

**BANGLADESH'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY WITH
CHINA, 2008 - 2022**

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ARJUN C



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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Bangladesh’s Defence Diplomacy With China, 2008-2022” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background

Defence diplomacy is now one of the most important ways to build bilateral and regional relationships. It became popular after the descent of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The anxiety of Western countries that former Warsaw Pact countries would fall into chaos forced them to provide peacetime military assistance and aid. United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense (MOD), attempted to define such activities of its military and hence gave birth to the concept of defence diplomacy (Du Plessis 2008).

China's pivot to South Asia and multifaceted approach to all the constituent countries have impacted each of its foreign policy. Bangladesh is no exception to this and the area of Bay of Bengal have been the focus of China. The strategic relations of Bangladesh with China is shaped by its perception of vulnerability as a small state, which stems from the country's low economic and military capabilities. Further, Bangladesh prefers the Chinese arms due to affordable pricing and Beijing's decision to not interfere in internal affairs of other states. It was part of this small-state strategy by Bangladesh to form an alliance with a non-regional power to counter the possibility of threat from a large and powerful neighbour. The geopolitics of South Asia is such that the security dimension of the region is determined by the small states' connections with extra regional powers.

One of the most crucial factors in Bangladesh-China strategic relations has always been India. The animosity between China and India after the 1962 border conflict and superior military of China made it strategically favourable for Bangladesh to build a strategic relationship with it. Bangladeshi army grew closer to Pakistan and China after the assassination of Mujib. The Chinese recognition meant that Bangladeshi Army started depending on them for development. From then on China has been supplying arms to Bangladesh in large quantities. During Zia's presidency, China also built up the largest arms and ammunition factory in the world in Joydevpur, and took

over the MIG, which was constructed by the Soviets. Bangladesh also got a few F-9 and F-7 aircraft, as well as T-MBTs, from China during this time. It also obtained the Romeo submarine from China in 1984 as strategic relations between Bangladesh and China remained India-centric. Along with sending weaponry and equipment to Bangladesh's navy, China is also assisting it in procuring modern operational skills. Beijing and Dhaka struck a landmark deal in December 2002 to meet Dhaka's defence requirements—the first such agreement signed by Bangladesh. China delivered 65 artillery guns, 114 missiles and similar weapons in 2006. The Bangladesh Army's tanks (T-59, T-62, T-69, and T-79), as well as a considerable number of Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), artillery pieces, and small arms and personal weapons, are all Chinese-made. The Bangladeshi Navy consists primarily of Chinese-made platforms.

From 2010 and 2019, China accounted for over 74% of Bangladesh's weaponry imports. Tanks, submarines, frigates, fighter planes, anti-ship missiles, and most small arms are all manufactured in China. The investment by the Asian giant is important for its own string of pearls policy and Bangladesh's development. Yet, China taking control over Hambantota and Gwadar ports in the subcontinent has forced Bangladesh to look towards India when it comes to Chittagong port. China also tried to get its hands at the Sonadia deep seaport but Bangladesh dropped the plan later and moved on with Matarbari deep seaport project with Japan. This was considered as a setback for China even though Bangladesh joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2016. When Bangladesh's FDI stock is taken into account it isn't bigger than many countries. In 2020, China accounted for 1 billion in Bangladesh's FDI stock which was around 5.5 percentage of the total, a barely controlling stake. Comparatively, India has 4.2 percentage and USA, a large 20.9 percentage respectively. So, China's influence through FDI in Dhaka is very debatable, yet strategically recently, it has been successful in making inroads. Recently, Dhaka was very unhappy with Chinese Ambassador warning against Bangladesh joining the US-led 'Quad' - Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an initiative of Australia, India, Japan and the US. Yet, China is the biggest supplier of arms to Bangladesh and recently Vanguard, a Chinese company has been given the rights to establish a FM-90 missile maintenance centre in the country. The proposed research work is an attempt to analyse the defence

diplomacy of Bangladesh with China and the time period of focus is from 2008 to 2022.

1.2 Review Of Literature

Review of literature is the most important aspect or view of any research. It provides us valid knowledge and information about the topic and it could be helpful to reach any conclusion or new findings.

1.2.1 Defence Diplomacy

As defence diplomacy is the main focus of the research, it is important to the definition of it. Winger (2014) states that the term "defence diplomacy" became popular after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense (MOD), attempted to define various activities of its military and hence gave birth to the concept. The primary reason for this was the fear of former Warsaw Pact countries sinking into chaos again forcing western countries to provide them with military assistance and aid. It was defined as the "varied activities undertaken by the MOD to dispel hostility, build and maintain trust and assist in the development of democratically accountable armed forces, thereby making a significant contribution to conflict prevention and resolution." However the study of defence diplomacy is still plagued with conceptual ambiguity. The term defence diplomacy was never developed as an idea but was used to encompass various activities by states.

Cottey (2004) puts defence diplomacy as "the peacetime use of armed forces and related infrastructure as a tool of foreign and security policy." The paper puts that while defence diplomacy is unnecessary between states having peaceful relations, it is important for many regional and bilateral relations. External powers should press states into such strategic relations by acting as impartial facilitators. The authors also list out a comprehensive list of defence diplomacy activities : "direct and institutional contact between military officials, sending of defence officers to other nations, giving military education to foreign army personnel, inking bilateral defence agreements, providing the state's expertise on democratic functioning of army, contact and exchanging of information between military units, placing army or civilian personnel

in another state's defence ministry or armed forces, allocation of training teams, military exercises of all kinds and selling of arms.”

Barkawi (2011) offers a new perspective by identifying defence diplomacy as a technique for establishing hegemonic strength and dominance between nations. This concept incorporates Cottey and Forster's definition of defence diplomacy efforts, but in an international environment, the varied interests of nations is based on hierarchy rather than anarchy. He regards present current state of study of diplomatic practise as deceptive and analytically deficient, in which the use of force is structured via militaries modelled after colonial powers. This viewpoint is very sceptical of defence diplomacy and its operations, but it also helps to place defence diplomacy in a broader context.

Capie (2010) observes that while defence diplomacy is getting more widespread in Asia, the relationships that acquire greater proximity are those that have other security institutions in the background, including the degree and extent of its security partnership with the United States. At the same time, he observes how ASEAN has increasingly absorbed elements of defence diplomacy through the establishment of new platform such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meetings and many meetings. It is also observed how, in the case of Asia, defence diplomacy has underwent a degree of "institutionalisation and formalisation that reflects the regional militaries concentration on new non-traditional responsibilities and functions."

Drab (2018) observes that the defence force is a functional tool with extensive uses that go above their traditional martial missions under defence diplomacy. They play a key role in head to head international collaboration between countries, as well as in global partnerships and specialized organizations working in the security field. Diplomacy is now turning into a very personal commitment for commanders. The ever evolving international order and diversity in emerging threats. Such major developments does stress on the importance of military and arms sales as tools for defence diplomacy. Du Plessis (2008) writing about South African defence diplomacy states that defence diplomacy is a complementary approach to managing international affairs; it acts as a foreign policy instrument and supports the employment of other instruments; and it serves as a platform for engagement and negotiation. Defence

diplomacy thus goes beyond the use the military way in the diplomatic form as an unique sort of diplomacy.

1.2.2 Small State and Diplomacy

Bangladesh is comparatively a small state when interacting with China. Further, it's geographical location near a larger state like India also considerably governs its foreign policy. Hence, it is important to look upon how small states works out their foreign policy. Rothstein (1968) defines a small state as “a state that cannot gain security through its own capabilities and relies on others principally to safeguard its security in the event of any external threats. As a result, it seeks bilateral accords with stronger countries in order to ensure its security and independence.” Keohane (1969) also agreed with this, when he defined small state as “a weak and inefficient state in the international code.” Vital (1967) argued that small states under the risk of threat from a big power must maximise their strength, use their diplomatic capabilities and exploit all political and strategic paths to exert the “greatest possible pressure” on the threatening big power. Vital looked at the advantages and disadvantages of small states and came up with three basic styles or strategies: “Passive, Active, and Defensive.” The Passive Policy is a renouncing policy, in which one does nothing and hopes for the best. The policy adopted here is of complete submission. Within the Active strategy, a small state tries to change the existing order as per its aspirations by minimising differences between itself and the big power. In other words, an active strategy aims to take advantage of international system. Defensive strategy is essentially a method for increasing internal strength. Although Vital admired the active strategy, he recommended the defensive approach. Vital's theorization of a small state compared to a larger one primarily emphasized a strength oriented perspective on weakness and strength.

East (1973) tried to analyse the behaviour of small states and observed few behavioural patterns associated with them. These were nearly negligible participation in global matters, high levels of action in international organisations, high engagement and support to the structure of international legal norms, discouraging all states to use force for achieving their goals, avoiding behaviours and decisions that likely to estrange the system's major state. He also added that in foreign policy

activities small states have a limited and geographic sphere of focus, providing the explanation that small states have limited resources dedicated to international affairs, hence their foreign offices are likely to be minimal in size and capacity. As a result, fewer people would be involved in monitoring world events and implementing foreign policy decisions, so small states must be selective in terms of functional and geographic sectors in which they participate.

1.2.3 Bangladesh Defence Diplomacy

Siddique (2008) observes in the majority of cases, the entire budget of Bangladesh defence budget has not been used. This in no way implies that the defence spending is inadequate. Rather, it reflects a flawed procurement structure that prevents the most efficient use of the few resources available. This circumstance necessitates a thorough examination of our current procurement system to identify its flaws. Policy, process, and organisational reforms are needed in Bangladesh to optimise and maximise the defence budget and its execution modalities.

Biswas (2016) observes that Bangladesh's commitment to UN Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKO), has given diplomatic cover for the country. Bangladesh's image in regional and global platforms is enhanced by participation in various UN missions with the help by partners like the USA. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appreciated her government's involvement in UN peacekeeping efforts and also ensured that this will continue in her address at UN peacekeeping summit in 2015. Bangladesh's engagement in peacekeeping has been highlighted by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), a major player within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. The country also created a "Peace building Center (BPC)" in January 2016 with the goal of contributing more constructively to global peace. The Peacebuilding Center is designed to draw on Bangladesh's significant peacekeeping expertise and train people who want to help promote peace and security in the country.

Krishnaswamy (2003) puts that Bangladesh is aiming at achieving its long term objectives such as ensuring multiple partners, financial support and generating sources for foreign aid for solving the state's various issues. Bangladesh has

strengthened its image for the necessity to obtain foreign help. Bangladesh may do this by participating in UN peacekeeping, which allows it to collaborate with the global order and regional organisations to achieve a common aim of maintaining peace and security.

Datta (2021) observes that the persistent pressure on Bangladesh has recently gained traction. Bangladesh is being courted by the US and India to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). Furthermore, the author describes Bangladesh's condition as a “dilemma” or “double crisis.” It is also argued that China has no choice but to maintain Bangladesh's rapid development and resolve the Rohingya situation. If it antagonises China, the QUAD will not be able to solve Bangladesh's problem. Bangladesh should keep in mind that foreign policy must be pragmatic and focused on policy issues. It does not need to join any anti-coalition alliances and think about its advantages, which are strategic. It establishes the same kind of relationship with India and the US as it does with China.

1.2.4 Defence Diplomacy of China

Storey(2012) illustrates how China has significantly increased its defence diplomacy in South Asia. China’s annual defence white papers published by the State Council's Information Office since 1998 refers to defence diplomacy as ‘military diplomacy’. “Military diplomacy should serve the state's diplomacy and the modernization of national defence and the armed forces,” the 2000 white paper says, while the 2004 white paper says, “The PLA conducts active military exchanges and cooperation with armies of other countries and has created a military diplomacy that is all-directional, multi-tiered, and wide-ranging.” Bisley and Taylor (2015) explores the several sorts of engagement China has had in the Asia Pacific's renowned defence diplomacy event, the Shangri-La Dialogue, emphasising how powerful countries continue to block and affect the objectives of multilateral defence oriented gatherings. They focus their approach on characterising China's foreign policy posture based on the kind of interactions it engages in a multilateral framework.

Allen(2017) shows that PLA's military relations from 2003 to 2016 affirms that military diplomacy is being used by China to shape its security. Peace Ark, the

Chinese military hospital ship regularly stops at numerous Asian ports to develop China's picture as a harmless power that can make positive commitments to regional security. From 2010, China has increasingly displayed military capabilities and used military exercises for display of combatant prowess. The paper also notes that the increasing military diplomatic activities hasn't necessarily translated into success. There are lot of international and domestic limitations and increasing assertion by China is also discouraging its neighbours. It also concludes that military diplomacy runs according to instructions from top level leadership and hence, it will always reflect China's broader aspirations. The Institute for National Strategic Studies report called "Chinese military diplomacy, 2003-2016: Trends and Implications" as reported, South Asia is just behind south-east Asia when it comes to preference for PLA diplomacy. This also indicated that the PLA's increased engagements with Asia could not be isolated from US rebalance strategy to Asia in 2011 and the ascension of Xi Jinping to power in 2012.

Horta (2010) states that NDU has recently risen to the top of the Chinese government's defence diplomacy, especially its overseas education initiatives. The NDU, which has two campuses in Changping at Beijing with a campus for Chinese officers and another for foreign, is by far the largest military education facility in China. Every year, the NDU graduates 1,000 Chinese officers in a variety of fields of study on average. China is also quickly realising that selling arms is insufficient to keep its position. As a result, it is launching a comparable worldwide military education programme with the goal of training and influencing officials in nations where it feels like building relations is necessary. The PLA aims to build relationships with nations where it does not sell weapons through such educational means.

Sachar (2004) observes that the PLA is the world's only major army directly under the 'absolute leadership' of a political party, a tradition dating back to the 1920s. The army is not answerable to institutions such as parliamentary authorities because it solely reports to the Communist Party's Central Military Commission. When it comes to overseas military relations, the PLA engages in a wide range of actions. It tailors its military cooperation with foreign armed forces to reflect the diversity of China's broader bilateral relations with specific countries. China provides direct military support, including weaponry, to countries in which it has strategic interests. With

countries like Pakistan and Myanmar that are dependent on China, the PLA's involvement is significant, if not more so than usual diplomacy.

1.2.5 Bangladesh and China Bilateral Security Relations

A bilateral framework for security is very important for the two countries due to their geographical proximity. To get into this one must look into what and how bilateral relations work. As per Legro (2008), bilateralism is necessarily the “relations or policies of joint action between two parties. Typically the term has applications concerning political, economic, and security matters between two states. Bilateralism affords greater freedom and efficiency of action as fewer actors are involved.” This makes bilateralism the most favorable approach among foreign policy makers. Yet there is a limit to what bilateralism can achieve, like bilateralism is very inefficient and expensive to deal with some larger common problems like global warming, global terrorism, cybercrimes, etc. According to Ruggie (1992), bilateralism is “premised on specific reciprocity which also means the simultaneous balancing of specific quid pro quos by each party with every other at all times.” Many also observe that in many ways bilateralism can help in strengthening regional and multilateral ties, but this is not a universal trend. In the case of India, bilateralism has dominated its foreign policy both in South Asia and beyond. In fact, India’s regional and sub-regional efforts have shown aspired results essentially because of good bilateral relations with some neighbouring countries.

Mannan (2019) observes that Bangladesh prefers the Chinese arms due to affordable pricing and Beijing’s policy of assuring to not interfere internal affairs of other states. China’s policy of overlooking the human rights and political condition of the recipient country, which is opposite to Western states make it an attractive seller. Bangladesh winning maritime boundary cases against India and Myanmar has forced itself to expand its naval capabilities and China has occupied the position has a provider of arms. The recent acquiring of two Chinese Ming-class Type 035G submarines by Bangladesh Navy (BN), commissioned as BN Nabajatra and BN Agrajatra prove this. China’s involvement with Bangladesh is considered as a projection of its soft power in the region, which ultimately would challenge India’s dominance.

Wagner (2018) states that the countries surrounding India have no trust on the big neighbour and are ready to use the 'China Card' and improve relations with various great powers. Hence, India also have interest in how Bangladesh interacts with other countries to protect its interest. The tensions between India and China is a concern for Bangladesh, while India is concerned about the growing influence of China in Bangladesh. Ali(2018) states that the regional power India should play an important role in persuading Myanmar for securing return of refugees. India along with China and Japan has provided huge assistance in constructing fabricated houses in Myanmar for Rohingya refugees. It also adds that India's support is necessary for securing the right of displaced Rohingyas. India and Bangladesh should move towards a win-win formula so that the multi-dimensional relations is a success.

