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FAMILIES AND POLITICAL RECRUITMENT IN BANGLADESH: A STUDY OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

Md BAKTHEAR UDDIN*

Abstract

Political dynasties play an important role in many modern states including some present-day democracies. There has been a remarkable increase in the role of families in political parties and politics in recent times. Members of political dynasties and powerful political families commonly hold important party and government offices in Bangladeshi politics. Political dynasties are not only at work at the national level but also at the regional or local level. Like other South Asian countries, Bangladesh also has its share of family-based political recruitment. This paper assesses the extent and reasons for the significance of selective powerful families in Bangladesh. Political dynasties enable dynastic politicians to preserve and extend their power in Bangladeshi politics. An attempt has been made here to describe recruits of local and national level leaders of three major parties in Bangladesh from the members of the families of the powerful local and national leaders of those parties. This paper claims that cultural tradition, the importance of blood connections or kinships, and lack of institutionalisation give rise to dynasticism in Bangladesh politics.

Keywords: Bangladesh, political parties, Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party, political families

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Bangladesh has a long history of the struggle for democracy. It earned her independence through a long democratic movement. Bangladesh has about 100 political parties of which 40 are officially registered with the Election Commission. Most of the political parties are dynastic. People of Bangladesh seem to value their dynastic leaders. They value politicians who can ensure a continuous flow of material patronage from above, maintain continuity with their past ideologically and biologically, and satisfy their psychological need to be led by their beloved leaders and their heirs. They prefer leaders with personal qualities like education, wealth, and generosity, and when asked they explain that ordinary people do not make good political leaders.¹ Dynasty is an efficient branding, mobilisation, and vote-winning method in a country where party programmes are vague and actual policies are moving into the populist middle. Political parties in Bangladesh are neither totally autocratic nor fully democratic. But like most other South Asian countries, they incorporate elements of autocracy, oligarchy (dynasty), and democracy.²

Like other South Asian countries, Bangladesh also has its share of dynastic politics. Like them, political parties in Bangladesh also recruit leaders and officials from among the members of selective powerful families. As a result, state affairs turn into the affairs of a few families belonging to some important parties that control the political landscape and politics, public policy, and state affairs. While one can argue that as a result of this 'dynastic politics' or 'dominance of families' growth of democracy gets thwarted, it can, however, be said that family connection compensates for the lack of institutionalisation and weakness of the party. 'Inheritance of blood' at least saves the parties from getting split. As opposed to 'inheritance of ideology', 'inheritance of blood' has proven to be more efficient, valuable, and powerful as a source of authority and legitimacy. Dynasticism "works in modern political systems because it appeals to notions of inherited

charisma that help legitimize leadership succession and minimize organizational division."³

Left, right, centrist, religious, all types of parties follow more or less the same pattern of recruitment. This recruitment pattern is based on the following assumptions:

1. Ascriptive criterion rather than achievement criterion is followed;
2. Family connections prove to be a more powerful source of legitimacy than anything else;
3. Leaders with family ties can satisfy the psychological needs of the party activists and supporters;
4. They seem to be more efficient and capable than non-family member leaders;
5. Supporters and activists are expected to be better served by the family members of the original leader;
6. Over time, leaders of 'inheritance of blood' establish full control over the party. They then create a place for themselves.

This study is designed to discuss the issue of leadership recruitment by Bangladeshi political parties. The primary focus of this paper is to understand the extent and reason for the significance of family in leadership recruitment by the Bangladeshi parties. It describes political recruitment strongly based on familial connections in Bangladesh. Secondary sources like newspaper, magazines, journal articles, TV reports, as well as primary sources like personal interviews, telephone calls or messages of various kinds with the leaders. It describes the recruitment pattern of three major parties in Bangladesh: the Awami League (AL), the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and the Jatiya Party (JP) to show the nature and reasons for recruitment of leaders from the families of the senior leaders of the parties.

Awami League

Bangladesh Awami League (AL) is the largest political party in Bangladesh. It was founded in 1949 in opposition to the ruling Muslim League in Pakistan with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani as its President and Shamsul Huq as the General Secretary. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Sheikh Mujib) was one of the founding Assistant General Secretaries of the party. Three years later, he became the General Secretary and remained so until 1966 when Mujib took charge of the AL as its president. Mujib began consolidating his hold on the party during the 1950s and was instrumental in strengthening the Awami League throughout East Pakistan. In 1957, when he was given the option to stay either with the parliamentary party or the party organisation, he chose to remain with the organisation. Mujib metamorphosed from an organisational man to a charismatic leader in the 1960s. After HS Suhrawardy died in 1963, the Awami League suffered a leadership vacuum. Mujib felt the need to revitalise the party and decided to step forward as the leader. Soon after assuming the party presidency, he launched the Six Points movement, which not only brought the Awami League into the limelight but also the programme's formula turned Sheikh Mujib into a champion of the Bengali causes.⁴ Ideologically, the AL was initially oriented to left-of-centre on the political spectrum. But since 1992, when it changed its manifesto and adopted a 'free market' economic policy, the AL has essentially become a centrist party.⁵ Bangladesh got her independence under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib who is affectionately called '*Bangabandhu*' (Friend of Bengal) and 'father of the nation'. He was Bangladesh's first President, who wanted to establish Bangladesh as a secular, socialist, and democratic state.

Following the brutal murder of *Bangabandhu* and his close associates between August and November 1975, the AL faced a leadership crisis. From his murder on 15 August 1975 to 1981, the AL was in a deep leadership crisis and its future seemed uncertain.

Inefficient leadership lacking charisma and internal squabbling threatened its effectiveness as a major party. Considering all this, in May 1981, the Awami League leaders appealed to Sheikh Hasina to end her exile in India, return home, take charge of the party, and lead the struggle for the restoration of democracy, rehabilitate *Bangabandhu* with befitting honour and dignity. Sheikh Hasina accepted their request, returned to the country, and assumed the leadership of the AL. As Mujib's daughter, politics was in Hasina's blood. Sheikh Hasina was active in student politics. She was directly involved in making history in the birth of a new country, Bangladesh, from East Pakistan under the leadership of her father. Since 1981, she has been the President of the Awami League. She played a key role in the pro-democracy movement during 1982-90 against the military rule of General Hussain Mohammad Ershad. She considered it her duty to protect and preserve the legacy of *Bangabandhu* that successive governments had doggedly denigrated and tried to erase. Due to her leadership quality and political maturity, she was able to keep the AL united and brought it to power in 1996 after 21 years of oblivion. "The Awami League saw its victory as the return to power of the rightful rulers of Bangladesh, an end to two decades of domination by anti-liberation forces, and an opportunity to restore Sheikh Mujib's Sonar Bangla."⁶ She has brought the AL again to power in 2009 and has kept it in power since then. She became the most mature and charismatic leader of the country. Sheikh Hasina is not the only one who has entered politics from the Sheikh Mujib family. A host of members of the 2nd, 3rd, and even 4th generations of Sheikh Mujib family got involved in the AL politics and have assumed important positions.

Sheikh Hasina's son Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed Joy is the Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) adviser to his mother Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He joined politics in February 2010 as a member of Rangpur District Unit of the Awami League. Sheikh Hasina's younger sister, Sheikh Rehana Siddique, is Hasina's

informal 'adviser' and confidant and companion on state visits and functions. She has been made the adviser of Tungipara Upazila unit of AL in Gopalganj. In 2007-08, while Sheikh Hasina was imprisoned under the emergency rule of Fakhruddin Ahmed's caretaker government, Sheikh Rehana organised the AL secretly on Hasina's behalf. Radwan Mujib Siddique Bobi is the eldest among three children of *Bangabandhu's* younger daughter Sheikh Rehana and academician Professor Shafiq Ahmed Siddique. He plays important role in the Awami League's research wing, Centre for Research and Information (CRI), and is working to empower and inspire the youth through its Young Bangla platform. The brother-in-law of Sheikh Rehana retired Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique has long been Sheikh Hasina's security adviser. Former Minister, Presidium member, and an MP Engineer Khandakar Musharraf Hussein is the brother-in-law of Sheikh Hasina.⁷

Sheikh Hasina's cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (Sheikh Selim) is a member of the Presidium, member of parliament, and former minister. Many members of the next generation are also active in AL politics. Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, son of Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni (nephew of Sheikh Mujib and founding Chairman of the Awami Jubo League—the party's youth wing) has been an MP since the 9th parliament (2008). He has been elected Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation on an AL ticket. Very recently, Sheikh Fazle Shams Parosh, another son of Sheikh Moni, has been elected the president of Jubo League upon Sheikh Hasina's desire. Disgruntled army personnel killed their parents (Sheikh Moni and Arzu Moni) at their Dhanmondi residence on 15 August 1975. They, their two uncles, and a few family members survived. Another brother of the Sheikh Moni and Selim, Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Maruf (Sheikh Maruf), was the Presidium member of Awami Jubo League. Sheikh Fazle Fahim, son of Sheikh Selim, is the President of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI). Sheikh Fazle Nayeem, another son of

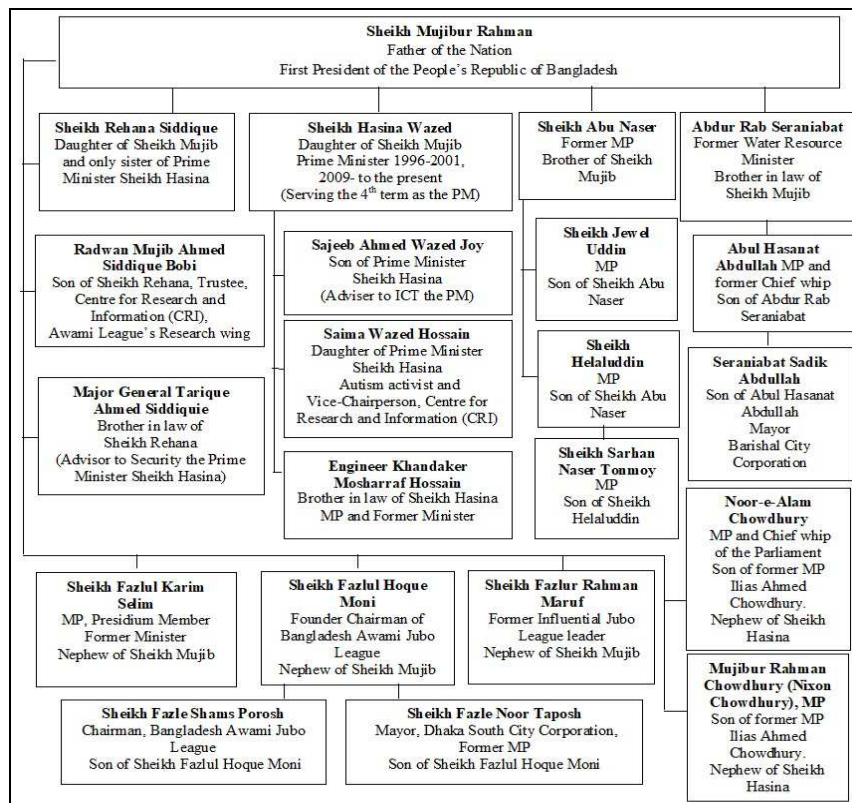
Sheikh Selim, was an influential leader of the Jubo League. Abul Hasanat Abdullah is the running MP and was the former chief whip of the parliament. He is the son of Mujib's brother-in-law Abdur Rab Serniabat who was the water resource minister under *Bangabandhu*. He was also murdered on 15 August 1975 at his Minto Road house. Shahan Ara Abdullah, the wife of Abul Hasanat Abdullah, was the vice president of Barishal District Awami League, who survived the August massacre in 1975. Serniabat Sadik Abdullah, son of Abul Hasnat Abdullah and grandson of Abdur Rab Serniabat, is the Mayor of Barisal City Corporation. Sheikh Helaluddin and Sheikh Jeweluddin are the MPs in the 11th parliament. They also play an important role both in the party and government. They are the sons of late Sheikh Abu Naser, brother of Sheikh Mujib and former MP, who was killed on 15 August 1975. Sheikh Sarhan Naser Tonmoy, son of Sheikh Helal and grandson of Sheikh Abu Naser, is an MP of the running 11th parliament.⁸

Noor e Alam Chowdhury Liton, the chief whip of the 11th parliament, and Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury (Nixon Chowdhury), an MP of the 11th parliament, are the nephews of Sheikh Hasina. Both are the sons of former MP Ilias Ahmed Chowdhury who is the nephew of Sheikh Mujib.⁹ AFM Bahauddin Nasim was a former MP. He was Assistant Personal Secretary-2 of Sheikh Hasina during 1996-2001. Now he is one of the influential Joint General Secretaries of Awami League Central Committee. He is a close relative of Sheikh Hasina. Omar Faruq Chowdhury, the brother-in-law of Sheikh Hasina, is a former president of Jubo League. All of them play important role in Awami League politics as well as the government. Zillur Rahman, a veteran AL leader and Mujib's companion, served as the AL's general secretary and minister for many years. He was also the President of Bangladesh from 2009 until his death in early 2013. He led the AL in its crisis time, especially, after the assassination of *Bangabandhu* and during 2007-08 while Sheikh Hasina was imprisoned under the Fakhruddin caretaker government. He was the uncle (by marriage) of

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Ivy Rahman, the wife of Zillur Rahman, was the president of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League—the women wing of the Awami League, until her death in the 21 August 2004 grenade attack on Awami League rally in Dhaka. Their son, Nazmul Hasan Papon, is an MP from the AL and also the powerful president of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Figure 1

Sheikh Mujib Family in Bangladesh Politics



Source: Information contained in this table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, and books.

The most prominent families in the AL after the Sheikh family are the families of the four national leaders. They were close associates of Mujib and played a key role during the War of Liberation in 1971 in

the absence of Sheikh Mujib who was in jail in Pakistan at that time. Those four leaders are Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, AHM Kamruzzaman and M Monsoor Ali. They were killed in jail by the killer of Sheikh Mujib on 3 November 1975. The family members of these leaders have a special place in the AL. Many of the members of these families have been placed in important positions of the party and government.

Syed Nazrul Islam was a trusted companion of Sheikh Mujib. He was the Acting President of the Mujibnagar Government during the war of liberation in 1971. Syed Ashraf Islam was the son of Syed Nazrul Islam. He was a former MP and Minister. Under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, Syed Ashraf served as the General Secretary of the AL for two terms. He played a remarkable role in the 2007-08 emergency period. Syed Ashraf's ascendancy in the party can be to a large extent attributed to his family connection. After the death of Syed Ashraf, his sister Syeda Zakia Nur Lipi got the AL nomination and was elected as an MP in a by-election.¹⁰

Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, the widow of Tajuddin Ahmed, another of the four trusted companions of Mujib and the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, was the president of Bangladesh Awami League after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and his four senior companions in 1975. She tried her level best to keep the party united and afloat at a very critical juncture of the party after *Bangabandhu's* assassination. Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, the son of Tajuddin Ahmed, was made an MP and State Minister. His sister Simmin Hossein Rimi has also been made an MP.

Similarly, Dr Mohammad Selim, the apolitical eldest son of another trusted companion of *Bangabandhu*, Captain M Monsoor Ali, was made an MP in 1996. His younger brother Mohammad Nasim was a party activist and leader. He was a former minister, Presidium member, and coordinator of the AL-led 14-party alliance. His son, Thanvir Shakil Joy, was an MP in the 9th parliament. "Thanvir Shakil Joy

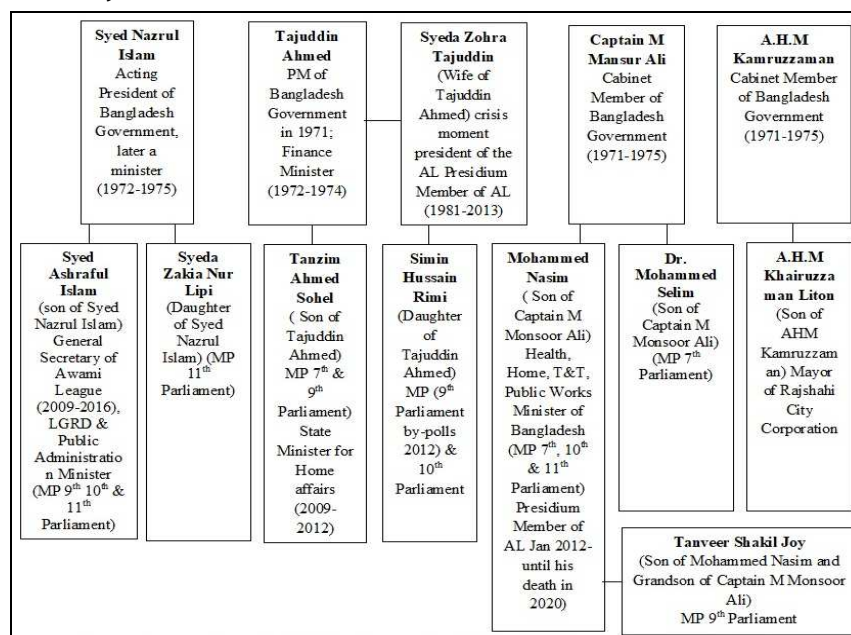
and his cousin Sheherin Selim Ripon, son of Dr Mohammad Selim, are seeking nomination in the by-election from Sirajganj-1 constituency after the seat was vacated due to the death of Mohammad Nasim.”¹¹

AHM Kamruzzaman was another of four national leaders and trusted companions of *Bangabandhu*. His son AHM Khairuzzaman Liton was made Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation.

The sons and daughters and other family members of the four “National Leaders” also have been recruited to various positions of importance in the party structure of AL and AL led government. They committed to serving the nation as their fathers did. They got the posts not only for their family connections but also for their popular appeal in their localities.

Figure 2

Dynastic Successors of Four National Leaders of the AL



Source: Rounaq Jahan, *Political Parties in Bangladesh: Challenges of Democratization*, (Dhaka: Prothoma Prokashan, (2015) 118; and information gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books.

Most of the dynastic leaders did not rise through the ranks, or work for their constituencies at the grassroots level or the society or masses to get voted into power. They were simply from the 'right' families. Political parties are flooded with second, third, even fourth-generation members of those few powerful families. Grassroots level leaders are often deprived of nomination or any other position in their respective parties. The general perception is that political position is determined not by their leadership quality, but by their family connections. Earlier, dynastic leaders used to be found at the national level, but of late many leaders are selected or nominated based on their family or blood connections at all levels from national to local.

Bangladeshi people like their dynastic leaders. They believe that dynastic leaders understand their concerns better, care about them, and address their demands spontaneously. The pattern is found at the local level as well where many of the leaders have been recruited from the important and powerful families of local leaders. Many of the family members of those leaders are emerging as replacements of their parents and grandparents. That has become almost a common form of elite recruitment at the local level.

We can start with the case of ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury of Chittagong. He was a dedicated and very influential AL leader in Chittagong. He was the president of Chittagong City unit of the Awami League and three-time elected mayor of the Chittagong City Corporation. His wife, Hasina Mohiuddin, is also the president of Chittagong City Mohila Awami League. His son Barrister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel was made an organising secretary of the party. Now he is serving as an MP and Deputy Minister of Education. Wasika Ayesha Khan is the daughter of former Presidium member Aatur Rahman Khan Kaiser. She is an MP and Finance and Planning Affairs Secretary of AL Central Committee. Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed is the son of former MP, minister, and Presidium member Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu. Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed is

an MP and Minister of Land. Khadizatul Anwar Sony is the daughter of former MP Rafiqul Anwar is the MP in the 11th parliament. Former MP Mostafizur Rahman's son, Mahfuzur Rahman Mita, is the MP in the 11th parliament from his father's constituency.

Rezwan Towfiq Ahmed, the son of the President Advocate Abdul Hamid got elected as an MP in the last two parliaments (10th and 11th). Another son of the President is Russel Ahmed Tuhin. He is also active in local politics. Veteran politician, former general secretary of AL, and former Presidium member and Minister Abdur Razzak's son Barrister Nahim Razzak has become an MP after the death of his father. Another former General Secretary of AL and ex-minister Abdul Jalil's son Nizam Jalil is the youngest MP in the 11th parliament. Mohammad Saeed Khokon, former Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation, is the son of Mohammad Hanif, former AL chief of Dhaka Metropolitan Unit Awami League and Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation. Tanveer Imam, the son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Public Administration Advisor HT Imam, is an MP in the 11th parliament.

