



Available Online at ESci Journals

# Journal of South Asian Studies

ISSN: 2307-4000 (Online), 2308-7846 (Print)  
<http://www.escijournals.net/JSAS>

## INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP (1975-1990)

Shahnawaz A. Mantoo\*

*Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, India.*

### ABSTRACT

India's links with Bangladesh are civilization, cultural, social and economic. There is much that unites the two countries - a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. With Bangladesh, India shares not only a common history of struggle for freedom and liberation but also enduring feelings of both fraternal as well as familial ties. This commonality is reflected in multi-dimensional relations with Bangladesh at several levels of interaction. But there had been many twists in the past between the two countries particularly during 1975-1990 which are very much vital to know. The objective of this paper is to highlight the major shifts, as there were those big changes which shaped the future course of the relationship between the two countries. The paper further provides this understanding that the national interest is the most vital part of any country's foreign policy for which it can go to any extent.

**Keywords:** Agreements, Disagreements, Economic Relations Geo-politics, Peace, Strategies, War, Unresolved Issues.

### INTRODUCTION

India and Bangladesh relations have witnessed many ups and downs right from the liberation of Bangladesh. The relations between the two nations after 1975 could not move beyond the expected lines. The military dispensation in Bangladesh brought sea changes in its foreign policy in order to fulfill national interests as well as to come out of Indian domination. This shift in Bangladesh foreign policy equally led to a paradigm shift in India-Bangladesh relations and the two sides particularly Bangladesh diverted its external policy towards western countries because of her diplomatic and economic considerations. The paper seeks to provide an in depth study of these shifts as well as to analyze how national interest compels the nations to change the contours of their foreign policies as happened with Bangladesh. The purpose of the paper is also to highlight the fact that this phase from 1975 to 1990 has in fact changed the future directions and discourse of the bilateral dynamics between the two nations. Currently, both nations are enjoying very good relations.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The relations between the states are studied through different yardsticks. The studying yard sticks are available in the form of theories which have been put forward by different writers who are mainly involved in studying and analyzing the relations between nations. The different writers have put forward different theories to study the bilateral or multilateral relationships. However these theories are not inclusive in their connotations and can't fit everywhere. These theories are not immune from the limitations and drawbacks but what is important here is the co-relation because of which one researcher can come across different pros and cons of the bilateral atmosphere between the two neighboring countries.

This paper focuses on two theoretical frameworks for studying the bilateral relations between the two neighbors i.e. India and Bangladesh. The first theory by which it has been measured is the Realist Theory propounded by Morgenthau (Neacsu, 2009). The main contentions of this theory is defined by different assumptions like: the international realm is anarchic and consists of independent political units called states; states are the primary actors and inherently possess some offensive military capability or power which

\* Corresponding Author:

Email ID: shahnawazmantoo@gmail.com

© 2015 ESci Journals Publishing. All rights reserved.

makes them potentially dangerous to each other; states can never be sure about the intentions of other states; the basic motive driving for the states is 'survival' or the 'maintenance of sovereignty'; states are instrumentally rational and think strategically about how to survive.

The second theory which is largely fit to study the relations between the two neighboring countries is Game theory because of this theory a student of international relations can at least have a touching observation about the intentions of states as well as the maximization policy, which states apply to fulfill their national interests while dealing with the other states. Cooperation is usually analyzed in game theory by means of a non-zero-sum game called the "Prisoner's Dilemma". The two players in the game can choose between two moves, either "cooperate" or "defect". The idea is that each player gains when both cooperate, but if only one of them cooperates, the other one, who defects, will gain more. If both defect, both lose (or gain very little) but not as much as the "cheated" cooperator whose cooperation is not returned. The problem with the prisoner's dilemma is that if both decision-makers were purely rational, they would never cooperate. Indeed, rational decision-making possesses two probabilities. First is that one state makes the decision which is best for it whatever the other actor chooses. Suppose the other one would defect, then it is rational to defect itself. It is meant that the other actor won't gain anything. Second probability is that if the other actor does not defect, it will be stuck with a loss. Suppose the other one would cooperate, then you will gain anyway, but you will gain more if you do not cooperate, so here too the rational choice is to defect. The problem is that if both actors are rational, both will decide to defect, and none of them will gain anything. However, if both would "irrationally" decide to cooperate, both would gain. The main contention here is that it is better for both the nations to be rational so that both can gain from the rational behavior otherwise irrationality may harm both. Being a bigger nation in the region, India has to show more maturity and should show more accommodation towards the smaller nations of the region. Bangladesh on the other side has to live with the reality that geography cannot be changed and there is no best other option than cooperation. Leaving aside the theoretical and hypothetical proposition, the practicality reality demands that both countries should cooperate with each other because cooperation is the best tool to fulfill one's

national interest in the current globalized environment and this cooperation is beneficial for both the countries.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The region of South Asia has gained a lot of international importance during the last two decades. Accordingly, a rich research material has come into existence by some of the top-brass social scientists both from the South Asian region as well as from outside. Many books have been written on the Indo-Bangladesh relationships. The following are some of the books which need a mention here.

Robert Jackson's book *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: A Political and Historical Analysis of the 1971 War* (1975), offers a detailed review of the South Asian politics in general and the relationship between Bangladesh, Pakistan and India in particular. It contextualizes the emergence of the Bangladesh in the South Asian politics.

S.R. Sharma's *Bangladesh Crisis and Indian Foreign Policy* (1978) gives us a graphic picture of the relationship between the two. However, the book ends up giving a chronological account and lacks the analytical vigor.

J.A. Naik's *India, China and Bangladesh* (1992) analyses the significance of the three countries in the stability of the South Asian region.

J.N Dixit's book *Liberation and Beyond: Indo-Bangladesh Relations* (1999) has some of the unique features. The writer has got a good grip on the expertise on international relations. The author has accordingly tried to analyze the relationship in the idiom of this expertise. It accordingly unravels some of the emerging dimensions of the relationship between the two.

Harun Rashid's *Indo-Bangladesh Relations: An Insider's View* (2002) again gives a well-detailed and objective analysis of the topic. The special feature of this book is that it has touched upon the internal aspects of the relationship and has given an in-depth analysis of the same.