Datta (2008) observes that both China and Bangladesh have territorial disputes with India and are against the Indo-US nuclear agreement, hence, Bangladesh anticipates no danger from China and this will bring about more noteworthy protection participation between the two nations. The article also states that Bangladesh is not likely to acquire military strength to be a threat to India, but the improving relations between it and China cannot be ignored. When it comes to domestic politics of Bangladesh, due to lack of historical baggage with China, local political parties find it easier to deal with China. Often, nationalist credentials is attached to taking an anti-India stand while China has acquired acceptance among the masses. Sarker (2014) observes that growing military collaboration between these countries has made India wary of a joint military threat from Bangladesh and China over India's northeast. As a result, India ensured its military presence in the region by deploying a strong contingent of the Indian Army and Air Force, which were armed with advanced weapons such as tanks, missiles, MiG-21, MiG-27, Su-30, and other aircraft.

Behuria (2012) observes that South Asian countries lack an integrated view of regional security and an urgent need of multi-level dialogue is necessary. The lack of consensus is the reason that SAARC convention on terrorism and the Additional protocol have not materialized. The author states that it is necessary for smaller countries in the region to get over old prejudices against India and the latter to exhibit qualities to fasten the process. The confidence building measures between countries should not be limited to governments and civil societies must also have a part in it.

Garver has stressed China's geostrategic interest in Bangladesh. According to him, the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and China is the result of China's geostrategic interest in Bangladesh (Garver,2002). China's "string of pearl policy" might serve as a security quarantine for India. He argues in his paper "The Security Dilemma in Sino-Indian Relations" that China's restoration of Gwadar port and anticipated modernization of Chittagong port will dismantle India's strategic monopoly and edge in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean region.

1.3 Rationale and Scope of the study

China and Bangladesh shared an antagonist relationship as the former was against Bangladesh's independence movement, yet through the later years it has significantly improved. While Bangladesh has framed its 'Look East' policy in order to minimise its dependence on India and make inroads into China and South-East Asia, China has also been looking towards South Asia as a part of its Belt and Road Initiative. The Asian giant has significantly increased its defence diplomacy in South Asia. Defence diplomacy is referred to as "military diplomacy" in China's defence white papers which have been published by the State Council since 1998. The 2000 white paper puts that "Military diplomacy should serve the state's diplomacy and the modernization of national defence and the armed forces," while the 2004 white paper says, "The PLA conducts active military exchanges and cooperation with militaries of other countries and has created a military diplomacy that is all-directional, multi-tiered, and wide-ranging."

Being a small state near a big one like India, the insecurity and distrust has driven Bangladesh to China. Both the countries have territorial disputes with India, hence, Bangladesh anticipates no danger from China and this is bringing about more noteworthy security relations between the two nations. When it comes to domestic politics of Bangladesh, due to lack of historical baggage with China, local political parties find it easier to deal with China. Often, nationalist credentials is attached to taking an anti-India stand while China has acquired acceptance among the masses. Considering these developments in an increasingly multi polar world the proposed

research work will analyse the historical background and present status of defence diplomacy between the two states. It will also focus on the interaction of a small state like Bangladesh with a big state China when it comes to security. Since China is trying to make inroads into South Asia, the perspectives and strategic aims of PRC's defence diplomacy in Bangladesh will also be analysed. Special focus would be given to the period of 2008 to 2022, analysing the progress and also taking into account the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative from Bangladesh's perspective.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the historical background of defence relations between Bangladesh and China?
2. What is the present status of the Bangladesh-China defence cooperation ?
3. What has been achieved in recent years through the defence diplomacy?
4. How will defence diplomacy address their common challenges and concerns?
5. How does the PRC promote their strategic interests through defence diplomacy particularly with Bangladesh ?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. As its defence diplomacy, Bangladesh plays 'China Card' to counterbalance India in the region.
2. The defence relations of China with Bangladesh is a reflection of its strategic aspirations to increase its strategic presence in the South Asia Region.
3. Even though the aggressive attitude of China has affected its defence diplomacy, the lack of historical baggage has made the domestic politics in Bangladesh more inclined towards China.

1.6 Research Methodology

The research work will be analytical and make use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. It will use both the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will include reports published by various governments and international organizations, data related to Bangladesh's defence diplomacy with China. The main sources that will be referred are the literature by academicians, experts, journals, websites etc. The study will be deductive as well as inductive in nature. It will make use of case studies to do fundamental analysis of the bilateral security relations and defence diplomacy between these two states.

1.7 TENTATIVE CHAPTERS

1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the topic and provide full context and rationale of the study, the research questions and give an outline of the proposed research work.

2. Bangladesh's Defence Diplomacy

This chapter will look into the concept of defence diplomacy with respect to Bangladesh and how it is used strategically.

3. Bangladesh-China Security Relations

In this chapter, the factors affecting the security relations of Bangladesh and China will be analysed. Special focus will be given to South Asian geopolitics and how it affects this.

4. China's Defence Diplomacy vis-a-vis Bangladesh

This chapter will look into the present status of the China's defence diplomacy in Bangladesh and what has been achieved in recent years through it. The chapter will also focus on Bangladesh through small state insecurity syndrome lens.

5. Conclusion

This chapter will discuss and summarize the main findings of research and analysis undertaken in the preceding chapters.

Bangladesh's Defence Diplomacy

2.1 Historical Perspective

Bangladesh's defence diplomacy although not designated as such, began and its foundation was set by Bangabandhu Mujib Ur Rahman. Defence was of primary importance after independence and the existing armed force was converted into national army. The process was not easy as many existing forces did not submit their weapons and this concerned the state. Especially forces like Kader and Mujib Bahinis, with 10,000 members apiece, not only refused to give up their weapons but also upheld the integrity of their organisations. Most armed organisations eventually gave up their weapons on Bangabandhu's orders, and willing Kader and Mujib Bahini members were incorporated into the paramilitary forces and other government positions (Rashid 2008).

Although the armed units formed during the Liberation War and their successful participation in the conflict, the military's role, purpose, or objective was not perceived in the same way following the conflict for a number of reasons. First, the success of the citizen guerilla army in winning the war led many in the government and the populace to believe that Bangladesh would not require a sizable conventional armed force to meet its security and defence requirements. Second, for at least 20 years, no meaningful financial plan was possible due to the nation's crippled economy. Third, many believed that Bangladesh was highly unlikely to engage in conflict in the near future or even face a challenge to its territorial integrity because it was surrounded on all sides by an ally and supporting India and had a 25 Years' Peace and Friendship Treaty in place. It was therefore not really required to keep big standing forces. Fourth, well-equipped, trained, and organised paramilitary forces like the National Militia might deal with erratic law-and-order situations and internal security issues. Being a small state, it has often relied on other states to deal with various internal and external issues.

Here, Bangladesh is defined as a "small state" based on preexisting literature. Rothstein defines a small state as "a state that cannot gain security through its own

capabilities and relies on others principally to safeguard its security in the event of any external threats. As a result, it seeks bilateral accords with stronger countries in order to ensure its security and independence” (Rothstein 1968). Keohane also agreed with this, when he defined small state as “a weak and inefficient state in the international code (Keohane 1969).” Vital argued that small isolated states threatened by a great power should maximise their military potential, use their diplomatic capabilities and exploit all political and strategic paths to exert the greatest possible pressure on the threatening big power. He looked at the advantages and disadvantages of small states and came up with three basic policies or strategies: Passive, Active, and Defensive (Vital 1966). The Passive Policy is a renouncing policy, in which one does nothing and hopes for the best. The policy adopted here is of complete submission. Under the Active strategy, a small state tries to change its external environment to its advantage by minimising differences between itself and the big power. In other words, an active strategy aims to take advantage of international system. Defensive strategy is essentially a method for increasing internal strength. Although Vital admired the active strategy, he recommended the defensive approach to small states. Vital's conceptualization of a small state in relation to a bigger one essentially emphasized a power-politics view of weakness and strength.

East tried to analyse the behaviour of small states and observed few behavioural patterns associated with them. These were minimal amount of general engagement in global affairs, maximal engagement in activities of international organisations, high levels of support for international legal norms, avoidance of the use of force as a statecraft method, avoiding behaviours and policies that likely to alienate the system's more powerful state. International organisations promote state cooperation and lessen conflict by resolving issues with collective action. A highly structured and peaceful international system will be most beneficial to small states. International organisations provide definitions of what constitutes cheating, prescribe appropriate sanctions for doing so, and keep an eye on state adherence to these regulations. International regimes also lower the costs of diplomacy by gathering parties together in a single setting where they may discuss issues, reach agreements, and more affordably penalise cheaters (Keohane & Martin 1995). He also added that in foreign policy activities small states have a limited and geographic sphere of focus, providing the explanation that small states have limited resources dedicated to international

affairs, hence their foreign offices are likely to be minimal in size and capacity. As a result, fewer people would be engaged in analysing global issues and implementing many decisions, so small states must be selective in terms of functional and geographic sectors in which they participate (East 1973). Small states require a free-trade zone in an open global economy to thrive. Smaller states are much more dependent on commerce for their success, even though both large and small states gain from free trade. Small states, on the other hand, have a much greater need for barriers in commerce in the globe to be as low as feasible because they have much smaller domestic markets. The degree of economic openness in the world is a key factor in the survival of small states (Alesina & Spolaore 2003). Many tiny states likewise want to be neutral. The ability of the small state to prove that it is totally neutral and poses no threat to larger states depends on its ability to survive, in addition to the circumstances of the international order and the desires of powerful leaders (Karsh, 1988). In conclusion, the international order at any given time influences the diplomatic relations of a "small state." In peaceful, stable, and organised international settings, small governments have more alternatives for foreign policy and produce better results (Thorhallsson 2017).

2.2 Post Independence

Hence, the 1972 Constitution set a foreign policy discourse based on peace and security for all. Article 25 of the Constitution is about "Promotion of international peace, security and solidarity" where it is stated that: "The State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter, and on the basis of those principles shall – (a) strive for the renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for general and complete disarmament; (b) uphold the right of every people freely to determine and build up its own social, economic and political system by ways and means of its own free choice; and (c) support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or racialism" (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh).

In addition, Article 63 deals with the issue of war while Article 145 (1) deals with international treaties. These constitutional provisions reveal the peaceful nature of Bangladesh foreign policy and international relations. This approach meant that international peace and security was central to Bangladesh's foreign policy. In the gathering of the Commonwealth heads of governments in Ottawa on 3 August 1973, Mujib Ur Rahman stated that "I believe that both the developed and the developing countries have an overriding common interest in survival and peace. Can we not concert our efforts to contribute towards creating an environment of peace in the world" (Hossain 1998). Citing the peaceful foreign policy he described the country's strong intention towards contributing to peace in the sub-continent, in Asia and in the world. He reiterated this point at the UN General Assembly; "the Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order in which the aspiration of all men for peace and justice will be realized (UN General Assembly, September 25, 1974, p.159)."

Similarly, international security also remained a key concern in the making of Bangladesh foreign policy. However, international security was perceived by Bangladesh from the perspective of human security, where the issues of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, human progress were emphasized rather than conventional military security. In addition, while peace was highly encouraged, war was discouraged in the first constitution of Bangladesh which also reveals the nature of security that Bangladesh emphasized on. For instance, Article 63 of the Constitution says that "War shall not be declared and the Republic shall not participate in any war except with the assent of Parliament (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh)." Bangladesh's non-aligned approach to foreign policy under Bangabandhu allowed the nation to take advantage of the Cold War environment. On January 24, 1972, the USSR became the first major world state to officially recognise Bangladesh, and the following day it did the same (Morsalin 2022). During an official visit to Moscow on March 1, 1972, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman pleaded for emergency relief, emphasising the need for food, medical, building supplies, and transportation equipment (Shabad 1972). Intergovernmental agreements were subsequently formed between Dhaka and Moscow in the areas of trade, air services, economic and technical support, and cooperation in culture and science. Given the realities of the Cold War, the US recognised

Bangladesh established diplomatic ties less than a month after Bangabandhu visited Moscow. Bangladesh sought to deepen its ties with the Western allies since the tremendous economic and humanitarian demands of the newly formed state could scarcely be met by Indo-Soviet aid. That did not, however, interfere with Bangladesh's impartial stance toward the two superpowers. Bangladesh was able to get the biggest amount of aid from the US at the time—more than \$318 million—by March 1973.

Bangladesh under Mujib Ur Rahman also focused on peaceful settlement of disputes, emphasizing the role of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving the unresolved issues between states which has strong relevance for the pursuit of international peace and security. It is worthy to note that Bangladesh was successful in signing Land Boundary Agreement with India in 1974 through dialogue to resolve the land boundary issue. In addition, in order to resolve maritime boundary demarcation with India and Myanmar, Bangladesh also emphasized on the role of dialogue and diplomacy. The military and later Khaleda Zia's regime's foreign policy was categorized by its anti-India stance. India was portrayed as expansionist, endangering the more minor states independence. When dealing with India, the military regimes put the concepts of national security and sovereignty front and centre. He boosted the budget's percentage of defence spending from 13% in 1974 to 32% in 1975 and continued this upward trend in the following years. From 1972 to 1981, the budget increased by almost 186%. To decrease classifications within the military and to stabilize it, Zia reformed it. Despite all of this modernization and reform, zia had to deal with more than 26 coup attempts (Islam 1984).

In reality, Zia once acknowledged that he had a rebellious army. For instance, General Zia assured the country, “I can assure you that today we are not alone or friendless. I want to tell everyone that we do not want friendship at the cost of our independence, sovereignty and integrity” (Rizvi 1991). The new military oriented government was more inclined towards the west and Pakistan. The secular values that India shared with Mujibur Rahman’s government was no more as Gen Zia dropped secularism and favoured Islam. Bangladeshi army grew closer to Pakistan and China after the assassination of Mujib. Countries that were hesitant to engage in trade with Bangladesh, including Saudi Arabia, now developed both diplomatic and commercial

ties. Due to Bangladesh's anti-Indian stance, China became a close ally of Bangladesh. Bangladesh's foreign policy suddenly became global and entrenched in realism (Bharadwaj 2003). The other fundamental change was his tendency to make issues domestic and international as he found necessary. The government of Ziaur Rehman attempted to internationalise local disputes, for example the Ganga Water dispute. He brought up the Farakka issue at Turkey, Colombo Summit of non-aligned nations and the UN General Assembly. During his administration, it was commonly believed that India was using the free trade zone as a cover to smuggle items from Bangladesh into India. The trade deal had stipulated a ten-mile stretch on side of the border. He also looked upon the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty as something that was forced on Mujib.

2.3 Ershad Regime

A major shift in Bangladesh's foreign policy involving defence began during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dispatched 50 tonnes of tea and an army medical unit to Egypt. Later, President Ershad built on this by sending 2,300 Bangladeshi troops to the Gulf War against Iraq as a part of US and Saudi Arabia led Operation Desert Shield (Hossain 1997). This was the first foreign policy issue to be fiercely debated in Bangladesh as the decision turned out to be unpopular at home. Many among Bangladesh's Muslims responded enthusiastically to Saddam's portrayal of himself as an Islamic warrior, against the might of the non-Islamic world and decadent sheikhdoms in the Gulf. The Bangladesh state viewed the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq as unjust and was concerned about its expatriate population, further, the increasing oil price affected its economy.

The then-foreign minister of Bangladesh called the circumstance "difficult and delicate." Bangladesh could not passively observe while Ba'athist forces attacked the kingdom's territorial integrity because Saudi Arabia was the guardian of the two holiest mosques in Islam. Bangladesh completed the repatriation procedure in August and September 1990 with the aid of Biman's DC-10s, a Boeing 747 given by Saudi Arabia, and planes from Malaysian Airlines and Aeroflot that were paid for by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). As the air war began in January 1991, opposition parties led by Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia respectively reaffirmed their support for UN resolutions and demanded an

end to the hostilities. After the forced resignation of General Hussain Muhammad Ershad the new caretaker government continued lending its support to the coalition force.

“Bangladesh made a most valuable contribution to our logistics, sending us some of their best support units which, at that stage, I needed more urgently than combat troops,” said Prince Khalid bin Sultan, a Saudi commander of the coalition forces (Hossain 1997). It was the Bangladeshi ambassador in Saudi Arabia who brought together envoys of other South Asian countries to oversee the South Asian expat population in Saudi Arabia. The Bangladesh Army helped Kuwait in the post-war period to eliminate landmines left by Saddam's soldiers. Landmine clearance claimed the lives of 270 Bangladeshi soldiers. Since then, a contingent of the Bangladeshi military has been residing in Kuwait as part of Operation Rebuilding Kuwait (ORK), also known as Operation Kuwait Punargathan in Bengali (OKP). The contingent had 639 members in 2016.

