² During 1993 the industries in Bangladesh were returned to its Pakistani owners. Due to the congruence of objective of Bangladesh-Pak politico-security diplomacy their foreign policy developed striking similarity and linkage pattern.³ Both developed close relationship with the West, Muslim world and China. The two countries already had affinity due to traditional bonds of religion and history and therefore extended support at various international forums and have identical views on many regional and international issues.⁴

The Pak-Bangladesh relations are limited by some domestic and external constraints, the first being the unsettled problems of standard Pakistanis and the division of assets and liabilities. The second factor is the legacy of the

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1. Srikant Mohapatra, "National Security and Armed Forces in Bangladesh", Strategic Analysis.
 2. Asian Recorder (New Delhi), Vol.36, no.33, 13-19 August 1990, p.21295.
 3. M. Abdul Hafiz, "Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations still developing", BIISS Journal, Vol.6, no.3, July 1985, p.386.
 4. C.M. Shafi Sami, Pak-Banger Relations in Changing Environment.

liberation war, who had witnessed the atrocities of Pakistani army. The third factor in Bangladesh-Pakistan relations was the India factor.

Among other Islamic countries are Malaysia and Indonesia. A joint economic commission is working between Malaysia and Bangladesh. Relationship between Indonesia and Bangladesh though not good are upto the mark owing more to cultural and religious reasons rather than economic or political.

Relations with China

China not only accorded immediate recognition to the military regime that seized power in Dhaka in 1975, but also expressed readiness to provide it with political and military help and support. Good relations between the two countries helped to neutralise radical, extremist pro-Chinese groups and parties, which had substantial power and influence in country. Finally, it helped to balance and counter-growing threats from India and served as an insurance chip against the Soviet Union. Bangladesh's relations with China were built on the common platform of anti-Sovietism and anti-Indianism.¹ China became an important

1. G. Mostafa, p.112, (n.I, P.N.36)

partner of Bangladesh in terms of its political, military and security interests.¹ Clearly ideology did not matter, because China was also a Communist country and the Chinese were as atheistic as the Soviets.

Geographic proximity as well as common and identical views on major international and regional issues (like Kampuchea issue, Afghanistan crisis and on Farakka issue) helped to cement relations between the two old enemies.

China supported Bangladesh in its bilateral disputes with India and welcomed Dhaka's strong anti-Soviet stand, while Bangladesh supported China's position on Afghanistan, Kampuchea and on other regional and international issues. Relations with China were mainly important for political and strategic reasons. Bangladesh valued Chinese support for the causes of its national interest and security. On the other hand, Bangladesh's anti-Indian and anti-Soviet postures served China's interests. For geo-political and strategic reasons, Chinese influence in any South Asian country was deemed to be detrimental to both Indian and Soviet interests in the region. Bangladesh's strong support for China on the Kampuchea issue both in the UN and the nonaligned movement further damaged Bangladesh-Soviet Rela-

1. Ibid., p.111.

tions.

Bangladesh valued Chinese support for the causes of its national interest and security. During President Ershad's visit to China in 1985, President Li Xiannian praised Bangladesh for "upholding justice, opposing expansion and power politics and working to develop friendly relations with other countries"¹. Despite the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, China accused Moscow of continuing support for the unpopular Najibullah regime to consolidate the rule of the people's democratic party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and Bangladesh supported China's position. Close friendly political relations also helped to improve economic relations between the two countries. Bilateral trade between the two countries rose from Taka 428 million in 1975-77 to Taka 2,560 million in 1984-85. As a symbol of this growing friendship, Bangladesh has built a cultural centre and a school in Beijing.

Military cooperation between Bangladesh and China developed rapidly in the 1980s. To satisfy pro-Chinese groups the government appointed Kazi Jafar, leader of the United Peoples' Party, a major pro-Chinese group. Later he was

1. P.M. Aslanov and B.A. Bolotin, "Ideologicheskaya ekspansia Pekina v iuzhuoil Azil, na blizhhesne Sreduem Vostoke", Narodi Azile Afriki, No.3, 1981, p.287.

made political adviser to the President due to Cabinet reshuffle.

China remained an important political, military and strategic ally for Bangladesh in the 1980s, but as Gorbachev emphasized the need for the "deideolization" of international relations and Sino-Soviet relations improved, the Soviet Union was ambivalent or less concerned about Dhaka's courting of China.

Relations with USSR

Moscow Dhaka relations remained cordial until the change of government on 15 August 1975 which was a quite a setback of USSR. In fact, what happened in Bangladesh in 1975 was mainly a joint action by pro-Western, pro-Pakistan, conservative Islamic force along with radical extremist pro-Chinese forces against pro-Soviet and pro-Indian forces.

The Soviet Union, did not criticize his regime directly, rather it blamed the right wing forces and left extremists for undermining Bangladesh-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union was satisfied with the fact that the military regime of Zia brutally cracked down on the pro-Chinese groups and parties in late 1970s.

There was, in fact, no improvement in Bangladesh-Soviet relations during 1976-81, when the BNP government was in power. On the contrary, the situation further complicated in 1981 when the Soviet Union attempted to smuggle forbidden equipment into Bangladesh.

The USSR wanted to monitor the Chinese activities in Bangladesh and set up a diplomatic offensive in the third world. Bangladesh was a suitable alternative for surveillance activities, on losing Rangoon as a base.

The main problem of Bangladesh-Soviet relations was mutual mistrust and lack of priority from both sides to improve relations. The renewed cold war and deteriorating East-West relations in the early eighties had their own implication for Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

CAPTER - III

**FOREIGN POLICY OF BANGLADESH,
DURING KHALIDA ZIA PEIROD (1991-96)**

CHAPTER III
FOREIGN POLICY OF BANGLADESH
DURING KHALEDA ZIA (1991-96)

Begam Khaleda Zia, widow of General Zia-ur Rahman who had captured power following the coup of 1975, was installed in power after the 1991 elections. The foreign policy of Begam Khaleda Zia resembled the foreign policy which was formulated after the 1975 coup by her husband General Zia. The basic framework of Khaleda Zia's policy with regard to the external relations of Bangladesh were greatly based on the policies of Zia-ur Rahman and H.M. Ershad.