In Sylhet, former Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad was a veteran political leader in AL. His son Mahmud us Samad Don is an MP in the 11th Parliament. Present Foreign Minister AKM Abdul Momen is the brother of AMA Muhit, who was finance minister from 2009 to early 2019. Late Badruddin Ahmed Kamran was a popular leader in Sylhet. He was the Mayor of Sylhet City Corporation. His wife, Asma Kamran is the secretary of Sylhet City Mohila Awami League. Suranjit Sen Gupta was a veteran political leader, renowned parliamentarian, former minister and Presidium member of Awami League. His wife, Joya Sen Gupta was elected MP from his husband's constituency in Sunamganj.¹²

Shamim Osman is the MP for Narayanganj-4, his brother Selim Osman is also the MP for Narayanganj-5. Nasim Osman, their elder brother was first elected MP in 1986, and he was re-elected in 1988, 2008, and 2014. These three Osman brothers (Nasim, Selim, and

Shamim) are the sons of AKM Shamsuzzoha popularly known as Zoha. Zoha was first elected MP in the 1970 election. In the first national election in 1973 after the war, Zoha was elected MP again. Zoha's father was Khan Saheb Osman Ali. Osman Ali was a political activist, businessman, social worker, and an MPA. He was elected to the Provincial Assembly in 1946 on a Muslim League ticket. In addition to these five MPs over three generations from the same family, Sarah Kabori Sarwar was also elected from this Osman family. She was a famous film actress and sister-in-law of Zoha. She was elected MP from Narayanganj-4 in 2008.¹³

Afzal Khan of Cumilla is a very influential leader of Cumilla Awami League. He has served on important party position. Nargis Afzal Khan, the wife of Afzal Khan, headed the party's women wing for a long time. His brothers Fazal Khan and Himmat Khan and his nephews Jewel Khan, Mozammel Khan, Kamrul Khan, Kamal Chowdhury, and Jamshed Chowdhury are the most influential leaders of the Awami League in Cumilla district. Among the leaders of the party's student wing is his son Arman Khan. His daughter Anjum Sultana Sheema was AL's Mayoral candidate for Cumilla City Corporation election. Now, she is an MP in the 11th parliament.¹⁴ Zahid Ahsan Russel is the son of famous trade union leader and MP Ahasanullah Master of Tongi. Meher Afroze Chumki is an MP and was the State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs. She is the daughter of former MP Moyezuddin Ahmed, who was a close associate of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujib.

The Siddiquis of Tagnail is an influential family in their locality. There are four brothers of this family in active politics in Tangail. They include Awami League (AL) central leader, former Presidium member and minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui, his younger brother Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) president Abdul Kader Siddiqui Bir Uttam (former leader of the Awami League) and their younger brothers and Tangail district KSJL joint conveners, Murad Siddiqui and Azad Siddiqui.¹⁵

Another influential family of Tangail is the Khan family. The four Khan brothers are Awami League former lawmaker Amanur Rahman Khan (Rana), his younger brother, Shahidur Rahman Khan (Mukti), (former Tangail municipal mayor), business leader Zahidur Rahman Khan (Kakon), Saniyat Khan (Bappa) was the central vice president of Bangladesh Chhatra League. The Khans' father is an elected MP in the 11th parliament.¹⁶

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

Following the assassination of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujib and turmoils in politics and within the military, General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) emerged as the military strongman. He assumed power upon the tragic events of 7 November 1975. After assuming power, following a familiar pattern, Zia attempted to civilianise his military rule. In the process of civilianising his military rule, he took several measures like holding elections and party formation. He contested the presidential election as the nominee of the Jatiyatabadi Front (Nationalist Front), an electoral alliance of both leftist and rightist anti-AL anti-Indian forces.¹⁷ The victory in the presidential election in 1978 set the stage for the parliamentary election in 1979.

His experiment with party formation eventually led to the formation of the BNP. Zia dissolved the Jatiyatabadi Front, formed Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in September 1978 using state machinery and patronage to a large extent as a vehicle to civilianise his rule. The BNP comprised JAGODAL, and factions of various components of the JF.¹⁸ It is a nationalist, centre-right, anti-AL, and anti-Indian political party. This party promotes a free-market economy and is opposed to communism and socialism. Zia took some constitutional measures such as, "replacement of 'secularism', a fundamental state principle of the constitution, by 'absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah', redefining 'socialism', as 'economic and social justice'; replacement of 'Bengali' nationalism and identity with

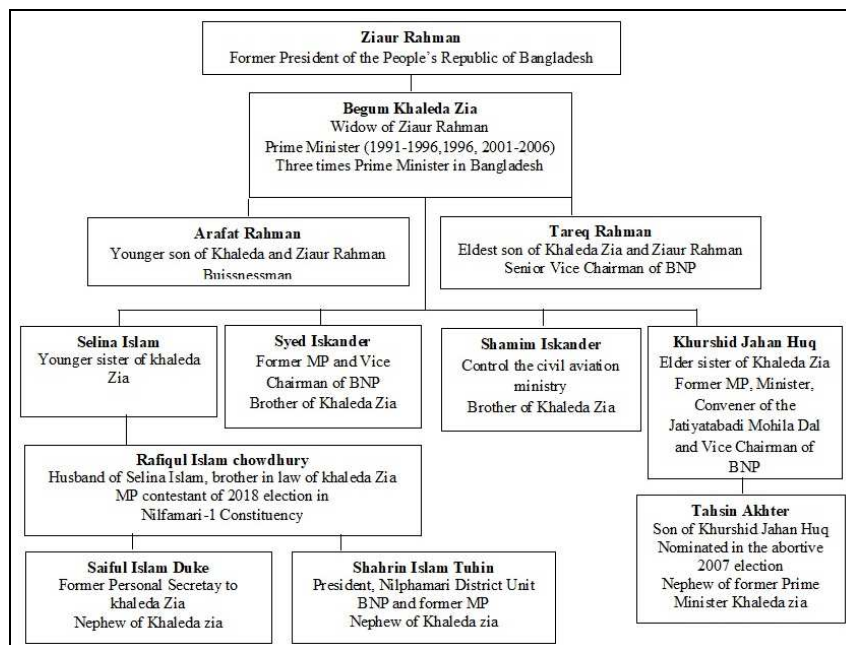
'Bangladeshi' to emphasise territorial rather than ethnic identity."¹⁹ He used religion as a legitimisation tool for his military rule.

Zia was killed in 1981 in an abortive coup by a faction of the military. The BNP was on the brink of disintegration after its leader's death. But, it survived then and is still in the game due largely to the selection of Zia's widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, as its leader in 1983-84. The party leaders asked Khaleda Zia to assume the party leadership. Khaleda assumed leadership of the BNP in 1983-84. A housewife with no political background, she led the party during the pro-democracy movement against Ershad's military rule throughout the 1980s and emerged with the image of an uncompromising leader. Zia married Khaleda Zia in 1960 when she was just 15 years old. She was admittedly content to stay in the background and raise their two sons and displayed little enthusiasm for politics until her husband's death.²⁰

"When my husband was killed, I did not get involved. I did not want to," she told Time. "But party leaders started consulting me and I had to join due to public pressure."²¹ BNP won the general election in 1991 under Khaleda Zia's leadership. She became the first female Prime Minister of the country. In 2001, she became the PM again. To-date, Khaleda Zia remains the Chairperson of the BNP.

Begum Khaleda Zia was chosen unanimously as the leader of the BNP in the early 1980s. The party had other important leaders, including those who had held the office of prime minister under Zia. The BNP secretary general, Baddurudouza Chowdhury was also a leader of substance. But there was not a squeak from any of the senior leaders or the party ranks. Another South Asian country and the party had accepted dynastic succession as something quite natural and normal.²² Tareq Rahman, the eldest son of Khaleda Zia, has been waiting in the wings to formally take over the leadership of the BNP. Tareq Rahman, reportedly, was the mastermind behind the BNP's successful election campaign and was the key decisionmaker after the 2001 elections, though he held no formal position. On 22 June 2002,

he stepped forward and became the Joint Secretary-General and then Senior Joint Secretary-General. Later, he was nominated as the Senior Vice Chairman (second only to his mother, the chairperson of the party). He had the final say about each and every major decision taken by the BNP-led 4-party alliance government during 2001-06. He made the office of the chairperson in the Hawa Bhaban parallel to the Prime Minister's office in the Gonobhaban. He reportedly used government power to control party and government. Rumours were rife that this was a prelude to consolidating dynastic succession that if BNP had won the next election, Tareq Rahman would have been the Prime Minister and Khaleda the president.²³ Tareq's younger brother Arafat Rahman was a businessman. He was sentenced in court in 2011 in absentia for corruption and money laundering during his mother's premiership during 2001-06. No doubt, he peddled influence during his mother's tenure. He died in exile in 2015. Khaleda's brother Major (Retd) Syed Iskander was a Vice-Chairman of BNP and former MP. Khaleda Zia created a post of Special Secretary-General for Iskander in the BNP. Shamim Iskander, another brother of Khaleda Zia, controlled all business of Bangladesh Biman. Her sister Khurshid Jahan Hoque was a former MP and Minister. She was also the Convener of the Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal (the women wing of the BNP) and Central Vice Chairman of BNP. Upon Khurshid Jahan Huq's death, her son Tahsin Akhter became the leader in his ancestral home district of Dinajpur. He was nominated in the abortive 2007 election. Saiful Islam Duke, former personal secretary (PS) to Khaleda Zia and Shahrin Islam Tuhin, a former MP and President of Nilphamari District BNP were the two nephews of Khaleda Zia. Their father, husband of Khaleda's younger sister Selina Islam, Dr Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury contested in the 11th (2018) national elections as the BNP candidate from Jatiya Oikkya Front (Front of National Unity) Nilphamari-1 (Domar-Dimla) constituency.²⁴

Figure 3**Zia-Khaleda family in Bangladesh Politics**

Source: Information contained in this table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books.

Members of the families of other prominent BNP leaders are also being recruited in high positions of the party, not because of their special contribution to the party or their special quality but mostly by virtue of being the members of the prominent families. Such family members of Zia and Khaleda Zia were also included in the Committee announced on 6 August 2016. While the discussion above catalogued the names and particulars of members of the Zia-Khaleda family, below we provide the particulars of the BNP leaders who belong to powerful BNP leaders.

Shama Obaid, the organising secretary of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is the daughter of former Secretary-General and minister KM Obaidur Rahman. She contested the Faridpur-2 parliamentary election 2008 as a BNP candidate. Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain's son Khandaker Maruf

Hossain, is a Supreme Court lawyer and member of the Central Executive Committee of the BNP. Hanged war criminal and member of the Standing Committee Salauddin Quader Chowdhury's son Hummam Quader Chowdhury is also a member of the Central Executive Committee of the BNP. Salauddin Quader's brother Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury has long been the Vice-Chairman of the party. It should be mentioned that the Chowdhurys come from the powerful Fazlul Quader Chowdhury family in Chittagong. FQ Chowdhury was a hardnosed Muslim League leader and died in 1973 while he was in jail on the charge of collaborating with the Pakistan occupation army during the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971. Another standing committee member Jamiruddin Sircar's son lawyer Nawshad Jamir is the international affairs secretary of the BNP. Khaleda Zia has made standing committee member Mirza Abbas's wife Afroza Abbas, the party's assistant women's affairs secretary. Vice-Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo's son Tabith Awal has also been included in the Central Executive Committee as a member. Tabith contested the Dhaka North mayoral election two times as BNP's nominee. Engineer Ishraq Hossain, son of Sadek Hossain Khoka, former Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation and Vice Chairman of the BNP, contested the Dhaka South City Corporation as the BNP's mayoral candidate. Aninda Islam Amit has been made assistant organising secretary who is the son of late Tariqul Islam, former minister and a member of the standing committee of the BNP. Standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy's daughter Aparna Rani Roy has been given the post of the assistant secretary for manpower development affairs. Nitai Roy Chowdhury is the vice-chairman of the BNP. His daughter-in-law, Nipun Roy, has become the central executive committee member. Nasima Akhter Kalpana, the widow of the party's leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, who died in jail, has been given a post. Salahuddin Ahmed, a member of the standing committee, has his wife, former MP Hasina Ahmed, in the executive committee. Former organising

secretary M Ilias Ali's wife, Tahsina Rusdir Luna, is among the 73 members of Khaleda's advisory council. Shahida Rafique, the wife of standing committee member late Rafiqul Islam Miah, has also become a member of the advisory council. Former minister Harunar Rashid Khan along with his daughter Afroza Khan Rita is also in the advisory council of the BNP. She served as the President of Manikgonj District BNP. Nasir Uddin Asim is on the advisory council. He is the son-in-law of former state minister Abdul Mannan. Former whip late Jahed Ali Chowdhury's son Fahim Chowdhury is a member of the executive committee now. Late Secretary-General Khandaker Delwar Hossain's son Abdul Hamid Dablu is also a member of the executive committee. Businessman Faisal Alim, son of late BNP leader, former minister, and a convict on war crimes charges Abdul Alim, who was sentenced to prison until death, is a member of the BNP's Central Committee. Moinul Islam Shanta is a member of Khaleda's advisory council who is the son of late industries minister M Shamsul Islam Khan. Rabeya Siraj, the wife of former environment minister Shajahan Siraj, is an assistant weaving affairs secretary. Anwar Hossain Bulu, brother of former state minister Alamgir Kabir is a member of the executive committee. In Sylhet, M Naser Rahman was elected to the parliament in 2001 in a by-election from a seat vacated by his father, ex-finance minister Saifur Rahman. Naser Rahman remains as a member of the Central Committee. Vice-Chairman Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin's son Mir Helal Uddin has also been made a member of the central executive committee. Lawyer Rumin Farhana, the assistant international affairs secretary of the BNP, is the daughter of Democratic League's president late Oli Ahad. Democratic League is BNP's partner in the 20-Party Alliance. Ms Farhana is an MP in the 11th parliament. Hasina Ahmed was an MP. She is the wife of Salauddin Ahmed, former MP, state minister and standing committee member of the BNP. Barrister Shakila Farzana, a Supreme Court lawyer and a leader of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi

Forum is active in politics. She is the daughter of Syed Wahidul Alam, former whip and MP.²⁵

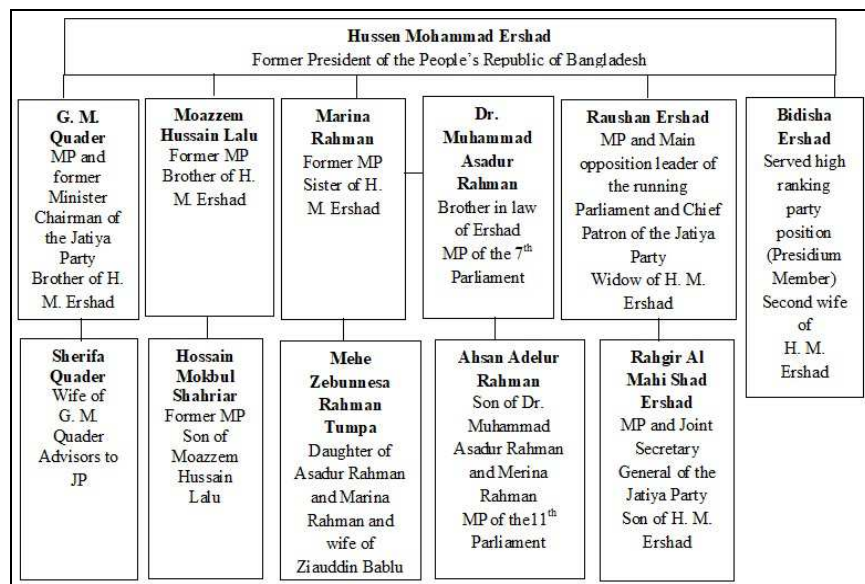
Jatiya Party: On 24 March 1982, General Hussein Mohammad Ershad (HM Ershad) seized power in a bloodless coup overthrowing the elected BNP government of President Justice Abdus Sattar. He ruled till December 1990. Like Zia before him, he also attempted to civilianise his military rule. For that purpose, he formed political parties. He first formed the Janadal (People's Party) with President Justice Ahsanuddin Chowdhury as the convener in November 1983 with a faction of the AL (Mizan), and a faction of the BNP led by Shamsul Huda Chowdhury. The Janadal was the nucleus of Ershad's ultimate party; the Jatiya Party (JP), which was a conglomerate of various smaller parties and factions, and civil-military officials. On 1 October 1985, the ban on political activities was partially lifted. Finally, in January 1986, JP was launched with Ershad as the party Chairman.²⁶ An analyst said that the JP was an 'umbrella party' that assembled under its banner some well-known turncoat politicians whose ideological orientations ranged from the socialist left through moderate to the conservative right.²⁷ Ershad took some constitutional and administrative measures for continuing his military rule. He used religion as a legitimisation tool for the continuation of his power. He made Islam the state religion through the eighth amendment to the Constitution.

Jatiya Party has been the third-largest party in Bangladesh since 1991. Ershad was the party chairman until his death. Like AL and BNP, Ershad's JP also has a dynastic character. His wife Roushan Ershad had long been the Vice-Chair of the JP and is the chief patron of the party now. She is also the main opposition leader in the 11th parliament. Even after her husband died in 2019, she is still active in politics in the JP. Another wife of Ershad, Bidisha Ershad, was also active in politics. She is appointed to a high position (Presidium member) in the party. Ershad's brother, Golam Mohammad (GM) Kader has been elected as the chairman of the party in the recent party

council. Marina Rahman, sister of Ershad was an MP in the 10th Parliament. Asadur Rahman was a Jatiya Party politician and former MP of the 7th Parliament. He was the husband of Merina Rahman and brother in law of Ershad. Their son, Ahsan Adelur Rahaman is an MP of the 11th parliament. Another brother of Ershad, Moazzem Hossain Lalu is a former MP. He is involved in Jatiya Party Politics. Hossain Mokbul Shahriar, son of Moazzem Hossain Lalu, was an MP. Recently, Ershad’s son, Rahgir Al Mahi Shad Ershad, has been elected as an MP in a by-election from Rangpur 3 constituency after the seat was vacated due to the death of his father, HM Ershad. GM Quader also made his wife Sherifa Quader, sister Merina Rahman, and niece Mehe Zebunnesa Rahman Tumpa as advisers to JP in recent party council.²⁸

Figure 4

Ershad Family in Bangladesh Politics



Source: Information contained in this Table was gathered by the author himself from various newspapers, magazines, journal articles, books, etc.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, we tried to describe recruits of local and national level leaders of three major parties in Bangladesh from the members of the families of the powerful local and national leaders of those parties. This kind of recruitment of leaders is done on the ascriptive basis and not based on achievement. Several points can be made from the above discussion in this paper.

Necessity

The first generation of dynastic leaders in South Asia had to emerge out of necessity; a necessity for their respective party. To maintain party unity and to fight against military autocracy, the male members of these parties installed the deceased leaders' family heirs to the leadership position of their respective parties.

Another necessity was psychological. The deceased leader often appeared as the iconic figure staying above all of his companions. Party activists and supporters could not find any of the companions of the deceased leader to embody his charisma, charm, and the 'qualities'. So, the psychological need of the party activists and supporters demanded someone from his family and/or blood connection to take charge. They think that the leader's kin may embody the 'qualities', charm, and charisma of the deceased leader. That is exactly what happened in the cases of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia. Both the leaders came under the same challenge from the so-called 'inheritors of ideology' of the deceased leader.

Sheikh Hasina was challenged by her General Secretary Abdur Razzak in 1983 who broke away and formed the BAKSAL in 1983-84. But he could not succeed in the face of the overwhelming power and Sheikh Hasina remained the beloved leader as the daughter of the *Bangabandhu*. Razzak, a smart and dedicated student leader and the organiser had to eventually accept the reality. He returned to the AL in 1992 accepting Sheikh Hasina's leadership.

Almost the same was the case with Khaleda Zia. Undoubtedly, she was made the leader of the BNP to keep it united as no other leader in the party could symbolise the charisma or charm and qualities of Zia. No leader could capture the grief of Khaleda Zia, the young widow of just 34 with two minor children. No leader could draw the sympathy as Khaleda could. Few leaders could listen to other colleagues as they could listen to Khaleda. Nonetheless, a series of defections by senior leaders indicate that they did not accept Khaleda as the successor of Zia. Both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia had to work hard and skilfully to establish their control over the party and state.

Psychological Needs of Leaders

The new leader's psychological and security needs brought their relatives to the key positions in party and government. These leaders recruited their family members to important positions for two primary reasons: they needed to do that for their psychological need and security. But things changed later. As politics got degenerated and became a way of earning money, third- or fourth-generation of leaders from families began to be recruited in growing numbers even at the local levels to have firm control of a few families and the supreme leader's family in running the party in collaboration with influential local families belonging to the same party. They are controlling the party and thus controlling the party and the government (when in power) patronage systems. That also explains the acrimonious relations between the parties led by few families because it is related to the control of the patronage system.