The basic concept of Bangladesh's foreign policy, “friendship to all, malice to none,” as well as Article 63 of the Constitution, which prohibits going to war, were both buried by Bangladesh's participation in Operation Desert Shield. Bangladesh's participation in the conflict demonstrated its support for Saudi Arabia and the United States while harming relations with Iraq. Bangladesh's response to the Gulf Crisis was tempered with practicality as it came from a small, weak state. Through this line of action, Bangladesh was able to get more Saudi and Western economic aid in the future, on the terms that were required. Thus, one may conclude that Bangladesh's Gulf policy served the country's interests effectively.

One can argue that the interest of the Ershad regime was deeply involved in sending troops because it pleased the United States. On the contrary, Bangladesh sacrificed the peaceful foreign policy tradition that Bangabandhu introduced. There were various events that improved Bangladesh's standing abroad. For instance, Bangladesh's status internationally increased when it was chosen as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1978. This boosted the states' confidence and it adopted “a robust foreign policy” in 1979 and attempted to strengthen ties with Asian nations (Haque 1980). General Ershad served as the inaugural Chair of the South Asian Association

for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which helped raise Bangladesh's standing in the eyes of the international community. Bangladesh was the trailblazer in creating SAARC in 1985. It is also important to mention that Bangladesh's international standing improved after Foreign Minister Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury was elected to lead the 41st session of United Nations. President Ershad's downfall in December 1990 brought democracy back to Bangladesh. The successive administrations of General Ziaur Rahman and General H.M. Ershad maintained more or less similar foreign policies toward the US and the USSR after the death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. By forging deeper ties with China, Pakistan Japan, and the Muslim world, both regimes sought to offset India's hegemonic control over the area. Additionally, while taking into account Indo-Soviet relations, these regimes increased their collaboration with the US, while bilateral ties between Bangladesh and the USSR reached their lowest point.

2.4 Khaleda Zia

After the BNP, led by Khaleda Zia, won the 1991 elections and the administration carried on her husband President Ziaur Rahman's foreign policy legacy by maintaining close ties with China, the Islamic world, and the major powers while avoiding India. For instance, while on a peacekeeping operation in Haiti, Lieutenant General Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim, the Chief of Staff of the Army, met with President Bill Clinton and travelled to the US to meet with Pentagon representatives. Within the US International Military Education and Training Program, the United States increased its 1996 aid allocation from US\$175, 000 to US\$258,000. Another noteworthy development occurred in 1995 when US and Bangladeshi forces engaged in combined military drills in the Bay of Bengal. Hillary Clinton, the first lady, also travelled to Bangladesh in 1995. Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been notorious for its anti-Indian approach. As a result, once BNP lost power, they claimed that Awami League had sold Bangladesh's sovereignty to India (Kochanek 1998). This was in full display when Khaleda Zia visited India in 1992. Her government like her predecessors could not satiate the genuine demands of the Chakmas, largest group of the nation's tribal people. This became a foreign policy and security issue when illegal migration of Chakmas to India ensued. Secondly, it was reported that over the past 20 years, the militants have been utilising Indian territory to launch guerrilla operations against the state of Bangladesh. The goal of Khaleda

Zia's trip to Delhi in May 1992 was to enlist its assistance in getting the Chakma militants to make a compromise on their stated demands. Her joint statement with the Indian PM appeared to resurrect the long dormant but very explosive issue of illegal immigration. Indian efforts to deport illegal immigrants resulted in the roundup and deportation of 100 Bengali speaking residents from New Delhi's slums rather than the repatriation of Bangladeshi Chakmas. Bipartisan opposition to the Indian decision was sparked by this, virtually defeating the goal of Khaleda's goodwill trip. Additionally, it created diplomatic concerns for the seventh SAARC summit, which was supposed to take place in Dhaka. Fortunately for her, Khaleda Zia's diplomatic failures with India turned out to be a blessing in disguise, rekindling domestic support for confronting India's dubious intentions (Khan 1993). BNP came to power in 2001 for the second time. In 2002, during Khaleda Zia's administration, Bangladesh and China inked the Defence Cooperation Agreement. Improvements were made to the military connections between the US and Bangladesh. Additionally, the main features of ties between Bangladesh and India at this time were accusations and counter accusations. For instance, leading BJP political figures in India consistently accused the BNP of “sheltering anti-India armed groups”(D'costa 2011).

2.5 Sheikh Hasina

In contrast to her predecessors, Sheikh Hasina established the nation's foreign policy based on the values of peaceful coexistence and non-alignment, which were outlined by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh's administration of Sheikh Hasina pursues a pro-active foreign policy. Therefore, Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina contributed significantly to international diplomacy by integrating foreign policy into the country's overall strategy. The goal of Sheikh Hasina's “development first” foreign policy has been to lessen reliance on India and West while simultaneously encouraging stronger cooperation between Bangladesh and China, Japan, and Russia. Kochanek points out that, “The government has been quite active on the foreign policy front in trying to develop its bilateral connections in the region, advance its economic diplomacy, and promote new types of multilateral relations” in this context. Like mentioned earlier Bangladesh favours cordial ties with everyone. Bangladesh thus adopted a neutral stance during the 2020 Ladakh conflict between India and China. The foreign minister of Bangladesh, AK Abdul Momen, said, “Our position is always clear. We want peace, not conflict. Both China and India are our friends. We

do hope both China and India will de-escalate the situation immediately and resolve all issues through negotiations” (Bhuiyan 2020). According to Sheikh Hasina, “what’s the problem with it ? maintaining ties with both China and India? Bangladesh has no animosity with anyone because we are following the lesson taught by Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, friendship to all, malice towards none” (bdnews24.com 2019). In 2000, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated that “The Security Council has to focus on the prevention of armed conflicts by building a culture of peace”(Ranjan 2019).

Further, Sheikh Hasina speaking at the Security Council Summit added that “we live up to our solemn pledge of a world free of wars, a world where the culture of peace has taken deep, deep root” (UN Security Council, September 7, 2000: 15). The Prime Minister also headed a top level meeting on peace building, “Peacebuilding: Way towards Sustainable Peace and Security” at the United Nations Head Quarters was held on 25 September 2012, where a draft declaration was prepared. Later at the sixth session of the Peacebuilding Commission the declaration was adopted at UN General Assembly. The document stressed on “critical importance of peace building in strengthening peace in post-conflict countries, preventing their relapse into conflict and achieving long-term sustainable peace through security and development; need for a comprehensive, effective and coordinated response to the security, institution building and socioeconomic challenges facing States and societies as they recover from conflict and pursue their aspirations for sustainable peace and development” (UN General Assembly, Security Council, 28 September 2012).

While addressing the UN General Assembly in 1996, Sheikh Hasina expressed Bangladesh’s deep commitment to international peace and security. Hasina pronounced that: “Bangladesh has responded to the appeal for the contribution of troops for peacekeeping operations under the provisions of the Charter and resolutions of the Security Council. We consider this our solemn duty as a Member of the United Nations. It is a matter of much satisfaction to us that our valiant soldiers have gone to different trouble spots around the world and have given a good account of themselves in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them with honor, dignity and dedication to duty. I would like to reiterate our readiness to respond positively whenever we are called upon to assist the peace process in accordance with the United Nations Charter.”

Huge resources are needed for the ambitious Forces Goal 2030 program's modernization and expansion of the Bangladeshi military. The fact that Bangladesh's defence expenditure has been steadily expanding is not surprising. Nevertheless, despite these budgetary increases, the acquisition's scope was such that it left a funding gap. Bangladesh has recently relied on financial support from its two main military suppliers, China and Russia, to address this. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in 2018 by Bangladesh's Khulna Shipyard Limited (KSY) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), a state-owned naval shipyard in India, to collaborate on the design and construction of warships. In order to increase India's defence exports to Bangladesh, the Export-Import Bank of India made a credit line of \$500 million available in November 2019. According to the contract struck with the Armed Forces Division of the government of Bangladesh, the funds were made accessible. The line of credit was active beginning on November 7, 2019, and it will last for 10 years. According to the agreement, Bangladesh must purchase at least 75% of its defence products and services from India and the other 25% from other vendors. Under the agreement, the prices of goods and services could be reduced by up to 75 per cent.

Due to their participation in and victory in the 1971 war of freedom, India and Bangladesh have a shared cultural memory. As the non-traditional security threats are so great, cooperation between the two nations' armed services is essential. The two nations have strong, continuous security cooperation, which has accelerated as a result of multiple high-level visits from the two nations' defence establishments. These trips include the first-ever trip to Bangladesh made by the Indian defence minister in 2016. The military chiefs' repeated trips only serve to highlight their shared commitment to addressing new security issues. Joint exercises between the two nations known as "Sampriti" have been conducted nine times. With the signing of agreements relating to defence, such as an MoU for providing a defence Line of Credit worth US\$500 million to Bangladesh, both nations have improved their cooperation in this area. Defense cooperation entails capacity building, exchanges between National Defence Colleges in the area of national security, strategic studies, and collaboration between the armed forces of the two nations in the area of research in science and technology.

Bangladesh's act of handing over the insurgents who were using the state as a safe haven was very well appreciated and encouraged by India. The largest defence agreement in Bangladeshi history was reached by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while her 2013 visit to Moscow. The agreement was for the acquisition of military hardware at a 4.5% interest rate with an 18-year repayment period (Morsalin 2022). Additionally, Dhaka and Moscow committed to work together on anti-terrorism programmes and efforts to combat cybercrime. To balance this, Bangladesh also joined the State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program after signing the "Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative" with the US in 2013. Despite the fact that China and Russia continue to be Bangladesh's main military suppliers, the government has been expanding its choices by engaging with the UK, Italy, France, Turkey and Poland too. The discussion above shows how Bangladesh's foreign policy under Sheikh Hasina in regards to its defence is "independent," "balanced," and "proactive."

2.6 UN Peace Keeping

Bangladesh isn't just a "small state" but is the eighth most populated country with many domestic problems relating to politics, frugality and development. Due to its weak structural bases and limited capacities Bangladesh has substantially reckoned on the goodwill of the transnational community for foreign aid and profitable backing. The country's several domestic challenges has not stopped it from making a positive print on the world stage through its sweats in maintaining transnational peace and security. This has been so evident when it comes to Bangladeshi engagement in the field of UN peacekeeping operations. The state joined the UN as the 136th member in September 1974, and with this, Bangladesh's constant engagement within the organization began. It was so busy that Bangladesh was promoted to the status of a UNSC non-permanent member in 1978, just four years after being admitted to the UN.

It had a significant impact on several security crises during this time, including Vietnam's military intervention in democratic Kampuchea, Israel's occupation of Golan Heights and Lebanon, as well as Zimbabwe's decolonization. The state joined other UN organizations, such as the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UN educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO), the UN fund for

Population Activities (UNFPA), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Bangladesh has also been actively participating in the activities of some of these organizations. For instance, it initiated the submission of multiple initial suggestions for the reorganization of ECOSOC in July 1998. Additionally, Bangladesh proposed that the new commission include eight members from Africa, seven from Asia, six from Latin America and the Caribbean, four from eastern Europe, and eight from western Europe.

Bangladesh used the Article 25 to its advantage as democratization took over Latin America in the 1990s. Since 1990, Bangladesh has been governed by two civilian governments, both of which have publicly stated their support for UN peacekeeping efforts—affirming Bangladesh's continued support for the UN's expanded role in third-party mediation and intervention in international armed situations. Prime minister Khaleda Begum stated that Bangladesh believes it is crucial to strengthen the UN and its peacekeeping apparatus because it is essential to maintaining the security of smaller and weaker states. Bangladesh has maintained this stance about UN peacekeeping despite the change in government in 1996 with Sheikh Hasina taking office. She announced that Bangladesh would participate more actively in UN peacekeeping missions in the future at the UN millennium summit in September 2000, in addition to emphasizing Bangladesh's continuous support. The Bangladeshi military has also indicated its strong support for UN peacekeeping operations.

Political parties in Bangladesh have always supported the military's participation in peacekeeping operations as they believe it will instil democratic values in the army and improve civil-military relations at home especially with its military dictatorship past. With a gross national income per capita of \$1,314 as of July 2015, Bangladesh joined the club of low-middle income developing nations. Despite making significant economic development over the past 25 years, Bangladesh continues to have trouble managing its extreme population density and constrained resources of various kind. This motivates the government to search for business prospects abroad and explains why Bangladeshi military and police find UN peacekeeper remuneration rates to be alluring. Thus, the financial rewards received by Bangladeshi peacekeepers are crucial in sustaining the economy. The same sources are said to have generated BDT40 billion (\$513 million) in revenue for the Bangladesh Police over the past two decades.

UN peacekeeping aids the Bangladesh Army in acquiring and maintaining military hardware that it otherwise wouldn't be able to, as well as in rewarding its people. This is done by encouraging trade agreement for local enterprises, particularly in the pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors, UN peacekeeping may also result in additional indirect economic benefits. One such is the leasing of land by Bangladeshi business people in African nations to start farms, which will help both Bangladesh and the host nations meet their food needs.

The military has a history of having significant influence over government decision-making. In his speech at the international peacekeeping seminar that the Bangladesh Army hosted in Dhaka in 1998, for instance, Army Chief of Staff (COAS) Lieutenant General Mustafizur Rahman noted that the “Bangladesh Army today is not limited to safeguarding the country's sovereignty and nation-building, but it also transcends our national boundary through participation in UN peacekeeping operations” (Krishnaswamy 2003). Haiti is an example of this as Bangladeshi peacekeepers have played an important part in maintaining stability there. They were first deployed in Haiti in 2004 as part of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. In order to give humanitarian aid in the areas affected by the earthquake, a female FPU was sent to Haiti with the mission of ensuring basic healthcare and education for children as well as combating violence against women.

Later, in 2012 the United Nations awarded the Bangladeshi police unit a medal for their law enforcement efforts in Haiti. The Bangladesh Police have participated in UN peacekeeping missions since 1989 and have grown to be one of the top police-contributing nations. The number of Bangladeshi police officers serving in UN missions has increased by 1500% between 2000 and 2016, topping 2,000 policemen in 2011. The members of the police force are stationed in East Timor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, South Sudan, and Haiti as individual police experts and Formed Police Units (FPU). A Bangladeshi FPU made up of 120 police officers was awarded the UN Medal in May 2012 for their noteworthy contributions to MINUSTAH. Additionally, the Bangladesh Navy and Air Force participated in UN missions in Asia and Africa.

A general Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in December 2007 as part of the UN Standby Arrangement System, between the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), the Armed Forces Division (AFD), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Police, serves as the foundation for this decision (Zaman 2016). The current system of decision-making in this area lacks a central authority or coordinating commission or committee. The Bangladesh Army tends to make all tactical choices about Bangladesh's participation in UN peace missions, and the civilian authorities has not contested this authority, which is significant when examining participation patterns generally. The UN Secretariat's requests for peacekeepers are what trigger the decision-making process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) submits this request on behalf of Bangladesh's Permanent Mission to the UN, which reviews this in the context of Bangladesh's bigger foreign policy aspirations and current global obligations. The Defense Attaché at the Permanent Mission in New York handles the formalities and then sends the requests to the appropriate Bangladeshi agencies. The Armed Forces Division, which serves as the Army, Navy, and Air Force's coordinating headquarters, should be contacted with requests involving personnel. At the Army Headquarters in Dhaka, the Overseas Activities Directorate oversees peacekeeping operations. Requests for naval and air force are sent to the corresponding Navy and Air Force Headquarters in Dhaka, which subsequently provide the required instructions for the ensuing operations. The Overseas Operations Directorate provides the other interested branches of the armed forces with the appropriate instructions for troop preparations. This entails the choice of employees, as well as the delivery of tools and instruction. Requests for the deployment of police officers for UN missions are made to the MHA. Following the original announcement, the MHA gives the Dhaka Police Headquarters the order to make personnel selection judgments. The decision-making process heavily weighs the capacity development of the peacekeepers. Potential UN troops can receive specialised training from BIPSOT.

As the Peacekeeping Operations and Training Centre (PKOTC), BIPSOT was founded in 1999 to keep in check the skills needed for the new generation of personnel, that is distinct from the standard fighting skills possessed of these personnel. It underwent a redesign and name change in 2002, adding new capabilities

and resources. The chosen contingent members receive monthly pre-deployment training from BIPSOT. The Police Staff College in Dhaka and the Police Academy in Rajshahi both offer specialised and custom training programmes to the members of the police force for peacekeeping missions, despite the fact that the Bangladesh Police do not possess distinct specialist training facility. The importance of UN peacekeeping was visible as Sheikh Hasina in 2022, urged every Bangladeshi peacekeeper to fulfil their duties in the international peacekeeping operations with honesty, professionalism, and integrity. According to the prime minister, 6,825 Bangladeshis are actively serving in UN peacekeeping operations. They make up 9.2 percent of the 75,516 peacekeepers from 121 nations that have been deployed to maintain world peace (The Daily Star 2022). She added that the number of women peacekeepers from Bangladesh's armed forces and police is constantly increasing, with 519 now serving in international peacekeeping missions. Currently, Bangladeshi soldiers are serving in 13 different missions worldwide.