Begam Khaleda Zia like her predecessors followed close relations with China and the Islamic world. This is substantiated by the fact that she visited Japan in 1994, China in May 1991, Malaysia in April 1994 and numerous Islamic countries. Khaleda Zia further liberalised the economy and opted for market economy. These developments added extensive economic content in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. More importance was attached to trade in the foreign policy. A roving trade representative of the country was appointed for the enhancement of trade.¹ All these developments

1. S.R. Chakravarty, ed. Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har Anand Publications, 1994, p.56.

brought a shift in the foreign relations of Bangladesh from merely receiving foreign aid. Further, external trade assumed significant position in the foreign policy of Khaleda Zia. These changes in Bangladesh's external relations, particularly that formed the Begam Khaleda Zia's foreign policy can be further analysed in terms of internal as well as external factors.

Among the external factors which greatly helped Bangladesh to have a new course in its foreign policy was the end of cold war, followed by disintegration of Soviet Union, which gradually transformed the world from bipolar to unipolar. With cold war coming to an end, military regimes in the most of the third world countries were overthrown and democracy was established. In South Asia, following Pakistan, democracy was also established in Bangladesh. Thus, the end of cold war at international level indirectly aided Bangladesh in restoring democracy.

As regards internal factors the major change was in the form of democracy, as Khaleda Zia has opted for Parliamentary Democracy in place for Presidential form of Government. The logical arguments for such transformation was to ensure

people's participation in the governance of the country, followed by the effective role of opposition, unlike in authoritarian regime.

Since 1980, due to misrule of successive military regimes the Bangladesh economy was in shambles. Hence, the new democratic government under Begam Khaleda Zia gave more importance to economic factor in its foreign policy. As a result, Bangladesh's economic policy aimed to provide multi-farious economic co-operation, with individual countries and regional groupings, viz., SAARC.

Bangladesh's economic relations with external countries were based on the following three aspects:

- (a) Trade relations with the neighbouring countries, particularly in South Asia.
- (b) Relations with countries like the U.S.A., Japan, China and Korea who provided much aid and investment.
- (c) Relations with oil rich Muslim countries.

In particular, the following were its prime objectives:¹

1. Trade promotions with particular emphasis on the promotion of export;

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Vol.1, Nos.1-4, 1995, p.8.

2. Attracting foreign investment and joint ventures;
3. Export of manpower;
4. Acquiring appropriate advance technology including training and technical knowhow including training and technical;
5. Sustaining the current flow of foreign aid, diversify the sources of aid the removal of adverse conditionalities as far as possible;
6. Securing scientific-technical assistance;
7. Collaborative research in relevant fields;
8. Protection of environment through international co-operation.

With these objectives in view Bangladesh has given priority to economic policy in its diplomatic initiatives. And often in this direction Begam Khaleda Zia led a series of visits to number of East Asian Countries (more properly known as Asian tigers). The most important visit among these was to South Korea in May 1995.¹ This led to number of agreements at the official level. Some of these were: (a) establishment of protocol on co-operation in the sphere of science and technology, (b) Cultural exchange programme, (c) a memorandum of understanding for the setting up of a

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey Quarterly, BIISS, Dhaka, Vol.I, No.1, March-May 1995.

50-bed modern hospital on the outskirts. Similar visits were undertaken by Begam Khaleda Zia to Malaysia and Japan for economic gains.

Priority in this was to play a positive role of the international level, as Bangladesh got elected to United Nations Security Council. This was followed by Bangladesh becoming the Chairman of the Group of 77, and later, the President of the UN General Assembly and member of UNICEF¹ Executive Board.

In the post-Cold War era, Bangladesh started playing significant role in the international politics. These include the following: Bangladesh increased its commitment to world peace and security that was manifested in her involvement in almost all UN peace-keeping missions across the world; her active participation in various other issues for example dealing with gender issues and acute social problems like poverty, unemployment and social injustice, etc.

While as a member of Non-Aligned Movement, Bangladesh continues to support the movements' objectives primarily the

1. Biswas, Sanat Kumar, Media Presentation on 'People's Republic of Bangladesh', IIMC, July to November 1994, p.10.

South-South co-operation and the establishment of New Inter-¹
national Economic Order.

As far as SAARC is concerned, Bangladesh continues to play a positive role. It should be remembered that Bangladesh was the first country to propound the concept of SAARC. In 1993 Bangladesh hosted the 7th SAARC Meeting. Begam Khaleda Zia, being the Chairman of the 7th SAARC meet, initiated the concept South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement. SAPTA, as it is popularly known, would be beneficial for all SAARC countries. The other aspect of 7th SAARC declarations were: (a) combating terrorism; (b) giving priority to trade with the aim that with the passage of time preferential trade agreement will lead to free trade zone. Bangladesh gave its full support to all the above mentined declarations of the Seventh (7th) SAARC meeting.

The aim of SAPTA was to augment intra SAARC trade. To facilitate intra-SAARC trade a list of 226 commodities for preferential tariff concession, ranging from 10 to 100 per cent was approved by the Heads of State or Government during

1. Rajan, M.S., Non-alignment and the Nonaligned Movement in the Present World Order, New Delhi, 1994, p.187.

the 8th SAARC meet in New Delhi 1995.¹

Bangladesh further showed dynamism in international relations which is reflected in its bilateral relations with number of countries. And these relations have been analysed separately with countries like USA, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Nepal, other Islamic countries, Myanmar, Srilanka, Korea, Japan, U.K., Afghanistan, the ASEAN countries, Taiwan, etc.