The Benefits of Power

When we categorise the types of dynastic leadership. We can see variations in terms of the causes and nature of the emergence of dynastic leaders. Even in the tug of war for the soul of the party between the so-called 'ideological inheritors' and the 'inheritors of

blood' of the principal deceased leader, the former lost to the latter everywhere as the latter proved to be more unifying, more legitimate, more identifying with the party, and closer to the party activists and loyalists. The 'inheritors of blood' encompass both 'ideology' and 'blood connection' of the deceased (in most cases assassinated with the status of a martyr) leader. In Congress in India, Morarji Desai lost to Indira Gandhi. In the case of AL in Bangladesh, Razzak's 'ideological challenge' could not make any dent in Hasina's leadership. In case of the BNP, a series of defections throughout the 1980s by the senior leaders of the BNP, the formation of a separate BNP, and/or joining hands with Ershad's military government can be seen as a challenge to Khaleda's leadership. Henry C Hart, an analyst, does acknowledge that one who "enters top leadership through inheritance alone need to demonstrate very little in the way of character, very little in the way of prior political roles." But he hastens to add, "this statement is less true if succession by inheritance is contested, as it was for Indira Gandhi in the period from 1966 to 1971. She wrested de facto control from what was intended to be a mere formal and perhaps temporary tenure by showing extraordinary will, strategic skill, and popular appeal."²⁹

Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia were recruited by leaders of the two major parties in the early 1980s. It was hoped that their leadership could heal party splits and mobilise popular support. Following the overthrow of the military rule, these dynastic leaders, with competing charismatic inheritance, have alternated in power for over three decades.³⁰ They reached their destination for their patience, commitment, and dedication. They did not come to power overnight. They struggled and worked hard to shape the country's democratic life. They systematically came to power through an election. People's choice and mandate made them popular leaders.

Dynastic succession is a "natural" outgrowth of such family-based political networks. Besides, the saddening pervasiveness of political assassination (particularly in Bangladesh, India, the

Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan) raises the issue of 'inheritance of blood' more often than would be the case with normal life expectancies.

Since the leadership of the parties in Bangladesh is dominated by a few powerful families connected to a particular party, party contest has, to a large extent, turned into a contest among the families. Family-based parties have turned the democracy into a system of electoral contest among the parties. In this process, the families that lead the party indeed control the patronage system. Party contest has turned out to be a system of control of some families of a party and the control for state and/or party patronage.

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TREND OF GROWING TRADE BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND CHINA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

Bangladesh-China relations have rapidly improved, especially in bilateral trade, which has increased significantly in recent years. Since the starting of Bangladesh-China relations, interaction has expanded through agreements, trade, investment, projects, and partnerships. However, trade is the most important sector, which has expanded remarkably in the 21st century. China is the largest trading partner of Bangladesh and Bangladesh's trade with China accounts for 26.5 per cent of the total trade of Bangladesh, which is the highest and still growing.¹ The paper is going to explore the gradual development of trade between the two countries. It will also discuss the major sectors of export and import and their contribution to increasing trade between the two countries. Throughout this research, it is also found that despite the increasing trade relations, both sides are still anxious about the rising trade deficit. So, the paper is also going to discuss the current situation of trade imbalance and ways to reduce it.

Keywords: *Bangladesh, China, trade, economic relations*

Bangladesh-China Trade in the Twenty-First Century

From the very inception of the 21st century, Bangladesh and China have been experiencing steady and continuous development in

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their bilateral trade. Although the development was noticed before the start of the twenty-first century, a rapid change is being noticed in the trade volume since the onset of the twenty-first century. While in 2002 trade between Bangladesh and China was \$1.1 billion, in 2005 it was around \$3 billion, and in 2006 it reached \$3.19 billion, and in 2008 it stood at \$4 billion.² In 2009, with its increasing trend, it reached \$4.5 billion and in 2011 it increased by 17 per cent compared to 2010 and in 2012 again it surpassed \$8 billion.³ In 2014 the two-way trade reached \$12.5 billion, with an increase of 21.98 per cent over the previous year. In recent years, export to China has increased and export growth stood at 40 per cent while import growth stood at 20 per cent. It is projected that Bangladesh-China bilateral trade would surpass \$30 billion in 2021.⁴ To encourage bilateral trade between the two countries, thirteen Bangladeshi companies and seven Chinese companies have jointly signed a trade agreement worth \$186 million in 2016 and expressed their willingness to import more Bangladeshi products. Besides that, considering the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) possibilities, Bangladesh and China have a huge prospect of improving trade relations. If Bangladesh signs the FTA, it will be able to export 10 out of 50 export products and will also be able to import a large number of necessary goods, which will boost Bangladesh-China bilateral trade. According to the benchmark discussion, around 42 countries are identified as natural trading partners of Bangladesh. All these countries give duty-free access to Bangladeshi products, while some of them offer preferential tariff facilities.⁵ China is one of the major countries that gives Bangladesh duty-free access. Bangladesh has been enjoying this facility since 2003. According to Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), as a least developed country under the duty-free quota-free program, Bangladesh has been enjoying zero facility in certain products. Both Bangladesh and China have always given importance to ensuring mutual interest. So, considering the overall situation, this FTA can bring bright prospects for Bangladesh-China economic relations.

Bangladesh-China Export Scenario

Bangladesh lags far behind China in terms of export growth. By exporting \$2.14 trillion worth of goods each year, China is the largest exporter in the world. On the other hand, every year, China imports around billions of dollars' worth of goods from different countries of the world, while in 2015 it imported only \$840 million worth of goods from Bangladesh.⁶ Although Bangladesh imports mostly from China, its exports to it are meagre. But the hopeful sign is that in the last decade Bangladesh's exports have increased by more than 13 times in contrast to China's exports, which have increased almost five times. It means that the demand for Bangladeshi products in the Chinese market is increasing.⁷ Bangladesh is hopeful that China will import more from Bangladesh in future especially readymade garments, medicine, cottage industries, ceramics, leather products, fish, etc.

Table 1
Bangladesh's Total Export to China from
2000-01 to 2015-16 (In Million US\$)

Year	Export Amount (In million US\$)
2000-01	11.67
2001-02	18.92
2002-03	19.50
2003-04	45.65
2004-05	56.07
2005-06	64.35
2006-07	92.97
2007-08	106.95
2008-09	97.62
2009-10	178.63
2010-11	319.66
2011-12	401.94
2012-13	458.12
2013-14	746.20
2014-15	791.00
2015-16	808.14
2016-17	949.41

Source: Export Promotion Bureau, Final Book 2015-'16 and Textile Today, 27 July 2017.

Export of Readymade Garments

In recent decades, RMG has been the biggest sector of the export basket. Bangladesh entered the RMG sector in 1978 with nine units with their earnings of \$0.069 million. But, due to the policy support of government and hard work of both entrepreneurs and workers, it has now become the largest export sector with unique growth.⁸ Bangladesh had the cheapest labour at \$68 as minimum wages. In terms of labour cost, it lagged behind India by \$3, Vietnam by \$10, China by \$70. Comparatively lower cost, 24 hours electricity facilities in EPZ areas, own seaport, easy and well-connected transportation by air and road, special investment facilities such as 5-year tax holidays, exemption from tax on foreign loan, 3-year multiple entry visa, and duty-free import of raw materials and machinery make RMG as an attractive trading sector because of which the numbers of RMG units are on the rise.⁹

Table 2 below shows that in FY2016-17, total exports from Bangladesh to China stood at \$949.41 million, a big jump from FY2010-11 when it was only \$319.66 million. Bangladesh's total exports grew by 17.49 per cent over the previous year.¹⁰ In FY2017 (July-March) Bangladesh's export to China fetched up to \$736.92 million from \$558.01 million, an increase of 32.06 per cent over the previous year.¹¹ Bangladesh's exports to China in the last five years grew at an annual average of 30 per cent. But the export growth is very slow and stood at 6 per cent and only 2.2 per cent in the fiscal year 2014-15 and 2015-16 respectively. It is estimated that among the total exports of Bangladesh, the contribution of exports to China is a negligible 2.4 per cent.¹² Although Bangladesh's total exports to China are not noteworthy, some sectors have the potential to increase Bangladesh's exports to China. In 2015, Bangladesh exported \$3 million worth of knit and woven garments, \$140 million worth of leather goods, and \$11 million worth of jute and jute goods. Moreover, the export of cotton also witnessed an upward trend.¹³ In FY2015-16,

five major export items covered almost 80 per cent of its total exports, of which woven and knit garments comprised 42.2 per cent. These five major export items are woven garments 24.5 per cent, leather products and travel items 17.9 per cent, paper yarn and woven fabric 12.6 per cent, knitwear 17.8 per cent, raw leather 6.5 per cent. Besides, fish and footwear sectors are also gaining importance and have the potential to constitute almost 8.5 per cent share of the total export.¹⁴

Table 2
The Number of RMG Units and Employees
in Bangladesh from 2001-2016

Year	Number of Garment Factories	Employment in Million Workers
2001-02	3,618	1.80
2002-03	3,760	2.00
2003-04	3,957	2.00
2004-05	4,107	2.00
2005-06	4,220	2.20
2006-07	4,490	2.40
2007-08	4,743	2.80
2008-09	4,925	3.50
2009-10	5,063	3.60
2010-11	5,150	3.60
2011-12	5,400	4.00
2012-13	5,876	4.00
2013-14	4,222	4.00
2014-15	4,296	4.00
2015-16	4,328	4.00
2016-17	4,482	4.00

Source: Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 2016.

According to the information provided in Table 2 above, 4,482 units are active in the RMG sector at present which is creating employment opportunities for 4 million people of whom 80 per cent are women. Knit garment and woven products are exported to 148 and 132 countries, respectively. The total export earnings have crossed \$20 billion and are projected to be doubled by the year 2020.¹⁵ Currently, Bangladesh is the second-largest RMG exporter after China.

RMG covers over 82 per cent of the total annual export and stood at \$28.09 billion in 2015-16.¹⁶

Table 3
Comparative Statement on Export of RMG and
Total Export of Bangladesh during 2001-2017

Year	Export of RMG (In Million US\$)	Total Export of Bangladesh (In Million US\$)	% of RMG's to Total Export
2001-02	4,583.75	5,986.09	76.57
2002-03	4,912.09	6,548.44	75.01
2003-04	5,686.09	7,602.99	74.79
2004-05	6,417.67	8,654.52	74.15
2005-06	7,900.80	10,526.16	75.06
2006-07	9,211.23	12,177.86	75.64
2007-08	10,699.80	14,110.80	75.83
2008-09	12,347.77	15,565.19	79.33
2009-10	12,496.72	16,204.65	77.12
2010-11	17,914.46	22,924.38	78.15
2011-12	19,089.73	24,301.90	78.55
2012-13	21,515.73	27,027.36	79.61
2013-14	24,491.88	30,186.62	81.13
2014-15	25,491.40	31,208.94	81.68
2015-16	28,094.16	34,257.18	82.01
2016-17	28,149.84	34,655.92	81.23

Source: Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 2016.

Looking at Table 3, it can be found that during 2001-17, RMG sector accounted for the maximum share of the total annual export and from FY2013-14, its share of Bangladesh's total exports crossed 80 per cent. Not only this, Bangladesh is gradually extending its share in the global clothing market. The continuous rise in the global clothing market is evidence of a huge opportunity for Bangladesh in the RMG sector.

Figure 1**Global Market Share of Bangladesh in RMG from 2011-2016**

Source: Dhaka Tribune, 2 August 2017.

Figure 1 indicates a gradual rise of Bangladesh in the global textile market share. While in 2011 it controlled 4.8 per cent market share, in 2016 it captured 6.4 per cent, which is an increase of 0.50 per cent over the previous year.¹⁷ For this huge amount of RMG export share, China is becoming an attractive destination. The duty benefits and lower wages of Bangladeshi garment workers as well as a lower production cost in comparison to China, the Chinese consumers are attracted to Bangladeshi products as they can save at least 15 per cent if products are imported from Bangladesh. While in China the average wage is \$500, in Bangladesh it is between \$70 and \$100. The rising wage rate and production costs of China are providing Bangladesh with an opportunity to capture the Chinese market.¹⁸ According to the projection of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF), by 2020 China will have to extend the production of its garments from \$300 billion to \$750 billion both for export and domestic use equally, while currently 80 per cent of its garment products are produced for local consumption only. It means that China's market size will expand much more than the present market size.¹⁹ The World Bank projected that if Bangladesh could capture 20 per cent of China's market, it would accelerate Bangladesh's yearly garment exports more than twice and would create around 5.4 million

employment opportunities. Moreover, the trade deficit would also be reduced.²⁰ The increasing demands of 1.35 billion people have pushed China to explore the alternative market and the ultimate result is Bangladesh's overall export including RMG sector to China is going to increase.

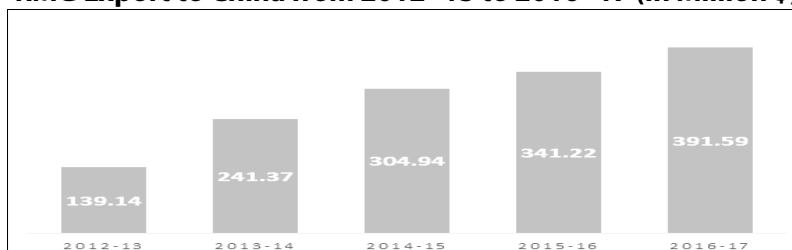
Table 4
Bangladesh's Woven and Knit Export to China
from 2014-2016 (In Million US\$)

Year	Woven	Knit	Total
2014	147.73	120.04	267.77
2015	174.69	130.80	305.48
2016	221.63	172.07	393.70

Source: Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 2016.

Although Table 4 describes the upward trend of woven and knit export of Bangladesh to China since the FY2014-15, Bangladesh has been experiencing this rising trend since even before 2014. Bangladesh's RMG exports were worth \$110.09 million from July to December in 2013 while in 2012 they were \$68.60 million. Both woven and knit exports increased significantly from \$42.36 million and \$26.24 million to \$65.95 million and \$44.15 million, respectively, from July to December 2013 and 2014. The export of woven and knit garments jumped by 55.67 per cent and 68.26 per cent than the previous year and the total RMG exports to China rose by 60.49 per cent in FY2013-14.²¹

Figure 2
RMG Export to China from 2012-'13 to 2016-'17 (In Million \$)



Source: Textile Today, 27 July 2017.

Figure 2 represents the rising RMG export to China which is stood at \$391.59 million in FY2016-17. Bangladesh has witnessed around 14.77 per cent annual rise of about \$400 million in FY2016-17. China's policy to shift its production focus from basic items to high-end products is making Bangladesh hopeful about its continuous increase of RMG export. It is expected that Bangladesh will be able to export \$1 billion worth of RMG products within a few years.²² Both China and India are growing economies with their gigantic market size and have become attractive destinations of export for Bangladesh. But Bangladesh is facing negative export growth with India due to India's domestic production and various non-tariff barriers, while in the case of China, Bangladesh is optimistic about export growth. In FY2016-17 (July-March), Bangladesh experienced a 27 per cent increase in RMG export to China, which reached \$285.07 million from \$224.26 million of FY 2016-17. At the same time, nearly 8 per cent decrease in exports to India took place. Exports to India came down to \$96.99 million from \$105.25 million of FY2016. Again, the export of leather and leather products to China grew by 27.11 per cent, standing at \$214.23 million from \$168.43 million in the previous year while with India the major export product, i.e., jute and jute goods, fell by 17.08 per cent, coming down to \$142.14 million from \$171.41 million in the previous year.²³ To continue with the upward trend of exports to China, Bangladesh government has taken initiatives to set up several economic zones and paying attention more and more to maintain it.

Bangladesh-China Import Scenario

Bangladesh is a densely populated country and depends on foreign countries for several import items. Bangladesh imports several goods from China and, in recent years, it has been the highest. Currently, Bangladesh imports 70 per cent of its goods from China. Bangladesh receives some advantages with regard to the import of goods from China. Affordable price, quality product, easy

transportation, and early and timely shipment and delivery compared to India and any other country make China the main (the largest) import source of Bangladesh. Presently, Bangladesh imports 84 per cent of its goods from its top 20 importing countries of which China tops the list.²⁴

Table 5
Import Payment under (Cash Buyer's Credit+IDB/ITFC+Loans and Grants) of Bangladesh with Top Twenty Countries

Year		2014-15	% of Total	2015-16	% of total
Sl. No.	Major Countries	In million \$		In million \$	
1.	People's Republic of China	76,160.4	26.4	9,669.1	26.3
2.	India	42,685.4	14.8	5,452.9	14.8
3.	Singapore	15,069.2	5.2	1,925.1	5.2
4.	Japan	12,869.7	4.5	1,643.6	4.5
5.	Indonesia	9,667.4	3.4	1,235.5	3.4
6.	Korea, Republic of	8,970.2	3.1	1,145.0	3.1
7.	United States of America (USA)	7,881.4	2.7	1,007.6	2.7
8.	Malaysia	7,493.2	2.6	956.7	2.6
9.	Brazil	7,457.3	2.6	952.3	2.6
10.	Hong Kong	6,380.5	2.2	805.1	2.2
11.	Germany	6,250.1	2.2	798.0	2.2
12.	Taiwan	6,039.6	2.1	771.1	2.1
13.	Canada	5,691.3	2.0	726.6	2.0
14.	Thailand	5,255.1	1.8	669.1	1.8
15.	Saudi Arabia	4,572.5	1.6	590.1	1.6
16.	Kuwait	4,434.8	1.5	556.4	1.5
17.	Australia	3,972.1	1.4	507.5	1.4
18.	Pakistan	3,716.7	1.3	474.7	1.3
19.	Uzbekistan Other Countries	4,439.3	15.4	574.9	15.5
	Total	288142.1	100.0	36809.8	100.0

Source: Annual Import Payments 2015-16, Statistics Department, Bangladesh Bank.²⁵

In FY2015-16, China supplied 26.3 per cent goods among the total imported goods, which were worth \$9,669.1 million. If we look at

the statistics provided by the Bangladesh Bank, we can see that from 2002-03 to present, China has become the top importer to Bangladesh.

Table 6

**Top Import Supplier of Bangladesh
from 2002-03 to 2015-16**

Year	Top Import supplier
2002-03	India
2003-04	India
2004-05	India
2005-06	China
2006-07	China
2007-08	India
2008-09	China
2009-10	China
2010-11	China
2011-12	China
2012-13	China
2013-14	China
2014-15	China
2015-16	China

Source: Annual Import Payments 2015-'16, Statistics Department, Bangladesh Bank.

During 2002-05 India was the top source of Bangladesh's imports. But in 2005-07, China took over India as to the top supplier. In FY2007-08, India regained its position as the largest source of imports to Bangladesh. But after that, from FY2008-09, China has constantly maintained its top supplier position.

Although this is evidence of strong bilateral trade relation between Bangladesh and China, it is also the principal reason for the huge trade imbalance between both the countries as exports from Bangladesh to China are relatively smaller in amount to meet up the huge trade gap. In the annual import payments, it is very clear that Bangladesh imports a large number of goods from China and every year it is increasing.