*Indo-Bangladesh Relations* (2008) by P.S. Nair documents some of the important aspects of the relationship between the two countries. The book has given a detailed account of the future prospects of the two states in the region.

Another important edited book edited by Smruti S. Pattanaik *Four Decades of India Bangladesh Relations: Historical Imperatives and Future Direction* (2010), provides a detailed understanding of different dimensions of the relations between the two nations. The book also discusses the different issues in detail

between the two nations.

N. Jayapalan has written a very beautiful book *India and Her Neighbours* (2000). The book gives a detailed account of India's relationship with her sub-continent neighbors. The book also discusses in one of its chapters the India-Bangladesh relations and also gives a detailed account of some of the pressing issues between the two nations.

Kathryn Jacques in his book *Bangladesh, India and Pakistan: International Relations and Regional Tensions in South Asia* (2000), discusses the relationship between India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and also provides a detailed account of the internal as well as external dimensions of the relationship between these nations. The book further discusses the main issues between the South Asian nations particularly between these three states.

Mohd Tajuddin in his book *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Liberation War to Sheikh Hasina* (2010) gives a detailed account of the foreign policy of Bangladesh from the liberation of Bangladesh to sheikh Hasina phase. The author also analyses the different dimensions of the Bangladesh foreign policy particularly internal as well as external.

Chandrika J. Gulati in his book *Bangladesh Liberation to Fundamentalism: A Study of Volatile Indo-Bangladesh Relations (1988)* highlights the different dimensions of the Bangladesh society particularly its religious dimensions and in this context discussed the bilateral relations between the two nations.

Jyotindra Nath Dixit in his book *India's Foreign Policy and its Neighbours* (2001) provides a detailed account of India's foreign policy towards its neighbors. At the same time it also highlights different dimension of Indian foreign policy towards the neighboring countries.

Meenu Roy in her well researched book *India and Her Sub-continent Neighbours* (2010) discussed the India's foreign policy towards her neighbors. The writer also gives a lucid overview of different problematic issues between India and her neighboring countries.

Ramaswamy R. Iyer in his book *Water: Perspectives, Issues, Concerns* (2003) discusses and analyzes several interlinked themes related to crucial aspects and many dimensions of water resources in India. The author draws upon his vast administrative experience to present a lucid view of the issues affecting water resources while critically renewing policy and constitutional provisions.

Scott B. MacDonald, Jonathan Lemco in their book *Asia's*

*Rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2011) offer a sophisticated assessment of a group of nations that are becoming essential markets for U.S trade, industry, and finance, even as they increasingly represent fierce competition for global markets. The work traces changes that launched the region down the path to potential economic and political ascendancy, and it looks at various factors, from politics to economics to demographics that affect Asia now and will continue to do so in the future.

David M. Malone in his book *Does the Elephant Dance?: Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy* (2011) is a well-researched book on Indian foreign policy. Does the Elephant Dance? The author seeks to survey the main features of Indian foreign policy. It identifies elements of Indian history relevant to the topic; examines the role therein of domestic politics and internal and external security challenges, and of domestic and international economic factors; and in successive chapters delves into the specifics of India's policy within its South Asian neighborhood, and with respect to China, the USA, Bangladesh, West Asia (the Middle East), East Asia, Europe and Russia, and multilateral diplomacy. It also touches on Indian ties to Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. India's "soft power", the role of migration in its policy, and other cross-cutting issues are analyzed, as is the role and approach of several categories of foreign policy actors in India. Substantive conclusions close out the volume, and touch, inter alia, on policies India may want or need to change in its quest for international stature.

Ramesh Trivedi in his book *India's Relations with Her Neighbours* (2008) offers a fascinating area of academic discourse which needs to be examined for a clear understanding of the elements of international politics which necessarily carry political ramification. It attempts to assess the bilateral relations, co-operations and contours of trades, accords and understandings. To be more precise, it deals with the treaties and accords, political and economic co-operations, trade relations, wars and conflicts of each neighboring-nation with relation to India.

Syed Ali Mujtaba in his book *Soundings on South Asia* (2005) gives a detailed account of a region marked by an asymmetry of power structure, different systems of governance, and interstate conflict but at the same time exhibits a great deal of harmony in ethnic composition, food habits, language, values, mores, and norms. A

compendium of the region's development, these short essays focus on individual countries within the greater South Asian context in order to understand the dynamics that block regional integration. South Asia's inability to forge a regional identity is challenged by theories that argue the differences between countries are not as large as they seem. Apart from the above books the other books on the topic include Marcus F. Franda's *Indo-Bangladesh Relations* (1975), S. S. Bindra's *Indo-Relations* (1982), Rekha Saha's *Indo-Bangladesh Relations* (2000), and Y.M. Bammi's book *India Bangladesh Relations: The Way Ahead* (2010) etc.

Besides these books, there are some important following research papers which have highlighted the areas of concern as well as the areas of convergence.

The research paper written by Piyali Dutta *India-Bangladesh Relations: Issues Problems and Recent Developments* (2010) highlights the historical as well as present context of the relations between the two nations. The paper also highlights the areas of concern and also the development made on various areas between the two nations.

The ASPEN Institute India in its published report *India-Bangladesh Relations: Towards Increased Partnership* discussed the various issues between the two countries particularly some important issues like water sharing, border problem etc. The report also provides some important suggestions as well as the recommendations for the policy makers of the two nations.

Farooq Sobhan in his research paper *India-Bangladesh Relations: Past, Present and Future* (2008) highlights the historical background of the relations as well as provides a detailed account of the present dimensions of the relationship. He also provides valuable proposition regarding the future directions of the relations between the two nations. Moreover, he in his another paper *India-Bangladesh Relations: The Way Forward* provides a detailed account of the present context of relations and also gives a brief description of the future relations between the two nations and also provides some fruitful suggestions.

Muchkund Dubey in his research paper *Indo-Bangladesh Economic Relations* highlights the historical context of the economic aspects of relations between the two. He also mentions the trade imbalance between the two nations and also provides some suggestions as well. The writer also provides detailed account of the trade in new regional discourse and stresses upon the nations to

increase the economic integration which is beneficial to every country in the region.