Bangladesh-India relations

Bangladesh's foreign policy consider India to be its cornerstone primarily because of its physical closeness to India which is further backed by number of economic and natural resources.

Eversince the assassination of Mujib-ur Rahman the anti-Indian stand was used by Bangladesh politicians as a major election plan. This was also true in case of Bangladesh National Party and this was quite reflective when Begam Khaleda Zia came to power in 1991. As S.R. Chakravarty points out that Khaleda Zia proved to be a failure in its

1. Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Dhaka, Vol.I, 1-4 November-December 1995.

foreign policy towards India.¹ This was primarily not because of willingness on their part but the game of politics in Bangladesh has been a major obstacle.

Primarily, Bangladesh has got two major concerns with regard to its relations with India: (1) Indian regional security posture; (2) A set of bilateral dispute.

Bangladesh has serious mistrust and suspicion about the India's role as self-appointed custodian of peace and stability in the South Asian region. Further cause of distrust is the India's role in Sri Lanka and Maldives. India's relations with her neighbours deteriorated as the neighbours considered these as Indian hegemony in the region. Bangladesh-India relations too reached a near deadlock over almost on all contentious issues. The worst victim of such an unhealthy atmosphere in the region became the emerging process of co-operation within the framework of SAARC.

Bangladesh-India Bilateral Dispute

Bangladesh-India relations have been characterized by the existence of a number of contentious issues, which in long run, has proved to be too difficult to resolve. While

1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, 1994, pp.20-21.

some of them are rooted in the historical past others are the outcome of the current dynamics of bilateral as well as intra-state relations. The list of such issues contains the following:

- i. Sharing of the water resources of common rivers including that of the Ganges;
- ii. Implementation of the 1974 Land-Border agreement in general and an accord on the leasing of Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh in particular;
- iii. India's policy towards ethnic insurgency in the Chittagong hill tract;
- iv. Demarcation of maritime boundaries and the ownership of South Talpatty Island;
- v. Trade imbalance in favour of India;
- vii. Smuggling, illegal cross-border activities and a number of other issues.

Trade and Economic Relations

Economic and trading relations between any two countries indicate the nature of their political relations and vice-versa Indo-Bangladesh relations is no exception. In pre-liberation days the general belief among the Bangladesh leadership was that East Pakistan was a loser due to the ban imposed on Indo-Pakistani trade since the war of 1965.

New Moore Island:

As far as New Moore Island is concerned, the Bangladesh claims New Moore Island to be Bangladesh territory by an odd logic which tends to extend the internal boundary between the two countries along a conveniently angled straight line that stretches right into the Bay of Bengal. The island is clearly in the bay and not within the internal waters of either of the two countries. The basis of the Indian claim is the median line principle which is a popular tool used in maritime delimitations. The median (or equidistant) line is drawn along points plotted on the sea which would be equidistant from outermost tips of the land territories of the contending countries. Thus, if the median line is drawn southwards from the "Radcliff line" New Moore will fall to its west, thus making it an Indian island.¹ The current situation is that India has occupied the New Moore Island, and this has been more or less accepted by Bangladesh.

Chakma

The Chakmas, Buddhist tribals living in the 5188 sq. miles of CHT, are flowing regularly and crossing over the

1. Ishtiaq Hassan, "Bangladesh-India Relations: Issues and Problems: Onus on Dhaka", Deccan Herald, 30 May 1995.

vast open Indian border in the north-eastern Tripura state to avoid what they describe as inhuman and barbaric raids on their community folk by soldiers of the Bangladesh army and Bengali Muslim settlers. This has become one of the most ticklish issues describing the relations between India and Bangladesh.¹

In February 1995, during the premiership of Begam Khaleda Zia, about 5,179 refugees belonging to 1,028 families were sent back to CHT during the first two phases of repatriation. However, the process soon came to an end because of a controversy regarding the rehabilitation of the refugees.

Earlier in May 1992, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during her India's tour agreed to take back fifty thousand Chakma refugees which is under clout and constituted a secretary level joint action committee to check illegal infiltration.²

The problem still continues to be a major irritant in Bangladesh-India relations. Moreover, Ms. Khaleda Zia's

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1. S.D. Muni (ed.), Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia, Konarks Publisher (Pvt) Ltd., 1996.
 2. S.R. Charkavarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publishers, 1994, pp.83-84.

government was passing through a phase of constitutional crisis, which hampered her from resolving the issue. The internal domestic pressures forced her to sideline this burning problem.

Insurgency Problem

The factors responsible for the outgoing insurgency are both historic as well as developmental. The cumulative effect of the development and resettlement policies was the crystallization of a defiant stance among the tribals which was expressed in the absence of a participatory democracy in the growth of insurgency.

Bangladesh believed that India provided assistance and encouragement to the insurgencies and the spill over effect of the insurgent activities was politically felt in the border provinces of India which in turn put pressure on the central government to assume a posture not to the liking of Bangladesh. During Khaleda Zia's period, the two countries agreed to share intelligence in launching anti-insurgency operations and to effectively implement the 1991 agreement regarding handing over illegal migrants between the two

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countries. Both sides discussed other matters of security and stressed the need for early completion of demarcation of land boundary. Concern was expressed by the Indian side over the increasing insurgency in the north-eastern states. The Bangladesh representatives assured India that they would not allow their country to be used for terrorist activities against India. There was however not much outcome in practical terms in countering the insurgency problems between two countries.