Table 7**Import Payments from Bangladesh to China
from 2000-01 to 2015-16 (in Million US\$)**

Year	Cash	Loans & Grants	Other Unclassified Imports	Total
2000-01	354,942	27,044	561	382,547 (\$708.94 m)
2001-02	368,764	134,425	1,327	504,516 (\$657.78 m)
2002-03	452,107	91,057	90	543,254 (\$779.50 m)
2003-04	667,628	37,471	1,054	706,153 (\$1,132.72 m)
2004-05	990,520	17,555	161	1,008,236 (\$1,643.77 m)
2005-06	1,375,123	17,443	2,023	1,394,589 (\$2,078.99 m)
2006-07	1,752,325	23,041	513	1,775,879 (\$2,572.62 m)
2007-08	2,129,214	21,619	947	2,151,780 (\$3,136.70 m)
2008-09	2,350,466	23,657	487	2,374,610 (\$3,451.47 m)
2009-10	2,622,348	17,317	2,514	2,642,179 (\$3,819.28 m)
2010-11	4,207,963	6,949	1,736	4,216,648 (\$5,912.55 m)
2011-12	5,053,815	33,028	1,827	5,088,670 (\$6,433.21 m)
2012-13	5,041,350	9,956	3,193	5,054,499 (\$6,324 m)
2013-14	5,860,850	3,187	4,017	5,868,054 (\$7,559.00 m)
2014-15	6,348,915	39,791	5,854	6,394,560 (\$ 8,232.99 m)
2015-16	7,556,306	7,584	5,215	7,569,105 (\$9,745.33 m)

Source: Annual Import Payments 2015-16, Statistics Department, Bangladesh Bank

In 2016, one-fourth of Bangladesh's total imported goods came from China.²⁶ While in FY2010-11 total imports from China were worth \$5.9 billion, in FY2015-16 they reached \$9.8 billion with an average growth of 13 per cent per annum. As a result, there is a growing trend in import share representing 20.7 per cent in 2013-14 to 24.1 per cent in 2015-16.²⁷ Though the list of import items is long, raw materials for textiles and clothing occupy a prominent position. Bangladesh mostly imports fabrics, cotton, yarn, staple fibres and accessories for its readymade garments industry. Besides this, Bangladesh imports electric machinery, equipment, fertilizer, plastic, iron and steel, chemicals, food items, etc.²⁸

Table 8

**Commodity-Wise Import Payments of China
(under Cash+Buyer's Credit +IDB/ITFC+Loans and Grants):
From 2014-15 to 2015-16 (Taka in Crore)**

SL	Commodity Group	2014-15		2015-16	
		Amount	% of Total	Amount	% of Total
1	Cotton (all types), cotton yarn/thread and cotton fabrics	12501.8	19.6	13934.2	18.3
2	Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery, and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	10460.3	16.4	11316.5	14.9
3	Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television image and sound recorders and reproducers and parts and accessories of such articles	7826.3	12.3	10116.8	13.3
4	Man-made staple fibres	3545.1	5.5	4129.5	5.4
5	Iron and Steel	2928.2	4.1	4121.6	5.4
6	Knitted or crocheted fabrics	2970.4	4.6	3199.5	4.2
7	Man-made filaments	2420.9	3.8	2896.8	3.8

8	Fertilizers	1517.2	2.4	2207.2	2.9
9	Plastics and articles thereof	1690.8	2.6	1672.4	2.2
10	Organic chemicals	1417.2	2.2	1372.1	1.8
11	Mineral fuels, mineral oils, and products of their distillation bituminous substances; mineral	856.3	1.3	1195.5	1.6
12	Articles of apparel & cloth accessories, not knitted/crocheted	977.8	1.5	1065.8	1.4
13	Salt; sulphur; earth and stone; plastering materials, lime, and cement	640.0	1.0	1042.8	1.4
14	Ships, boats and floating structures	667.0	1.0	1034.0	1.4
15	Inorganic chemicals; organic or inorganic compounds of precious metals, of rare-earth metals, of radioactive elements or isotopes	1121.5	1.8	998.3	1.3
16	Tanning or dyeing extracts; tannins and their derivatives; dyes, pigments and other colouring matter; Paints and Varnishes; Putty and other mastics; Inks	946.3	1.5	996.2	1.3
17	Special woven fabrics; tufted text. Fabrics; lace; tapestries; trimmings; embroidery	842.5	1.3	979.1	1.3
18	Arms and ammunition; parts and accessories thereof	648.5	1.0	973.5	1.3
19	Vehicles other than railway or tramway Rolling stock, and parts and accessories thereof	810.1	1.3	937.6	1.2

20	Paper and paperboard; articles of paper pulp, of paper or paperboard	730.8	1.1	926.8	1.2
21	Miscellaneous chemical products	832.1	1.3	838.2	1.1
22	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	656.8	1.0	808	1.1
23	Impregnated, coated, covered textile fabrics, etc.	581.5	0.9	737.6	1.0
24	Optical, photographic, cinematography, measuring, checking, precision, medical or surgical instruments, and apparatus; parts and accessories thereof	462.5	0.7	732	1.0
25	Articles of Iron and Steel	547.7	0.9	663.1	0.9
26	Others	5587.5	8.9	7266.3	9.3
	Total	63887.1	100.0	76160.4	100.0

Source: Annual Import Payments 2015-'16, Statistics Department, Bangladesh Bank.²⁹

According to the information in Table 8, payment of all of these commodities have increased in FY2015-16 over FY2014-15. While in FY2014-15 Bangladesh imported 22 per cent of all of its imports, she imported 26.4 per cent of its total imports in FY2015-16 from China.³⁰ After considering the import items of Bangladesh, an increasing trend was noticed in the major import goods, i.e., textile and textile articles, machinery and mechanical appliances, electrical equipment, vehicles, aircraft, vessels, associated transport equipment, miscellaneous manufactured articles, etc. while a decreasing trend was noticed in mineral products, chemical products, vegetable products, live animals, animal products, prepared foodstuffs, raw hides and skins, leather, foreskins, etc.³¹ Although Bangladesh is trying to reduce its import expenses to balance its trade deficit with China, most of its import goods still come from China. In comparison to this, China's imports from Bangladesh are not noteworthy and the ultimate result is a growing trade imbalance.

Coping with Trade Imbalance: An Alarming Concern for Bangladesh and China

The increasing trade deficit is a huge concern for both Bangladesh and China. At the initial stage in the 1990s, the Bangladesh-China trade deficit was around \$5.5 billion. In FY1990-91 Bangladesh's export to China were around \$2 billion. After that, only in FY1993-94 and FY1997-98, Bangladesh's exports to China increased while in other fiscal years they decreased while imports from China were increasing. Both countries are trying to reduce the trade imbalance. Although in recent years Bangladesh's total export to China is increasing yet, Bangladesh is facing a huge trade deficit.

Table 9

Bangladesh's Trade Deficit with China from 2000-01 to 2015-16 (in Million US\$)

Year	Export	Import	Trade Deficit	Trade Ratio
2000-01	11.67	708.94	-697.27	1: 60.75
2001-02	18.92	657.78	-638.86	1: 34.77
2002-03	19.50	779.50	-760	1: 41.79
2003-04	45.65	1,132.72	-1087.07	1: 24.81
2004-05	56.07	1,643.77	-1587.7	1: 28.58
2005-06	64.35	2,078.99	-2014.64	1: 32.31
2006-07	92.97	2,572.62	-2479.65	1: 27.67
2007-08	106.95	3,136.70	-3029.75	1: 29.33
2008-09	97.06	3,451.47	-3354.41	1: 35.56
2009-10	178.63	3,819.28	-3640.65	1: 21.38
2010-11	319.66	5,912.55	-5592.89	1: 18.49
2011-12	401.94	6,433.21	-6031.27	1: 16
2012-13	458.12	6,324	-5865.88	1: 13.8
2013-14	746.2	7,559.00	-6812.8	1: 10.13
2014-15	791.00	8,232.99	-7441.99	1: 10.41
2015-16	808.14	9,745.33	-8937.19	1: 12.05

Source: Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) and Author's Calculation

Bangladesh and China experienced a huge trade gap from the year 2000 to 2016. In recent years, Bangladesh's export to China has experienced a relative increase compared to the early twenty-first century. Thus, the trade gap has also reduced from that of the earlier

time. Still, however, it is huge and the trade ratio is almost 12 times higher. In FY2013-14, while Bangladesh-China trade gap was worth \$6.80 billion in FY2014-15 it was \$7.43 billion, which was an increase of 9.2 per cent.³² In FY2015-16, it crossed \$8 billion. In FY2016-17, Bangladesh had trade relations with 198 countries all over the world, among which Bangladesh had a trade deficit with 71 countries. In this case, Bangladesh experienced the highest trade deficit with China, which was worth \$6,881.47 million, the second-highest was with India which was \$3,998.16 million, and the third-highest was with Singapore worth \$1,575.21 million.³³

According to expert knowledge and analysis, there are several reasons behind the gigantic trade imbalance with China of which limitations of diversification on export products is prominent. Lack of export products diversification is creating obstacles for Bangladesh to attract Chinese consumers to its products. Although Bangladesh is enjoying zero tariff facilities, it failed to utilise this facility fully as a result of its limitation in product diversification and ultimately trade deficit with China is continuing to rise in recent days.³⁴ Besides, political instability, the failure of various governments to maintain a stronger strategic relationship with China, and lack of appropriate efforts to control the huge trade deficit are also responsible for the rising trade deficit. So far, China has taken several initiatives and has planned to take serious efforts to reduce the trade gap. China has given zero-tariff treatment to certain products from 41 Least Developed Countries under Duty-Free Quota-Free Program. As a less developed country, Bangladesh is enjoying this facility. According to the commerce ministry officials, because of being a less developed country, China has been giving duty-free access to many Bangladeshi products since 2003. Under APTA, since 2010, China was giving duty-free access to 4,700 goods. In 2014, Bangladesh was offered duty-free access of 7,800 commodities by China as a goodwill gesture to enhance economic ties.³⁵ Bangladesh has received duty-free access of

5,054 Bangladeshi commodities in 2016. But still, Bangladesh's export to China is not noteworthy. Bangladesh mainly exports RMG products and leather and leather goods to China. Bangladesh cannot use the benefit of the duty-free access fully and is hoping that in future it will take the maximum advantage of the offer. To reduce the trade imbalance, China is opening up its market slowly and is dropping the duty rate on imported goods to China. While it was 15.3 per cent in 2002, it is 9.8 per cent now which is the lowest among the developing countries.³⁶ It is also working to trim down the tax on the trade of jute and textiles, which are Bangladesh's major export products.

From the very beginning, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given importance to mutual negotiation through dialogue between the two countries' business enterprises for greater duty-free access of more Bangladeshi products to the Chinese market. Mentioning youth power, cheap labour, cost and huge trade imbalance, she expects a duty-free market facility for all Bangladeshi products.³⁷ She expects that China will import more jute and jute goods, leather and leather goods, frozen fish, ceramics, and pulses from Bangladesh, which will help Bangladesh to deal with the vast trade gap to a large extent. The Prime Minister's office instructed the commerce ministry to give more attention to the issue so that more and more Bangladeshi products can be included in the duty-free and quota-free lists for the Chinese market. They have also planned to set up a fashion design institute along the Chinese model to boost the export market for RMG in China. Moreover, they also took a free trade agreement under consideration for review and continuation.³⁸ To narrow down the yawning trade gap, importance was also given to free trade agreement through which both countries will get duty free facility and can ensure export growth. The then commerce minister, Tofail Ahmad, was hopeful about the export growth, as in the recent years export growth has been increasing and if it continues Bangladesh might be able to expand its export to China and the

projected export amount could reach \$2 billion within two or three years.³⁹ Bangladesh wants to be a middle-income country by 2021 and wants to expand its business with Chinese enterprises. Bangladesh has to diversify its export products to increase export growth and to increase her share of the Chinese market. Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CDP), thinks that increasing trade deficit is a bad sign in comparison to China's trillion-dollar imports from all over the world and very low import from Bangladesh. Recently readymade garment, leather, and footwear exports were continuing the growing trend, though it is quite unsatisfactory because, in the context of China's huge demand, Bangladesh's export share is negligible. He urged the government to invest more in the production of these goods as well as to diversify Bangladesh's export products. Besides, local exporters can also play an important role in this regard. Government's recent step to set up a special economic zone is a hopeful initiative to decrease the trade deficit.⁴⁰ To make China a beneficent trading partner Abdus Salam Murshedi, the former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Association, BGMA, suggested increasing Chinese investment in Bangladesh to fight the trade gap.⁴¹ Shahjahan Mridha, General Secretary of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggested infrastructural development for expanding trade as well as to reduce the trade imbalance. He is hopeful that by taking effective measures Bangladesh-China trade imbalance can be reduced. In recent years, Bangladesh's exports to China have increased by 25 per cent and it is a good start to contain trade gap. For easier trade and banking transactions, he thinks both countries should set up their banking branches in each other's countries. If Chinese banks arrive in Bangladesh and vice versa, direct banking transactions will be easier and ultimately boost the bilateral trade and may contribute to the reduction of the trade gap. He was also optimistic about the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) and

hopes that the implementation of this project would bring about a positive impact on the entire trade relation. Transportation would be easier and less in cost than the previous system when goods used to be delivered by waterway. It would also save time because it took around one month for goods delivery while after the implementation of BCIM-EC it would take roughly 48 hours. Moreover, strategically it would be more balanced for our security.⁴²

Conclusion

Due to the liberal trade policies of Bangladesh and China, trade between the two countries has increased more rapidly than ever before in the last decade. With the start of the 21st century, mutual friendship and cooperation between the two nations have increased further, which has led to continuous growth in bilateral trade. To expand trade, Bangladesh and China have discovered different new areas of trade and new avenues for mutual benefits. As a result, Bangladeshi exports to China have increased 13 times. Not only that, a growing trend has been noticed in the overall trade volume. Although Bangladesh's exports to China have increased far more than before, the export amount is meagre compared to the import, which has raised the concern of trade deficit. Proclamations of taking concrete initiatives for improving economic cooperation, expanding bilateral trade, and increasing investment flow have come out as hopeful signs for reducing the trade imbalance.

Bangladesh is trying to export more products to the Chinese market. Besides, Bangladesh has already been trying to increase its trade in the world market with the help of China and trying to upgrade herself to a middle-income country. To achieve its goals, Bangladesh is strengthening its relation through increasing economic cooperation with China. As Bangladesh is concerned about the trade deficit with China, so it is trying to explore the Chinese market and export more products which will help reduce the trade gap. Noticing the trade gap,

China is also increasing its investment in Bangladesh hoping that friendship and cooperation between them will reduce the trade imbalance. Believing in the bright prospect of their economic cooperation, both nations are now giving more attention to exploring the potential sectors of economic development, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, blue economy, agriculture and food production, human resources development, infrastructure development, etc.

In Bangladesh, the readymade garment is still the country's largest export sector. To maintain this position, Bangladesh needs to diversify the products of the ready-made garment industry more comprehensively. Value-added clothing will help capture the greater share of the global garment market. As China is the world's largest textile and clothing exporter, it is helping Bangladesh in the textile sector. According to Bangladesh Bank, the Chinese government's investment in Bangladesh reached \$56.79 million in 2015, of which 65 per cent is in the textile sector.⁴³ For convenience in textiles and clothing, it is very important to increase standard chains. China is an available source of raw materials, which is used to sustain trade surplus in European and North American countries. Bangladesh imports ready-made garments goods every year from China. As trade imbalance is a major challenge for Bangladesh and China, so with China's help, Bangladesh can manufacture these products by herself and can export it to the overseas market. Even, these products can be exported to China to reduce the trade deficit. China is a big country with a huge population. So, the internal market of China is a big hope for Bangladesh to reduce the trade imbalance.

Bangladesh is also hoping to get duty-free access for all products to the Chinese market. According to the policy of the World Trade Organization (WTO), as an LDC country, Bangladesh is entitled to duty-free access for all products in China. Bangladesh mainly imports raw materials and industrial equipment from China. So, because of the

increasing demand for these products, there is no scope for import reduction of these goods. So, the only choice open for Bangladesh is, increase its export to China, diversify her export items and reduce the trade deficit.

So, observing the overall situation, it can be said that, though Bangladesh and China are fighting against the increasing trade deficit, various new fields of trade and investment are being identified which will help Bangladesh and China to move forward in a balanced manner. The growing trend in the fields of trade, investment, economic ties, projects and partnership will be a big opportunity for Bangladesh to cope up with trade imbalance and maintain a constant and stable economic development.

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INDO-PAKISTAN RIVALRY OVER KASHMIR: A CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS?

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Abstract

Samuel P Huntington's argued in 1993 that the nation-states will remain dominant actors in world affairs, yet the principal conflicts will occur between the nation-states composed of different civilisations. A civilisation is defined as the highest cultural grouping of peoples composed of a common language, history, customs, institutions, and, most importantly, religion. Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African civilisations exist in the contemporary world. For centuries, South Asia has experienced conflict between Muslim and Hindu civilisations, thereby, giving birth to two new states in 1947. Against this backdrop, this paper applied the concept of 'clash of civilisations' to elucidate the Indo-Pak conflict over Jammu and Kashmir. It argues that the dispute between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir is not politico-economic, rather it has civilisational dynamics. The ideological fault lines significantly contribute to the Indian brutality and suppression of Muslims in Kashmir as both Hindu and Muslim religions are opposite to each other.

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Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir is a nuclear flashpoint between India and Pakistan and has locked the two neighbours into an enduring conflict. The South Asian neighbours went to three full-fledged wars over Jammu and Kashmir, but military adventurism brought nothing but misery and annihilation. Kashmir became a prominent source of friction between India and Pakistan and left no chance for tranquillity and good neighbourly relations in the region. The dispute is internationally recognised and the United Nations has passed various resolutions recognising Kashmiris' right to self-determination.¹ Nevertheless, India has illegally occupied the region and turned it into a living hell. New Delhi has deployed more than a million army personnel in the region and has been using brute force to control the movement of independence.

The geostrategic position of Kashmir makes it important in South Asian politics. Historically, the British and Russian empires were rivals over the area and it remained as a buffer zone between the two imperial powers.² Now, India and Pakistan are fighting for the accession of the region. Kashmir is rich in natural resources and its geostrategic position connects South Asia with Central Asia. The security of Kashmir mainly determines the security of India and Pakistan. The frontier regions of Kashmir provide a shield to South Asia from foreign intrusion. So, in the post-1947 era, the region became a sort of lifeline for both India and Pakistan. Another aspect, which makes Kashmir prominent in the regional geopolitical and geostrategic environment is its religious and cultural identity. India is of the view that without Kashmir, its secular identity is nothing more than a claim. Whereas, Pakistan has always asserted that Kashmir is the core of the 'two-nation' theory and the agenda of Pakistan is incomplete without the accession of Kashmir.

In this context, it is argued that the lingering issue of Kashmir is influenced by the civilisational clash between India and Pakistan. The secular Indian identity provides an excuse for New Delhi to continue its occupation against the wishes of Kashmiri Muslims. Meanwhile, Pakistan's religious affinity with Kashmir cannot easily ignore the illegal occupation of India. So, Kashmir's accession to either side becomes a matter of national identity between India and Pakistan, and both neighbours are in no mood to withdraw their claims over the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Theoretical Framework: Clash of Civilisations

In 1993, Samuel P Huntington warned the international community that the patterns of conflict among the states are going to transform. The era of conflict between the nation-states and ideologies is over, yet a new phase of dissension is emerging on the international front. Earlier, the post-war world witnessed the struggle between the two superpowers competing to expand their ideological influence. Whereas, the source of conflict in the post-cold war world is not primarily ideological or economic, rather the dominant source of conflict among the humankind is cultural. "The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."³

A civilisation is a cultural entity, which is the highest level of grouping of peoples. Villages, ethnic communities, regions, and religious groups, all have distinct features of cultural homogeneity. Chinese and Arabs are culturally different from each other. Similarly, Hindus and Muslims are of opposite civilisations. A civilisation is defined by both the common objective elements such as language, customs, common history, institutions, religion, and the subjective self-identification of people.⁴ So, it can be stated that common religion, customs, and values influence the development of civilisational identity. The civilisational clash among the Muslims and Hindus of South Asia is as old as the first Muslim entered into this

region in 711 AD. Hindus portray Muslims as outsiders and invaders occupying their land and converting local inhabitants into Islam. The Muslims ruled India until the reins of power were taken over from them by the British Crown in 1757, and the British Empire ruled India for another hundred years till the partition of 1947.

The religious and communal animosity between the Hindus and Muslims came in the way of every effort of the British government to obtain a unitary government for British India and the Indian states.⁵ So the British government approved the partition plan on 3 June 1947 and announced to settle the partition question once and for all by 15 August 1947. The partition plan approved the option for princely states to join either India or Pakistan based on religious, geographic, cultural, and economic contiguity. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was a predominantly Muslim state with a Hindu ruler, and its accession with Pakistan was natural, based on conditions outlined in the partition plan. But the Indian National Congress leadership, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, persuaded Maharaja Hari Singh to accede to India.⁶ So, the Maharaja conceived the perpetual animosity between India and Pakistan after acceding the territory to India. So, since 1947, India and Pakistan are having contesting claims over Kashmir and spending billions of dollars to sharpen their military power. The cultural identity persuaded both states to use the military means to fully integrate the region with either side, but all their efforts have proven futile so far. India claims that being the largest secular state, Kashmir's integration is essential. To the contrary, Pakistan asserts that Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the 'two-nation' theory and goes far away for the region. Both states have time and again claimed that their national identity is incomplete without the accession of Jammu and Kashmir.⁷

Two-Nation Theory and the Partition of India

The genesis of animosity between Hindus and Muslims of India can be traced back to the early eighth century when Muhammad Bin

Qasim, a young Muslim general was sent out by the Umayyad Caliph in Baghdad to expedite a ship seized by a local Hindu ruler.⁸ The conquest of Muhammad Bin Qasim laid the foundations of Islamic rule in India, which lasted until the eighteenth century when the reins of power were taken by the British. Various Muslim dynasties had ruled India but the Mughal dynasty counted to be the most powerful and popular one. At the height of the Muslim rule, the minority status of Muslims did not matter to them but the onset of the British rule in the subcontinent their vulnerability in a predominantly Hindu state controlled by the British.⁹ Therefore, the theory of two nations gained momentum and Muslims started a struggle to gain a separate state.