2.7 Conclusion

Defense diplomacy has long been a crucial element of international affairs and a successful strategy for developing bilateral and regional ties. The following goals could be recognised in the current context for developing long-term cooperative partnerships, striving to foster mutual trust and aid in conflict prevention, bringing transparency to defence ties, and supporting confidence-building efforts. It aids in shifting partners' perspectives and encourages collaboration in various fields including business, sports, bilateral relations, education, etc. Bangladesh has used the Article 25 in its Constitution and have taken part in UN peacekeeping missions. The article makes the state to base its diplomatic relations on the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter. This along with the state being small has forced it into active participation in UN Peacekeeping to gain political and diplomatic clout abroad.

Hence, in order to sustain this Bangladesh usually the efficiency of the personnel engaged in peacekeeping and also promotes action to address various difficulties as the UN peacekeeping missions keeps on getting challenging. Bangladesh joined the UN late as a troop contributor, but over the past three decades, it has established itself as a reliable partner. Overall, Bangladesh has started exercising defence diplomacy on a fundamental level. With it being among the largest contributors to United Nations

Peacekeeping Missions, the small state has been helping significantly in promoting peace and stability in various rouge and conflict facing states in Arica. Further, Bangladesh has also been actively engaging in military drills of all kinds, no matter bilateral or multilateral to keep its defence forces in par with others. Hence, Sheikh Hasina has been exploring all possible avenues, even adding onto existing programmes like dispatching a military medical team in 2020 under the Kuwait Punargathan programme to help combat the Covid-19 epidemic.

Defence diplomacy have seemingly become a major part of Bangladesh foreign policy but the one dimensional dependence on UN peacekeeping is very visible. The current effort to transform Bangladesh Navy into a "builder's navy" by constructing increasingly sophisticated vessels, corvettes, and frigates locally seems to be a step to overcome this limitation.

Bangladesh-China Security Relations

3.1 Introduction

Bangladesh and China look at each other as important allies. The ties between Bengal and former Chinese land seems to be leading us back to two thousand years according to various historical texts. The interactions were through the southern Silk Route, the flow of goods and exchange of knowledge and technologies. In fact, historical records largely left by visitors from China like Fa Hien in the early fifth century, Hue en Tsang in the seventh from China, and Atish Dipankar in the eleventh century from Bangladesh provide a glimpse of this (Sarker 2014). The Bangladesh Crisis had turned South Asia into “an area of intense diplomatic activity and conflicting alignment” (Choudhury 1973). All major powers including the USA, Soviet Union and China were involved here to safeguard their strategic interests. China’s self isolation in the sixties and early seventies due to the Cultural Revolution meant that it had a minimal presence in South Asia. At the same time, Soviet Union had created significant influence in the region among which the most prominent was the Brezhnev’s “collective security system.” This along with the proposal for regional cooperation between Soviet Union, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan was a Soviet strategy to encircle it according to China. With Pakistan providing a strategic platform to check India’s rise and common ally USA visiting soon, China claimed that India and Soviet Union were interfering in Pakistan’s internal issue. The fall of Dakha, according to Zhou Enlai was not a so-called milestone but “the starting point of endless strife on the Asian sub-continent and of their defeat” (Sidky 1976).

Although Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy of the Awami League, a Bengali who had visited China in the middle of the 1950s, is credited for initiating Pakistan's China policy, President Ayub Khan was actually the main inspiration. In 1956, when an Awami League-led administration led by Ataur Rahman Khan was in power in East Pakistan, Chinese Premier Zhou En Lai made a successful trip to Dhaka. These early linkages is said to have greatly helped in overcoming the initial enmity post Bangladesh’s independence. Through all available means, China has greatly aided Bangladesh in many different industries, and Bangladesh has also steadfastly adhered

to its “One China Policy.” The need for China as a ally to counter balance India forced the Bangladesh's political elite and bureaucracy to look over past actions. The Bangladeshi political figures and bureaucrats gave a nuanced interpretation of China's role in the liberation war to make it seem less hostile. They stated that Pakistan anticipated that China would enter the conflict on their side against India. However, China refrained from doing so because of a 25-year friendship treaty between India and the former USSR and its reluctance to engage in military conflict with the USSR. It was also pointed out that China encouraged Pakistan's military leadership not to use torture and come to a political solution (Holmes 2019).

Complete safe conduct outside of the nation was granted to Chinese consular staff in Dhaka. Abdus Samad Azad, the foreign minister of Bangladesh, said that they have extended their hands of friendship to China. Mujib made an effort to appease the Chinese authorities by expressing his high admiration for them. However, it took the Chinese a while to return the Bangladeshi gesture. Bangladesh nevertheless made an effort to avoid overtly criticising China which was attempting to make up for not assisting Pakistan militarily by offering Pakistan substantial diplomatic support, according to Dhaka's assessment of the situation. Since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was aware of China's obligations, he treated the situation very leniently. Though he was not happy with China's veto against Bangladesh's membership in the United Nations, he said, “We do not want to maintain hostility with our neighbour China. We have nothing against the biggest country in the world” (Kristof 1992).

Dhaka kept trying to better ties with China and Mujib expressed his intention clearly on a visit to Japan. It sent a commercial team to China in an effort to forge an economic connection even in the absence of formal diplomatic ties. K.M. Kaiser, a veteran of China, was also appointed ambassador by Bangladesh to Rangoon and Beijing as well. The remaining biggest obstacle to moving the relationship forward was the problem of the prisoners of war (PoW). With the announcement of the New Delhi Agreement between India and Pakistan on August 28, 1973, to address the issues surrounding the repatriation of POWs held in India since 1971, the situation on the Indian subcontinent took a positive turn. This was followed by Pakistan recognizing Bangladesh and vice versa, establishing a favourable political environment Sino-Bangladesh relations (Mahanty 1983). Following that, on June 7,

1974, the UN unanimously approved Bangladesh's candidacy. Even still, China wished for Bangladesh and Pakistan to resolve their differences before formal recognition and the opening of diplomatic relations. It was too near to Pakistan for Bangladesh to be recognised without that country's consent. On the other hand, Dhaka planned to use Beijing to resolve unresolved issues including the distribution of assets. When Pakistan and Bangladesh recognised one another in February 1974, China's hostility to Bangladesh weakened. The relationship between China and Bangladesh was drastically altered after Mujib's ousting in August 1975. China was not comfortable in formally acknowledging his government after branding him a Indian and Soviet Union "agent." Dramatic events in Dakha, including the murder of Mujib, the installation and subsequent toppling of Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed, and the rise to power of Major General Zia-ur Rahman, gave China the opportunity to recognise Bangladesh and begin a close connection with it. It was seen in Beijing as a humiliation for the Soviet Union and India. At that time, Dhaka made an effort to improve affinity with Pakistan and the Middle East, as attitude towards India also deteriorated. All of this had a favourable effect on the relationship between China and Bangladesh, which led to the opening of diplomatic ties on January 1976.

3.2 Beginning of Security Relations

Bangladesh and China found common ground to cooperate militarily based on their national interests. Given Bangladesh's restricted military budget, Chinese weaponry and armament facilities are very economical, enabling it to sustain its national defence system in an efficient manner. Long-term gains for China are in terms of potential energy demands, political results along with financial gains. To summarise major diplomatic interactions between the two countries, it began with the late President Ziaur Rahman's first trip to China in 1977. China contacts were quickly established by the new military dictatorship led by Ziaur Rahman. On the other side, China took advantage of the situation to reclaim the strategic dominance over South Asia that it had previously lost as a result of the partition of Pakistan in 1971. Mujibur Rahman oversaw Bangladesh, which benefited from the security provided by both India and the Soviet Union. However, following Mujibur Rahman's murder, the Soviet Union discontinued all of its military aid to Bangladesh. While Ziaur Rahman's military administration was in control, China filled the void. China demonstrated a strong desire to develop good relations with Bangladesh during Ziaur Rahman's two trips

there in 1977. He was welcomed warmly and the CCP Chairman broke protocol to greet him at the airport. The Chinese recognition meant that Bangladeshi Army started depending on them for development. China offered assistance to Bangladesh in rebuilding its infrastructure. Additionally, it also provided 78% of Bangladesh's imports of arms between 1975 and 1980 extended defence assistance. The framework of Bangladesh-China relations soon expanded to include China's backing for Bangladesh in its conflict with India. China gave Bangladesh her unwavering support in the international community about the Farakka issue (Foysal 2014). Additionally, Ziaur Rahman linked China to the Muslim world. In 1980, he returned to China and had conversations with the Chinese leadership regarding trade, defence, and economic collaborations. While China grew closer to Bangladesh during the military regimes and influencing Dhaka's missile programme, the influence of Indian Army almost became non-existent. Gen Zia's attitude towards India attracted China and Bangladesh found a close ally due to such successive regimes.

China acquired the MIG constructed by the Soviet Union and expanded Joydevpur to become the world's largest weapons and ammunition plant during Zia's rule. Bangladesh also got several F-9, F-7, and T-MBT fighters from China at this time. The first Chinese leader to visit an independent Bangladesh was the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Li Xianian in 1978. President Ershad made multiple trips to China. In the 1980s and the practise of cross-country travel persisted. Under General H.M. Ershad, military cooperation between Bangladesh and China once more grew. During the Ershad era, both nations scarcely budged any strategic policy deviations. He made seven visits, the first of which was made just seven months after he assumed control. Bangladesh was listed among the "five friendly Countries" in Asia by Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang in the anniversary big speech in 1984 (Foysal 2014). During that period, Bangladesh was visited by senior Chinese officials such as Prime Minister Li Peng and President Li Xiannian. Ershad faithfully carried out his immediate predecessor's foreign strategy.

Bangladesh received a Romeo submarine from China in 1984, the year Ershad came to office. On January 7, 1987, a Chinese delegation headed by General Yag D. Zhi, Chief of General Staff of the Peking Liberation Army paid a visit to Bangladesh and furthered their military relations. Both sides engaged in conversation about topics of

shared interest during the visits (Ghosh 1995). The visit aided in the Chinese-style organisation of the Bangladeshi army. China also looked after and maintained the Joy Dumpur arms factory. China demonstrated its readiness to modernise the fledgling Bangladeshi Navy and other branches of the armed forces when Ershad paid a visit to Beijing on June 29, 1990. The two nations struck a trade deal and an agreement on reciprocal visa exemption in 1989. The only hiccup came in 1988 due to a major change in Chinese policy. After the 1988 visit of Indian PM, China decided to forge cordial ties with India (Baral 1989). Strategic partners consequently received less consideration. China also changed its mind about aiding Bangladesh in the dispute over water sharing with India. To cause this phenomena, the then-Chinese leaders gave Bangladesh their assurance that the easing of tensions between the two powers would not have an impact on relations between the two countries. China had become Bangladesh's top import and arms destination by the 1990s.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the head of the opposition travelled to China on humanitarian mission in June 1991. She conveyed her appreciation to China for helping Bangladesh during the 1991 hurricane. While the Hasina administration was acutely aware of the significance of China in the altered framework of international and regional affairs in 1996, one may legitimately link it to the rising prominence of East Asian countries throughout the whole spectrum of Bangladesh foreign policy. In actuality, Hasina's trip to China in 1996 marked the start of Bangladesh's foreign policy's Look East strategy. Following this high-profile visit, Bangladesh's foreign policy gave China and Japan significant prominence. Similar to India, Bangladesh began moving eastward to strengthen its diplomatic, commercial, and trade ties with important nations in the East and ASEAN region. High-level interactions that Bangladesh constantly maintained strengthened this policy.

The unwillingness of India and Bangladesh to renew the historic “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Peace” of 1972 illustrated the depth of their mutual mistrust between the two parties. Due to its contentious Article 8, which forbid the contracting parties from “entering into or participating in any military alliance directed against the other party” and “refraining from any aggression against any other party,” the treaty gave rise to political wrinkles at the domestic level in Bangladesh (Bhattacharjee 2018). Because of the geopolitical ramifications of this

treaty, India experienced great political success. After the treaty's initial 25-year term ended in 1997, it was not renewed. India's strategic vulnerability has been made public by the treaty's non-renewal.

The visits of the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to Bangladesh in January 2002 and in return the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia paid a visit to China in December of the same year strengthening the ties between the two countries. The year also saw China becoming the only nation with a comprehensive defence cooperation deal with Bangladesh, the two states signed the “Defence Cooperation Agreement” covering partnership related to defence production. Following that 2005 was designated as “China-Bangladesh Friendship Year.” China's Premier Wen Jiabao and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had official talks in 2005. For the peaceful existence in the region, they vowed to combat terrorism, transnational crime and committed to exchange information, cooperate in law enforcement, and perform intelligence-sharing (FMPRC 2005). More than 50 poor Bangladeshis tried to enter Malaysia illegally from the Yunnan province of China after being duped by fake organizations. After the issue was resolved, China sent them home and paid for the trip. In addition, China collaborated with the Bangladeshi authorities to arrest members of the unlawful group that was based in China (Yuchen 2022).

Bangladesh helped China apply to join SAARC as an observer in the same year. 2010 marked the 35th anniversary of the relationship between the two nations. Bangladeshi politicians will continue to work to keep friendly ties with China in the coming decade. It was noteworthy that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina travelled to China for five days in March 2010 after spending two months there in the previous year. Through this visit, Bangladesh aimed to further strengthen its bilateral ties with China in order to obtain its support for a number of initiatives, including the building of a deep sea port and the realisation of the Kunming initiative. Following Sheikh Hasina's visit, opposition leader Khaleda Zia visited China from December 19–23, 2010, and they spoke about a variety of topics of interest to both countries. The prime minister Sheikh Hasina also visited China in 2014 confirming how important is the relations with China is for Bangladesh.

Commenting on the visit she said that China is a time tested friend of Bangladesh and their hospitality proves it (Bhattacharjee 2014). Even though China only supported two of the projects Bangladesh asked soft loans for, the visit was considered a success. Xi Jinping made his visit to Bangladesh in 2016 and stated that “We agreed to elevate China-Bangladesh ties from a comprehensive partnership of cooperation to a strategic partnership of cooperation” as various agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) valued more than USD\$25 billion were signed (Ranjan 2016). The 2019 visit by Sheikh Hasina to China also proved to be successful and improve the relations as nine agreements in the areas including aid for the Rohingyas, financial and technological cooperation, investment, power, culture, and tourism were signed along with reassuring defence cooperation. The good relations continued when the Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi visited Bangladesh and signed 4 agreements in the field of “cooperation on cultural issues, disaster management, educational programs of a Chinese university with Dhaka University on marine science and hand over of 8th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge in Pirojpur” (AIR News 2022).

3.3: China in Bangladesh’s Security Framework

Small isolated states threatened by a great power strive to maximise their military potential, use their diplomatic capabilities and exploit all political and strategic paths to exert the best possible pressure on the threatening big power. Vital looked at the advantages and disadvantages of small states and came up with three basic policies or strategies: “Passive, Active, and Defensive” (Vital 1967). The Passive Policy is a renouncing policy, in which one does nothing and hopes for the best. The policy adopted here is of complete submission. As far as the Active strategy is concerned, a small state tries to change the global or region network to its advantage by minimising differences between itself and the big power. In other words, an active strategy aims to take advantage of international system. Defensive strategy is essentially a method for increasing internal military ability. Even though, Vital admired the active strategy, he personally promoted the defensive style to small states. It is observed that Bangladesh is definitely not taking the passive approach due to its trust deficit with India. The lack of resources and limited economy doesn’t allow Bangladesh to completely be independent in developing its security structure. Hence, as Rothstein

stated, the small state has to seek bilateral accords with stronger countries in order to ensure its security and independence (Rothstein 1968).

A security region is a collection of nearby nations that are housed in a “security complex.” In terms of the region, Barry Buzan has described this “security complex” as “ a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another ” (Buzan 1998). A small state will therefore go beyond the region for protection if it is unfairly positioned in a regional security complex with the insecurity syndrome and harbours bilateral enmity toward a large neighbour. On the other hand, an extra regional power would exploit the smaller state to strengthen its strategic control over that region generally and against a relatively stronger state of that region with which it does not have reliable bilateral relations.