Ganga Water Dispute

Prime Minister Begam Khaleda Zia visited India in May 1992. Her talks with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao were satisfactory. Both sides agreed to evolve a "comprehensive and permanent plan", for the sharing of water resources.² Further, bilateral talks on sharing of water were held in March and November 1992 under the auspices of the joint committee of experts of Bangladesh and India. Joint River Commission agreed to resume negotiations on the sharing of river water between the two countries.³

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1. Dilera Choudhury, "Bangladesh and the South Asian International System", 1992, pp.230-31.
 2. Keesing's Archives Record of Events, Vol.38, No.5, May 1992.
 3. Ibid., Vol.38, No.11, November 1992.

However, the Indian view was that this issue of the river water between the two countries was not confined to the Ganga alone and that other major river systems such as Teesta and the Brahmaputra which were also common to the two countries. The flow in, which should be taken into account for a comprehensive and lasting solution to the growing needs for water in both the countries.

Further in June 1993, Bangladesh claimed that the Indian ruler authorities have been regularly withdrawing water during the dry winter season at the Barrage in Farrakka, thereby reducing the volume of water flowing into the Bangladesh side.¹ India denied the heavy withdrawals and maintained that both countries should agree to take steps to augment the flow in the river during the lean season.

The Ganga water dispute has shown that though technical legal and economic aspects of the problems are important, yet ultimately a solution depends on the political goodwill of the government concerned. This could be seen from the fact that an amicable solution was reached between both the countries in 1997, however, after Khaleda Zia's² period.

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1. Asian Recorder, Vol.XXXIV, No.28, 9-15 June 1993.
 2. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey Quarterly, BIISS, Dhaka, Vol.II, No.r, December 1996.

After the expiry of 1985 interim agreement India and Bangladesh were making yearly ad hoc agreement for the sharing of Farrakka water.

When BNP was in power, Khaleda Zia wanted to include Nepal, in order to solve the water controversy by building dams in Nepal but India opposed it. Khaleda Zia attached importance to the Ganga dispute for the fear of the opposition, rather than the issue itself.

While attending the special commemoration meeting during the UN General Assembly sessions marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of the world body, Prime Minister Begam Khaleda Zia depicted the problem as a life and death issue for the people of Bangladesh. Earlier, on 5th November 1977 an agreement was signed between the water. It was an interim agreement. Likewise it was extended till 1988, which lacked comprehensive and enduring aspect resulting in strained relations between the two countries during Khaleda Zia's period.

Tin Bigha Agreement

Tin Bigha has been another contentious issue between India and Bangladesh. Tin Bigha is a corridor connecting the two enclaves of Dahagram and Angarbota. In terms of

length, Tin Bigha is 178 85 meter. The primary problem in this was that, over this corridor India has exercised sovereignty which was resisted by Bangladesh.

However during Begon Khaleda's Regime, a positive stand in this direction was taken when Bangladesh recognized the sovereignty of India over Tin Bigha, at the same time India handed over the Tin Bigha on a lease for 999 years 26th July 1992.¹ So scholars describe such stand of Bangladesh as positive and her (Bangladesh) role to be constructive in terms of her relations with India and they were eager to resume trade relations. So naturally in the early phase of Khaleda Zia'a rule, the close political relationships dictated mutually beneficial economic relations and there was close economic co-operation between the two countries.

Further economic relations between India and Bangladesh constitute a very significant aspect of the overall relations between these two countries. They cover a vast area of economic activities, including trade relations, credit arrangements, joint ventures and transport. They benefit both the countries and have an overall stabilising effect on the political relation between them.

1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publishers, 1994, p.83.

Bangladesh from India's point is one of the important markets as according to 1992-93 figures points a staggering sum of Rs.1030 crore. Bangladesh was ranked 15th among the major markets for Indian goods.

The economic reforms introduced recently both by India and Bangladesh have inevitably introduced changes in the nature and forms of economic transactions and interaction between the two countries. The major trends in Bangladesh-India relations are as following:

Trade Relation

India's exports to Bangladesh have grown more than 20 times during the last one decade, for instance in 1982-83 Bangladesh-India amounted to Rs.327 crore which rose to Rs.1,030 crore in 1992-93.¹

In terms of the commodity composition during 1992-93 by far the largest item of export from India was cotton yarn and fabrics, accounting for about 47 of the total export. The next position was occupied by engineering goods accounting for Rs.200 crore followed by chemicals. However, from Bangladesh's view point, the major problematic thing is the

1. Ibid., p.100.

persistent and massive imbalance of trade with India.

Joint Venture

Joint ventures with buy-back arrangement have always been regarded as an important means for redressing the trade imbalance between India and Bangladesh, apart from contributing to the process of industrialization of Bangladesh. Some projects under the joint ventures have been under consideration ever since the commencement of economic relation between India and Bangladesh.¹ However very few joint ventures have so far materialised. And in this direction few steps have been initiated particularly in garment and fertilizer plants. But still major steps are to be taken.

Harnessing the Complementaries

The economies of both Bangladesh and India have many complementaries, which can be mutually beneficial to each other. For instance, India could benefit by importing gas for its industrial development, while in return Bangladesh can be benefitted in terms of hard currency and by importing various manufactured goods at lower duty. But all this has to go a long way.

1. Ibid., p.103.

Transit Facilities

It forms one of the major constraints in Indo-Bangladesh relations. India has been denying transit facilities through its territory to Nepal and Bhutan for sending their goods to Bangladesh and through Bangladesh to overseas market. Similarly Bangladesh has been denying transit through its territory for sending Indian goods to its north-eastern states.¹

In spite of number of high level talks, there has been no progress in this matter in spite of the likelihood of all these gains. As a matter of fact, transit facilities need serious attention, because of this fact the economy of the entire region shows close co-ordination in terms of raw materials, finished products, geography and rich cultural and historical factors.