The advent of British rule brought significant benefits for Hindus as they readily accepted modern education and cultural values of the new masters. The change of masters was not an unusual phenomenon for Hindus, as they had spent centuries under the Muslim rule. The goodwill of the new masters earned them top administrative positions, which improved their economic and social status.¹⁰ They made advancements in education, politics, culture, and economic spheres. Meanwhile, Muslims were deprived of power, education, politics, and economic opportunities.¹¹ The British accused the Muslims of the revolt of 1857 and used indiscriminate force against them. They were deprived of properties and pushed into extreme poverty and destitution. For instance, the British Crown passed the New Land Settlement Act (1793), whereby it created a new class of gomashtras or zamindars to collect land revenue. The new class of Hindu gomashtras overcharged the Muslim peasants, even during famines. SR Wasti documented that Hindu gomashtras got full protection of East India Company and the Company's servants "committed actions which make the name of the English stink in the nostrils."¹²

From 1857 to 1885, India experienced the worst economic scenario. Frequent cycles of famine heavily destroyed the agriculture

sector, affected the farmers, excessive land tariff turned fertile lands barren, and strict control on the press left no option for Indians to criticise the discriminatory policies of the British Raj. So, in 1885, the Indians were provided political space through the platform of the Indian National Congress, a political party conceived and set up by Allen Octave Hume, a former British Indian Civil Servant.¹³ The Hindu ascendancy claimed that there were only two forces in India, Hindus and the British India. Yet, the notion was outrightly rejected by Muslims and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan asserted that a third nation too existed in India with a distinct religion, philosophy, language, art, history, and culture. It was argued that the Muslims belonged to a different civilisation, which was based on opposing ideas and conceptions. So, the Muslims of India formed the All India Muslim League in 1906 to safeguard the interests of their community.

The early years of the twentieth century saw the clash of Hindu and Muslim civilisation in the British India. From 1921 to 1922 Bengal, Punjab, and Multan witnessed serious riots between Hindus and Muslims in Muharram. The communal clashes resulted in the utter vandalization of properties with little human losses. In 1924, Kohat burned due to Hindu-Muslim clashes. The incident brought major casualties and property losses to Hindus. This tragic event affected many areas of the subcontinent such as Nagpur, Lahore, Lucknow, Moradabad, Bhagalpur, Kankinarah, Shajahanpur, Allahabad, and Delhi. In 1931, Hindu-Muslim relations experienced another blow with the outbreak of Kanpur riots. The rioters killed more than 400 people in just six days, burned eight mosques, forty-two temples, and 250 houses. Soon after the riots, some prominent Congress leaders published a report in which they shed light on the historical clash of Hindu and Muslim communities.¹⁴

Since Muslims and Hindus were opposite civilisations, their representative political parties also advanced communal interests. Muslim League demanded a separate electorate system, while

Congress pursued the joint electorate system because it ensured Hindu domination in the centre and Hindu majority in provinces. In 1928, the Nehru Report recommended that Muslims are granted one-fourth representation in the central government and Sindh is established as a separate province with a self-sufficient mechanism.¹⁵ The report also proposed minimum reforms for NWFP and Balochistan. Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah termed the report a Hindu document and outrightly rejected it. In 1929, he responded to the Nehru report with his famous fourteen points, a truly representative document of Muslims and other minority groups.

When elections for provincial assemblies were held in the winter of 1936-37, Congress formed the government in nine out of eleven provinces from 1937-39. Before the elections, Jawaharlal Nehru had stated, "there are only two parties in India, the Congress and the Government, and others must line up."¹⁶ During its two years in power, Congress took various steps to advance the agenda of Hinduisation. The singing of *Vande Mataram* became compulsory in opening assemblies of schools and legislatures, the INC flag was hung at local administrative buildings, a military department was established to raise a national army, the children of government schools were forced to salute Gandhi's portrait, Hindi replaced Urdu as a language of instruction, and Congress members were appointed on government posts. Francis Yeats-Brown made the following observation about the two-year term of Congress:

"During the first two years of Congress rule in the United Provinces, riots had doubled in number, armed robbery had increased by seventy percent and murder had gone up by thirty three percent."¹⁷

So, it is worth mentioning here that communal clash was taken to new heights during the Congress rule, which taught a harsh lesson to Muslims that life in United India was impossible. So, on 23 March

1940, the Pakistan Resolution was adopted in the annual session of Muslim League and a resolute movement began to achieve the final destiny. Therefore, in a short span of time, Muslims of India got their separate homeland in August 1947. Yet, independence was not free from bloodshed and destruction.

Independence and the Future of Princely States

At the time of Indian independence in August 1947, some 562 sovereign princely states constituted about a third of the British Indian empire. Among them, the Muslim majority State of Jammu and Kashmir was enjoying the full legislative and jurisdictional powers.¹⁸ Yet, the 3 June Plan of 1947 laid the principles for princely states to join either India or Pakistan based on geographical, religious, cultural, economic, and political contiguity. The accession of Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, and Junagadh was tremendously problematic. Hyderabad and Junagadh were in Indian geographical possession, so considered to be part of India. While the Nizam of Hyderabad proclaimed to stay independent, he met with Indian military intervention. Junagadh was annexed by India through an ambiguous plebiscite.

Jammu and Kashmir differed in one important respect from the other princely states. It had a border with Chinese territory of Tibet and the newly created state of Pakistan. This geographic location made Kashmir significant for imperial powers of nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁹ The British considered it a buffer state to avoid a direct conflict with the Soviet empire, meanwhile, the geography of Kashmir provided a strategic edge to British India for trade with China and rest of Central Asia. The geographical links between Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan were much better than those with India if the Muslim majority Gurdaspur district was awarded to Pakistan in the actual process of partition. A Pakistani Gurdaspur district meant that

there was no direct Indian land access to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁰

Geography, population, economy, and religion comprised the fundamental grounds for the Pakistani claim over Kashmir. An overwhelming majority of Kashmiri population was Muslim and it was contiguous to the Muslim-majority region of Punjab, which became part of Pakistan. Second, the economy of Kashmir was bound up with Pakistan. Its best communication links with the outside world lay through Pakistan and the bulk of Kashmiri exports and imports used the Pakistani route. Third, Pakistani rivers of Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus, which flow through Jammu and Kashmir territory, are essential for the prosperity of the agricultural life in Pakistan.

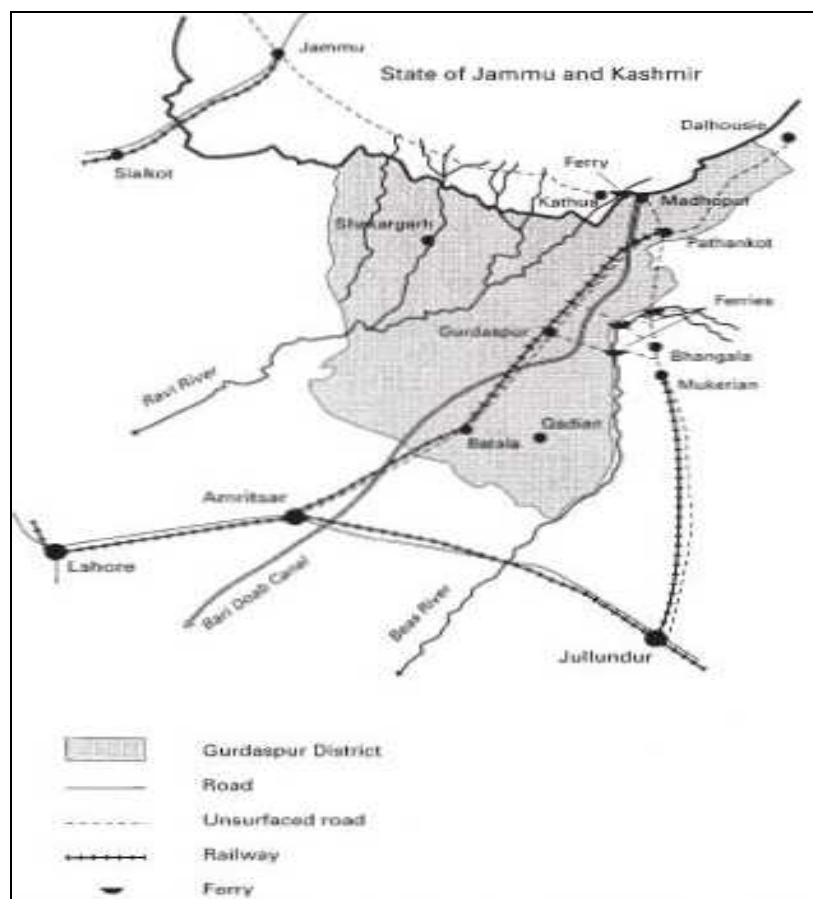
The factors discussed above proved the importance of Pakistan for Kashmir, yet Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to annex Kashmir into the Indian Union. Maharaja Hari Singh, on the other hand, was preparing the ground to announce independence. This was alarming for Nehru and Congress leadership. So, to induce Maharaja Hari Singh, Lord Mountbatten arrived in Srinagar on 17 June 1947. Just before his departure, on 14 June, he received a private letter from Krishna Memon, warning him that there might be negative consequences for Anglo-India relations if the State of Jammu and Kashmir were permitted to go to Pakistan.²¹ Similarly, on 17 June, Mountbatten received a long note from Nehru in which he argued that despite 70 per cent of the Muslim population, inhabitants of Kashmir would approve accession to India because of their devotion to Sheikh Abdullah. This note proved that Nehru was aware of the fact that based on the Muslim population, Kashmir would become part of Pakistan, but he wanted the territory at any cost.

The demarcation of territorial boundary of new dominions was proposed to set up through two Boundary Commissions chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The partition of Gurdaspur district was deliberately difficult as it had a Muslim majority population and a geostrategic

position. The boundary commission was supposed to work independently. Documented evidence exposed, however, that Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbatten, and his aides influenced the partition process. The original plan of the boundary commission granted the entire Gurdaspur to Pakistan but the persuasion of Mountbatten and Nehru worked and the boundary commission granted three eastern tehsils of Gurdaspur district to India in a provisional map published on 8 August 1947.²² So the direct land link provided an excuse to India to claim Kashmir. This entire process exposed two major objectives of Jawaharlal Nehru. First, Nehru wanted land access to China and Central Asia through Kashmir, second, Kashmir accession provided strength to the Indian argument of secularism.

Map 1

Land Routes to the State of Jammu and Kashmir



Source: Royal Geographical Society Collection. Published under the direction of the Surveyor-General of India, revised 1937

Clash of Civilisations and Demographic Change in Jammu

The civilisational and communal clash has always been a source of antagonism between Muslims and Hindus of India. The Hindu and Sikh inhabitants of India always portrayed Muslims as invaders and never missed a chance of their extermination. Jammu massacre of October 1947 is one example to quote here. To make an explicit assessment of genocide, it is essential to assess the composition of the population. According to the 1941 Census, eastern

Jammu was inhabited by 619,000 people, including 10,000 Sikhs and 305,000 martial Dogras Rajputs and Brahmins, and 411,000 Muslims.²³ Forming 40 per cent of the total population, Muslims were in majority in Riasi, Ramban, and Kishtwar areas and nearly attained parity in Bhadrawah. The Muslims of Jammu had close geographic, historic, economic, ethnic, religious, and cultural connections with Pakistani Punjab so they favoured joining Pakistan. Yet, the Dogra ruler preferred to accede to India.

In March and April 1947, communal violence broke out in Punjab and NWFP areas of Pakistan. In a matter of weeks, some five thousand Hindus and Sikhs were slaughtered and thousands migrated to Kashmir. These emigrants brought tales of brutality and oppression, which ignited a wave of retaliation. So, Jammu's Muslims were to pay a heavy price for the violence, which was a part of the clash of civilisations. The Jammu region turned into a killing field when the Dogra forces with the assistance of Hindus and Sikhs committed the carnage against the Muslim community. The Jammu holocaust is a dark chapter of Kashmir's history as Maharaja Hari Singh personally headed the campaign. Horace Alexander's article published in *The Spectator* on 16 January 1948 estimated killing of 200,000 Muslims. Whereas, *The Times* of 10 August 1948 reported that 237,000 Muslims were persecuted.²⁴

The Jammu massacres not only transformed the demography of the region but also exposed the fault-lines between the two civilisations. It revealed that Muslims and Hindus were rival communities and shared no common ground for a harmonious society. A Jammu-based Hindu newspaper stated, "A Dogra can kill at least two hundred Muslims," which illustrated the deep-rooted hostility among the two communities.²⁵ By mid-September, Jammu city's Muslim population was halved. The persecution and dispersal of the Muslims from Jammu city exposed the worst example of ethnic cleansing of a locality. To escape the state-sponsored genocide, by late

November, hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Muslims took refuge in the border cities of Sialkot, Gujrat, and Jhelum. In the first week of November, the Pakistan government sent a caravan to rescue the refugees into Sialkot. Near the Sialkot-Jammu road, a convoy of thirty Lorries was attacked by Dogra troopers, RSS activists, and other armed mobs. All the male members were annihilated, while the women were abducted.²⁶ The Hindu Maharaja of Patiala aided Hari Singh to eliminate the Muslim population. He not only supplied weapons but also sent a Sikh brigade of Patiala state troops to Jammu.

There was a conspiracy to change the demography of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Jawaharlal Nehru established the land link with Kashmir through gaining the three tehsils of Gurdaspur. Now the Hindu demographic majority was needed to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir. Therefore, the task was given to Maharaja Hari Singh and Prime Minister Mehr Chand Mahajan. When Mahajan arrived in Jammu, a group of delegates met with him and inquired recommended that since the power was being transferred to the people they should better demand parity. One member remarked that how could they demand parity when there was a huge difference in population ratio. Mehr Chand Mahajan pointed to the Ramnagar natural reserve below, where some bodies of Muslims were still lying and said, "The population ratio too can change."²⁷ The above discussion unveils that the Jammu massacres were systematically planned to change the demography of the area, in which civilisational clash played a fundamental role.

Kashmir and the Indo-Pak Conundrum

The Indo-Pak conundrum over Kashmir started immediately after the independence of the two countries in 1947. The state of Jammu and Kashmir was vital for both dominions, so they started manoeuvring for annexation. New Delhi started to construct road links with the state as well as forced Maharaja to accede to India.

Meanwhile, Pakistan pitched for accession and sent numerous delegations to Jammu. Yet, the war of words and allegations made matters worse. The indigenous revolt against the tyranny of Maharaja met with the brute force of state troops but re-invigorated with the aid of tribesmen from NWFP.²⁸ Once Maharaja realised the loss of the state, he appealed India to send the military in Kashmir. So, on 26 October 1947, Indian troops airlifted to Jammu based on a vague instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh.

Kashmir has always remained significant for British India and later its successor dominions, i.e., India and Pakistan. The importance can be explained in three inter-related dimensions. First, the ideological difference between India and Pakistan made the integration of Kashmir indispensable to prove their ideologies right. Being a Muslim-majority state, Pakistan claims that the agenda of the two-nation theory is incomplete without the accession of Kashmir. Kashmir is a natural part of Pakistan because an overwhelming majority of the Kashmiri population is Muslim. So, they cannot live under the control of a Hindu-majority state that usurps the rights of Muslims. To the contrary, India claims that being the largest Muslim polity within India, Kashmir endorses the Indian claim of secularism and equality for all minority groups. So, the ideological difference is prominently contributing to the ongoing rift between India and Pakistan.²⁹

Second, the geostrategic location of the region is vital for both Pakistan and India. It not only provides natural security to the dominion that controls the region but also revitalises the dream of connectivity with China, Central Asia, and the rest of Eurasia. If the entire Kashmir is controlled by Pakistan, it would cut-off India from China and the same is true for Pakistan if Kashmir goes to India. Therefore, the possession of Kashmir is most significant for both India and Pakistan. Third, Kashmir is endowed with natural resources including water and dense forests.³⁰ The Indus basin in Pakistan is

mainly dependent on rivers originating from Kashmir. Meanwhile, the tourism industry, fruit orchards, and handicraft industry have the potential of billions of dollars. The irrigation system of Indian Punjab is also dependent on water flow from Kashmir. New Delhi is generating billions of dollars in revenue from Kashmiri tourism industry. It is considered to be an economic bonanza for Jammu and Kashmir as industrial development is limited. So, the ideological, strategic, and economic forces played an immediate role in the Indo-Pak rivalry over Kashmir, yet the most significant role is played by the ideological clash.

The first war over Kashmir in 1947, divided the state into two parts, which to this day are controlled independently by India and Pakistan. Pakistan controls one-third of its territory called the 'Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir', whereas rest is under the Indian control. Pakistan portrays the region as its *Shah-Rag* (Jugular Vein), whereas India calls it *Atoot-Ang* (integral part). Practically, however, both states have failed to integrate the entire region.

Against this background, it is important to investigate why the two neighbouring states are engaged in a protracted conflict and why they are directing their resources to build military doctrines rather than the well-being of their populations.

The two-nation theory played a crucial role in the partition of India. The theory argues that India is home to two distinct nations known as Muslims and Hindus. Both nations' religion, customs, values, and rituals are different. One's hero is the traitor of another, so life in a single political unit was impossible for Muslims of Indian Subcontinent. Therefore, India and Pakistan got independence and successive dominions started playing their cards to annex the territories based on the rules determined in the partition plan. The religious, economic, and cultural affinity made a rigorous case for Pakistan to integrate the entire Kashmir. 77 per cent of the Kashmiri population was Muslim with close affinity to areas joining Pakistan.³¹ Hence, it was appropriate for Pakistan to integrate Kashmir into its

dominion as the homeland of Muslims of South Asia. The leaders of the newly born state argued that their agenda of statehood was incomplete without the inclusion of Kashmir. On the other side, the secular identity increased the necessity for India to annex Kashmir. According to the Indian point of view, a Muslim majority area might flourish in the limits of a Hindu-dominated state, which would prove the country's secularism without any doubt.

Why, despite the passage of more than half a century, India and Pakistan are unable to conclude an agreement over Kashmir. Joseph Korbel, chairman of the United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) until 1949, argued in his book *Danger in Kashmir*:

The real cause of all the bitterness and bloodshed, all the venomous speech, recalcitrance and the suspicion that have characterized the Kashmir dispute is the uncompromising and perhaps uncompromisable struggle of two ways of life, two concepts of political organization, two scales of values, two spiritual attitudes, that find themselves locked in deadly conflict, a conflict in which Kashmir has become both symbol and battleground.³²

At the height of independence, India was divided into two components: the dominion directly controlled by the British and princely states under the empire's policy of 'paramountcy'. So, when India was divided into two new dominions, princely states were required to accede to either dominion. Independence option was absent in the partition plan.

The first Indo-Pak war broke out on 26 October 1947 with the airlift of Indian troops to Jammu. The forces of the two countries were fighting with each other to gain control of the area, until India took the dispute to the United Nations Security Council in January 1948. New Delhi transmitted a message to the UNSC President that Pakistan was meddling in the affairs of Kashmir, so the UN being an international

peacekeeper needed to act. In January, the UNSC opened its floor to discuss the Kashmir dispute. From the Pakistani side, Sir Zafarullah Khan made a bold speech and highlighted the Indian and Dogra aggression. On 20 January 1948, the UNSC adopted a resolution that established a commission, to be known as the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), to investigate facts and propose mediatory measures. On 21 April, another resolution was adopted by the UNSC, which called Pakistan to withdraw its forces and demanded of India to reduce its forces to a minimum level so that a plebiscite could be made possible. Finally, a ceasefire was enforced on 1 January 1949 and a temporary peace was restored.³³

The first Indo-Pak war taught a harsh lesson to the Pakistani leadership that the state is facing a security dilemma from a five times bigger enemy and internal balancing strategy alone cannot ensure the security of the state. So, Pakistan sought external balancing strategy. Islamabad made military alliances with the United States and China. The alliance with the US provided enormous economic and military resources to Pakistan, which helped it build its nascent military and secured the insecure state.³⁴ In the decade of 1960s, Washington transferred state of the art military weapons and ammunition to Pakistan, which ensured the defence of the country. Yet the alliance often saw a downward trend due to divergent geopolitical and geostrategic interests. Meanwhile, Pakistan and China enjoy an all-weather and time-tested friendship. In critical times, Beijing transferred military equipment and assistance to Pakistan, which restored the confidence of armed forces of Pakistan.

The dispute over Kashmir dragged India and Pakistan into the second war in 1965. A decade of failed bilateral and multilateral diplomacy frustrated Pakistan. Hence, Islamabad sought a military option to liberate Kashmir and a full-fledged war broke out on 6 September. The Pakistan air force had a decisive role in the war by shooting down seventy-five Indian aircraft. The United States

immediately put an arms embargo on both states and urged them to restore peace. The ceasefire was put in place on 20 September 1965.³⁵ The third war broke out in 1971 when India invaded East Pakistan in support of secessionist forces. Consequently, Pakistan was dismembered and East Pakistan became Bangladesh. The 1971 war proved that Hindu dominated India never accepted Pakistan and will always pursue its malicious designs.