The nature and intensity of the bilateral animosity that a minor state shares with the dominant power in the region heavily influences its strategic relationship with an extra-regional power. In such relationships, the small state generally has minor functions to play. In the event that the relationship between the large powers of the region and the extra-regional power improves, there is also always room for change in the nature of the partnership. However, a tiny state has more alternatives to deal with states in its immediate neighbourhood when it has a relationship with an extra-regional power. Security concerns in the region are always raised by a minor state's relationship with an extra regional power, especially for the dominating power in the region. The smaller states of South Asia have been compelled to forge strategic ties with extra regional powers as a result of the imbalance of power in the region and the threat of hegemony by a much bigger neighbour, India. China's leap as a competing economic, military force and its readiness to project influence into South Asia has made Bangladesh view it as an extra regional power that can help in counter balancing India.

3.4 Maritime Security : The Game Changer

In the realism school of thought, maritime security is primarily considered as an issue of “sea power.” The idea of sea power tries to construct the usage of naval forces and theorise tactical plans for their application. Scholar Geoffrey Till describes sea power as the capacity to conduct transport via the sea during peace time and also the ability of navies to strike other navies in times of war (Till 2018). Bangladesh depends heavily on shipping, whether it is through the Bay of Bengal or through its extensive river system, which is based on the Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna rivers. Mongla, one of its main ports, lies 60 nautical miles (97 km) upriver. The Bangladeshi cuisine includes a lot of marine goods, particularly fish and shrimp, which are also a major source of export revenue. The Bay of Bengal is a particularly productive maritime region, and marine resources are crucial for the development of the nation. The majority of the high-quality shrimp produced in Bangladesh is sent to Europe. The nation's fisheries directly support close to 12 million people (Till 2004). Further, geologists believe that one of the largest oil and gas reservoirs in the Asia-Pacific area is located in Bangladesh's EEZ. Exploring this abundant reservoir has the potential to make Bangladesh a significant worldwide hydrocarbon producer.

The past decade witnessed two major victories for Bangladesh concerning international maritime borders. The long-running maritime dispute between Bangladesh and Myanmar was finally addressed by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in its ruling in March 2012. The 40-year-old maritime dispute between Bangladesh and India was settled by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in July 2014. Bangladesh obtained 19,467 square kilometres in the Bay of Bengal out of the 25,602 square kilometres that were in dispute, according to the PCA decision. Overall, Bangladesh gained more than 1,18,813 square kilometres of Bay of Bengal marine space (Energy Bangla 2014).

This enormous marine region, which includes the “territorial sea, 200 nautical miles of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and a sizeable portion of the continental shelf outside the EEZ, is nearly the same size as the country.” The government has laid forth a comprehensive plan for a blue economy in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean in this context. Thus, safeguarding the nation's maritime area and sea lanes from diverse conventional and non-conventional threats has become a top foreign and

security policy objective for the Indian Ocean littoral state. Maritime security has become Bangladesh's primary foreign With major navies of the world competing in the Indian Ocean to advance their interests, evolving piracy-related threats and human traffickers depending more and more on maritime routes, Bangladesh has realised the importance of enhancing its own national capabilities and fostering maritime cooperation with the other states along the Indian Ocean Rim (Hossain 2016).

As the Pakistanis learned in 1971, Bangladesh is extremely sensitive to anything that endangers the access to its different ports. An opponent who controls the Bay of Bengal might project strength down Bangladesh's coastline, target its commerce lanes, and threaten its ports, especially Chittagong and Mongla, where more than 150 ships land each month. The defence of Bangladesh's modest merchant marine fleet has symbolic significance as well. Bangladesh is now free to release a call for international bids for Bay oil and gas exploration. China, which is insatiably in search of energy, is probably eager to work with Bangladesh to explore for oil and gas in the Bay, strengthening relations between the two nations. Further, this intersects with China's maritime motives.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, after his ascension made it clear that China aims at dominating the maritime domain. It serves as the primary means of transit for the majority of global trade, but it is also the foundation upon which China hopes to establish itself as a regional or possibly global hegemony, as declared explicitly during the 19th National Congress. Due to the geostrategic pressure of India and the United States of America, China has been worried about the Malacca Strait for years. China has adopted a plan to build the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road." To protect its rights and economic concerns in the region, China has plans to create an Indian Ocean fleet and to peacefully share power with the USA and India (Jiacheng 2017). China has started to lessen its vulnerability in Indian Ocean by building transportation networks in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Myanmar taking the Malacca dilemma into consideration.

Through the connectivity of these two nations' land highways, China's western and southern provinces are now linked to the ports in Pakistan and Myanmar. Given that the Indian Ocean lanes account for 80 percent of China's maritime trade imports and

is the most crucial of the country's four main shipping lanes (the other three are the East Pacific, Arctic, and Atlantic), Chinese government views the Indian Ocean as integral to the Maritime Silk Road (Ahamed 2020). Bangladesh's need to strengthen its naval capabilities is essential, and China has used this opportunity to strengthen its ties with the former. When the maritime border conflict between Bangladesh and Myanmar grew more heated in 2016, both nations strengthened their navy in the BoB. China used the situation to its advantage of this circumstance and sent Bangladesh with munitions and arms, while India did the same for Myanmar. While it is true that they both made money from the deal, the heightened militarization of the area with the backing from two bigger countries was merely a display of military might.

Bangladesh signed the Submarine Deal in 2017 as a result of the Bay of Bengal arms race. As a part of the agreement, Bangladesh paid \$203 million for two Chinese submarines and received assistance in building its first submarine facility. This breakthrough occurred at a pivotal moment when the Rohingya and maritime border crises were driving up tensions between Myanmar and Bangladesh and both nations were bolstering their navy. According to the agreement, Chinese officers will train Bangladeshi staff members on how to run the submarines and the base. The fact that there are PLA Navy trainers and stealth observers inside the two submarines while they are conducting sea trials near Vishakhapatnam, giving them complete knowledge of India's maritime movements, and Dhaka purchased from China when it could have bought from India is more significant than the submarines themselves being outdated.

Chinese engagement in “Forces Goal 2030” is an example of further deepening of Bangladesh-China defence relations. The plan established in 2009 by Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League to address conventional security concerns, and later updated in 2017 emphasises how crucial it is for Bangladesh to update its army, navy, and air force's fighting capabilities. Bangladesh has been enhancing its commitment to maritime security and also its projection as a marine power. It had sent two ships for the UN Maritime Task Force off the coast of Lebanon since 2010. Bangladesh too wants to start giving out disaster help after long being a recipient of it. The Bangladesh Navy had also provided assistance to Sri Lanka following fatal landslides, the Maldives following the 2014 water crisis, and the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan. The Bangladesh Navy has created an ambitious growth plan to increase the

size of its fleet to 150 ships by 2030 in order to achieve this goal. To achieve that Bangladesh has heavily engaged with China for Navy hardware. There are many reasons for that, among which the most blatant being the low cost. Also diverse procurement would require regular need of expertise from different suppliers leading to high cost. The country would also have to send sailors to different countries adding to the cost. Even though Bangladesh have tried to multi source the hardware, Chinese suppliers usually come up with the lowest rate.

Considering all this, Bangladesh also has a lot to worry about too. The over dependence on China for navy procurement have the potential to back fire in the future. The availability of cheap hardware has also affected the development of the local industry even though the government is encouraging it. Research and Development has taken a significant blow in the country even though the Bangladesh Navy is trying to transform into a “builder's navy” by constructing increasingly sophisticated vessels, corvettes, and frigates locally (Rashid 2019). The ever increasing maintenance budget for low cost procurement is also a matter of concern. The strengthening of cooperative relations with the Bangladeshi military was highly prized by China, according to Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie in 2008.

3.5 Arms Trade

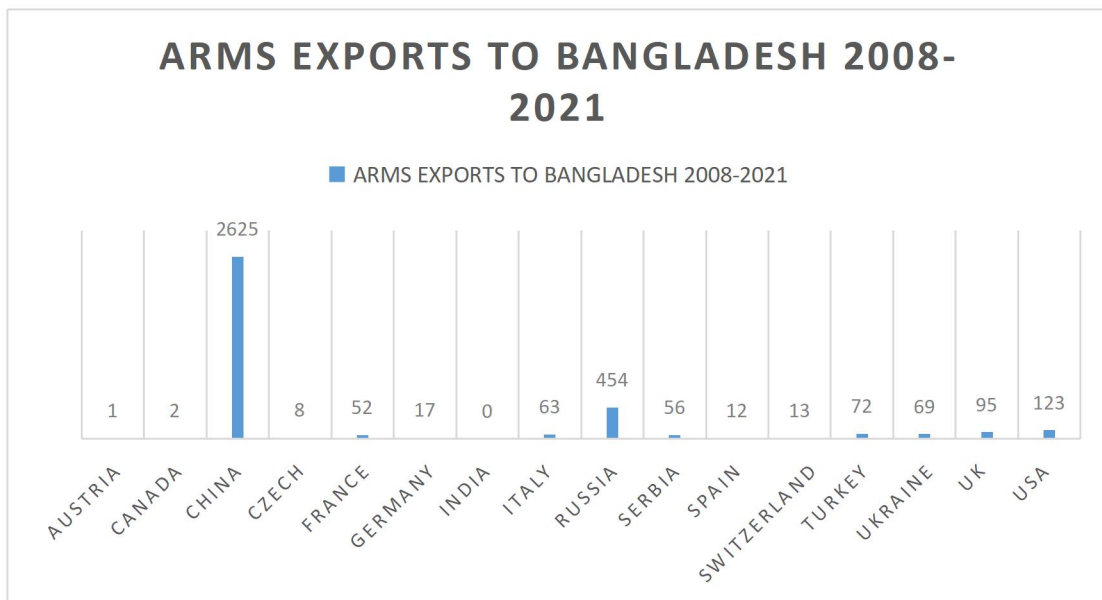
China's involvement in defence of Bangladesh began even before the country was liberated, with aiding in construction on an ordnance factory in 1968. China helped in rebuilding the factory after the liberation war and also backed Bangladesh Ordnance Factories (BOF), the largest military manufacturing complex of the Bangladesh Army, located at Gazipur. In the recent years, China has managed to transform from a significant arms importer to a net exporter, also with capability to rank among the top arms exporters globally. Chinese defence firms in particular are widening the scope of their bids for contracts for the purchase of weapons such as missiles, armoured vehicles, artillery, air defence systems, ships and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) (Raska 2020). These requests frequently correspond to or complete Beijing's agreements on trade, commerce, and military-technical cooperation with particular nations in Asia, Africa, and also the Middle East.

China continues to be a net importer of complex military equipment, including sensors, naval weapons, and aircraft engines, but it has been able to break into new markets thanks to its low prices, accessible service, and absence of geopolitical restrictions. Hence, from the small nation's perspective, arms from China is a great alternative to those from Western suppliers considering Beijing's steadfast diplomatic policy of not meddling in the domestic disputes of other countries. This is a policy that runs counter to the Western states' policy on weaponry transfers. The non-interference policy simply means that China would not apply sanctions or raise any concerns if a state used weapons acquired from China for whatever reason. However, it has reaffirmed that it does not sell arms to non-state entities. The non-interference principle is actually appreciated in practise. Many African nations as well as rogue states like Iran and North Korea look to China as a last-resort arms supplier (Li and Matthews 2017). Hence, Bangladesh finds India and other nations untrustworthy as supplier of weapons. They could withhold access to weapons during a domestic crisis in Bangladesh (Mannan 2019).

According to the "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2010" report from the US Office of the Secretary of Defense, China has made targeted arms sales as a tool for strengthening links with strategically significant nations like Bangladesh and to "generate revenue to support its domestic defence industry" (Office of the Secretary of Defence 2010). Further, the strategic alliance of many western countries with India makes them unreliable as the bigger neighbour can put pressure on the sellers. Unlike, western countries who fear a negative impact on their relations with India, China can be looked at as a reliable supplier. It also has the most number of suppliers in the world, hence can respond positively to smaller demands while western suppliers rarely agree to such orders (Rashid 2019). As a result, China is now Bangladesh's top supplier of weapons, with Russian transfers coming in second place and accounting for less than a sixth of the total. After Pakistan, China's other South Asian trading partner, Bangladesh is the recipient of the most expensive armaments from China. Also between 2010 and 2020, China's arms exports to Bangladesh amounted for 73.56% of the value of all the weapons.

Like several other small nations, Bangladesh is attempting to get global suppliers to collaborate with local industry in order to help create capabilities to meet its defence export goals. Due to the inadequate capacity to acquire new knowledge, growth has been modest thus far, but its agreement with China under the 2002 defence pact, which also mentions “enhancing co-operation in defence training, maintenance, and in some areas of production” has been of some help (Samsani 2021). With assistance from China, Bangladesh installed an anti-missile launch pad close to Chittagong Port in 2008, and one missile testing was carried out in May with Chinese assistance. The anti-ship missile C-802A's successful test launch from the frigate BNS Osman at Kutubdia Island in the Bay of Bengal had a 120 km strike range.

TIV figures for arms exported by China to Bangladesh, 2008-21¹



General Qiliang, a visiting vice chairman of the Chinese Communist Party's military commission, inked four defence agreements with Bangladesh in 2014. As per the accords, the Chinese military would provide weaponry and training to the Bangladeshi army. Additionally, they would establish a language lab inside the

¹ It is to be noted that “SIPRI TIV figures do not represent sales prices for arms transfers. They should therefore not be directly compared with gross domestic product (GDP), military expenditure, sales values or the financial value of export licenses in an attempt to measure the economic burden of arms imports or the economic benefits of exports. They are best used as the raw data for calculating trends in international arms transfers over periods of time, global percentages for suppliers and recipients, and percentages for the volume of transfers to or from particular states” (SIPRI 2022).

military-run Bangladesh University of Professionals. China has also made inroads in building of submarines and ports in Bangladesh. Similarly in 2016, “two 1,350 tonne Type 056 corvettes, BNS Shadhinota and BNS Prottoy, built by China Shipbuilding and Offshore International Company was purchased by the Bangladesh Navy. The ships are armed with 76 mm and 30 mm naval guns and C-802A anti-ship missiles (ASMs) and a FN-3000N surface-to-air missile system”(Vasani 2020).

In 2018, Bangladesh and China agreed to a new military pact. The new agreement calls for China to provide the Bangladesh Air Force with 23 units of Hongdu K-8W intermediate training jets. As a result of Myanmar's previous acquisition of 50 K-8Ws, the BAF felt compelled to increase the number and capability of its training aircraft fleet. Bangladesh also agreed to let a Chinese company “Vanguard” to set up a FM-90 air defence missile maintenance facility. The same missile is a part of the arsenal of the People's Liberation Army and Bangladesh’s too. The "Hong Qi" missile, designed and constructed by the CNPMIEC, was upgraded in the truck mounted FM-90 system (Street Times 2022). It can work with many objectives and conduct simultaneous offensives against several targets within a radar range of 25 km. Among its capabilities are the capacity to target “ultra-low-altitude cruise missiles, air-to-surface missiles, and anti-radiation missiles at a distance of more than 16 km.”

This missile is one of many defence-oriented investments and armaments that China has made available to Bangladesh, including surface-to-air missile systems, naval guns, and anti-ship missiles. Two Chinese-made submarines named BNS Navajatra and BNS Joyjatra were introduced to Bangladesh in 2017 and have since been maintained and updated to assist Bangladesh develop a fully functional “three dimensional” force. Moreover, China has provided technical training and experience sharing to an expanding number of Bangladeshi armed forces. When considering Bangladesh's economic status and geographic location—it is surrounded by India on three sides—former Indian Naval Chief Admiral Arun Prakash said, “the acquisition of submarines is not only nonsensical but actually an act of provocation as far as India is concerned.” However, despite India's military hegemony in the Bay of Bengal, China's ambassador to Dhaka asserted that the submarines would contribute to regional stability. Even if these submarines have sparked debate in New Delhi, it's crucial to remember that Bangladesh chose the Ming-class because they couldn't

afford the Russian Kiloclass or the more sophisticated Yuan-class. The submarines, which were constructed in the 1970s, “were primarily used by China as training vessels in the 1990s and were considered not to be successful.” Since then, they have been equipped with cutting-edge sonar and torpedoes. Aside from these and other ships, the Bangladesh Navy also employs Type-053H1, Type-053H2, and Type-053H3 Frigates, Type-056 Corvettes, and Type-021 and Type-062 patrol boats (Roy Chaudhury 2022).