Border Trade

Border trade between Bangladesh and India shows a closed proximity in terms of geography. However the main aspect in border trade is that, often it takes the form of illegal trade characterized as smuggling. The primary

1. Ibid., p.106.

factor for such illegal trade as reported in Weekly Holiday of 11 June 1993, is that "The prices of agricultural commodities across the border are substantially lower than those in Bangladesh. At the current rate of exchange the rice price in India is half of that in Bangladesh".¹ This is true of almost every commodity. So efforts have been directed to bring large number of commodities under South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) at much reduced tariff rate.

Credit Arrangement

India has been providing regular credit facilities to Bangladesh, as to bolster her economy. This credit facilities is under exceptionally soft terms and conditions. Besides many of them were in nature of grants.

However the latest trend is that Bangladesh has recently shown increasingly less interest in accepting Indian credits. This is partly because of their terms and conditions attached to their utilization.

However to bring trade relations at much smooth pace, Bangladesh has taken the help of regional groupings in form of SAARC. To further bolster the trade, a step has been

1. Ibid., p.109.

taken by forming the South Asian Preferential trade agreement in 1993. As under this, an effort has been made to bring large number of commodities under low tariff regime.

China-Bangladesh Relations

With Begam Khaleda Zia coming to power as the Prime Minister there has been no basic change in Bangladesh attitude in the external relations towards China. During her three day visit to China in May 1991, she held talks with her Chinese counterpart Li Peng on bilateral, regional and various other international issues. As a result, China agreed to give Bangladesh a soft loan of about Rs.20 crore. Besides, both China and Bangladesh agreed that poorer nations in South Asia were not getting their true share in the world economy, and their voice must be heard by the developed world.¹ Begam Khaleda Zia, in her next visit to China, stressed the importance on Bangladesh-China trade relations. In continuation of her policy, a parliamentary delegation was sent to meet Chinese President Yangshangkun in Beijing in September 1992, towards further improving the ties between both the countries. China also responded

1. Suchita Ghosh, "Impact on India of the China-Bangladesh Connection: Locational Significance of Bangladesh to China and India", Strategic Analysis, August 1994, Vol.XVII, No.5, pp.607-622.

positively towards furthering the relations between the two. In August 1995, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tang Ziascuan visited Bangladesh.¹ During his visit Mr. Ziascuan stressed the need for exploring newer avenues of cooperation in the light of changing circumstances.

Despite the problems faced in development, China has been officially giving aid since 1953. Chinese aid is characterised by generous terms: assistance in forms of gifts, low or non-interest loans, long repayment period, and so on.² Chinese aid consists mostly of Chinese products or credit to purchase the same. Chinese project aids underline her technological advancement and easily visible infrastructural projects like bridges, motorable roads, rail roads etc. and recreational projects like halls, gymnesia etc. In Bangladesh for example, China has built a friendship bridge over the Buriganga river in Dhaka. In most cases Chinese aid facilitated trade. Economic development tended to be the dominant factor in their relations. Bangladesh on her part is reportedly attaching more importance to economic

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, Vol.I, No.3, September 1995, BIISS, Dhaka.
2. Iftekharazzaman, "Bangladesh in the Changing World: Challenges and Options at Home", BIISS Journal, Vol.13, No.2, 1992.

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diplomacy to achieve national economic development.

USA-Bangladesh Relations

Bangladesh and USA have come closer for mutual benefit and cooperation. On 9th August 1995, an agreement on US food aid to Bangladesh was signed in Dhaka between US Ambassador to Bangladesh, David N. Merrill and Md. Lutfullahil Majid, Secretary, ERD, on behalf of their respective governments, according to which Bangladesh will receive 1,41,000² metric tons of wheat at US \$32.5 million.

During her visit from 4th to 7th September, Robin Raphel noted that relations between the two countries were "progressing well". In the same visit, she met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina and expressed her optimism over a solution for the then existing³ political crisis in Bangladesh.

During Khaleda Zia's period, much importance was given to the economic aspect of U.S.-Bangladesh relations. Khaleda Zia understood very well that in order to achieve economic development, Bangladesh needed enormous foreign assistance

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1. S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), Foreign Policy of Bangladesh, Har-Anand Publications, 1994, pp.308-9.
 2. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Vol.I, 1995.
 3. Ibid.

and investment. Bangladesh felt that the United States had the economic power and influence, in order to meet the desired development of Bangladesh. Besides this, the Bangladesh-United States political relations were cordial, since both the countries had similar perceptions on New Delhi and Moscow. Further, Bangladesh agreed totally to the views of the United States on certain significant international issues during Khaleda Zia's period, viz., NPT, CTBT, etc. Thus the similarity of view on both regional and international issues brought Bangladesh closer to the United States during Khaleda Zia's period.

Among the South Asian countries, Bangladesh offers the most attractive incentive package to foreign investors. One of the concrete outcome of all these is the phenomenal growth of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh. In 1995, Bangladesh recorded the highest increase in FDI among South Asian countries. Bangladesh was the eighth largest borrower of concessional loans from the World Bank. Bangladesh enjoys Most Favoured Nations¹ (MFN) treatment from a number of industrially developed Western countries including USA, UK, Germany and generalized system of preference (GSP)

1. Dilerla Chaudhary, Bangladesh and the South Asian International System, 1992, pp.74-121.

for favourable export to USA.

On 25th February 1995, US Congressman Bill Richardson visited Bangladesh at the request of Union administration. He emphasized the need for a dialogue among the political leaders of both the government and the opposition.¹

Bangladesh-Soviet Relations

The Soviet Union welcomed the 1991 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh congratulated Begam Khaleda Zia for her visit. Both the countries emphasised the need for maintaining high level political contacts on a regular basis.² The Soviet side hailed Bangladesh's efforts in promoting peace and stability in South Asia through the SAARC.