To the contrary, years of mismanagement, corruption, nepotism, suppression, and failed Indo-Pakistan peace efforts angered the Kashmiri population. Therefore, a mass uprising began in 1989 across the Kashmir valley. Different armed groups emerged on the forefront and proclaimed to free Kashmir from Indian occupation. The protracted curfews, lockdowns, extra-judicial killings, and kidnappings became a customary phenomenon in Kashmir. The occupying forces used brute force to stop agitators and introduced various draconian laws such as AFSPA and TADA. In 1990, Kashmir was placed under central government control. Once the insurgency exacerbated, a wave of bloodshed started in the valley between freedom fighters and Indian occupation forces. By 1994, there were 500,000 Indian troops combating militancy in the valley and during the Indian offensive, massive human rights violations were perpetrated such as arbitrary arrests, detentions without trial, and custodial deaths. For instance, from 1987 to 1995, over 76,000 people had been arrested under TADA (Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act) throughout India with less than 2 per cent of detainees being convicted. New Delhi passed the 'Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act' in July 1990 to provide sweeping powers to the army for arrest, interrogate and detain anyone without a warrant and provided legal immunity to their actions.

Once India mounted an offensive against agitators, many armed groups emerged in the Jammu and Kashmir region with the resolve to liberate Kashmir from the tyranny of India. Pakistan being a

party to conflict extended the moral, diplomatic, and political support to the Kashmir cause and conveyed the Indian atrocities to the International Community. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Hizbul-Mujahedeen, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen, and Lashkar-e-Taiba were established in the period of the high uprising in Kashmir.³⁶ The cadres were of the view that the Indian occupation was illegal and the liberation of Kashmir was their fundamental duty. The clash of civilisations was obvious in the period when both sides were using arms to inflict each other. Kashmiri Mujahedeen were heavily influenced by the ideals of Islam, especially jihad. In the meanwhile, the conventional military superiority of India time and again encouraged the Indian leadership to wage a war against Pakistan. Therefore, a credible nuclear deterrence was necessary to offset the conventional pre-eminence of the Indian military machine. Consequently, in 1998, Pakistan responded to the Indian nuclear tests and declared herself a nuclear-capable state. Although the nuclear parity diminished the chances of a full-fledged war, both countries turned their guns towards a proxy war.

The international geopolitical and geostrategic environment underwent a fundamental change as a result of the terrorist incident on 11 September 2001. The new international security environment caused many states to bring change in their security policies. The United States announced a unilateral war on terror, in which Pakistan soon found itself engulfed and its foreign policy towards India and Afghanistan underwent a strategic change. The war on terror caused Pakistan to alter its core security policies in the region. Hence, Islamabad had to abandon its support to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and backing of freedom fighters in Kashmir.³⁷ Initially, the policy reversals helped Pakistan to salvage its Kashmir policy, but the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament on 12 December 2001 made things more complicated. New Delhi termed it as the "Indian 9/11" mobilised its troops along the Indo-Pak border and vowed to attack

Pakistan. The South Asian region was on the verge of nuclear war. Yet the diplomatic intervention by major powers saved the two antagonist neighbours.

After Indo-Pak military standoff in 2001-02, President Pervez Musharraf made a daring move to declare that no Pakistan-based organisation would be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of religion. He banned five Islamist organisations including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), the two prominent jihadi organisations fighting for the liberation of Kashmir.³⁸ He announced to use force against individuals and organisations involved in terrorism. Meanwhile, he asserted that Kashmir runs in our blood and we will continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic support to Kashmiri peoples. We will never budge an inch from our principled stand on Kashmir.³⁹ India appreciated the efforts of President Pervez Musharraf and resumed the bilateral negotiations. After a series of negotiations, President Pervez Musharraf presented his four-point formula in Agra Summit held in 2004. He proposed free movement of peoples along the Line of Control, self-governance or maximum autonomy given to locals, phase-wise withdrawal of armed forces from the region and a mechanism of joint management to monitor self-governance. India refused his proposal and declined to continue peace talks on Kashmir. So, no further developments had been made over Kashmir in the following decade.

In 2014, Bharatiya Janata Party made inroads into the Prime Minister House by winning 336 seats in the Indian legislative assembly. India embraced an authoritative and assertive foreign policy under Hindu extremist Narendra Modi. From inception, Modi declared India a Hindu dominated country and began a systematic campaign against religious minorities. Armed mobs charged with Hindu nationalism frequently attacked minority groups and killed dozens. The slogan of Hindu supremacy received widespread recognition and BJP once again secured a victory in the Indian national elections of 2019,

making Narendra Modi the Prime Minister for a second term. As promised during his election campaign, on 5 August 2019, Modi revoked the Articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian Constitution, which recognised the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan stridently rejected the unilateral act of India and reiterated its support for the suppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan's foreign ministry issued a statement claiming, "Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory."⁴⁰ Therefore, it was argued by Pakistan that India has no right to unilaterally change the status quo. After more than four decades, the United Nations Security Council called an emergency meeting and deliberately discussed the Kashmir issue. The member states expressed their anxiety about a nuclear war in the region due to Indian illegal action. Chinese ambassador to the UN rejected the Indian decision and urged New Delhi to respect the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council to implement the principle of the right to self-determination.

On the other side, Kashmir has been under siege, India invoked curfew in the area, suspended all kind of communication networks, caged some eight million Kashmiris, applied inhumane tactics of mutilating civilians, arresting young boys, imprisoning political leaders, and sexually harassing women. Pakistan condemned the illegal occupation of New Delhi and urged the international community to play its role in implementing the Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The global community is worried about India's intentions to perform ethnic cleansing. Genocide Watch, a US-based pressure group, has issued a genocide alert for the Indian occupied Kashmir.⁴¹ The revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A provided an opportunity to New Delhi to settle the Hindu population. So, it is appropriate to claim that India can launch an ethnic cleansing campaign similar to the Jammu massacres committed in 1947. Exclusive settlements and enclaves would be built for RSS activists and

military soldiers. Once India secures a sensible Hindu majority in Jammu and Kashmir, it would call the United Nations to implement the plebiscite. Yet, the ethnic cleansing and genocide could result in the outbreak of a full-fledged war between India and Pakistan, as Islamabad has always claimed that its independence is incomplete without Kashmir's integration.

Conclusion

The dispute over Jammu and Kashmir is a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia. The two antagonistic neighbours equipped with nuclear arsenals are locked in a protracted conflict. Islamabad terms Kashmir its jugular vein, while New Delhi claims the region to be its integral part. The division of India was a result of the two-nation theory as Muslims argued that India was home to two distinct nations. Meanwhile, the Congress leadership presented the secular image of India home to multiple ethnic groups. Therefore, the integration of Kashmir became essential for either dominion. The conflict over the state of Jammu and Kashmir is neither political nor economic, rather it is a conflict between two rival civilisations. The complete integration of the region with either dominion is a question of survival, which encourages India and Pakistan to use force.

As Samuel P Huntington predicted that the clash of civilisations will be a driving force for future conflicts in the world where different cultural groups will be engaged in war. The present study also concludes that the Kashmir issue is a matter of cultural fault-lines between India and Pakistan. Despite geostrategic and geo-economic importance, the cultural identity of Kashmir intimidates India and Pakistan. Pakistan being home of Muslims always claims that appropriate option for Kashmir is to integrate with Pakistan. Meanwhile, New Delhi points out that a majority Muslim state being a part of the Indian Union enhances its claim of secularism. Competing concepts lock them into ensuing conflict and both states are reluctant

to abandon their claim. Therefore, it can be concluded that cultural fault lines are a major cause in the Indo-Pak rivalry over Kashmir.

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BIG BROTHER SYNDROME AND NEPAL'S SECURITY DILEMMA

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Abstract

The recent controversy between Nepal and India is triggered by the release of a new political map of India that placed the Kalapani region in the Uttarkhand state. New Delhi's burgeoning interest in the Kalapani region is worrisome. Indian forces have been controlling this strategically important area since 1962. According to the Sagauli Treaty of 1816, Nepal claimed that the aforementioned area of around 337 sq km belonged to it. Nepal's parliament, on its part, approved a new map showing Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh as its territory. With the constitutional amendment, this issue has become a permanent foreign policy irritant between the two states. In the backdrop of the changing geopolitical environment of the region, especially after a Sino-Indian clash at Ladakh, it would be naive to say that New Delhi will occupy Nepal's territory by force. Nevertheless, New Delhi will continue to exercise its influence to safeguard its security interests. Keeping in mind Nepal's asymmetrical interdependence with India, foreign policy options for Kathmandu to reinforce its claims in the recent dispute over the Kalapani region to neutralise New Delhi's 'Big Brotherism' are limited but achievable.

Keywords: *big-brotherism, Kalapani region, asymmetric interdependence, Sagauli Treaty, cartographic maneuvering, Indo-Nepal border, security dilemma*

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“The Indian elephant cannot transform itself into a mouse. If South Asia is to get itself out of the crippling binds of conflicts and cleavages, the six will have to accept the bigness of the seventh. And the seventh, that is India, will have to prove to the six that big can indeed be beautiful.”

-Bhabani Sen Gupta¹

Options for small states in dealing with big powers in the international system have always been limited. Thanks to globalisation, however, the risk of military invasions has significantly reduced. The growing interdependence has widened the room to manoeuvre small states' foreign policies.² Since the end of the cold war, the question of what strategy small states should adopt to manage tensions with big powers in the neighbourhood has been widely discussed. Amongst others, two viable policy options have emerged out of this debate: the small states either follow a 'neutral policy' or ally with potential players in the region and abroad to neutralise neighbouring dominant states' overbearing influence. Nepal has tried long and hard to stay neutral while maintaining its autonomy but has largely remained unsuccessful. It has also attempted to ally with others to counter New Delhi's political and economic exploitation but the obligations of the Friendship Treaty of 1950 have always come in the way.

Nepal is a landlocked country, sandwiched between the two Asian giants: China and India. It shares a long border with India covering the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh in the east, west, and the south and the Tibetan autonomous region of China in the north. The country, unfortunately, fell under the Indian sway soon after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950 further intensified Indian machination in the northern frontiers of Nepal, which were aimed at establishing military check-posts in the tri-junction area, the Lipulekh, and the Kalapani. India approached the

Rana rulers of Nepal to counter the emerging security challenge, i.e., Chinese encirclement. The Ranas, who were looking for foreign support to consolidate their power against the democratic forces in the country, accepted India's friendship proposal. To cement their ties, a Treaty of Peace and Friendship along with secret letters was signed between the two states in 1950.

Like Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, the then Prime Minister of Nepal, Jang Bahadur Rana's machination with Jawahar Lal Nehru provided New Delhi undue leverage in Nepal's defence and security affairs. In both the aforementioned cases, people's aspirations had been marginalised that resulted in a permanent regional security issue.

In Dhaka's case too, New Delhi entered into cooperation with the Soviet Union for arms supply during the peak of the East Pakistan crisis in 1971. During the liberation war, New Delhi sent arms and ammunition procured from Russia through a Peace and Friendship Treaty to the then East Pakistan. Indian support was primarily aimed at pulling Dhaka into its security orbit. Like Nepal, India also mocked the Friendship Treaty of 1972 with Bangladesh when it supported the secessionist movement, the Shanti Bahini, in Chittagong Hill Tracts. The rebels were mainly Buddhists fighting against the Bangladesh government for autonomy. New Delhi secretly provided shelters, arms, and money to the insurgents in 1976. The target was obvious, the separation of the concerned territory from Bangladesh.³

Thus, India's neighbourhood policy has been interventionist since its inception. Nepal being a small and landlocked state has remained vulnerable to India's strategic manoeuvring. Besides controversial water-sharing agreements, the 1950's Treaty of Peace and Friendship is a classic example to illustrate New Delhi's big brother syndrome. The treaty, though, highly unpopular in Nepal, survives until now.

The present controversy over the control of Kalapani region between Nepal and India is not a new phenomenon in their bilateral relations. The novelty is that Nepal, for the first time, reciprocated Indian cartography of the disputed Kalapani region by issuing its political map. The 337 sq km region is comprised of Limpiadhura, Lipulekh, and Kalapani. Geographically, the region is a tri-junction between India, Nepal, and China. New Delhi has been exercising control over Nepal's high altitude Kalapani region since the 1962 war with China. Nepal has many a time raised the issue of withdrawal of Indian forces with the Indian government. Recently, the issue flared with the release of a new political map by India in November 2019. The map showed Kalapani under the Pithoragarh district in the state of Uttarakhand, India. Nepal strongly protested India's cartographic manoeuvring in its region. Within a short span of six months, New Delhi took another bold step. In May 2020, India's Minister of Defence Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 80 km Kailash-Mansarovar road. This road is said to be the shortest route to reach Kailash-Mansarovar, a Hindu pilgrimage site in the Tibetan plateau. However, this road passes through Nepal's territory, the Lipulekh. This development has triggered a fresh dispute in the tri-junction. Nepal views it as a gradual and planned encroachment.

This is not the first time under Modi government that New Delhi is challenging the sovereignty of a small neighbouring state. In 2015, soon after the promulgation of a new Constitution by Nepal, India imposed an unofficial blockade using the 'Madhesi card'⁴ that resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis in the country with dozens of casualties. In sum, India's foreign policy vis-à-vis small states in the region has been exploitative and lacking mutual respect. This argument is also supported by an Indian professor Ashok Swain in the following words:

It is true that India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Nepal in particular and other South Asian countries, in general, have

been big-brotherly and less consultative and often lack mutual respect. With time and changing geopolitics, the policy was going through a slow change, but the transition has stopped with Narendra Modi being the prime minister. Modi, after coming to power in 2014, has further reinforced India's old neighbourhood policy.⁵

This paper presents a historical analysis of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Nepal since 1950. Keeping in mind Nepal's asymmetrical interdependence with India, the paper discusses foreign policy options for Kathmandu to strengthen its claims in the recent controversy over Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh and neutralise New Delhi's 'big brotherism'. The main contention and conclusion of this paper are that Indian cartographic manoeuvring is a part and parcel of India's mainstream hegemonic policy to keep the smaller states under its thumb for its security interests. New Delhi's burgeoning interest in the Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh is worrisome as these areas can be utilised as strategic space in wartime. Islamabad, on the other hand, cannot overlook Indian activities in the aforementioned region. Islamabad is equally concerned about Modi's growing influence in the Himalayan region as it can potentially undermine the Kashmir cause.

India-Nepal Relations: A Complex Asymmetrical Interdependence

Nepal came under the Indian radar right after Tibet's annexation by China in 1950. The growing threat perception forced New Delhi to secure its relationship with Kathmandu as early as possible. Events in Nepal were also developing fast. The Rana regime was facing an existential threat by the democratic forces in the country. To secure its position, the then Prime Minister of Nepal, Jang Bahadur Rana joined hands with India. A Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the two states immediately. The Rana

regime, however, could not survive for long. Just three months after signing the treaty, democratic forces took over control and an interim setup was installed in Kathmandu with the help of India.⁶

The treaty of friendship was signed against the backdrop of domestic turmoil. Nepali Congress was planning a military coup in September 1950 with the help of its *Mukti Sena*, the liberation army. This plan was supported by their rival King Tribhuvan. There were widespread protests in the country to abrogate the Rana system and make Tribhuvan the king of Nepal. India persuaded King Tribhuvan to stop *Mukti Sena* and held rounds of discussions with the Ranas simultaneously. Finally, Indian pressure and armed struggle at home forced Ranas to agree to the Indian proposal (popularly known as the 'Delhi Compromise') in which the king's powers were restored and Tribhuvan was declared the king of Nepal. The Ranas and the Congress party formed an interim government to hold elections for a constituent assembly. Indian insistence on democratic installation in Nepal was primarily to contain the communist pressure. Joining hands with the Rana Regime in 1950 and overthrowing it in 1951 reveals how quickly New Delhi penetrated the political matters of Nepal.

There was little realisation of Indian influence in the Nepalese political circles until the secret letter signed with the Peace Treaty was made public. Criticism of Nehru's unilateral assertion to defend Nepal's territory against foreign aggression forced him to disclose the security understanding between India and the Ranas of Nepal.⁷ Article II of the treaty states:

The two governments undertake to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state likely to cause any breach in the friendly relation subsisting between the governments.⁸

In pursuance to this article, the two governments further agreed through secret letters:

Neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult with each other and devise effective countermeasures⁹.

And:

Any arms, ammunition or warlike material and equipment necessary for the security of Nepal that the Government of Nepal may import through the territory of India shall be so imported with the assistance and agreement of the Government of India. The Government of India will take steps for the smooth and expeditious transport of such arms and ammunition through India.¹⁰

Article V of the treaty further binds Nepal to take New Delhi into confidence while importing arms, ammunition, and other warlike material for its security needs.

The above clauses demonstrate India's urgency in addressing the immediate and future security threats in the Himalayan region. The importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaty grew with the changing geopolitical scenarios, particularly after the 1962 Sino-India war. Indian obsession with security is quite logical as it shares a long and open border with Nepal, which is comparatively more populated than Nepal's border with Tibet (China). Beijing on its part has no reason to reciprocate security arrangements with Nepal as it enjoys a geographical and military advantage. However, she is more concerned with anti-Chinese activities in Nepal and the Tibetan area. In line with Indian and Chinese concerns, the treaty put Nepal into a security conundrum. Nepal's option to remain neutral amid Sino-Indian differences has been compromised.

The so-called democratic setup established by New Delhi in 1951 collapsed with the royal coup in December 1960. According to Dhurba Kumar, Professor of Political Science at Tribhuvan University,

Nepal, the 'unsophisticated' Indian diplomacy led to the royal coup and closed the door on democracy for three decades. New Delhi fully exploited Nepal's internal political divisions to gain the maximum strategic advantage against China. The timing of regime change in Nepal was crucial as the Sino-Indian ties began to deteriorate and Nepal under the treaty was bound to provide bases including Kalapani to Indian forces to advance their troops. Right after the Sino-Indian war in 1962, India-Nepal ties turned into a 'special relationship'. New Delhi, through this 'special relationship' card, wanted strategic primacy in the neighbouring states to address the shortcomings of the 1962 war.

To further the defence ties, New Delhi signed the Arms Supply Accord with the royal monarchy in 1965. This accord eventually led to 'Indianisation' of the Royal Nepal Army instead of 'modernisation'. The Indian supremacy followed by this accord was tested in 1969 when Nepal requested to withdraw military personnel from the northern border adjoining Tibet. India agreed only when Nepal assured to share all information deemed harmful to each state and also turn a blind eye to Indian presence in the Kalapani area along the north-west tri-junction of the China-Nepal-India border.¹¹ Nepal agreed to Indian demands as the former wanted a concession on the Trade and Transit Treaty that was about to expire in the 1970s. For a landlocked state, the Trade and Transit Treaty (signed in 1960 between India and Nepal) was a livelihood issue that India often exploited. Despite meeting Indian demands, New Delhi refused to extend the treaty on technical grounds, which led to countrywide protests against India. The economic situation was deteriorating rapidly. In mid-1971, the government of Nepal was forced to sign the less favourable trade and transit treaty with India.

India was playing delaying tactics for obvious reasons. Nepal's relations with Beijing were shaping up in the background. Secondly, public opinion about India in Kathmandu was also changing. The

political elite also started criticising mutual security arrangements with India more openly. Kirti Nidhi Bisht, the then Prime Minister of Nepal categorically expressed Kathmandu's inability to act for India's so-called security. He was of the view that the commitments made in the 1950 friendship treaty had fallen in disuse since India had not consulted Nepal for military check-posts both at the time of Sino-India war in 1962 and India-Pakistan war in 1965. Besides, later in 1975, Nepal's move to declare its territory a 'Zone of Peace' fuelled New Delhi's security concerns as the proposal was recognised by 117 countries including China and Pakistan along with the United States.