List of arms China exported to Bangladesh from 2008-2021

No. ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year(s)		Delivered	Comments
			of order	Year of Delivery		
5	<u>Padma</u>	Patrol craft	2011	2013	(5)	Produced in Bangladesh
2	LPC-1	Corvette	2014	2017	2	Bangladeshi designation <u>Durjoy</u> ; produced in Bangladesh
5	<u>Padma</u>	Patrol craft	2019			Produced under licence in Bangladesh
(10)	C-802	Anti-ship missile	(2005)	2008	(10)	For 1 Type-053 (Osman or <u>Jianghu</u>) frigate
(14)	PL-9	SRAAM	(2005)	2006-2008	14	For F-7MG combat aircraft
(174)	Type-59G	Tank	(2009)	2014-2019	(174)	Bangladeshi Type-59 tanks rebuilt to Type-59G in Bangladesh with kits from China
(58)	Type-69-IIG	Tank	(2009)	2010-2013	(58)	Bangladeshi Type-69-II tanks rebuilt to Type-69-IIG in Bangladesh with kits from China
(2)	FM-90	SAM system	(2010)	2011	(2)	
(75)	FM-90	SAM	(2010)	2011	(75)	
(16)	C-704	Anti-ship missile	(2011)	2012-2013	(16)	For LPC-1 corvettes
16	F-7MG	Fighter aircraft	2011	2012-2013	16	F-7BGI version
2	LPC-1	Corvette	(2011)	2013	2	Bangladeshi designation <u>Durjoy</u>
3	Type-654	ARV	2011	2012	3	
44	Type-90-2M/MBT-2000	Tank	2011	2012-2013	(44)	BDT12 b (\$160 m) deal
(30)	C-802	Anti-ship missile	(2012)	2014	(30)	For Type-053 or Type-510 (<u>Abu Bakr</u> or <u>Jianghu-3</u>) frigates
(15)	C-802	Anti-ship missile	2012	2015	(15)	For Type-056 (<u>Shadhinata</u>) frigates
(50)	HHQ-10	SAM	2012	2015	(50)	For Type-056 (<u>Shadhinata</u>) frigates
2	Type-053H2	Frigate	2012	2014	2	Second-hand; Bangladeshi designation <u>Abu Bakar</u>
2	Type-056	Frigate	2012	2015	2	Bangladeshi designation <u>Shadhinata</u>
9	K-8	Combat aircraft	2013	2014-2015	9	K-8W version
2	Type-035G	Submarine	(2013)	2016	2	Second-hand but modernized before delivery; BDT16 b (\$203 m) deal; Bangladeshi designation <u>Nabajatra</u>
(18)	WS-22 122mm	Self-propelled MRL	(2013)	2014-2016	(18)	
(60)	Yu-4 533mm	Anti-ship torpedo	(2013)	2016	(60)	Probably second-hand; for Type-035G submarines; designation uncertain
(15)	C-802	Anti-ship missile	(2015)	2019	(15)	For Type-056 (<u>Shadhinata</u>) frigates
(11)	CJ-6	Trainer aircraft	(2015)	2016	(11)	PT-6A version
2	FM-90	SAM system	2015	2016	2	
(75)	FM-90	SAM	2015	2016	(75)	
(100)	FN-6	Portable SAM	(2015)	2017-2020	(100)	FN-16 version; possibly incl assembly in Bangladesh
(50)	HHQ-10	SAM	(2015)	2019	(50)	For Type-056 (<u>Shadhinata</u>) frigates
2	Type-056	Frigate	2015	2019	2	Bangladeshi designation <u>Shadhinata</u>
(30)	C-803	Anti-ship MI/SSM	(2018)	2019	(30)	For Type-053H3 (<u>Jiangwei-2</u> or <u>Umer Farooq</u>) frigates
(30)	FM-90	SAM	(2018)	2019	(30)	For Type-053H3 (<u>Jiangwei-2</u> or <u>Umer Farooq</u>) frigates
7	K-8	Combat aircraft	2018	2020	7	K-8W version
2	Type-053H3/ <u>Jiangwei-2</u>	Frigate	2018	2019	2	Second-hand; Bangladeshi designation <u>Umar Farooq</u>
(31)	WS-22 122mm	Self-propelled MRL	2018	2018-2019	(31)	
(44)	VT-5	Tank	2019	2021	(5)	

Bangladesh's bilateral security ties with India and Myanmar are in trouble because of problems including border water conflicts, regional extremist groups, and cross-border crimes. Bangladesh is now again at risk for security due to India and Pakistan's public admissions that they have sought out and built nuclear weapons, which has cast a nuclear shadow over South Asia. Hence, it has developed its nuclear technology for specific uses like research and teaching based on the perceived threat (Islam 2016). Theoretically, Bangladesh has chosen to acquire nuclear weapons while maintaining the option of advance nuclearization in the future. However, inadequate infrastructure, staff training, and research experience exacerbate Bangladesh's already-existing security concerns and further test the nation's nuclear security system (Kamruzzaman 2021). The Bangladeshi army is also equipped in practically every way with Chinese small guns, armoured personnel carriers, and infantry gear. China has provided Bangladesh with more than 100 different fighter jets and trainers for its air force. While some of them have been retired or crashed, the majority still serve as the Bangladesh air force's mainstay in combat. Additionally, Bangladesh's fleet has been reinforced through cooperation between China and Bangladesh.

Through a partnership managed and assisted by China's state-owned firm China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, Khulna Shipyard Ltd. (KSY) was able to commission five locally constructed Padma-class patrol craft for the Bangladesh Navy. In accordance with a technology transfer agreement that was concluded in May 2010, CSIC gave Khulna Shipyard the design and material packages. Chinese shipbuilders are now eager to provide customers who need them with technology and shipbuilding experience in addition to low-cost solutions for countries that are constrained for funds (Ridzwan 2014). The Khulna Shipyard Ltd. in Bangladesh has begun work on the second batch of five Padma class patrol vessels that have been ordered by the Bangladesh Navy as a result of the project's success (Domiguez 2020). On November 8, 2017, the Bangladesh Navy commissioned two Chinese LPCs of the Durjoy class that were domestically constructed, Durgam and Nishan, as well as two 32-m submarine handling tugs, at the Titumir naval station in Khulna. The BAF and Chinese personnel previously worked together on F-7 overhauls. The Bangladesh Air Force currently has the capacity to maintain F-7 fighter planes. Cost reductions and a decrease in reliance on foreign contractors would result from this. In September 2018, the first aircraft underwent an independent overhaul. The upgrade programme

demonstrated Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its domestic defence industry with assistance from global vendors (Grevatt 2018).

China is Bangladesh's main partner in all of these industrial projects, demonstrating the expanding defense-industrial links between Dhaka and Beijing. These arm transfers usually go hand in hand with other forms of aid to complete foreign policy efforts carried under the OBOR. Even though smaller countries including Bangladesh have complained about faulty military equipment, they prefer it due to cost effectiveness comparatively. Bangladesh recently complained about the lack of post sales service and maintenance from Original Equipment Manufacturer, Hongdu Aviation. The seven K-8W aircrafts bought in 2020 as addition to a batch of nine in 2014 faced malfunctions and the vague response from Chinese National Aero Technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC) didn't impress the Bangladesh Air Force (NEN News 2021). The newly acquired two Chinese 053H3 Frigates that arrived at Mongla Port Bangladesh was reported having faulty gun system and navigation radar. Even though Bangladesh is not happy to pay more for the repairs, it seems that both the countries are making new inroads into their security relations through arm sales. Bangladesh have given space to a Chinese firm Vanguard to build a maintenance facility for FM-90 missile systems (Katoch 2022).

3.6: Conclusion

The lack of interest by China to recognise the newly independent state and its history against the liberation war didn't deter Bangladesh from taking a pragmatic approach. The smaller South Asian state recognised the need of an extra regional power to counterbalance India and China seemed to be a great option. Hence, security became the aspect of relations that proved to be most important. Beyond the historical dependence of Bangladesh on China for defence activities, what proved to be the major factor in intensification of the security relations was maritime security. Chinese engagement in "Forces Goal 2030" and ever increasing arms trade are examples of the same.

Bangladesh believes that the presence of foreign naval powers will only restrain other regional ambitions, particularly India, which it views as a danger. The country that considers maritime trade and resource rich EEZ as the future of its economy finds it

necessary to modernize the navy. China's and Bangladesh's interests are now aligned in the Indian Ocean region as the former is also energy hungry due to its development . China's policy on arms sales, is to ignore the recipient nation's political or human rights condition. This is a policy that runs counter to the Western states' policy on weaponry transfers.

Overall, Bangladesh-China security relations seems to have solidified in the last decade even though there have been minor hiccups like reports of low quality Chinese weapons. Still, due to the South Asian regional security complex, the strategic partnership is likely to flourish as the interests are too high for any of the party to move away. There is much to be seen about the extend to which both these countries trust each other. The access of maritime borders to Chinese experts in submarines seems to be pointing at high levels of trust Bangladeshi side. Future holds the answer to whether Bangladesh would let Chinese submarines near and also whether, in the case of a potential war between the big powers, China anticipates that Bangladeshi military refuse Indian military any passage through its territory to manoeuvre troops and logistics supply to India's landlocked Northeast region.

Chapter IV

China's Defence Diplomacy vis-a-vis Bangladesh

4.1: Defence Diplomacy of China

China's annual defence white papers published by the State Council's Information Office since 1998 refers to defence diplomacy as 'military diplomacy'. "Military diplomacy should serve the state's diplomacy and the modernization of national defence and the armed forces," the 2000 white paper says, when the one four years later puts, "The PLA conducts active military exchanges and cooperation with militarizes of other countries and has created a military diplomacy that is all-directional, multi-tiered, and wide-ranging." Chinese military diplomacy primarily adheres to the PLA's ideas of military diplomacy during times of peace.

The goal of military exchanges is just one of several objectives that might be taken into account in the larger sense of military diplomacy. Traditional military exchange goals include: first, preparing and bolstering one's own armed forces; second, enhancing relations with other nations (including averting the creation of enemies; selling military equipment and establishing influence); and third, introducing cutting-edge military innovations. In general, China has likewise not shown significant deviation from these goals of the military exchange (Yasuhiro 2006). In a speech to the All-Military Diplomatic Work Conference in January 2015, Xi Jinping listed a number of objectives for Chinese military diplomacy, including encouraging all inclusive national foreign policy and advancing military construction.

Xi also emphasised the need to defend China's interests in security, development, and sovereignty. China changed its National Defense since 1998 to the China's Military Strategy White Paper in 2015, which was made public for the first time history. The white paper is crucial because it outlines the People's Liberation Army's new strategic direction (PLA). First, it describes a "active defence" approach and highlights China's dedication to "winning informationized local warfare" (Kania 2015). Secondly, it stresses on the objective of developing into a naval super power and a promotion of a more authoritative Chinese presence out from the territory of the People's Republic

(Gady 2015). The latest white paper identifies internet, space, nuclear forces, and oceans as the four primary areas for China's military expansion (Chang 2015). Consequently, the PLA's general leadership, PLA Rocket Force, and PLA Strategic Support Force were formally proclaimed in December 2015 (Liu Hui 2019).

4.2: Defence Diplomacy - Decision Making in China

Despite some entities' function, power, and even people overlapping, the Communist Party of China and the Government of the People's Republic of China have separate decision-making systems. Decisions are thus made along two tracks inside the Chinese political system: the “Party track and the State track” (Jakobson and Manuel 2016). There are three main coordinating bodies of interest from the perspective of comprehending how the system functions: one in the Party and two in the State. The Politburo Standing Committee(PSC), is the body that makes the final decisions on major foreign policy problems. The PSC is in charge of making important choices that have an impact on China's important alliances with countries including the US, Japan, Russia, and North Korea. In addition, the PSC must handle emergencies or global crises like international occurrences or border conflicts (Gore 2013).

The military is in charge of security- or military-related foreign relations, while civilians are in charge of daily diplomacy (Ji 2014). Armed forces have a degree of independence that can impact decisions regarding diplomacy. The autonomy's historical connection to the communist party cannot be severed, especially during the war when the CCP's military might was its main source of strength (Song 2008). Hence, as pointed out by Jakobson and Manuel (2016), “party leadership upholds a decision-making system that keeps the military at arm’s length from political decision making.” Although the state is in power, the party is in charge of the PLA and ultimately controls the use of force through it as an armed wing. As a result, the military cannot be ordered by the government because of its considerably greater stature than that of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Gore 2013). It should come as no surprise that foreign policy can be carried out independently of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The Chinese decision-making structure also includes Leading Small Groups (LSGs), which can be used as a mechanism for the PLA to participate in the formulation of

foreign policy. The Politburo Standing Committee makes the final decisions, with the LSGs serving only as advisors. By interacting with important nations and delivering services to the general population to improve China's reputation, military diplomacy aids larger diplomatic efforts by China. Due to the top-down nature of Chinese defence diplomacy and the inclusive nature of this objective, almost all military diplomatic efforts serve to advance broader Chinese diplomatic objectives.

The final say in matters of foreign policy belongs to Xi Jinping. This leadership position was established prior to Xi's ascent to the pinnacle of China's power structure in November 2012. He was apparently given control of the Protection of Maritime Interests LSG, a new senior leaders group with responsibility for maritime security, as early as mid-2012. According to reports, Xi was appointed to lead a "Office to Respond to the Diaoyu Crisis" in September 2012 (Jakobson 2013). Upon becoming General Secretary, Xi assumed leadership of the majority of significant LSGs, including those pertaining to Taiwan affairs, international relations. Xi is also the leader of the newly established State Security Committee, which was announced in 2013 (Li & Yanzhou 2015).

But Xi has also made it plain through a number of important trips to the relevant People's Liberation Army (PLA) units that the nation will follow a more leadership oriented attitude - that includes the potential use of violent activities in order to preserve what Beijing sees as China's "core interests" (Poh 2017). In January 2013, Xi made the following point during a academic meeting with members of the CPCCC Political Bureau: "China will stick to the road of peaceful development, but will never give up its legitimate rights and will never sacrifice [its] national core interests. No country should presume that China will trade its core interests or will allow harm to be done to [China's] sovereignty, security or development interests."

Although China has always been focused to protect its sovereignty and fundamental interests, Xi has undoubtedly come across as much more tough-minded than his predecessors. Adding onto his current position as Chairman of the CMC, he has demonstrated his power over the PLA by taking leadership of the new CMC Joint Battle Command Center. He has also shown his steadfast support for the development of a much more capable military to accomplish these stated goals. China's ever

increasing assurance and ambitions to have a far important role on the global arena are demonstrated by Xi's determination to outline a foreign policy agenda that is different from that adopted by the West.

The phrase “Chinese Dream” was first used by Xi Jinping on November 29, 2012, while he was at the National Historical Museum's "The Road to Revival" exhibition, which featured artefacts that chronicled China's history of resistance against colonial powers' attacks and humiliation. The Central Military Commission (CMC), the Politburo, and the Leading Small Groups (LSGs) are the three institutions through which the PLA influences Chinese foreign policy (Grieger 2015). The party that seeks to dominate the PLA has a prominent organisation called the CMC. The CMC Chairman is also the CCP Secretary-General. Furthermore, since there isn't a military representative in the Politburo inner circle, Xi Jinping serves as the CMC Chairman in the Politburo Standing Committee, representing PLA interests and foreign policy viewpoints (Grieger 2015).

4.3: Factors affecting China’s Defence Diplomacy with Bangladesh

As India got stronger, South Asia has been moving into a region under its hegemony. This intersected with the rise of China and its willingness to influence the region drawing the south Asian regional security complex into interaction with East Asian regional security complex (Buzan 2011). China sees western influence in the region as a challenge to its security, hence its South Asian policy have been modeled on strategic considerations. Also, despite continuous emphasis on the strategic concerns involving Taiwan and the other three seas, future PLAN operations outside the area are growing and expanding geographically. While these operations aim to secure SLOCs, they more directly reflect the actions historically taken by a country seeking to rise in the global economic sphere, among which is the deployment of a global navy.

As a sign of Beijing's aspirations in that ocean, New Delhi is alarmed over Chinese explorations of the seafloor of the Indian Ocean. India's apparent maritime policy of efficiently managing the Indian Ocean and the possibility for the United States to dominate navigational choke spots critical to China's trade and, consequently, to its economy, are two topics of great concern to the PLAN. Its cultivation of strong

military ties with Pakistan including supporting its nuclear programme, Bangladesh and other smaller countries of the region has been to keep India's rise in check (Pushpa 2014). Pakistan has been the strategic pathway for China to South Asia for many years, but after dictatorship took over Bangladesh in 1975, China found itself a partner who no longer was pro-India.

Bangladesh also took a pragmatic approach towards China pushing aside the bitter past in order to counterbalance Indian hegemony in the region. With Southeast Asia as a maritime neighbour, China to the north, India to the west and east, and Bangladesh's geographic placement near the BoB and Indian Ocean, it becomes crucial for both India and China. Defence diplomacy of China is coordinated with its strategic interests. It can be observed that in recent years, China's military engagement with bigger developed nations have decreased. The country has prioritised other nations in the nearby regions of ASEAN and South Asia in order to establish itself as the undisputed regional power (Pandey 2019). The brainchild of President Xi, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and building "South-South" links with the "non-western" globe to create a "win-win collaboration" have been the focus of China's diplomacy as a whole.