However, all this literature is in piece-meal and needs to be properly arranged and dovetailed especially in the context of recent developments in the region of South Asia.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The understudy paper necessitates the use of historical and analytical methods. The historical methodology has been used to highlight the historical background of the problem and then in depth analysis has been made to ascertain the main argument of the paper. The paper has used both primary as well as secondary data. The primary sources include policy documents, foreign affair records and other relevant primary sources. The secondary sources which have been used in the paper constitute of books, papers and other relevant secondary material. In fact the data has been used from both sources and hence an attempt has been made to come to the reasonable conclusion.

#### **MAIN ARGUMENT OF THE PAPER**

The relation between the countries by and large revolves round the national interest of a nation. The paper argues that national interest as per the realist School of thought is the main pivot round which the foreign policy of any country is concerned. The foreign policy is designed to fulfill the national interest of a country concerned. The formulation of foreign policy of any country is designed as per the given internal and external environment of a particular nation. Going by the same realist school of thought the India-Bangladesh relations cannot be an exception and which the history itself has proved after 1975. The Bangladesh had this feeling in mind that they have their own nation and to develop it, there was a need to protect the internal as well as external sovereignty of the nation and fulfill the aspirations of the people. The India Bangladesh relations took a u-turn and Bangladesh came under the new army dispensation for the first time since its liberation. The new government led by army formulated its foreign policy according to its domestic milieu as well according to the external forces. This foreign policy of the military regime inserted certain Islamic principles only to gain domestic recognition as well as to come out of the India domination and they were largely successful in this regard. This foreign policy continued till the downfall of Ershad regime. The fact of the matter is that Bangladeshi leaders formulated different set of policies in order to

fulfill its national interests and brought the country to the point where Indian influence could be minimized. The Indian dispensation also realized this fact that the liberation fervor as well the assassination of the trusted friend Sheikh Mujib had brought a paradigm shift in the contours of Bangladesh foreign policy and this in turn had a direct impact on the bilateral atmosphere. They also had this feeling that military establishment is not going to provide any room for Indian government to make further inroads in the internal affairs of the new born nation. The paper further argues that this understudy period had a deep impact on the future of bilateral relations and changed the contours of the foreign policies of both nations.

#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Bangladesh emerged on the world scene after the disintegration of Pakistan on December 16, 1971 under the military patronage of India which set the stage for the Indo-Bangladesh relationship (Nair, 2008). The caesarian birth of Bangladesh has brought an end to the myth of two nation theory based on religion. The emergence of Bangladesh had its impact on the politics of the sub-continent. The historical and geographical proximity of Bangladesh to India coupled with its allegiance to Non-alignment, Panchsheel, Parliamentary Democracy, Socialism, Secularism etc. were compelling factors which persuade Bangladesh to share cooperation with India. Bangladesh liberation movement was spontaneous and democratic in content and secular in spirit. India's massive support and assistance to the Bangladesh liberation struggle made it possible for Bangladesh to attain independence (Ahmed, 1983). The help and assistance of India to Bangladesh created the environment to establish mutual cordial relations. During the 1971 war India gave shelter to ten million refugees and bears the brunt of the war (Islam, Nag, Lama, Khanal, and Kemal, 2010). It was but natural that structural building of society in general and the enactment of constitution in particular. The relationship between the two countries during the emotional and formative years was quite friendly and there were visits and counter-visits from both sides. But as per J. N. Dixit, 'it was unfortunate that this honeymoon phase did not last long due to the assassination of the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman'. Thus, the golden era with which the Indo-Bangladesh relations started came to an end in 1975. Since the incident of 1975, an uncertainty prevailed in the country and a number of

coups took place in succession which had a worse impact on the mutual relations of the countries. After the assassination of Mujibur Rehman, Bangladesh came under the military rule which lasted from 1975 to 1990. At first, it was Ziaur Rehman and then general Ershad who ruled for 15 years (V. N. Khanna, 2007). The military rule damaged the mutual relations between the two countries. The original constitution of Bangladesh reframed and some of the major principles of its earlier constitution were deleted and its new structure was reframed on the religious lines in order to gain legitimacy domestically as well as from outside. The recognition factor which was very important for the survival of Bangladesh also played an important role during this disturbance. India's unhappiness with the military raj of Bangladesh resulted in the damage of the friendly environment to a great extent. After 1975 Bangladesh came closer to western and Muslim countries and the military establishment followed some policies in order to distance Bangladesh from India. These policies had deep impact on the relations of the two countries and the damage control was started after the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1990. After 1990 the relations between two countries resumed the friendly environment leaving some tense moments aside. With the growing relations between the two countries there arose some important issues between the two countries which seriously threatened the friendly environment again. Both countries were able to settle some issues but there are still some irritants between the two countries which need immediate attention of the leadership of both the countries. Presently, the two countries, though slowly, are marching towards good friendly environment and leadership from both sides is serious in promoting and maintaining friendship (Ahuja, 1972).

After the independence, the war ravaged country needed solid leadership with political maturity to overcome the seemingly insurmountable problems created by nine months long war of liberation and to steer the nation to build a society free from corruption, deprivation and exploitation through the means of unity, establishing rule of law, strengthening the democratic institutions and creating economic opportunities for the people. But unfortunately the overthrow and murder of the father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rehman by dissatisfied and disgruntled army officers was the most dramatic of the three coups took place on August 15, 1975, November 3,

1975 and November 7, 1975 in Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's suspension of democratic government in January, his downfall in August and the week of turmoil in November from which General Ziaur Rehman emerged as *de facto* military dictator had profoundly altered country's political structure. The causes and consequences of these upheavals extended beyond the borders of Bangladesh. General Ziaur Rehman eliminated both his moderate rivals such as Khalid Mosharraf and his extremist rivals like the junior officers of the Bangladesh army (Oren, 1976).