India's political and military elite was wary of increasing Chinese cooperation with Nepal. In response to this emerging scenario, New Delhi stressed that Nepal could not further its relations with China as it was treaty-bound. India deemed it to be an end of its strategic primacy with Nepal. In 1988, amidst heated relations, Nepal approached China to purchase arms and ammunition, which India responded to with an economic blockade in 1989 by not renewing the trade and transit treaty once again.¹² Almost all the border crossings were closed along with Calcutta Port which was the only reliable opening to the sea. This blockade completely paralysed Nepal's economy as there was no fuel, fruits and vegetables, and other essential goods supply for two weeks.¹³

All South Asian states including Pakistan condemned New Delhi's bullying act that violated the rights of landlocked states guaranteed under international law. An independent newspaper *The Muslim* published from Islamabad criticised Indian hegemonic behaviour towards the small states of the region in the following words:

What is worrying is that India's playing the role of the regional bully suddenly has acquired sinister connotations ever since Sri Lanka and the Maldives experienced a diminution of their sovereignty due to Indian actions. Now it

appears that New Delhi is using a similar strategy although it is an economic weapon this time against Katmandu for achieving the same goals.¹⁴

It was really hard for India to give up its decades-long efforts in tightening the noose around Nepal, particularly at a time when relations between New Delhi and Beijing were deteriorating. The anti-Indian sentiments were growing in Nepali society. After the blockade, Nepal's relations with China further strengthened. India, while sensing Kathmandu's tilt towards China, drafted a proposal in March 1990 to begin a new 'genuine' friendship with Nepal. However, there was no significant change in the proposal as it was merely a replica of the previous friendship treaty of 1950. Although Sino-Nepal ties relieved Kathmandu of its obligations towards New Delhi, economic and political exploitation by India continued in different forms.

The 'blockade' strategy was reinforced in 2015 under the Narendra Modi regime. Kathmandu faced an unofficial five months blockade that led to a severe humanitarian crisis, as Nepal's economy was already ruined by a devastating earthquake. This time, India used the Madhesi card to prevent international criticism. She exploited Madhesi people to protest against discriminatory citizenship measures against the people of the Tarai region, which socially and ethnically are close to India. New Delhi was unhappy with political developments taking place in 2015. First, the new Constitution was adopted that was long demanded by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), much to New Delhi's dismay. Second, KP Sharma Oli, Communist Party leader, was the potential candidate for the Prime Ministership in the upcoming elections, which India did not want.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) enjoys China's sympathy that worried New Delhi. In sum, frequent interventions by New Delhi into the political, economic, defence, and strategic affairs of Nepal have led the country to a complex asymmetrical interdependence with India. New Delhi's big brother attitude and

inhumane 'blockade card' has largely contributed to anti-India sentiments in the Nepalese society. Since the last blockade in 2015, relations between New Delhi and Kathmandu are at their lowest ebb. The Indian cartographic manoeuvring in November 2019 added fuel to the fire.

Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh Controversy

In November 2019, India updated its political map, placing Kalapani under the Pithoragarh district in the state of Uttarakhand. Nepal promptly reacted and urged New Delhi to clarify its position as the area of Kalapani belonged to Nepal according to the Sagauli Treaty of 1816 signed between the British East India Company and the Gurkha rulers of Nepal. The treaty decided that the Kali River was a boundary line between India and Nepal. Since then the origin of the river has been a bone of contention between the two states. India claims that the river originates through a small stream down from the Lipulekh area of Kalapani while Nepal claims that it flows from the Kuthi Yanki stream in Limpiadhura marked as a border between the two states.

Map 1**Indian modified Map Incorporating
Limpiadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh**

Source: Nepali Times, Kathmandu

The Kalapani region lies between India's Uttarakhand and Nepal's Sudur Paschim Pradesh and touches Tibet in the north. Limpiadhura, Kalapani, and Lipulekh together make almost 370 sq km area that is considered the largest territorial dispute between New Delhi and the Kathmandu. This area is strategically important for India as it served as a base for Indian forces during the Sino-Indian war in 1962. India fears Chinese incursions through Lipulekh pass, which is located at the top of Kalapani and the tri-junction between China, India, and Nepal. India, since 1962, has been controlling Kalapani,

Lipulekh, and the surrounding area through its Indo-Tibetan police. India is of the view that poorly guarded passes were one of the reasons behind Indian defeat in the Sino-Indian war. Therefore, India put great emphasis on the security of the passes to China and Lipulekh is one of them.

On 8 May 2020, another move that triggered a diplomatic row between the two countries was the inauguration of the 80-kilometre road to Lipulekh, which Nepal objected to as an encroachment on its territory, as at least 17 km of this road passes through its territory. Amidst the illegal Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019, Nepal took Indian cartographic move and Kailash-Mansarovar road construction issues more seriously. There were widespread protests in the country, one in front of the Indian High Commission in Kathmandu, demanding the withdrawal of Indian forces from Kalapani. The social media also flared up with the trend of #BackOffIndia.¹⁵ Nepali government on its part immediately moved police forces to that area and also registered a protest with the Indian High Commissioner in Kathmandu. Besides, the Nepali government under immense pressure initiated a constitutional amendment.

Recently, Nepal has issued a new map that shows Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiadhura as part of its territory, claiming that the map was based on historical facts and in line with the Sagauli treaty of 1816. On 13 June 2020, the Lower House of Nepal's parliament unanimously passed an amendment to the 2015 Constitution to give legal status to the updated map of Nepal. With the constitutional cover, Nepal's claim has become a permanent foreign policy irritant in New Delhi-Kathmandu relations.

Conclusion and Policy Options for Nepal

India's Big Brotherism is not imperialistic. The hegemonic attitude towards small neighbouring states speaks about New Delhi's obsession with self-security. For India, Nepal is a crucial territory to

keep New Delhi away from direct Chinese intervention. The Friendship Treaty of 1950 with Nepal was essentially designed to address the aforementioned security concerns of India. Nepal, being a small and landlocked country, was an easy target for New Delhi. However, in the backdrop of the changing geopolitical environment, where Beijing has taken a firm stand at the Line of Actual Control between India and China and increasing members of the Belt and Road Initiative from the South Asian region (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives), it is quite far-fetched that New Delhi would occupy Nepal's territory. Nevertheless, New Delhi will continue to exercise its influence primarily because of strategic reasons. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's extremist policies, hawkish statements, inflated military views, and cartographic manoeuvring, however, have far-reaching consequences for regional peace and stability.

As the continuous suppression of Kashmiris' rights by New Delhi has become a permanent security threat to the region, India's attitude if unchanged would drag the smaller neighbouring states (the so-called comfort zones of India) into a 'security quagmire'. In the case of Nepal, the situation is particularly more complex as its border in the north and south is open and fragile with a significant presence of Indian forces since the 1962 Sino-Indian war. Moreover, Indian secret assistance to rebellious elements with money, arms, and shelter to advance its interests in the neighbouring state might invite a proxy war with other competing states.

Nepal is a small but a sovereign state that has an undeniable right to strengthen its ties with other countries in the region for economic opportunities and reduce its dependency on a single state, i.e., India. The fact of the matter is that whenever Kathmandu attempted to expand its relations with other major powers in the region, New Delhi, through its deep intelligence network, always tried to sabotage the diplomatic efforts. India seems to fear that other states might 'gang up' against it to undermine its interests in the region.

Thus, India's big brother syndrome is a stumbling block particularly for Nepal to have its say in determining its future. In line with the thinking, the study further concludes that economic and political exploitations will remain central to New Delhi's foreign policy vis-à-vis Nepal.

Having said that, policy options for Kathmandu are limited but potentially achievable. Kathmandu needs to adopt a cautious but assertive foreign policy approach as the country does not face an unavoidable existential choice between New Delhi and the other states in the region. While Nepal's economy is largely dependent on the Indian supply of essential goods, with the assistance of regional and international regimes, Nepal can escape asymmetrical interdependence with India. The dynamic foreign policy approach will surely enhance Kathmandu's bargaining power.

Can Pakistan's Diplomatic Support Make a Difference?

In the case of Pakistan, Islamabad's foreign policy with small states of the region is very clear. Islamabad condemns all kinds of suppression of rights and offers diplomatic support to raise and resolve their concerns. Islamabad's policy is based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Islamabad is of the view that small states having the same problems and the same neighbours must understand and appreciate each other's difficulties.¹⁶ With Kathmandu, Pakistan put great emphasis on the friendship between the two countries. In 1975, Islamabad strongly supported Nepal's proposal to declare it a 'zone of peace'. The recent border controversy also connects the dots with Islamabad as the new map released by India also showed Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as its Union Territories, which Islamabad has strongly protested. In line with this thinking, Kathmandu's concerns would be welcomed by Pakistan, and its diplomatic support amidst New Delhi's cartographic manoeuvring in Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh areas would help promote Nepal's cause.

Is 'China Card' a Permanent Fix?

To some extent, yes. Nevertheless, it largely depends upon the nature of the problem. Recent cartographic manoeuvring in the tri-junction is by default a serious concern for China. China does not want to pretend to be a counterweight to India because of the asymmetrical security orientation of both towards Kathmandu in which the latter is more anxious. However, China fully understands Nepal's compulsions under the Treaty of Friendship. China's direct intervention in the current controversy on behalf of Nepal is highly optimistic, though, Indian Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane has indirectly blamed China for Nepal's protests. Yes, Nepal should continue to advocate its claim while taking China into confidence. This would help begin the dialogue between New Delhi and Kathmandu.

Can Trilateral Engagement (China-India-Nepal) help Nepal in Addressing its Concerns?

Amidst security concerns from both India and China, the trilateral engagement between Nepal, India, and China is not feasible.¹⁷ Beijing's security concern is related to Tibet as it has been exploited by New Delhi. New Delhi on its part, sees China's growing influence in Nepal and its assistance in building communication infrastructure there a threat, not only to its commercial interests in the Kathmandu but also to its so-called territorial claims in the adjacent areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Kalapani, Limpiadhura, and Lipulekh. Moreover, India being a part of the US-led Indo-pacific Strategy, is unhappy with Nepal's decision to join hands with China in signing a Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In sum, both China and India, more or less, have been approaching Nepal independently. Thus, Nepal should focus on King Birendra's idea of developing Nepal as a gateway between South and Central Asia while maintaining a balance between China and India and improving relationships with other regional and international

countries. Nepal needs to fully exploit the new environment as several actors and factors have been added to its list. Apart from the United States and China, the European Union has its presence in Kathmandu.

Can Increasing Cooperation between the Small States Counter New Delhi's Big Brotherism?

Greater connectivity between the small states of South Asia is indeed a viable option to neutralise the impact of greater powers' policies. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) needs to be fully utilised in this regard. Small states together can bring a change in New Delhi's attitude. Nepal, on its part, needs to improve its ties with Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Besides, revision of the peace treaty with India is the need of the hour as the days of secret treaties are gone. Stress should be on removing the provision of security (in the secret letter signed along with the treaty) as it was primarily an Indian pre-emptive strategy against potential Chinese aggression in 1950. The friendship treaty should be rephrased in line with the aspirations of the people of Nepal.

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QUADRUPLE OF NUCLEAR GIANTS: PERILS OF SMALLER STATES OF SOUTH ASIA

ASMA RASHID*

Abstract

South Asia occupies a very important strategic location in the world. Its geostrategic location, presence of two de facto nuclear powers, and historical role in global politics further add to its importance. As global power dynamics are changing, apart from the US, the two emerging powers of China and Russia are taking a considerable amount of interest in South Asia. All these powers strive to extract maximum benefit from the region, therefore, making alliances with the important states of the region. In the context of great powers' interests in South Asia, the paper raises and answers two questions: first, why are the deepening of the Indo-US and Pak-China relations likely to have significant consequences for the balance of power in the region? Second, how the Indo-US and Pak-China power blocks are bringing in bilateral opportunities, whereas threatening the interests of other states of South Asia? The paper asserts that the growing Indo-US partnership is a threat to regional peace and stability because it causes a security dilemma in Pakistan and the US is taking advantage of the Indian position in the region to implement its pivot to Asia policy and, therefore, posing a direct challenge to Chinese interests in the region. Moreover, the US is supporting the growing Indian role in Afghanistan that is a direct security challenge for Pakistan. The emerging bloc politics in the region will serve the national interests of the larger states like Pakistan and India and draw economic aid and FDI from China and the US. Reciprocally, the US and China would continue to promote their national interests at the expense of their allies. However,

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this emerging security matrix increases the security risk of smaller states of South Asia.

Keywords: *China, Pakistan, India, US, South Asia, power politics, partnership*

The emergence of Bloc Politics in South Asia

It sounds fanciful for a small state to be noticed by a mighty one. Even more so if the rulers of growing powers see some benefit in that state. But in the real world, as the bubble of fantasies pops with a single tap, the people of the small states are enslaved and their resources snatched from them, their lands plundered and their abilities kept forcefully limited to keep them subservient. Such is the past of South Asia, a past that most of the states share. The shared past led to similar problems and the tragedies left such marks that the recovery is too slow for each state. The states have small economies, poverty, and inflation with growing needs and huge populations. They have, over the years, done what they could to please the superpowers and accumulate their power and wealth gradually.

South Asia has retained its geographical, political, and economic importance. With China and its growing influence in the whole world, this region holds the potential to become equally, if not more, powerful than the West. The world of today is undergoing huge changes, the events are historic and appear to be opening the curtains and giving a peek into the future of the world. The United States remains powerful but not the priority for many states. As the world witnesses the patterns of US foreign policy, its recurrent involvements in initiating wars against people who are much weaker and pose no fatal threat to the US and its subjective foreign policies are affecting its 'greatness' in the eyes of people. With such power dynamics on a global level as new powers seem to be emerging, South Asian democracies also frame their foreign policies accordingly. For the two larger states of South Asia, Pakistan and India, the foreign policies are also influenced greatly by their traditional rivalry. As for China, it has an

undeniable relationship of cooperation with Pakistan but it also maintains substantive trade relations with India. For China, it is about opportunities as they appear, but for the US it is to maintain its status and credibility as the superpower. It needs a strong partner in the region as well as a strong presence, which is apparent from its continued war in Afghanistan and a very clear strategic and economic leaning towards India.

As the Afghan war has been raging for two decades almost with no result or even hope for normalcy or peace, the US still has no resolute plan or wish to come out of the Afghan soil. Pak-India rivalry is also a player in determining bloc politics. Surely, a state cannot trust the friend of an enemy in politics, neither can both have the same bigger friend. This is also why one power cannot be the hegemon in the region rather there will always be a fight for a balance. As China has grown more powerful in the region, the US through India and Afghanistan will surely counter its influence. This is gradually leading to tension in the airs of South Asia with states trying to withstand their internal crises while finding a peaceful and least threatening place in regional politics.

Pivot to Asia vs CPEC

As we see a background of powers trying to hone in more influence we also reflect upon their methods and strategies. Obama administration brought a shift in the foreign policy of the US that was aimed to bind the Asia-Pacific region into economic and strategic deals with the US. The 'pivot to Asia'—which was later called the 'rebalance to Asia'—was a foreign policy based on the thought that the Asia-Pacific is the next centre for the world economy. This foreign policy shifted the focus from the Middle-East and Europe to the Asia-Pacific region. The new US foreign policy was "to lock in a substantially increased investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise in the Asia-Pacific region." What the US implied by this foreign policy

was a very literal meaning. On the other hand, the practical side of the Pivot to Asia tilted towards military and strategic courses of action rather than focused on economic and diplomatic policies.¹ This was not to be well-received by China, which took it as an aggressive foreign policy to contain Chinese economic expansion and growing influence in the region.

China continued to build on and started trillion-dollar programmes under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's wish to connect to Eurasian markets has been astoundingly powerful and resolute in action. In this journey of economic expansion, China has never taken a step back rather only when it had to convince the collaborating states to join in. The BRI and projects like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, CPEC, etc. have been like the backbone of the Chinese growing economy assuring a bright future. While the US policy did sound like it would want China to continue its development, it reacted bitterly.² The US did not accept the invitation of China to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) even when many of its Western allies did. The US took the AIIB as a threat to the Bretton Woods system and the monetary system emanating out of it, which is policed by the US.³

The Pivot to Asia was slightly transformed by the Trump administration. The focus of the Trump foreign policy has been to engage more with India in the region, especially when Prime Minister Modi welcomed the US with open arms. Wishes to strike a trade deal with India, national visits and many diplomatic gestures have been carried out. However, under the current circumstances, India is losing its reputation and getting internationally criticised for its brutal crackdowns against Muslims, and this time not just in Kashmir. Along with this, the economy of India under the Modi Regime is actually in a decline, currently facing the worst GDP in the last five years.⁴ Even under these circumstances, the US has chosen to stand with India. However, the urgency of striking a trade deal has faded because India

did not show readiness or flexibility to strike the kind of deal that President Trump approves of.⁵

Along with a pro-India stance, the Trump administration showed its distrust in China by escalating the trade war. Washington argued that China had unfair trade policies toward the US. After which, in 2018, the US decided to put trade barriers by increasing tariffs on Chinese products. China retaliated with tariffs on US imports. As of January 2020, the US has imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods and China has retaliated with tariffs on more than \$110 billion worth of US products.⁶

On the other hand, China's \$23 trillion initiative, a dream project to engage 62 per cent of the world population and more than 70 countries, is aimed to change the course of history.⁷ An initiative that boasts the connectivity of most of the world from China to Central Asia, Europe, Africa, and South Asia to the Pacific region along with academic and cultural exchanges and hard and soft infrastructure to be developed in all the countries involved in this Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) mega project. The initiative holds the potential to change the economic world order in favour of China and along with it a remarkable shift in the power structure of the world.

One of the projects under BRI is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). President Xi Jinping wants to expand Beijing's global role and CPEC is a successful example. Not only has CPEC tied Pakistan to China for infrastructure building, energy-based projects, and rail-based mass transit projects but Pakistan has also given China an entire port, the Gwadar port, on lease for 40 years. President Xi Jinping stated:

China will work with Pakistan to tackle non-traditional security threats to provide a reliable security guarantee for bilateral economic cooperation and common development. The Chinese nation loves peace. It will deepen win-win cooperation with its neighbours to deliver more benefits to

them through its own development. China will continue to pursue a win-win strategy for opening-up to build an open economy. This will create new development opportunities and space for both Asia and the world. We will strengthen cooperation with countries along with the land and maritime Silk Roads, to jointly build an open platform for cooperation and create new impetus to achieve sustainable development in the related regions.⁸

The statement makes it clear that China too wishes to seize all opportunities of strategic and economic cooperation in Asia and the world. It is clear that both the powers, the US and China, seek to gain strategic partnerships in Southeast Asia. The former trying to secure its credibility and influence in the region while containing the rapidly growing influence and power of the latter. They have increased tensions even militarily in the South China Sea, along with deployment of naval fleets of the US in the Pacific. The Pivot to Asia of President Obama has been criticised in the US and is even considered a failure. The pitching of an economic idea in Asia and executing it from the military headquarters did not pay the US much. Rather, it aggravated tensions between China and the US. The US has been successful in South Asia when it comes to appeasing India, even though their trade is not improving either. US-Pakistan relations have also improved as Pakistan observed the US-Taliban dialogues in early 2020. On the other hand, the seemingly never-ending Afghan War is further damaging the US economically and regionally because the regional population is starting to demand stability and development.

Growing Role of the US and China in Afghanistan

The presence and role of the United States in Afghanistan is multifaceted and deep-rooted to such an extent that even if the US wished to withdraw from there, an immediate withdrawal would be impossible without damaging US credibility and influence around the

world. Not only does the Afghan economy float with the help of US aid but the territory itself has also been a home and a battleground for the US military for almost two decades. Indeed, the Trump administration's efforts to negotiate with the enemy of 18 years for the sake of peace and better engagements than war have been criticised and appreciated simultaneously. On the 29 February 2020, the US envoy signed a peace deal with the Taliban in which the two parties for the first time made a mutual agreement that is to be followed by a comprehensive process of peace and troops withdrawal. The peace deal signed consisted of four core agreements.⁹ One of the agreements was to free 5,000 prisoners of the Taliban, which was not accepted by the Afghan Government. This peace-deal was to be followed by intra-Afghan peace negotiations. But before the plans could be materialised, the world fell into a bigger crisis of a pandemic that it was not ready to face. However, the efforts of the US seem sincere in the withdrawal. The internal Afghan political issues such as competition between the two top leaders Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani have also been monitored by the US. The US pressurised the two leaders to solve their dispute or the aid to the country would be cut-down. For this, the US Secretary of the State Mike Pompeo flew to Afghanistan with a plan to broker a deal between the two leaders who both claimed to be Presidents of Afghanistan.¹⁰

The situation remained unclear with regard to the peace deal with the Taliban and as time passed it was subjected to speculations and analyses. The Taliban attacks on the Afghan national defence and security forces have increased, contrary to what the Taliban promised in the deal. On the other hand, the US government's stance on this increase in attacks has been flexible. Secretary Pompeo commented on this in March 2020 that the Taliban had "committed to reducing violence; they have largely done that." But the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reports admit that violence has increased and that the Taliban would not agree to a complete

ceasefire.¹¹ This role of the US in Afghanistan is becoming controversial as the US government keeps the intricate mechanisms and extents of the peace deal secret. The deal does not give information on the thresholds of peace as decided with the Taliban. Along with this, the hidden mechanisms of the peace-deal are demanded by some representatives of the people to be made public.¹² What is evident from these circumstances is the ability of the US to pull strings in Afghanistan and the dependency of the Afghan government on the US. But it is not just Afghan dependency on the US but also the need for the US to keep a strong force, ally, and a stronghold for intelligence in the region. Along with this, the nature of withdrawal from Afghanistan is vague but following the theory of realism, it would be absurd to believe that the US would carry out a complete and comprehensive withdrawal from Afghanistan. Rather, more economic and strategic cooperation along with a considerable presence of US intelligence forces could be expected.