When the USSR ceased to exist in December 1991 and new states emerged in its place Bangladesh immediately recognised all of the Soviet successor states and established diplomatic relations with them. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Kunadze visited Bangladesh in early 1992 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of establishing diplomatic

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Dhaka, Vol.I, Nos.1-2 November 1996.
2. The Bangladesh Observer, 11 July 1991.

relations. In October 1992 Russia sent Edward Schevchenko¹ to Bangladesh to be the new ambassador. On 14 November 1992, Bangladesh and Russian federation signed a protocol providing for annual consultation between senior officials from the foreign ministers of both the countries.² Bangladesh also signed a protocol with Armenia establishing diplomatic relations.³

With the improvement of Sino-Indian and Sino-Russian relations in early 1990s Bangladesh lost its "China Card". As the cold war ended, much of the ideological rhetoric of Bangladesh,⁴ along with many other third world countries, lost its ideological and strategic importance to West. In fact, the end of the cold war helped to reevaluate Bangladesh's relations with Moscow without any prejudice.

The sudden disintegration of the USSR did not greatly affect Bangladesh because of its low level of economic interaction with the former USSR. On the contrary, forma-

1. Ibid., 12 July 1991.

2. Ibid., 1 October 1992.

3. Keesing's Record of World Events, edited by Rodger East (London: Longman), .

4. Mostafa G., National Interest and Foreign Policy: Bangladesh Relations with the Soviet Union and its Successor States (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1995), pp.

tion of independent successor states and their economic liberalization programmes, opened new opportunities for Bangladesh for expanding and promoting economic relations with them. Trade with Soviet successor states did not change much in terms of volume, however, it changed dramatically in terms of structure i.e. transition from government to private sector.

Islamic Countries and Bangladesh

The Gulf countries are of immense importance in the international scenario because of its oil wealth. Its importance increases manifold to the poor developing countries. Bangladesh being one of them pursues active diplomacy in this region. It has resident missions in all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Iraq and Iran.

Saudi Arabia was the last and is the most responsive among the West Asian Islamic nations towards the economic, political and security problems of Bangladesh. Begam Khale-da Zia went to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait on her first official foreign tour as Prime Minister in June 1991. She sent one and a half thousand troops to Kuwait to take part in mine clearing programme in 1991.

In 1993 fifteen hundred Haj pilgrims did not return

after Haj in Saudi Arabia but illegally remained there, after which the Saudi government has imposed restrictions on Bangladesh Haj pilgrimage. Troops have been sent to Kuwait as peace-keeping contingent to monitor in 1993. The Bangladeshi troops have been authorised to use weapon whenever they deem it necessary.¹

Since the second Gulf war Bangladesh-Iran relations have achieved new momentum. Iran is taking active interests in Bangladesh as a competitor to Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Islamic world. The deputy speaker of the Iranian parliament visited Bangladesh in February 1992 and the Foreign minister of Iran came to Dhaka in May 1992 in connection with the Rohingya refugee problem.² A meeting of the Bangladesh-Iran Joint Economic Commission was held in November 1993. Iran agreed to construct a cement factory and a food grains storage. It also assured Dhaka to give priority in employment to Bangladeshi labourers, skilled workers and professionals.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia urged the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to hold a special summit on Bosnia. She made the request in a letter of the heads of the State

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1. The Sentinel (Guwahati), 1 December 1993.
 2. The Sentinel (Guwahati), 1 December 1993..

or government of the member countries of OIC, on 15 August 1995.

Kuwait

Kuwait Prime Minister Sheikh Saed Abdullah Al Salem Al Sabah visited Bangladesh on 12th-15th April 1995.¹ During the visit, an agreement was reached between the two countries to set up a joint economic commission for enhancing economic, trade and technical cooperation.

Iran

On 10th-14th October 1995, Iranian President Rajsanjani visited to Bangladesh. During his visit he discussed the Balkan situation, the UN resolution on the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and the Afghanistan situation in the region and problems facing the Islamic Ummah and some other issues of common concern.²

Begam Khaleda Zia also visited Bahrain in August 1992. Two agreements to promote economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries have been signed. A ministerial

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Vol.II, Nos.1-2, 1996.

2. Ibid.

level joint committee was formed to oversee the implementation of the agreement.¹

Bangladesh and Pakistan

The formation of Bangladesh is basically an epitaph on the inability of the East and West Pakistan to share power equally just like the partition of India in 1947 was a reminder of the inability of the Hindus and Muslims to accommodate each other.

Pakistan has been fostering misconceptions among her citizens with regard to the creation of Bangladesh. Many Pakistanis still consider Bangladesh purely a product of Indian military intervention, ignoring the facts of Pakistan's own failure in rational integration.

A Bangladesh foreign ministry press release on the 5th of November 1995, denied the existence of Bangladeshis illegally living in Pakistan and said that the government of Pakistan "is duly bound to take back" all Pakistanis still stranded in Bangladesh.²

During the visit of Begam Khaleda Zia, on 24-25 April

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1. Bangladesh News, Vol.1, No.16, 15 August 1992.
 2. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey Quarterly, Vol.1, Nos.1-4, 1995, p.18.

1995, to Pakistan, the two countries signed an agreement on the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments and a MOU to promote cooperation in the field of agriculture between the two countries.

Prof. Nabi Dad Khan, special envoy to the Prime Minister of Pakistan paid two day visit to Dhaka on 29th-30th May 1995. He apprised Prime Minister Begam Khaleda Zia of the serious situation prevailing in Kashmir. The envoy also suggested that the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis should be solved in a package deal between the two countries.

On 26th-27th July 1995, during the visit of Bangladesh Minister for Commerce and Information M. Shamsul Islam attended the Pak-Bangladesh Sixth Joint Economic Commission meeting where both the countries agreed to promote bilateral trade in jute, tea, rice and cotton.

Hence, it can be concluded that the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh have improved during the period of Khaleda Zia.

Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Relations

The nineties witnessed strengthening of political and

economic ties between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The joint economic commission set up in 1985 was activated and a three year cultural exchange programme was signed in 1995 during Khaleda Zia's visit. Sri Lanka offered training for Bangladesh teachers, facilities for vocational training for Bangladesh, and scholarship for students bilateral trade got an uplift during Khaleda Zia's tenure.

In 1992-93 Bangladeshi exports to Sri Lanka was worth US \$12.03 million against its imports of US \$6 million. Bangladesh exported commodities worth US \$6.86 million to Sri Lanka and imported goods worth US\$ 6.73 million from that country. Politically, the relations between the two countries are cordial.¹

Nepal

Prime Minister Begam Khaleda Zia visited Nepal during 7-8 April, 1995. During the visit, both the countries underscored the need for strengthening SAARC, early operation of SAPTA and the use of water resources with particular attention on the protection of ecological balance. The ninth meeting of the Bangladesh-Nepal joint economic commis-

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, Vol.1, Nos.104, 1995.

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sion on 29-31 July 1995 in Dhaka underscored the need for joint investment and trade. On 28 January 1993 Nepal asked for trade corridor through India to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations

The two issues that figure prominently in Bangladesh-Myanmar relations are repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar and the border trade between the two countries.

Myanmar's minister for Immigration and Population, Lt. General Maung Hla visited Dhaka and assured Bangladesh that his government would take all necessary steps for speedy repatriation. The 18th round of talks and visit of Lt. Gen. Maung Hla have created grounds for optimism that a speedy solution of the problem was just a matter of time.

With the commencement of the border trade in 1994, one can buy goods worth US \$2,500 at a time without any registration or letter of credit. It also expected that border trade would have a positive impact on Bangladesh's economy as it would import raw materials from Myanmar and export consumer items to this neighbouring country.

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Vol.I, Nos.1-4, 1995.

Relations with other countries:

Japan has been a colonial power which has focused basically on its immediate neighbourhood of Southeast Asia. Bangladesh as it is a geographical part of South Asia, is a region of Japan's peripheral interest. Japan further has always been linked more to the West. What strikes out prominently as the key factor in this context is a combination of two of the vital policy contents in Japanese overseas economic policy. First, to ensure expanding market for its export, Japan needs to contribute in enhancing the purchasing power of countries like Bangladesh. Second, as a part of Japan's response to global pressure for increasing Japan's contribution to international peace, Tokyo continued to provide Bangladesh with economic assistance. The growth of Bangladesh's trade imbalance with Japan has been matched by the latter's rise as the country's largest source of foreign investment and aid. Japan during Khaleda Zia's period was ahead of any other country in terms of private foreign investment in Bangladesh economic assistance which proved to be the key to development of the country.¹

1. BIISS Journal, Vol.16, No.1, 1995.

During 3rd-5th January 1996, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's visited Bangladesh during which he signed two agreements. According to the agreements Bangladesh received 33.38 million pound sterling, equivalent to Taka 208 crores¹ in assistance.

After independence of South Africa Bangladesh High Commission started functioning there from 28th February 1995, for good and friendly relations.²

Thus, it could be seen that during 1991-96 Begam Khaleda Zia did not make any major changes in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. This period, in spite of witnessing a transformation in the nature of polity from authoritarianism to democracy, did not find any changes in the external relations. Most of the policies pursued by Khaleda Zia were nothing more than the continuation of the previous policies.

1. Bangladesh Foreign Policy Survey, Quarterly, BIISS, Vol.I, Nos.1-4, 1995.

2. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

Continuity and Change during Begam Khaleda Zia period

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in 1971. During the British period, most of the geographical area that forms the present Bangladesh, was a part of United Bengal, which was divided into East Bengal in 1905. Soon East Bengal emerged as the base of Muslim League, and subsequently with the partition of India in 1947, East Pakistan emerged as the province of Pakistan.

However, East Pakistan could not align itself with Pakistan for a long time because of lack of development activities, deterioration in the socio-economic condition of the people, and breakdown of law and order. Such repressive policies lead to a mass movement under the leadership of Sheih Mujib-ur-Rahman and finally with the help of India East Paistan achieved independence in December 1971. This marked the beginning of new chapter and a new history under the identity of Bangladesh.

However, looking into the history of Bangladesh, one realizes that it was first a British colonial jewel; as that time East Pakistan was considered to be a prized part with

rich hinterland, which extended till Bihar.

But it was the British policy of Divide and Rule which first divided Bengal into two and later British utilized religion to widen the distrust between the communities of India. Therefore religion played a major role in the partition of India, leading to gradual emergence of East Pakistan. However, the same religious factor played a less crucial role in the emergence of Bangladesh from the control of Pakistan.

The foreign policy of Bangladesh like that of any other country in the world is influenced by the nature of its political leadership. It began with the Awami League leadership under the inspiring personality of Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman. The historical legacy of anti-imperialism was the cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy during his regime.

However, Sheikh was consistent with his declaration that the foreign policy of Bangladesh would be guided by the principle of friendship with all and malice towards none. The Sheikh's main concerns were:

1. The diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by the independent states of the world and the acceptance of

- Bangladesh as a full member by the UNO and other such International Organizations;
2. Withdrawal of Indian troops and settlement of many vexed bilateral issues; and
 3. Speedy recovery of the war torn economy of the country.

At the same time, he was deeply committed to the objectives of the national liberation struggle like secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism, non-aligned etc.

But 1975, brought a change in the foreign policy of Bangladesh and for the first time, the seeds of anti-India sentiments began to grow at the cost of its drift towards USA, China and the Islamic world. However, this radical change in its foreign policy was related to the political developments which took place in 1975, as the military coup brought Zia-ur Rahman as the new President. Zia was known for his anti-Indian and pro-West policies.