Similarly, in 1975, India also experienced her worst political crisis since her independence owing to the domestic compulsions, Indra Gandhi suspended democracy and declared emergency (Palmer, 1976). Mrs. Gandhi's cry of *Grabi Hatao* (out with poverty) still resounded in Delhi and could also be seen resounded in Mujib's promise to his people for economic improvement within three years in his country. In fact, Bangladesh was less a reflection of India than the caricature of it. Bad as had been India's problems over population, agricultural production, industrial growth and political stability while those of the Bangladesh had been for worse. India had severe malnutrition, Bangladesh had plain starvation. India was having industrial stagnation at least in 1970's and 80's Bangladesh lacked industry and was totally depended on jute exports (Oren, 1976).

The new government under the leadership of General Ziaur Rehman gradually undertook some measures in foreign policy in order to bring the country closer towards western and eastern powers which could prove beneficial to its domestic as well as of foreign policy. The Bangladeshi leaders realized the need to fulfill her national interests and accordingly took some immediate measures to realize this end. India considered it a balance shift in the policies of Bangladesh thereto natural changes commenced in the strategies of South Asian politics particularly by bringing the China and USA at the door steps of India. Bangladesh is strategically important for India and served as a 'corridor' in the South Asian region (Ahmed and Nazneen, 1990). The military-civil bureaucratic government knowing the domestic and international environment began to be viewed as anti-India and anti-Soviet and pro-US, pro-West, pro-Pakistan or pro-Islamic in its foreign policy, therefore, the assassination of Mujibur Rehman marked a qualitative change in Indo-Bangladesh relations. The

successive regimes established good relations with Pakistan and other Islamic countries at the cost of its good relations with India. Countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia which was reluctant to open trade with Bangladesh during Mujib's regime now established both diplomatic and trade relations. With the result, within this changed context Bangladesh adopted "outward" looking foreign policy which was based on a new pragmatism (Ahmed and Nazneen, 1990).

#### **THE ERA OF ZIAUR REHMAN**

Ziaur Rehman first came to power in Bangladesh in November 1975, after the third of three bloody military coups that started with the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Political instability however prevailed in Bangladesh till Ziaur Rehman, the Chief of the Army Staff and the Chief Martial Law Administrator was sworn in as the President of Bangladesh (Franda, 1982).

The fall of Mujibur Rehman marked the watershed in Indo-Bangladesh relations and the growth of religious fanaticism and Bangladesh's change of stance in foreign policy seriously impaired the relations (Franda, 1981). Zia's animosity to Mujib and Mujib's cordiality to India made the former suspicious of New Delhi. Shortly after Ziaur Rehman's consolidation of power there was a deterioration in Indo-Bangladesh relations which was symbolized by the strong stand adopted by India in response to the attempted assassination of Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka. The growing mistrust was multiplied by the promptitude of Pakistan in recognizing the government of Ziaur Rehman. Although, Pakistan had recognized Bangladesh in 1974, the relations between the two countries during the Mujib period were not buoyant. After coming to power Ziaur Rehman adopted every possible measure to follow an independent internal as well as external policy and to get the country out of the position of dependence on India. Ziaur Rehman wanted to develop the quality of life of the people of Bangladesh which according to him was not likely to be raised by the schemes and ideals of the previous governments hatched between the civilian politicians and their henchmen, nor by what increasing became regarded in Bangladesh as a fawning servility to India on the part of the Awami League Government. Zia was fully aware of the fact that Bangladesh required proper planning, discipline, public demonstrable uprightness and the political will to succeed (Denis Wright, 1996).

In view of this Ziaur Rehman planned his own strategy

to bring Bangladesh out of indo-Soviet camp and lessen her dependence on India. He followed his own way of undoing the reforms introduced by his predecessors and added newer dimension to the country's political system. He concentrated on two spheres where the Awami League Government had fared badly and faced defame during the end of Mujibur Rehman's rule. He wanted to ensure political stability and economic growth.

**Policies of Ziaur Rehman:** Ziaur Rehman is considered the most realistic president of Bangladesh because of his policies he adopted immediately after becoming the president of the country. President Zia made some amendments in the constitution in 1977 which brought significant changes in the four principles of the country's Constitution i.e., nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism which were installed by the former Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujib in 1972 Constitution (Haroon Habib, 2011). Ziaur Rehman restored Islam by dropping secularism from the constitution and expressed his commitment to the rest of the principles. Thus, Bangladesh ceased to be a secular state and in place of secularism it was asserted, "absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah" (Dixit, 1999). It further stressed that "the state shall make an effort to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity" (Franda, 1981). Further known as '*Bangladeshis*' and not as '*Bengalese*' as provided by the 1972 Constitution, by changing the term President Zia wanted to give a territorial rather than an ethnic-linguistic identification (Haroon Habib, 2011). Moreover, the term Bangladeshi also differentiated the citizens of Bangladesh from the '*Bengalis*' of India (Jahan, 1980). It was an attempt by the Zia regime to bring his country closer to the Islamic world for recognition as well as for assistance. He became successful in pleasing the Islamic countries and received their aid in large amount. Besides this, it was considered an attempt of the Bangladesh government to distance itself from India. Zia government used Islam as a tool to bring unity among the people and various factions in the society who were earlier dissatisfied with the secular policy of the Mujib government and wanted Bangladesh to be declared an Islamic state. Another important step to digress the earlier pro-India policy, the post-Mujib regimes followed a strategy of weed out Hindus from the army, police and civil services. This led to an exodus of the Hindus from the Bangladesh to India.

New Delhi provided asylum to them and prevented them from going back to the Bangladesh (Khan and Zafarullah, 1980). The three coups and their aftermath events made a serious impact on Indo-Bangladesh relationship. The combination of political power formed by the United States, China and Pakistan, fully endorsed these measures of the Bangladesh government and provide political and economic support to the government (Narian, 1987). By providing Islamic leanings to the internal as well as external policies brought Bangladesh government closer to Pakistan. After establishing diplomatic ties with Bangladesh in October 1976 Pakistan stressed upon other Muslim countries especially Saudi Arabia to grant recognition to Ziaur Rehman's regime (Kodikara, 198).