Stability in the region is the foremost requisite for Chinese economic expansion and for the Belt and Road Initiative to go according to the plan. China, therefore, has started to become vocal about its wishes to help in better relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹³ As the US seems almost desperate under the Trump administration to withdraw, China finds it a good time to step in and fill the gaps as soon as they are created. China, with Pakistan's support, has sought to extend CPEC into Afghanistan, starting with smaller projects followed by larger ones.¹⁴

The US under current circumstances could also use China's help in settling political disputes in Afghanistan and in the establishment of an Afghan government that is stable enough to walk on a path towards self-sufficiency. Such cooperation, however, would require China to press Pakistan to be on the same side as the US. It is in the best interests of the US to establish a government in Afghanistan that serves its interests without being a hole in the US pocket. China is

also looking for similar stability in Afghanistan because the least threatening Afghanistan would mean the most secure BRI and especially CPEC. Cooperation between these two states on the issue is not seen even when they share the aim to have a similar end in Afghanistan.¹⁵ A lack of such a possibility reinforces the idea of bloc politics in Southeast Asia.

On the other hand, the Trump administration's tilt towards India, recognising its 'constructive contribution' and an invitation to play a more active role in peacebuilding is bound to put Pakistan in an unfavourable position.¹⁶ While US policies echo their need for Indian support, the US cannot afford to leave Pakistan out of the peace process either. Mainly because Pakistan not only supplies the US forces in Afghanistan but is also a nuclear power that the US would not want to be on the opposing side of. Peace is crucial now because the US can no longer afford war any longer. The US is currently having a \$3.7 trillion federal budget deficit in the fiscal year 2020.¹⁷ Along with this the Corona Virus pandemic has dealt the US a hard blow that will not only change the US priorities and expenditures but is also shaping a global public opinion that the US is neither invincible nor the prime power anymore. Even Pakistan, with its all-weather friend China at its back, has been taking US pressure with less seriousness. The US cannot afford to leave more gaps in the region because China seems to be always ready to step up.

The role of China in Afghanistan is bound to increase if the US takes back its hard power from the Afghan soil. This is because a regional and closer economic power has more capacity to efficiently exploit the resources in Afghanistan than a power thousands of miles away. History is in the making as the US is locked into an economic recession due to a pandemic and China has successfully fought the same deadly disease. The credibility of China and its capacity to deliver shall surely benefit from this. As for the role of any power in

Afghanistan, domestic peace and stability is the foundation that is necessary and vital to any development yet the hardest to achieve.

India-US Partnership: A Deep Dive

India-US relations can be traced back to 1947, but the contemporary strategic alliance started in 2016. The changing trends streamlined US interest with India. Moreover, the US pursued a single theme recently after the rise of China that though China had fallen prey to communism India must not. China's emergence is increasing the dangers of Thucydides trap for US hegemony,¹⁸ thereof, the US needs India as a strategic partner to curtail the rise of China.

In 2018, the US renamed its strategically significant Pacific Command (PACOM) as the US Indo-Pacific Command. At the top level, the US perceives China as a revisionist power that pursues to continue a substitute to the Western liberal order. However, in the more direct context, the fear has increased since China has extended its armed and commercial hold in the region much to the trepidations of smaller neighbouring states.¹⁹ Likewise, Chinese investments in BRI have instigated core monetary upheavals in numerous beneficiary states. So, China is posing a threat to the US authority in the region. In short, the US standing in the Indo-Pacific region has significantly suffered due to Chinese initiatives. Longstanding US partner Pakistan has also drifted away from it due to closer cooperation with China and US policies towards India in recent years that Pakistan regards as objectionable and discriminatory. Therefore, the US is in dire need to maintain a strategic partnership with India to have an active presence in South Asia.

The US is using all means to align India with its policies to avoid being a regional handicapper. It can be viewed by the US policies towards India as recently India became only the third Asian state after Japan and South Korea to acquire the Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) from the US.²⁰ The US has traditionally

preferred to place only those states in the STA-1 who are participants of the four export regulatory regimes: the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) regime. However, India was granted this without being a part of the NSG.

Pakistan-China Partnership

Having China as an ally, Pakistan gets a huge regional advantage. Having an undeniably significant geostrategic position, Pakistan has benefited from Chinese CPEC. This, along with a border with Afghanistan, makes it easier for Pak-China cooperation to extend into Afghanistan. India's huge investment in Afghanistan may not entirely be in vain but it is still not viable for India to use Afghanistan for economic projects. Transport would be possible only through Pakistan and Indian dream of a trade route to Central Asia via Chabahar port, Iran, and then Afghanistan is a long and expensive project and does not seem viable. Along with that, the recent recognition of the Taliban by the US may also be a source of concern for India.

Under the contemporary circumstances, Pakistan and China come forward as a stronger alliance in the region, economically and militarily. While other smaller South Asian states are not strong enough or in a position to take sides at the cost of their economy, India may feel off-balance in the region. The US is strongly supporting India, but for how long and how practically useful for India can be questioned. For now, the deals made in early visits of 2020 seem to be fading, with the US in its very own crisis and an upcoming election, which will inevitably keep it preoccupied.

This does not mean that the court is empty for China and Pakistan to play, but they do have the opportunity to bring the region some prosperity. The human rights crisis in India is also not helping the Indian reputation in the world. The region is in uncertain times,

and an off-balance for any state can be dangerous. No country should be left with unchecked powers, as chances of its corruption and misuse are always present and often prevail.

Security Concerns of South Asian States

Apart from the growing tensions and competition among the bigger states, the increasing bloc politics in the region is more concerning for the states that are not only geographically small but also lack any military or economic prowess. The smaller states of Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have always been underdeveloped and disadvantaged. Especially the politics of Nepal and Bhutan is deeply influenced by the powers to their north and south.

International relations among the smaller and bigger states are often studied in the light of the structural scarcity theory. It states that due to a lack of economic and military capabilities the smaller states start depending upon the bigger states.²¹ Another theory to study such relations is the dependency theory.²² According to this theory, the larger states influence the economy and politics of smaller states by entering their market and polity. This theory sees the larger states as dominating over the smaller dominated state which can hardly run itself independent of the influence of the dominating state.

For the most part, the weaker states in South Asia can also be studied in light of these theories. The geostrategic location, military, and economic power of these states are sufficient to determine their security concerns. To effectively study these states a SWOT analysis of each of these states can help in understanding the situation.

Bhutan

The Kingdom of Bhutan, a constitutional monarchy, is landlocked between two giant countries: China to the North and India to the South. Bhutan lies at the eastern edge of the Himalayas and has

evolved from a theocracy, so Buddhism plays an important role in its culture.

Moving ahead, Bhutan's administration is facing mounting internal criticism over its monetary progress under India's aegis.²³ The existing Bhutanese authority faces major problems with reference to escalating unemployment and inflating foreign debt to India. Beijing, on the other hand, is pursuing improvement in its relationship with Bhutan through soft power and the guarantee of a safer future. India's strategic fascination about evading military vulnerability to China in the Doklam Plateau has hindered Thimphu from frontier negotiations and has even deteriorated relations between India and China. The 72-day stalemate in the Doklam over assembly by the Chinese armed troops in 2017, echoed that diplomacy had collapsed and armed confrontation was a possibility. Bhutan was marching on eggshells throughout the 2017 crunch and was seen weighing between the two forces but felt deeply traumatised and even suffocated by the prevailing stance of India in their relationship. A discernible rivalry has intensified Thimphu's apprehensions about getting swept into a Sino-Indian struggle. Bhutanese leaders, and progressively more the people, deem that they must settle down their borderline with China and not attach their resolution to India's thornier and more intractable dispute.²⁴ Beijing has proposed Thimphu a tactical swap in which China would acknowledge Bhutan's contested territory in the north in barter for Doklam. New Delhi, nevertheless, steadfastly dissuades surrendering Doklam to China as it will put its chicken neck vulnerable to PLA,²⁵ and it will greatly foster the guerrillas operating under separatist movements in adjoining Indian states. So, Bhutan is facing an unprecedented dilemma in its security strategy as it cannot create a void for its stability by going against the will of two regional giants.

SWOT Analysis

Bhutan has an advantage of the Himalayas to its north, which have always made it harder for China to penetrate because of its

thousands of feet high peaks. Bhutan is significant due to the geostrategic position that borders it with the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and West Bengal. This position makes it a state of importance for China to access the Indian states while India uses it as a buffer to counter China.

The very strengths of Bhutan become its weaknesses because they act as an invitation for the two powers, China and India, to interfere in its economy and politics. Historically, Bhutan has never been colonised but it is under a huge Indian influence and the Royal Bhutanese Army is under influence of the Indian armed forces. Indian influence in Bhutan has been under the Friendship Treaty of 1949, but this treaty has limited Bhutan in establishing its relations with any state against Indian wishes.²⁶ As a landlocked country with a small population and army, the state is left to survive by virtue of its neighbour's support. Bhutan's chief export is hydroelectricity and India helps run the hydroelectric plants.²⁷ Bhutan on its own has neither economic nor military conditions to defend itself under extreme situations. It is the international law that protects its sovereignty.

Bhutan faces the threats of being economically crippled without Indian support. On the other hand, it requires more interaction with other states for growth and development. Bhutan has occasionally shown interest in expanding relations, including with China. Because China has the power to help modernise, educate, and develop infrastructure in Bhutan. Although it rejected the opportunity to be a part of BRI in the past, it may not take similar decisions in the future. This shift can be judged because of Bhutan's entanglement in Indian debt. It has to find a way to acquire more independence in its policies.

Bhutan is also seen as a buffer state by India to keep China away. As there are freedom movements in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Nagaland in the north-east, support and access to China in Bhutan could also fan these movements causing instability in India and preoccupying it with internal conflicts.

Bhutan is currently dominated by India; however, it has started to show a desire to establish diplomatic and economic relations with other states, including China. This could result in tensions between Bhutan and India. In case of any force exertion by India, China can be expected to come forward. Bhutan is now dominated by India with limitations on its growth and increased debt. And in case of a tilt towards China, Bhutan may become a state where China and India face each other threatening its sovereignty as well as peace.

Nepal

Nepal is the only official Hindu state in the world, another landlocked Himalayan country boasting the tallest peak in the world, Mount Everest. The state is a small territory sandwiched between two contending powers China to its North and India to South. The US-China rivalry is putting south Asian states in a precarious spot. For Instance, Nepal and India share a long border of about 1,880 km. The two states have settled maps encompassing 98 per cent of the border, but the Lipulekh pass, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura in western Nepal are amongst the areas that continue to be contested. Collectively, the three zones cover about 370 sq km. The strategic Lipulekh pass joins the Indian state of Uttarakhand with the Tibet region of China. Presently, Nepal and China have been enraged by India's current moves.²⁸ Delhi printed its new map of the boundary in November, following the division of Indian-administered Kashmir in 2019. The map integrated a few of the regions contested with Nepal within India's borders. This contemporary crisis entails the second round of CIA's Tibet operation,²⁹ a vivid attempt of insurgency in China's backyard that can help both the US and India to strengthen their control in the Indo-Pacific. The adversity of Nepal in this big-power show is that being a poor and impoverished landlocked state with a precarious and volatile political structure, major external forces like the US and China with concealed political and strategic pursuits can derail its way ahead. Thus, instead of performing a productive starring role,

these external powers convoluted the progression of tranquillity and peace taking place in Nepal.

SWOT Analysis

Nepal has its geostrategic significance and sufficient natural resources to support its economy but they are untapped. Nepal has friendly relations with India but it is also added to Chinese BRI. Still, it does not enjoy the best of both worlds.

Nepal is a poor state with high taxes, inflation, corruption, civil unrest, and is limited due to its landlocked geography. It has an army but that is not nearly strong enough to defend its borders in case of an attack by a higher power. Nepal depends upon India for most of its trade and India also opens doors for opportunities and jobs for a lot of Nepali people.³⁰

Nepal has been under political turmoil for decades; it is only now that political stability is expected because of a revised Constitution. Nepali governments have proven to be so incompetent and corrupt that none of its industry is booming. It has the potential to generate most of its revenue by tourism, hydroelectricity, irrigation, and agriculture.³¹ China also supports Nepal in establishing local industries.³² Nepal has a border dispute with India.³³ Its relationship with India is more susceptible to damage if India does not provide better opportunities. On the other hand, BRI is a promising deal for a country like Nepal.

Nepal is not currently completely dominated by any power, but it has been influenced by both India and China. In case of increased tension in the region, Nepal may have to take sides. Its position as a buffer state between two powers is a dangerous one for its own peace. Neither does it have effective diplomacy nor any economic or military prowess to defend its sovereignty absolutely.

Maldives

The Republic of Maldives is a small island nation in South Asia,

located in the Arabian Sea of the Indian Ocean. It lies southwest of Sri Lanka and India, an archipelago of the Indian Ocean known for its tropical beauty. It is the smallest state in Asia.

The Maldives retain tactical significance for India underneath the Modi regime's 'neighbourhood first' strategy due to its position in the Indian Ocean. However, in the duration of the pro-Beijing government of their ex-President Abdulla Yamen, bonds between India and Maldives got tensed and strained. There arose a moment in 2018 when India even envisioned an armed intrusion but now the Maldives is reviewing its strategies. It is supporting the US-led approach that is expected to raise eyebrows in Beijing.³⁴ The Maldives can anticipate additional turmoil in its political system in the immediate future as a repercussion of power struggle within the region.

SWOT Analysis

The geostrategic position of Maldives makes it an area of interest for India and China. It is in an important location in the Indian Ocean that China can use to not only counter Indian influence but also to further its global military interests.

The islands of Maldives have tourism and fishing as their major source of income. The islands also has a defence force, which protects it from internal and external threats. China has for long been a friendly country trading with the Maldives and also a source of tourism.³⁵ But this tilt towards China and excess of trade has led the Maldives into debt. The Maldives expects under the current government to get support from India while India is also ready to extend support to Maldives for strategic purposes.³⁶

In the case of bloc politics in the region, India has a higher chance of having the support of Maldives as it is physically closer and can produce a viable relation. However, in any case, if the Maldives decides to stay neutral, it may take a toll on its economy.

Sri Lanka

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island country in South Asia, located in the Indian Ocean southwest of the Bay of Bengal and southeast of the Arabian Sea. Sri Lanka is a developing country with good relations with India as well as China in the region.

Sri Lanka is another epicentre of great power games within South Asia. On one hand, it is encountering severe core political crises, while on the other hand, China, India, and the US are showcasing their agendas that are imperilling the future prosperity and autonomy of Sri Lanka. It is becoming an example of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy. The compression of powerful Chinese authorities concluded in an unfair deal that was ratified without the consent of the opposition. Although it gave China strategically valuable Habantouta port, it also exposed the dirty end of this power game by flaring up the interests of powerful nations within Asia in smaller and unstable nations in the immediate future. The internal and external volatility in Sri Lanka is adding to its vulnerability.³⁷

SWOT Analysis

Sri Lanka can give strategic access to China in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka has deep-rooted relations with China in economic terms. It has even built a billion-dollar port city in Sri Lanka.³⁸ This strong economic relation with China, however, does not ensure the military access too. However, Sri Lankan soldiers do get training opportunities in China. On the other hand, India is the closest state to Sri Lanka and another big market for Sri Lanka. India also wishes to strengthen its relationship with Sri Lanka to counter any threat and save Sri Lankan territory from being used against it.

Once again, Sri Lanka being considerably away from China may not face any direct threat to its security from it. But it is practically entangled completely with China in economic terms. On the other hand, good relations with India can maintain peace in the region. In

case of growing tensions in South Asia, Sri Lanka may choose to stay neutral due to its location, economy, and lack of military role in the region. Only in an extreme situation could we expect China or India to pull strings in Sri Lanka through economic pressure.

Bangladesh

Formal Indo-Bangladesh relations extend over roughly half a century, starting with India among the first states to officially acknowledge Bangladesh. However, India's controversial new citizenship law has hurt relationships with adjoining Bangladesh,³⁹ which worries about a stream of refugees entering the state resulting in a replay of the Rohingya crisis. Several elements thwart and hinder constructive bilateral interactions, stretching from migration disputes, rebel movements, borderline and export disagreements, and the dispute over the very essential resource, the water of the Ganges.⁴⁰ There is a perception of distrust that embodies Indo-Bangladeshi relations over these issues, with Bangladesh seeing India as a hegemon. In the background of all these incidents, China-Bangladesh affairs have morphed into a tactical collaboration.⁴¹ Bangladesh's look east policy is diminishing its reliance on India and enhancing the leverage of China. Under the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, China eliminated tariffs from 84 Bangladeshi manufactured goods that decreased the financial gap between the two countries. Bangladesh is now turning into a crucial player among South Asian nations for China's diplomatic-military realism. Strategic cooperation with Dhaka offers Beijing with enhanced leverage to keep track of Indian forces in the maritime realm. Until now, Bangladesh appeared to be harmonising its ties with both India and China in a larger regional paradigm but cumulative insecurity in Delhi over the influence of China after recent clashes indicates that Bangladesh will also be tested with a succession of compulsions offered by two regional architectures.

SWOT Analysis

Bangladesh is also a country offered huge projects by China under BRI. However, most of them did not come to fruition. The position of Bangladesh is not only important for China but also for other global and regional powers. Bangladesh has its own security threats in terms of smuggling, drug-trafficking, arms-trafficking, etc. The state has received support from China in military terms as China is always willing to export arms and munitions to smaller states.⁴² On the other hand, Bangladesh has also signed defence agreements with India.

Bangladesh is vulnerable in security terms because India certainly holds the ability and prowess to carry out any propaganda in Bangladesh. In regional tensions, Bangladesh could not be judged to wish for any involvement. Neither is Bangladesh so small to be easily swayed. It has huge economic support from other countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Egypt, etc.

Kashmir Issue

Lastly, friction between Pakistan and India magnified after unilateral annexation of Kashmir as an Indian Union Territory and due to the illegal claims on Gilgit-Baltistan. This situation established the threat of an all-out nuclear conflict in South Asia. The sense of balance of power utterly wrecked in the region in 2019 and pressed Pakistan for tighter collaboration with China. The two-edged sword is slicing through the state of Pakistan fearing the debt-trap diplomacy of China and carrot and stick tactic of US. The core economic pandemonium and political insecurity are making it complicated for Pakistan to survive the regional political twists. The only silver-lining for Pakistan is rooted in CPEC so, it will be compelled to dive in Chinese centric regional architecture. This selection will entail countless can of worms for Pakistan in the international theatre.

Conclusion

Recently, Pakistan and India served as a new battleground for two competing security architectures widely known as the Asia Pacific led by China and Indo-Pacific led by the US for imposing their regional order in South-Asia. This complicated tussle is reshaping and rearranging regional dynamics as well as the global order. Since July 2018, China and the US were engaged in a tit-for-tat tariff war that severely affected the trade liberalisation and facilitation worldwide. States like Pakistan and India went through a series of economic problems, which the World Bank depicted as dark clouds harbouring skies. US-India partnership is fuelling a battle of conflicting ideas within South Asia that raised serious concerns in China, Pakistan, and other aligned smaller states. The unilateral decision of the annexation of Kashmir, claim on Kalapani and Lipulekh, Tibet movement, funding of protests in Hong Kong and Taiwan, attempts of sabotaging CPEC, and China's global standing created a deeper security dilemma that led to an assertive rise of China in South Asia. The recent Indo-China border spat created a new cycle of confrontation and expansionism and flared up historical disputes between Nepal, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, and China. The interference of the US in this regional chaos is further exacerbating the already worsened situation. Realism is, therefore, indicating a growing menace of Thucydides' trap between the US and China creating a greater threat for regional stability of south Asia. These clashes, if prolonged, might fulfil the wild ambitions of US and Chinese authorities, but could push de facto nuclear states of Pakistan and India to a dead-end. Therefore, halt to confrontation is the need of the hour, but it does not seem plausible in contemporary situation. The road ahead will be dictated by the informational and algorithmic chess game of the US and China. South Asia might become the first hotspot for non-kinetic future warfare. The scales of war raised altogether from one-time conventional/predictable conflicts under nuclear overhang to an all-out belligerent trade war,

armed posturing, and armaments contest that will further jeopardise the regional harmony and integration within South Asia.

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