Further the policies of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, non-alignment, friendship with India underwent a tremendous change. After the assassination Zia, Ershad came to power. However, foreign policy under H.M. Ershad did not significantly deviate from what it was under Zia-ur Rahman's dispensation and the anti-India, anti-Soviet plank

was maintained. In the 1980's Ershad used foreign policy of Bangladesh to get military and economic aid from USA and China. Thus the basic aim of the military ruler's foreign policy was how to appease the Western bloc in general and USA in particular. The end of Ershad regime marked a new beginning of the nature of polity in Bangladesh. The fall of Ershad witnessed conducting of election to the Bangladesh parliament (Jatiya Sansad) on 27th February 1991, in which Bangladesh National Party emerged as winner and subsequently Begam Khaleda Zia became the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. This change from a military regime to a democratic government coincided with a major development in international politics which saw the end of cold war.

However, in spite of Bangladesh becoming a democracy, the newly elected Government showed very less interests in making any major changes in Bangladesh's foreign policy. The foreign policy of Khaleda Zia resembled the foreign policy which was formulated after the 1975 coup. Most of the policies of Khaleda Zia, seemed to resemble the policies of her previous military rulers. The basic framework of Khaleda Zia's policy was based on Islamic socialism like Zia-ur Rahman and H.M. Ershad who used Islam as a factor to save their political ends both at national and international level. Thus the same trend continued even after the resto-

ration of democratic rule under the leadership of Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh National Party.

Khaleda Zia, like her previous rulers, adopted the same policies of close co-operation with the West, particularly the United States, better relations with the Islamic countries, maintaining cordial relations with China, Japan and South Korea. Furthermore, the economic underdevelopment of Bangladesh, made Khaleda Zia to have close relations with all the above countries, since the economic relations with these countries were already nurtured by her previous rulers.

Khaleda Zia's primary objective was to promote the trade relations between Bangladesh and other countries, emphasising more on the promotion of exports. Besides, Bangladesh needed enormous foreign aid and assistance, and foreign investments. Further, Bangladesh needed advanced technology to develop itself. These factors were predominant in all her foreign tours to various countries viz. China, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and numerous other Islamic countries.

During Khaleda Zia's period, Bangladesh also tried to enhance its prestige at international level by actively com-

mitting itself to international peace and security. This could be seen from the fact that Bangladesh sent her troops to the various peace-keeping missions undertaken by the United Nations.

Continuity and Change

The regime of Khaleda Zia saw the continuation of some of the issues with India. The major success of Khaleda in this was regarding Tin Bigha Area, when she succeeded in negotiating the problem of Tin Bigha. However there existed a number of issues which were never taken and solved by Khaleda Zia. The primary issues of Chakmas and the Farrakka Barrage remained unconcluded during the tenure of Bangladesh National Party led by Khaleda Zia.

Further Bangladesh under Khaleda Zia continued to show hostile reaction on the occupation of New Moore Island by India. Regarding the problem of insurgency in North East states of India, Begam Khaleda promised that measures would be taken, but no concrete measures were taken and this problem remained as it existed before.

Bangladesh under Khaleda Zia period, continued the same politics of her previous rulers Zia and Ershad regarding Pakistan. Furthering her anti-Indian stand, her stress on

Islam consolidated the relationship between both the countries. Even though the issues of Bihari Muslims between Bangladesh and Pakistan existed during her period, that issue never affected Bangladesh-Pakistan relations during this period. During her period, Khaleda Zia visited twice Pakistan and discussed number of issues, as she wanted to improve the relation because of Islamic factors and because of good relation with USA.

Bangladesh also had very good relation with other major Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Gulf countries because of the aid. To further show her solidarity with Islamic countries, Begam Khaleda Zia also attended OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) in 1995 in Bosnia.

Khaleda Zia continued the "Traditional Friendship" relations with China. She visited twice China in 1991 and 1993, in order to get more economic aid, which she was assured by China. Besides China also assured Begam Zia, that it would not change its policies regarding Bangladesh because of the new developments in international policies. During her period, there were a number of Chinese delegations visiting Bangladesh continuously. While in case of Sri Lanka, the first quarter of 1995 witnessed strengthening of political and economic ties between Bangladesh and Sri

Lanka. Further exchange of visits took place at highest levels and bilateral co-operation process was taken steps ahead in the process. And to further show the genuineness, Begam Khaleda Zia visited Sri Lanka in January 1995, where a decision was taken to activate the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Joint Economic Commission.

However with Myanmar two issues figured prominently in Bangladesh-Myanmar relations, viz., the repatriation of Rohingya refugees and border trade during Begam Khaleda Zia regime. During her reign little progress took place in spite of the official meeting between the two countries' officials because of delaying tactics by Myanmar.

Begam Khaleda Zia made continuous efforts to maintain good relations with USA, but still she failed to achieve to those levels which were attained by the Ershad regime. An indicator of this was the declining economic aid during Begam Khaleda Zia's regime.

Besides this, USA continued to grant MFN (Most Forward Nation) during Begam Khaleda Zia regime as it was enjoyed by earlier regimes. In addition to USA, Bangladesh continued her friendly relation with European countries most prominent being U.K., France, Germany. While in Asia Bangladesh showed inclination towards emerging five Central Asian

Countries.

With Russia, Bangladesh continued her trade relation, despite being anti-Indian, as Russia and India are close friends in International politics. The period of Begam Khaleda Zia saw the new beginning with South Africa and subsequently Bangladesh opened the high commission in South Africa.

Despite the political crisis in Bangladesh, Begum Khaleda Zia tried her best to maintain friendly relations with a number of friendly countries, the most prominent being Islamic countries, Japan, USA, the primary aim being to get maximum economic aid as to promote, and improve economic deterioration in Bangladesh economy.

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