**Issues between India and Bangladesh during Zia's Regime:** There were four major issues which generated controversies between India and Bangladesh during Ziaur Rehman's regime. Of these two were inherited from Pakistan viz; water sharing from the river Ganges and dispute over exchange of enclaves and the other two were New Moore Island dispute and the problem of illegal migration.

**Ganges Water Issue:** Immediately after independence, Bangladesh entered into negotiations with India on water sharing from the river Ganges and the Joint River Commission was formed in 1972 with a view to work together in harnessing benefits of the rivers common to both the countries for the development of the people of the two countries (Mustafa, 1996). As a result of the cordial relations during Mujib era, a temporary agreement was reached on this issue. After the political changes in 1975, Zia's regime found it difficult to reach an agreement with India on water sharing at Farakka. The previous agreement of 1974 expired in May 1975 and until 1977 there was no agreement on this issue. Anti-India feelings were in its full swing since 1975-77. The press of Bangladesh played a significant role in arousing anti-India feelings among the people. The most of the people in Bangladesh were of the view that the Indra government was apparently determined to erode General Ziaur Rehman's position and policies by assisting the clandestine elements (Kodikara, 1981).

When successive attempts failed to reach a consensus, Bangladesh government internationalized the dispute and raised it before the Organization of Islamic

Countries (OIC), Foreign Ministers Conference in Istanbul in May 1976 and before the Non-alignment movement (NAM) summit at Colombo (B M Jain, 2010). Subsequently the issue was placed before the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in November 1976 (Kodikara, 1981). Indian government opposed the internationalization of the Farakka Barrage issue on the grounds that it was essentially a bilateral issue and the internationalization of the issue would only complicate the situation, delay solution and would worsen the relations between the two countries. India had also maintained that the question of water usage was a legal and technical problem which could not lend itself to political discussion (Abass, 1982). New Delhi's reaction was unambiguously expressed in the special political committee of the United Nations by India's Foreign Secretary Jagat. S. Mehta who said on November 1976 that, "*It was not India's aim to use any more water from the Ganga than was necessary to save the port of Calcutta*". According to him India was legally and morally entitled to withdraw waters within her jurisdiction for her needs (India and Foreign Review, December 1976). After narrating the whole facts of Farakka issue in the United Nations committee, India's Foreign Secretary said that, "the allegations made by Bangladesh were far-fetched and unfounded". Recalling, the rationale of the Farakka Barrage issue Jagat. S. Mehta suggested that the special political committee could best serve the interests of the two countries by urging them to resume bilateral negotiations in the spirit of mutual trust and cooperation Further India's permanent representative to the United Nations Rikhi Jaipal maintained that, "Bangladeshi attempt to present it in multilateral context cannot be regarded as promoting negotiations in good faith between neighbouring states" (Thakur and Wiggen, 2004).

Y.B Chavan India's Minister for External Affairs and leader of the Indian delegation to United Nations General Assembly session elaborating the problem and commented that most of the countries including the great powers and Arab nations who attended the General Assembly meeting felt that Farakka barrage issue is bilateral in nature and could be solved through a direct dialogue between India and Bangladesh (Thakur and Wiggen, 2004). Consequently Bangladesh's attempt to internationalize the dispute with India further deteriorated the relations between the two countries. Thus, the Bangladeshi move to internationalize the

Farakka barrage issue ended in a failure but paved the way for bilateral negotiations between the two countries (Thakur & Wiggen, 2004).

With a view to settle the issue bilaterally, New Delhi resumed negotiations and three rounds of ministerial level talks were held in the same year. However no resolution was made till the change of Government in New Delhi from Congress Party to Janata Party in March in 1977.

**Ideological Shift:** This ideological transformation brought by Bangladeshi leaders proved a very decisive as far as the future of India and Bangladesh relations was concerned. This transformation changed the future course of Bangladesh politics and leaders tried their best to reframe the constitution in order to come out of Indo-centric constitution and thus came closer to other powers that were adverse to India. The Ziaur Rehman was the man who was mainly responsible for this transformation and it was he who laid the foundation of this ideological transformation and other leaders particularly his party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) followed the suit.

#### **INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS DURING THE ERA OF JANATA GOVERNMENT**

Perhaps no single year since 1947 had been as momentous in the political annals of India as 1977. It had been momentous for the unexpected but epoch making political change that occurred with fall of Mrs. Gandhi's emergency regime through the ballot box. The elections struck the final blow to the dominant Congress Party rule which was already disintegrating under the weight of its internal contradictions. Janata party and its allies won 328 out of the 542 seats in parliament as against 153 for Congress. It was clear that the Janata victory was not simply the consequence of a consolidation of the opposition vote, but a substantial shift away from the Congress party (Weiner, 1977). Whatever the future brings, however, it was clear that India have experienced a remarkable democratic change that is no less a revolution because it happened through an extraordinary election rather than through a violent upheaval.

The change of government in India in 1977 had particularly influenced creation of trust among her small neighbors in particularly with Bangladesh. The Junta Government based her policy on beneficial bilateralism which created favorable response from Bangladesh. The Janata government brought certain changes in her



foreign policy and followed the, "Policy of Genuine Non-alignment and Beneficial Bilateralism" (Peu Ghosh, 2013). The execution of the policy of, "beneficial bilateralism" had three important dimensions namely Personal Rapport, Economic Accommodation, Political Neutrality and Non-interference in internal affairs (Muni, 1979).

The Junta Government changed the previous governments policy of support to Bangladeshi rebels and it also realized that the Congress government's policy towards neighbors suffered from a duality i.e., "of using 'good neighborliness' as a cliché on the one hand and adoption of a superior and imperious tone on the other". Therefore, the Junta government dedicated itself to remove this duality and restore credibility through beneficial bilateralism and genuine Non-alignment. The significance of Junta government's policy towards neighbors was clearly stated by Foreign Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in a university seminar where he stated that, "The junta governments from the first day of its existence, set out deliberating to clear the cobwebs of suspicion, removes misunderstanding and banish the fear of interference. We have not only professed strict non-interference in the affairs of its neighbours, but also practiced often in the face of great temptation to do the contrary. In seeking cooperation from and offering it to our neighbours we have never imposed ourselves upon them. We have gently tried to explain to them the mutuality of advantage in bilateralism and allowed the irresistible logic of geography to assert itself.... We have conducted and are conducting an open policy of friendship, mutually advantageous cooperation and equal and beneficial bilateralism with our neighbours....." (Gulati, 1990).