4.3.1: India and Bangladesh's insecurity

As with China, Bangladesh depends on the supply network with India. India, however, does not have a comparable to China in terms of investment. Compared to China and Japan, Indian investment in Bangladesh is minuscule. Despite this, India and Bangladesh have strong cultural, religious, ethnic, and historical links that can cause their relations to fluctuate. With varying degrees of influence, China has managed to penetrate most of India's neighbours and is continuously expanding. China already collaborates on security and other issues with some Himalayan countries leading to the suspicion of the "Himalayan Quad." Since India and China share unresolved land borders, neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan hold significant relevance for India. Along with having borders with India, Myanmar and Bangladesh also play a significant role in influencing the internal security situation in our North-Eastern states and in supporting India's "Act East Policy" which China doesn't see in a positive light (Rana 2021). Apart from six other neighbouring Indian states, Bangladesh is strategically

located close to the disputed Arunachal Pradesh between the two powers, which was the subject of a bloody war in 1962, and the Siliguri Corridor, which connects the Indian mainland with its seven comparatively underdeveloped northeastern states. This Corridor connects China and Bangladesh on a north-south axis.

With its seven sisters in the northeast, mainland India has no other supply routes. Therefore, Bangladesh must now offer transit facilities to India so that its goods can be transported from the Indian subcontinent to these seven less developed states through Bangladeshi roads and rivers at a far lower cost and with fewer dangers. India has preferential access to facilities at Chittagong Port, the principal port of Bangladesh, allowing it to transport goods to the Indian states of Tripura and Nagaland at a far lower cost and with fewer dangers. If there is a conflict, even a small one, for control of Arunachal Pradesh between India and China, Bangladesh may find itself in a precarious security situation. India and China are both actively involved in the Bay of Bengal conflict, using military spears and shields while they do so.

In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India maintains a dedicated three forces joint command that also controls the Malacca Strait. Bangladesh's economy and ability to support its population are heavily reliant on the Bay. For Bangladesh to exist, the SLOCs and resources in the Bay are essential. The effects of climate change are additionally mentioned. This poses a huge threat to Bangladesh since, according to a UN forecast, a significant area of Bangladesh may be submerged under water by the end of this century, displacing millions of its citizens (Karim 2015). Bangladesh is extremely sensitive to anything that endangers the access to its different ports as it is set on an economic path dependent on sea trade.

Hence, China with its cheap arms trade have become a primary partner in Bangladesh's overall plan to make the defence forces three dimensional, especially the navy. Bangladesh doesn't trust the big neighbour and certainly encourages extra regional powers, making Indian ocean a focus centre for both China and India. China has to exert its dominance in the region, while India aims at keeping its stature as the power. Conflicts over energy and communication sea lanes, as well as disputes over the power to influence politics in more fragile states like Myanmar and Nepal (a

non-Bay of Bengal littoral state), may come from the two countries' competition in enlarging their regional spheres of power in each other's backyards. The Bay of Bengal has so far seen the most problematic result of Sino-Indian competition in Myanmar, a neighbour to the economically weakest parts of both the country, which are - northeastern part of India and the Chinese province of Yunnan.

Bangladesh, in respect to this contest, lies at the centre of this as a Indian ocean littoral state (Khurana 2008). The current Chinese government is acutely aware of how crucial unrestricted maritime trade is to its continuing economic progress, which supports domestic stability. Due to this, China must send out ships to defend both its SLOCs and commerce ships. Additionally, it must make sure that commerce flows via crucial choke points, such as the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca, are not potentially disrupted. China, which formerly had the view of a continental state, has changed its strategic course as a result and now desires to be a marine power. China has made it clear that the PLAN's responsibilities include commerce protection, humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) missions involving Chinese nationals abroad, and noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs). Since scenarios involving these tasks are likely to include marine troops from multiple nations, the PLAN is currently working to gain experience and proficiency in these situations.

China prioritises the Indian Ocean in its quest to become a significant maritime force. For increasing its presence in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, Beijing is attempting to deepen its ties with the fleets of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. By enhancing its ties with three South Asian nations, China also hopes to boost its geopolitical influence in that region. Through its China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation, it seeks to advance its strategic objectives while also pursuing profitable business ventures (CSIC). A number of innovative submarine ideas aimed at the export market were announced by the CSIC in 2017. In particular, nations who are unwilling to purchase Western designs due to cost or political reasons may find CSIC to be well-positioned to gain future regional clients with its expanding portfolio of submarine designs that support a wide range of mission profiles (Kumar 2021).

Since 2013, the PLA Navy has been stationing vessels in the Indian Ocean under the claim of supporting operations against stealth in the Gulf of Aden. Bangladesh

received an offer from India in 2015 to install the surveillance radar system. The idea was unable to be implemented at the time because Dhaka was concerned about potential effects on its relations with China. Since then, the PLA Navy's activity in the Indian Ocean has increased (Kammerling 2018). The PLA Navy had 14 vessels and as many as seven submarines in the Indian Ocean during the 72-day standoff during the Doklam issue in western Bhutan. A Chinese PLAN Type O39A Yuan-class submarine was discovered in the Indian Ocean in 2018. In September 2019, seven PLAN warships were observed in and around the Indian Ocean by Indian Navy spy planes.

India has largely established itself as an opponent of the BRI. However, New Delhi has supported a strategy of "engagement with equilibrium" with Beijing rather than embracing a US-led anti-China narrative. This narrative may have changed after the Galwan incident, with a tendency to act like a nation hostile to China, prompting New Delhi to join alliance frameworks with other countries and programmes like the BDN. In February 2020, during President Trump's first trip to New Delhi, India and the United States explored the BDN's potential. One such chance for India is the BDN, a multi-stakeholder effort initiated by the United States, Japan, and Australia with the primary goal of advancing an economic alliance framework for the promotion of high-quality infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific.

As a result, Dhaka runs the risk of getting caught up in a competition between China and India for regional sway. By maintaining balanced relations with both, putting an emphasis on political and cultural affinities with India and economic links with China, it has so far managed to avoid falling into this trap. This balancing act is becoming increasingly difficult as Beijing and New Delhi compete for influence in the region. The growing Chinese soft power in Bangladesh has also irked India. An agreement between the two nations was reached in 2014, allowed the Chinese military to establish a Mandarin language lab in Bangladesh University of Professionals. When former Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan pledged to strengthen military ties by increasing personnel training and cooperating in equipment technologies during his trip to Dhaka in May 2016, it further demonstrated stabilization of relations. Even recently, Qin Guangrong, the governor of Yunnan province visited Dhaka and gifted a package of language lab equipment to

Bangladesh's North South University Confucius Institute. The governor insisted on their friendly relations going back to 2000 years and Confucius Institute is actively fostering educational interaction between China and Bangladesh (Roy Chaudhury 2022). In order to ease tension and reduce Bangladesh's reliance on India and China, Dhaka considers the United States as a strategic “third-way-balancer” and has proactively contacted Washington for help in international fora and economic assistance.

4.3.2: USA's presence and Indo-Pacific

The Communist Party of China's leadership declared the development of the country into a "global maritime power" as one of its national policies at the party's Eighteenth Congress, which took place in October 2012. China's maritime strategy does not specify how or on which specific oceans it will concentrate, but its interests in the Indian and Pacific oceans are hotly debated in Chinese strategic circles. The majority of China, Japan, and Korea's imports of oil and various other raw materials must transit via the Bay of Bengal, which is situated astride the sea lanes that link those nations to suppliers in the Persian Gulf and Africa. Bangladesh, one of the key players in the Indo-Pacific, depends very much on the BoB in various fields, from energy to conventional security. Thus, the BoB's future has significant security repercussions for each of them as well as for superpowers like the United States. Geopolitical considerations in the BoB are based on protecting these commerce and energy channels, which ties it to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (hereafter, FOIP) strategy supported by the USA and its allies.

Firstly, the US pursuit of "region transformation" via the merging of East Asia and the Western Pacific and South Asia and the Indian Ocean into the region is intended to create a regional power balance that benefits the United States. Many scholars who take the offensive realist approach assert that a fast developing China, like any other emerging power, will strive for hegemony in its region (Mearsheimer 2014). The United States is essentially weakening China's authority by extending the boundaries of its home territory from East Asia to the Indo-Pacific, as China now has a much bigger area to govern. India may pursue hegemony in South Asia and the nearby

Indian Ocean if the actual realism logic that is relevant to all emerging countries is applied to it. However, the US wants to back India's "leadership position in Indian Ocean security and throughout the wider [Indo-Pacific] region" (NSS 2017, 50).

The entrenchment of Chinese military forces in the region will prevent a emerging India from becoming the hegemonic force there, hence the United States is eager to help with the emergence of Indian dominance there. This means, the establishment of the Indo-Pacific helps the USA to counterbalance China and provide room for India when thwarting their shared aspirations for hegemony. It will be possible for the United States to maintain its position as the preeminent power in an Indo-Pacific region that is becoming more multipolar if the Sino-Indian competition draws the bigger nation's focus and take resources away from the Sino-American conflict (Pardesi 2020).

Under the BRI, China has recently increased its footprint in this area in an effort to circumvent the "Malacca Dilemma" and establish other overland routes to critical ports that would secure China's supply through the Indian Ocean. From China's geopolitical perspective, the BoB and its neighbouring countries make up a crucial region in which China needs to have substantial access. However, this raises issues for the global power USA and its allies, particularly for India, about how to prevent a single actor from dominating the BoB, necessitating action to ensure plurality. The geostrategic influence of great powers in the region are projected to increase as China's BRI and the US FOIP keeps developing in the region (Anwar 2022).

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), a component of Xi Jinping's larger BRI agenda, is causing a significant Beijing commercial presence in the Bay in addition to its naval deployments. It aims to connect South Asia's maritime areas to China's Yunnan region via the Bangladesh China India Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC) and the China Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC). Along with large investments in oil and gas pipelines, President Xi also put forward nation-specific economic corridors like the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) that will connect the mainland of China with the nearby Indian Ocean and lessen its dependency through the Malacca Strait.

China has made significant investments in the physical infrastructure of the area through the MSR, specifically in the facilities on the Ramree, Haigyi, and Zadetkyi Kyun Islands in Myanmar, as well as the facilities at the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka and several strategic ports, such as the Chittagong port in Bangladesh and further south. Even though they are civilian, these initiatives have a huge scale and provide logistical bases from which China's navy may soon plan to operate. These initiatives give Beijing the opportunity to run basic infrastructure along the vital sea lanes of the Bay of Bengal, adding to its already considerable leverage and sway over the host nations and the rest of the area. The U.S. Navy has prioritised Malabar as a crucial instrument to counterbalance China's influence as a result of China's increased attitude in the South China Sea and its expanding presence in the Bay.

The Obama Administration had implemented a "Pivot" policy that involves rebalancing toward Asia, which is defined as “East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania, which includes Australia and New Zealand”. Obama had denied that the strategy was aimed at countering China in the region but the Trump administration had no reservations about it as China was designated a “revisionist state” and a strategic rival of the United States challenging the “American power, influence, and interests attempting to erode American security and prosperity”(He 2020). Even though the NSS in 2015 stated that USA welcomes “rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous China” by the now famous 2019 Indo-Pacific strategy report. China was given the tag of a “revisionist power,” aiming to “reorder the region to its advantage by leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce other nations”(Department of Defense 2019).

South Asia is a region where the two major powers are competing. The promoting of two different geographical terms including the same region displays the importance - “Indo-Pacific” by USA and “Asia-Pacific” by China. Another crucial element is that the US presence in the Bay of Bengal is not much when compared to the the South China Sea, where it has stronger relationships with the ASEAN countries. The fact that the majority of the Bay's nations already have close ties with either China or India further serves to compound this disadvantage. In order to keep South Asian countries from becoming unduly dependent on one of the two big powers, the current US strategy aims to play on these intricacies by collaborating very well with South Asian

countries. Additionally, the US's increased focus on the recently democratic Myanmar is undoubtedly a tactical response to the need to maintain presence with in Bay of Bengal, where China and India both have significant interests. The key to US foreign policy's desire to maintain a dominant position in South Asia is its possible strategic connection to the Middle East, Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Asia. Additionally, as China has been amongst the fastest expanding economies and the Strait of Malacca is the route taken by more than 85% of the oil going for China, the energy politics may likely take a competing turn.

The now called “string of pearls” strategy of the Chinese military for the Indian Ocean includes the building of a sizable port and listening post at Pasni, and Hambantota, in Sri Lanka, and at the Gwadar port in Pakistan on the Arabian Sea. The Chinese have invested billions in the construction of naval and commercial outposts as well as military aid in Myanmar. All of these are intended to ensure a stronger presence in the communication sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is becoming the point of convergence for US and Chinese interests, which could lead to regional conflict. Furthermore, the proximity of Bangladesh and China might make American authorities uneasy. On the other hand, because to their mutual reliance on the same maritime lanes, China and India may form an alliance that, in some situations, may be tacitly problematic to the United States.

The US-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue was founded in 2012 as an annual gathering to debate ways to resolve disputes, work together on shared interests, and assess current relations in order to elevate them to new heights. The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement(ACSA) were two defence agreements that the US signed with Bangladesh the 8th Partnership Dialogue as part of its focus on security in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to these two accords, the USA placed a high priority on Bangladesh's labour and human rights regulations. Bangladesh's key aims were to diversify US investment in Bangladesh and lift RAB sanctions (Fernandez 2022). When questioned on her opinions on the US Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), Nuland said “it involved economic, security and technology elements and we love to see Bangladesh be involved in much of it (IPS) as you (Dhaka) are interested in being involved in with”(Rahman 2022).

4.3.3: Japan's Maritime Aspirations

As the second biggest economic power in the world in 2010, China surpassed Japan. Since then, dealing with China's ascent has been Tokyo's primary foreign policy concern. Japan views China's militarization of the East and South China seas and maritime expansion as a direct threat to its right to free navigation and a breach of international standards and values. Last but not least, China's efforts to enforce its own variant of a multipolar world system and rediscover the Silk Road through, among other initiatives, the Belt and Road Initiative have enraged not only Japan as well as its longtime allies, including the United States, the European Union, and Australia. Japan therefore decided to implement counterbalancing activities as a tool for hedging against China. Enhancing Japan's defence capabilities will give it "internal counterbalancing," while cooperating with the US and its allies will give it "external counterbalancing," respectively.

Japan has safe land and sea connectivity thanks to partnerships with nations like India, Australia, and a few South East Asian and South Asian nations. Additionally, it will improve Tokyo's position in relation to China's strategic goals. For its own security, Japan wants to keep the US involved in Asia. Tokyo believes that maintaining a US-led international system based on "free trade, multilateralism, and the rule of law" is crucial for preserving its maritime independence and hence force China to alter its stance. As opposed to Western-led multilateral institutions that are supported by "treaties, international law, and the pooling of sovereignty," China's new economic and political system is constructed differently. Beijing's chosen method for creating a new order is to "build a series of bilateral partnerships" that connect it to various capitals (Leonard 2016). Whenever Tokyo's national interests coincide with those of Beijing, it does not refuse to embrace Beijing. Japan has been open to the notion that China should have a significant influence in the Six-party Talks to contain Pyongyang, not with standing its criticism of China's assertive behaviour.

The Chinese "Belt and Road Initiative" causes discomfort in Japan. Every other major country in the world, including Japan, is now closely examining the strategic situation of South Asia, notably the proximity to China (both close and far). Asia and Africa

are involved in Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy. Additionally, it conjoins the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. South Asia is important in this arrangement, even if Tokyo views ASEAN as the pivot point for her policy. It should be emphasised that the two main parts of this project, the "Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor" and the "Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth (BIG-B)," are located in India and Bangladesh, respectively (Taufiq 2022). India is the South Asian nation that is most concerned of China's involvement in the region. India is wary of Chinese BRI activities in South Asia, especially those in Pakistan's Gwadar and Sri Lanka's Hambantota, as it is still scarred by the 1962 war's defeat. This presents enormous strategic opportunities for both the US and Japan under the new geopolitical landscape. India now plays a crucial role in both the FOIP and BDN, which are overseen by the US. Certain Chinese aid initiatives have met with scepticism from Bangladesh as well. Examples of this scepticism include the Bangladeshi government's response to China's proposal for the deep sea harbour in Sonadia or the US\$3.14 billion loan for the Padma bridge rail link under construction. Instead, Bangladesh chose to use the Matarbari deep seaport, which was funded by Japan (Ishida 2018).