The Junta government had certain similarities with the Zia regime in Bangladesh. Under regimes of Indra Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, India and Bangladesh did not cultivate cordial relations with the United States and kept at bay to China also. But both Ziaur Rehman and Morarji Desai brought their respective countries closer to the United States. Through the personnel contacts with the Indian prime minister, Ziaur Rehman could make his country's interests accommodative with the interests of India and vice versa. In 1979 Bangladesh even persuaded New Delhi to agree to involve Kathmandu in discussion on sharing of Ganges water. Zia also was eager to improve the relations with India. In the meantime, India had begun to

improve her relations with USA as well as China which Bangladesh had already fostered. Hence, there was no point of hostility/rivalry to arise among the relations of both the countries (Bindra, 1982: 53).

#### **REGIME OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI**

The Desai regime wanted to cooperate in every way with her small neighbors so that political stability, peace and order could be maintained in the region and cordial relations be maintained. The Junta Government expressed her belief that even the smallest neighbor was important for her and emphasized on maintaining cordial relations with the neighbors. The change of the governments in the two countries paved the way towards strengthening and stabilizing of the political and economic ties among the two countries. The Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai and the Bangladeshi President Ziaur Rehman met for the first time in London at the heads of the Commonwealth Nations meeting on June 10, 1977 where both the leaders agreed to sort out their differences (Muni, 1978). It was there that India agreed not to allow the Bangladeshis on Indian side of the border to carry on with the hostile activities against Zia government in Bangladesh. As a result of this understanding, more than 900 of such dissidents were sent to Bangladesh. This understanding resulted in the cooperation of Border Security Forces (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in fighting against the insurgents. At the end of the meeting the two leaders indicated that, "every attempt would be made to strengthen the relations between the two countries which began to deteriorate since the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman". In 1977, when the Zia government provided political stability in the country and Desai government was also able to give new directions to foreign policy in promoting friendly relations with the immediate neighbors, an agreement was reached on November 5, 1977 on the sharing of Ganga water during the lean season. The agreement was the major breakthrough and a very positive step towards building a strong bilateral relationship based on mutual trust and confidence (Muni, 1978: 96).

**Ganges Water Agreement 1977:** The biggest achievement of this particular period (1975-1990) was the Ganges Water Agreement 1977. The agreement was reached despite some irritants and very disturbing domestic circumstances in both the countries at that time. The Junta government, the first non-congress

government under the leadership of Morarji Desai assumed office in the last week of March 1977 at the center. The new government adopted a policy of close relations with neighboring countries under the rubric “beneficial bilateralism”. In its eagerness to promote good neighborly relations with Bangladesh the Junta government started its exercise of resuming talks with the government Bangladesh on Farakka and other issues (Salman and Uprety, 2002). Before the 1977 agreement

there were three rounds of official level talks between the leaders of the two countries held from September 20 to 30, 1977. The agreement was finally negotiated and signed at the ministerial level in Dhaka by Shri Surjeet Singh Burnala for the Government of the Republic of India and Rear Admiral Mosharraf Hussain Khan for the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The agreement was divided into three parts consisted of 15 articles, a schedule and a Side letter (Parua, 2006).

Table 1. Sharing of Ganges water at Farakka Between (1 January and 31 may every year).

Period	Flows reaching Farakka (based on 75% availability From observed data 1948-73)	Withdrawal by India	Release to Bangladesh
Cusecs			
Jan 1-10	98,500	40,000	58,500
11-20	89,750	38,500	51,250
21-31	82,500	45,000	47,500
Feb 1-10	79,250	33,000	46,250
11-20	74,000	31,500	42,500
21-28/29	70,000	30,750	39,250
Mar 1-10	65,250	26,750	38,500
11-20	63,500	25,500	38,000
21-31	62,000	25,000	36,000
Apr 1-10	59,000	24,000	35,000
11-20	55,500	20,750	34,750
21-30	55,000	20,500	34,500
May 1-10	56,500	21,500	35,500
11-20	59,250	24,000	35,250
21-31	65,500	26,750	38,750

Source: Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. XXII, November 1977, No. 11, p. 218.

**Articles of the Ganges Water Treaty 1977:** Some related articles are as follows:

*Article 1:* The quantum of waters agreed to be released would be at Farakka

*Article II:*

- The dry season availability of the historical flows was established from the recorded flow of the Ganges from 1948 to 1973 on the basis of 75% availability. The shares of India and Bangladesh of the Ganges flows at 10-day periods are fixed, the shares in the last 10-day periods of April (the leanest) being 20,500 and 34,500 cusecs respectively out of 55,000 cusecs availability at that period (Mizanur Rehman, 2006).
- In order to ensure Bangladesh’s share in the event of any lower availability at Farakka Bangladesh share should not fall below 80% of the stated share in a particular period shown in a schedule annexed to the agreement.

*Article III:* Only minimum water would be withdrawn between Farakka and Bangladesh border.

*Article IV:* A committee consisting of representatives nominated by the two governments in equal numbers shall be constituted following the signing of this treaty. The joint committee shall set up suitable teams at Farakka and Hardinge Bridge in order to observe and record at Farakka the daily flows below Farakka barrage, in the Feeder Canal and at the Navigation Lock as well as the Hardinge Bridge.

*Article V:* The joint Committee had to decide its own procedure and method of functioning.

*Article VI:* The Joint Committee had to submit all data collected and a yearly report to both the governments. Following submission of the reports the two governments will meet at appropriate levels to decide upon such further actions as may be needed.

*Article VII:* The Joint Committee was to be responsible for implementing the arrangements contained in the treaty and examining any difficulty arising out of the implementation of the above arrangements and of the operation of Farakka Barrage. Any difference or dispute arising in this regard, if not resolved by the Joint

Committee, would be referred to the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission. If the difference or dispute still remains unresolved it would be referred to the two governments which shall meet urgently at the appropriate level to resolve it by mutual discussion.

*Article VIII:* The two governments recognizing the need to cooperate with each other in finding a solution to the long term problem of augmenting the flows of the Ganges during the dry season.

*Article IX:* Guided by the principles of equity, fairness and no harm to either party both the governments agree to conclude water sharing Treaties/Agreements with regard to other common rivers.

*Article X:* The sharing arrangements under this treaty was to be reviewed by the two governments at five years interval or earlier as required by both party and needed adjustments based on principles of equity, fairness and no harm to either party made thereto if necessary. It was to be open to either party to seek first review after two years to assess the impact and working of the sharing arrangements as contained in this treaty.

*Article XI:* For the period of this treaty in the absence of mutual agreement on adjustments following reviews as mentioned in Article X India was to release downstream of Farakka Barrage water at a rate not less than 90% of Bangladesh's share according to the formula referred to in Article II, until such time as mutually agreed follows as decided upon.

*Article XII:* The treaty shall enter into force upon signature and shall remain in force for a period of thirty years and it shall be renewable on the basis of mutual consent (Dixit, 1992). Through the 1977 agreement India for the first time recognized the international character of the water of national River Ganges. Although the agreement provided a short term solution for the distribution of waters but it opened the way for a long term planning. The short term agreement laid down the quantum of water that India was to withdraw below Farakka during the lean session in which flow of Ganges comes down to around 55,000 cusecs (Dixit, 1992). In this agreement a highly consideration and sympathetic view of Bangladesh needs was taken into consideration. The Indian government did not press for securing a large quantum of Ganga water that was necessary for the health and safety of Calcutta port but instead it tried to win over the friendship and cooperation of Bangladesh by providing to her certain vital concessions. The agreement was severely criticized by the Indian press

and people because according to them it failed to safeguard the interests of India. Surjeet Singh Barmala observed that it reflected, "The spirit of accommodation and the desire for cooperation" (Dixit, 1992). Admiral Khan who signed the agreement on behalf of Bangladesh government said that, "it was a historic agreement and a meaningful step of far-reaching importance in the way of finding a lasting solution to the problem" However the main opposition party's leader Indra Gandhi while criticizing the agreement said, "By accepting a minority share in Ganges waters the Junta government was guilty of changing the consistent stand that India has been taking prior to 1977. Further that the agreement was designed more to reverse the stand taken by the previous congress government and less to satisfy the needs and interests of India. It was executed without any regard for the opinion of the experts" (Dixit, 1992: 308). The Prime Minister of India Morarji Desai while defending the agreement said that, "it is a historic agreement of extraordinary significance and the agreement have been reached through bilateral negotiations on the mutual goodwill and on the basis of accommodation". He further said that the real importance of the agreement was reflected in the approach and spirit which had made it possible. While giving his support he said, "such an approach and spirit if applied to the larger spectrum of our relations with Bangladesh can lead to an ever-widening cooperation between the two countries both bilaterally and in multi-lateral forums and it should constitute to furtherance our objective of promoting peace and development in the sub-continent and of working together towards a better world order" (Jayapalan, 2000)

The opposition parties launched a severe criticism in the Lok Sabha against the agreement. Chitta Basu moved a resolution which called upon the house to disapprove the agreement as being inadequate for supplying the water to Bhagirathi so as to save the Calcutta port. The Junta government was however successful in getting the agreement passed by the Lok Sabha (Foreign Affairs Record, 1997).

However leaving aside the criticism the agreement was a great achievement of both countries as it was seen as a very big confidence building measure after the end of honeymoon phase in 1975. This agreement enabled the Bangladesh head Ziaur Rehman to continue the negotiations for improving relations between the two countries. Accordingly Zia visited New Delhi in

December 1977 for the talks with Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai as part of the normalization of mutual relations. Both leaders showed a keen interest in resolving the New Moore islands dispute and also agreed to expedite implementation of land boundary agreement. New Moore is a 5.2 km island on which India ascertained her claim after providing Bangladesh with relevant information. India erected a number of pillars and hosted the Indian flag on the island on March 12, 1980 (Parua, 2006). Since then the Bangladesh government raised anti-India campaign in full swing and started collecting data and information to depict her claim over the ownership of the island. Bangladesh insisted on joint survey which India declines to accept. Regarding the Farakka barrage both leaders stressed the need for a long term solution of the water problem. After Zia's visit Prime Minister Morarji Desai told a press conference that Zia's visit to New Delhi has "marked a prominent milestone in the process of mending our fences and giving a new turn to the wheels of progress" (Parua, 2006).

The Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai along with Foreign Minister A.P.G Vajpayee also visited Dacca in April 17, 1979 as a further breakthrough in the renewal of neighborly relations between the two countries (Asian Recorder, 1979). Morarji Desai calls for more conferences and communication between the Border Security Forces of Bangladesh and the Indian states for sorting out how human border could be better regulated. During Desai's visit, Dacca and New Delhi agreed to set up committees, in addition to the high-powered Joint Rivers Commission, to work out a formula to prevent erosion along the Kushiara River and to share the waters of the Khowai and Teesta rivers (Asian Recorder, 1979). During this visit India agreed to import more items from Bangladesh including jute, timber, paper, naphtha, rayon, newsprint, pulses, and specialized textiles. Another significant development was the decision for wider cooperation through joint ventures in the fields of cement, biogas, solar energy, and fertilizer. India further offered Dacca 200,000 tons of food grains on an emergency basis, and accordingly an agreement was made in May. However, the Dacca-New Delhi relationship during 1979 remained tense because of the influx of 20,000 Indian Muslims from West Bengal in June, following communal riots. There was also sporadic exchange of fire in late 1979 between the border forces of the two countries at Hili, Belonia points,

and across the Mahuri River (Bhasin, 2003).