China was beaten by Japan in the contest, and Japan's possession of the port is a crucial indication that it is eager to compete in the region. The agreement may also represent a blow for China in South Asia, as it is attempting to forge military and commercial relations with a region that provides roughly 80% of its oil imports. Bangladesh has the fifth-highest population in Asia, at roughly 166 million. Bangladesh, one of India's closest neighbours, has a very prominent role to play in thwarting OBOR and preventing China from meddling too much in the Indian Ocean. As a result, Bangladesh is currently benefiting from help and FDIs from China, Japan, and India. The advancement of China and Bangladesh's infrastructure cooperation has not been halted by losing the bid war to construct Matarbari. Water conservation facilities are being developed under OBOR, along with railways, electricity facilities, communication infrastructure, and energy facilities (Shen 2018). Further, South Asian countries including Bangladesh feel uneasy with the current Western-led economic order, whereas Japan, an advanced nation, has so far found it to be comfortable. Japan's precautionary approach to China's military modernization while maintaining economic ties is not reflected by Bangladesh.

4.3.4: *Emerging QUAD*

After the effective collaboration between Australia, India, Japan, and the US in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and their humanitarian work in Indonesia, Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan came up with the much-discussed idea of the QUAD or Security Diamond. Due to China's hostility, India's reluctance, Australia's reservations, and eventual withdrawal from it in 2008, the grouping was short-lived. Abe persisted, and in 2012 he put up the idea of "Asia's democratic diamond," a union of four democracies, namely Japan, Australia, India, and the United States, to safeguard maritime commons, including freedom of maritime movement and navigation in both the East and South China Seas. Theoretically, it has established some sort of political and geographic arc to encircle China. The QUAD has now assumed physical form, although it falls short of a multilateral alliance a la the Cold War mostly due to the participation of the majority of the nations with close economic links to China. Theoretically, it has established some sort of political and geographic arc to encircle China. The QUAD has now assumed physical form, although it falls short of a multilateral alliance a la the Cold War mostly due to the participation of the majority of the nations with close economic links to China.

China's concern over Bangladesh joining QUAD was very evident when its Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Ji-ming said "Bangladesh's decision to join the anti-China alliance will harm bilateral relations" in May 2021. He added, "I know the QUAD was formed deliberating over China. Japan has already made it very clear that it is taking part in this US-led alliance because of China, and that is why China does not want to see Bangladesh in such an alliance". This statement was came after the Chinese Defense Minister Wei Feng's visit to Dhaka in April 2021 where he signaled at the need for both the countries to work together so that no external country becomes a hegemonic power in the region (Haider 2021).

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen responded to the Chinese envoy's contentious remarks by saying that Dhaka pursues foreign policy that is based on an approach of non alignment and realistic foreign policy and hence make decisions in accordance with those principles. "We're an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position.

Naturally, he (Chinese ambassador) represents a country. They can say what they want. Maybe they don't want it (Bangladesh joining the Quad),” Mr Momen retorted back while also stating that Bangladesh hasn't been approached to join QUAD (Ndtv 2021).

Bangladesh is making efforts to upgrade its navy, even going so far as to introduce a few submarines it purchased from China. Recently, it has been acquiring these weapons from western suppliers as well. It is making an effort to take on three dimensions. Despite this, China continues to be its principal weaponry supplier. Bangladesh simply cannot pick a side by becoming a member of a formal military alliance like QUAD. China is wary of Bangladesh joining the QUAD, although the QUAD officials have not yet extended an invitation.

4.3.5: Myanmar and Bangladesh's internal security

In Bangladesh's border regions, the militant nature of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization and the growing involvement of jobless Rohingyas in various criminal enterprises, including murder, racketeering, bootlegging, prostitution, and drug dealing, are well known (Alam 2012). Their operations were previously limited to Myanmar, but given domestic pressures and the few choices for asylum in Bangladesh, it seems possible that they will now extend their reach beyond the disputed Rakhine region and even into Bangladesh. The Myanmar military's use of chemical and biological weapons against "ethnic" insurgents has been alleged on numerous occasions, despite Myanmar's repeated denials. This is concerning. There is no assurance that such small or unusual weaponry won't be utilised to support or suppress insurgency along the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar. According to reports, drug abuse has dramatically expanded in the border regions between Myanmar and Bangladesh as a result of the Rohingya community's involvement in drug trafficking (Ahmed 2010).

The Rohingyas' appalling living conditions, particularly in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, make them potential recruits for Islamic fundamentalists and many other criminal organisations. This might then lead to transnational and non-traditional security threats including terrorism, human and drug trafficking,

unlawful logging, environmental destruction, maritime piracy, and other forms of deadly violence and crime. Another danger is escalating militancy (Parnini 2013). Under the pretence of combating an internal insurgency, Myanmar stationed more than 2,500 more troops close to the border in 2020. Many months after Rohingya exodus in 2018, Bangladesh had to call the Myanmar envoy to get the army moved back from the border. When Myanmar's troops were seen moving in an unusual way along the border in 2009, Bangladesh likewise sent more army personnel to the area. Border guards from the two nations engaged in gunfire in May 2014 as a result of the death of an on-duty Bangladeshi guard (Tayeb 2022).

As Myanmar's military terrorised and persecuted its own people, the UN had urged nations to stop selling Myanmar guns. Bangladesh is pleading with foreign organisations to send the Rohingya back to their country, but the refugees have declined, claiming security concerns, and they are still residing in filthy, claustrophobic camps. In order to stop a further flood of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, the government had sealed Bangladesh's border with Myanmar according to Bangladesh's foreign minister, A K Abdul Momen. "We won't take any more Rohingya people," he had added (Mahmud 2022). Even though China, the Philippines, and Burundi voted against the UN Human Rights Council move to create the panel that will also investigate potential acts of genocide in the western state of Rakhine in Myanmar on September 27, 2018, China has become the singular major international player in the Rohingya issue for Bangladesh. The security threat that Rohingya crisis have created for Bangladesh have added onto its dependence on China in repatriation of the refugees back to Myanmar. China's stance on the Rohingya problem is couched in the diplomatic politeness and ambivalence. First of all, it holds that Bangladesh and Myanmar should work together to resolve the Rohingya crisis. Second, it claims the Rohingya are citizens of Myanmar and should be taken there from Bangladesh. Thirdly, it opposes approaches that have a tendency to complicate and internationalise the issue.

In order to handle the issue as a regional leader, China has created three strategies to end the Rohingya problem since November 2017 that are each described as "result of discussions and based on consensus between the involved parties." Each of them has focused on only treating the conflict's symptoms, speaking of the necessity to bring

peace to the area and repatriate the Rohingya while remaining mute on the need to face the conflict's core causes and punish the offenders. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met informally with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali and Myanmar's Minister for the Office of the State Counselor U Kyaw Tint Swe in June 2018. During the meeting, the three parties reached a "four-point consensus," which were : i) immediately improve the conditions in Rakhine State by putting an end to violence, repatriating refugees, and developing the region; (ii) at this point, repatriating refugees to Myanmar from Bangladesh is the top priority; (iii) based on the preferences of the two countries, China is willing to assist in resettling them, including immediate assistance and reconstruction; and (iv) increase cooperation in developing the border (FMPRC 2021).

In collaboration, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China developed a tripartite plan for the return of Rohingyas during the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2019. The three countries decided to form a collaborative working group to handle the Rohingya's repatriation. Repatriation has not yet been possible because of the security crisis in Rakhine State. The trilateral summit was initiated by China in 2018, and a virtual meeting took place on January 20, 2021. At the end of the agreements, the repatriation was supposed to start by June 2021, but it hasn't. Myanmar and Bangladesh expressed their appreciation for China's helpful efforts to promote repatriation and their willingness to increase bilateral and multilateral avenues for communication and consultation. In October 2022, Bangladeshi Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made China's role clear as he stated, "They (China) are facilitators, not decision-makers. We are requesting them again and again (Daily Sun 2022)." One such initiative to lessen dependence on Malacca is the Chinese-built oil pipeline through Kyaukpyu to Kunming. China is also looking to sign port access agreements with Bay littoral nations. A kilo class submarine used by the Indian Navy and provided to Myanmar by India in 2019 was commissioned in December of that same year. The former INS Sindhuvir would be utilised by the Myanmar Navy, which intends to build its very own submarine fleet with in upcoming years to fend off any threats from a forceful Bangladesh. The Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) at Vizag modernised the Kilo class submarine, which was acquired from Russia in the 1980s and delivered in December 2019.

4.4: Conclusion

China's rise as a major power and Xi Jinping's embrace of the "Chinese Dream" have brought the South Asian regional security complex into interaction with East Asian regional security complex (Buzan 2011). Further, China sees western, and mainly American influence in the region as a challenge to its security and maritime aspirations, hence its South Asian policy have been modeled on strategic considerations. The insistence of Xi Jinping on "national revival" conveys that China is aiming for a prominent position in the international community. China's desire to become a global power and the "national revival" are intertwined. The rebirth of the nation will be lacking if China does not rise to global prominence. Hence, dominance in Indian Ocean is a necessity. Bangladesh with its central location in the region and its need for an extra regional power to counter balance have given China an amicable strategic partner.

China's defence diplomacy with Bangladesh depends on many factors as listed in this chapter. While other challenges to China's aspirations in South Asia are from extra regional powers, India is a domestic one. Dhaka has been maintaining a balancing act with both the major powers, hence allowing USA to gain more traction in the region as a strategic "third-way-balancer." The USA have established Indo-Pacific by joining East Asia, Western Pacific, Indian Ocean to create a regional order favourable to it and backs India to dent the aspirations of both the Asian powers in the region. The conflict between the India and China drives away resources from Sino-US conflict, as China has no choice but to respond to USA's presence in the Indian Ocean due to Malacca Dilemma. China, having made significant investment in infrastructure through MSR does possess sway over host nations forcing the US to prioritise the Malabar military exercises and rejuvenation of QUAD as instruments to counter balance. USA is supported by Japan in this regards as it believes in a US based international system. Japan looks at China's militarization in the maritime arena as a direct threat to its right to free navigation and a breach of international standards and values, so it has gone with a plan of enhancing its own defence capabilities and cooperating with US for "external counterbalancing," respectively. Japan also made significant inroads into South Asia when Bangladesh chose to go with Matabari Seaport after abandoning Sonadia Deep Seaport with China. Another factor that deeply influence how China's diplomacy with Bangladesh is Myanmar. China has

been the major international player with considerable say in repatriation process of Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar. Overall, China has been able to go head to head with all powers in the region and its defence diplomacy has been a major reason for it. China continues to be its principal weaponry supplier. Bangladesh simply cannot pick a side over it or afford to become a member of a formal military alliance like QUAD.

Chapter V

Conclusion

In the system of states and even before that, defence diplomacy has been an essential component of forging international relations. It has been a successful tactic for fostering bilateral and regional relations. Keeping defence as the centre of diplomatic relations between two countries helps in fostering mutual trust and aiding in conflict prevention; increasing the transparency of defence links; and assisting confidence-building initiatives. It has helped Bangladesh to exploit its strategic location and get benefits from both the major powers. Bangladesh takes direction from the Article 25 of its Constitution that makes the state to base its international relations on the principles promoted in the United Nations Charter. Consequently, it has been a front runner in taking part in the UN peacekeeping missions.

Along with this, the reality of being a small state has forced it into active participation in UN Peacekeeping to gain political and diplomatic clout abroad. Hence, in order to sustain its image of an important contributor, Bangladesh consistently observes the ability of its peacekeepers and does necessary work to address problems faced as the UN peacekeeping missions keeps evolving further. Despite joining UN late as a troop contributor, over the past three decades Bangladesh has established itself as a reliable partner. Overall, it has initiated itself into the field of defence diplomacy on a elementary scale but the one dimensional dependence on UN peacekeeping is quite visible in its defence outreach. The current effort to transform Bangladesh Navy into a "builder's navy" by constructing increasingly sophisticated vessels, corvettes, and frigates locally appears to be a step to overcome this limitation.

This has led the country to take a pragmatic approach towards dealing with the increasing Chinese influence and look over China's negative role in the liberation war. The smaller South Asian state recognised the need of an extra regional power to counterbalance India, and China efficiently served the purpose. Hence, security became the aspect of relations that proved to be most important. Beyond the historical dependence of Bangladesh on China for defence activities, what proved to be the major factor in intensification of the security relations was maritime security. The country

that considers maritime trade and resource rich EEZ as the future of its economy finds it necessary to modernize the navy. China's and Bangladesh's interests are now aligned in the Indian Ocean region as the former is also energy hungry due to its development. Chinese engagement in “Forces Goal 2030” and ever increasing arms trade are examples of the same. Bangladesh believes that the presence of foreign naval powers will only restrain other regional ambitions, particularly India, which it views as a danger. This narrative in Bangladesh has highly benefited China’s maritime aspirations in the region. China’s progress as a major power and Xi Jinping’s embrace of the “Chinese Dream” have brought the south Asian regional security complex into interaction with East Asian regional security complex.

Further, China sees western, and mainly American influence in the region as a challenge to its security and maritime aspirations, hence its South Asian policy have been modeled on strategic considerations. The insistence of Xi Jinping on "national revival" conveys that China is aiming for a prominent position in the international community. China's desire to become a global power and the narrative of "national revival" are intertwined. The rebirth of the nation will not be delivered completely if China does not rise to global prominence and relocates itself as the ‘middle kingdom’. Hence, dominance in Indian Ocean is a necessity. Bangladesh with its central location in the region and its need for an extra regional power to counter balance its heavy neighbor have given China an amicable strategic partner. After Pakistan, Bangladesh is the recipient of the most expensive arms from China. The arrangement of financial aid, the flexibility of its approach to transfer of technology and industrial collaboration, the flexibility of its repayment mechanisms (including counter-trade), and the strategic links it can offer to its customers, particularly ones who are not allied of the United States makes Chinese arms affordable and attractive to many developing and under developed countries. China's policy on arms sales, is to ignore the recipient nation's political or human rights condition. This is a policy that runs counter to the Western states' policy on weaponry transfers.

In between 2010 and 2020, China's arms exports amounted for 73.56% of the value of all the weapons to Bangladesh. Like several other small nations, Bangladesh is attempting to get global suppliers to collaborate with local industry in order to help create capabilities to meet its defence export goals. The political establishment in

Bangladesh, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, wants domestic defence firms to improve their capabilities, specifically BMTF and BOF. She also requests that the two businesses investigate the potential for exporting defence technology to other nations in the region. Due to the inadequate capacity to acquire new knowledge, growth has been modest thus far, but its agreement with China under the 2002 defence pact, which also mentions “enhancing co-operation in defence training, maintenance, and in some areas of production” has been of some help.

As of now, the only hiccup in the arms sale between China and Bangladesh seems to be the rise in faulty arms. Bangladesh recently complained about the lack of post-sales service and maintenance from Original Equipment Manufacturer, Hongdu Aviation. The seven K-8W aircrafts bought in 2020 as addition to a batch of nine in 2014 faced malfunctions and the vague response from Chinese National Aero Technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC) didn't impress the Bangladesh Air Force (NEN News 2021). The newly acquired two Chinese 053H3 Frigates that arrived at Mongla Port Bangladesh was reported having faulty gun system and navigation radar. Even though Bangladesh is not happy to pay more for the repairs, it seems that both the countries are making new inroads into their security relations through arm sales. Bangladesh have given space to a Chinese firm Vanguard to build a maintenance facility for FM-90 missile systems.

Overall, Bangladesh-China security relations seems to have solidified in the last decade. And, due to the South Asian regional security complex, the strategic partnership is likely to flourish as the interests are too high for any of the party to move away. There is much to be seen about the extend to which both these countries trust each other. While other challenges to China's aspirations in South Asia are from extra regional powers, India is a domestic one. The access of maritime borders to Chinese experts in submarines seems to be pointing at high levels of trust Bangladeshi side. Future holds the answer to whether Bangladesh would let Chinese submarines near and also whether, in the event of a potential Sino-Indian war, China anticipates that Bangladeshi military refuse Indian military any passage through its territory to manoeuvre troops and logistics supply to India's landlocked Northeast region. Dhaka has been maintaining a balancing act with both the major powers, hence allowing USA to gain more traction in the region as a strategic "third-way-balancer." The USA

have established Indo-Pacific by joining East Asia, Western Pacific, Indian Ocean to create a regional order favourable to it and backs India to dent the aspirations of both the Asian powers in the region. The conflict between the India and China drives away resources from Sino-US conflict, as China has no choice but to respond to USA's presence in the Indian Ocean due to Malacca Dilemma.

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