#### **INDRA GANDHI'S RESURGENCE PHASE**

'It's Indra Gandhi All The Way' was the lead headline in both The Times of India and The Hindustan Times, two of India's leading English dailies, on January 7, 1980, a day after the last vote had been cast in the country's seventh Parliamentary election. The Junta government could not complete the term and finally general elections were held in which Congress Party came back to power. After assuming the office Indra Gandhi criticized Junta Party for its weak foreign policy and alleged that it had ignored national interest (Rekha Saha, 2000). She had no good impression about post-Mujib regimes due to her dislikes for military rule. The Junta government's accommodative stance with India's neighbours was also not liked by her whom she viewed as a sellout of Indian interests. Mrs. Gandhi was critical of the foreign policy pursued by Desai government particularly in South Asia, yet on resuming Prime Minister's office in 1980 her policies towards India's neighbours underwent only marginal changes. The Indra Gandhi's approach with regard to neighbours was little harsh towards the end of her first term (Singh, 2003).

The domestic changes in Bangladesh were equally noteworthy as Zia became more confident about himself after civilianizing his military rule through the parliamentary elections held in 1979. Ziaur Rehman was fully aware of the fact that a policy of conciliation and cooperation with India could bring rich dividends to the country (Deo, 1991). In order to improve the relations with New Delhi Zia brought about some changes within his cabinet. To remove suspicion of India, Zia dropped Mouded Ahmed Deputy Prime Minister and an influential member of his cabinet who led the Bangladesh team in the Ganges Water talks with Delhi during the Junta regime (Nair, 2008). Zia was the first head of the state to meet Indra Gandhi and convey his greetings. Zia hoped his abrupt visit to New Delhi would change India's attitude towards him. But contrary to Zia's expectations Awami League supporters distributed sweets to express their joy when they heard the news of the massive victory of Indra Gandhi in the elections. This led one section of the people of Bangladesh to apprehend that India would interfere in Bangladesh once again. However, gradually the relations between the two countries showed some signs of improvement (Saha, 2000). President Ziaur Rehman visited New Delhi on January 20, 1980 to attend the United Nations

Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) conference. During the course of his visit he had two rounds of talks with Indra Gandhi. They discussed bilateral issues particularly border problems and sharing of Ganga waters at Farakka and decide to resolve these issues. The frequent meetings with Indian counterpart to resolve the outstanding issues brought optimism to the Bangladesh government and its leadership (Kuldeep Singh, 1987).

Ziaur Rehman mooted the idea of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) to offer a framework under which solutions to various international disputes of the South Asian region could be sought on multilateral basis (Hussain, 1981). India's approach towards solving the issue was on a bilateral basis and not multilateral and hence it viewed Zia's move with suspicion and distrust. At the preliminary meeting of the South Asian Foreign Secretaries held in Colombo on April 21-23, 1981 to consider a Bangladesh draft paper on SAARC, India insisted that bilateral and contentious issues should be excluded from their deliberations.

A perusal of Indo-Bangladesh relations during 1975-1981 (post Mujib era) reveals that pragmatism replaced the emotional framework and mind-set evolved during the liberation war which resulted in stresses and strains in the relationship of the two countries. Besides the above developments the New Moore island controversy soured the relations between the two countries during this period as there was no breakthrough regarding the issue. During this period the relations between the two countries had at times been testy with wide spread rumors that New Delhi had been adopting unreasonable assertive attitude towards her neighbor. Many of the old issues were revived and Dhaka's attempt to internationalize issues against India's wishes caused concern to India. Amidst several attempts to normalize the relations through peaceful negotiations the contentious issues remained unresolved. No doubt both the governments attempted to find a lasting solution to the issues between the two countries at different levels but it seemed that the trust-deficit could not help to maintain people to people relations although government to government relations were being preserved (Nair, 2008).

#### **GENERAL HUSAIN MUHAMMAD ERSHAD'S PERIOD (1982-1990)**

After the assassination of Ziaur Rehman on May 30, 1981, Abdus Sattar assumed power and established a

constitutional government in Bangladesh which sustained for a short period till it was replaced by a military overthrow led by Husain Muhammad Ershad on March 1982. He assumed the office of the president in December 1983 and remained in power over eight years and eight months (Ghosh, 1990).

Ever since assumption of power by General Ershad like General Zia he also emphasized on ideological transformation both at domestic as well as at relations with other countries. He emphasized that the cultural life of the Bangladeshis was to be based on the Islamic principles. He introduced changes in the educational policy and introduced Arabic as a compulsory subject in the elementary classes. All efforts to Islamize education and culture by the government and despite people's stress on Islamic identity from time to time in post liberation period, the dominant force in the socio-cultural ethos of Bangladesh is still secular but this process of change in national ideology strained the relations between the two countries (Ziring, 1992).

The Indra Gandhi regime welcomed the installation of Ershad government in Bangladesh and hoped to maintain friendly relations with the neighbours and stressed for the early settlement of bilateral issues mutually (Ghosh, 1989). To strengthen the relations between the two countries, Narasimha Rao- India's Foreign Minister visited Bangladesh in May 1982 and promised to supply 1,00,000 tons of wheat to Bangladesh in order to meet the food shortage of Bangladesh. President Ershad also reciprocated of maintaining good relations with India by visiting New Delhi in October 1982. During this October meeting, both the leaders agreed to form, a Joint Economic Commission to identify various areas of mutual economic cooperation. They discussed the operation of the 1977 Farakka agreement and further extended it for two more lean seasons and directed the Joint Rivers Commission to find out ways and means and commonly acceptable solution in order to arrive at final agreement. Memorandum of Understanding on Ganges Water Sharing: On October 7, 1982 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in New Delhi.

Besides, both the leaders agreed to complete the implementation of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement. India further agreed to transfer Tin Bigha Corridor in eternity to Bangladesh (Jayapalan, 2001). They agreed to resolve the issue of maritime boundary dispute in a spirit of understanding and good neighborliness.

Table 2. Sharing of Ganga Water at Farakka Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> May every year.

Period	Flows reaching Farakka (based on 75% availability From observed data 1948-73)	Withdrawal by India	Release to Bangladesh
	Cusecs		
Jan 1-10	98,500	40,000	58,500
11-20	89,750	38,500	51,750
21-31	82,500	35,000	47,000
Feb 1-10	79,250	33,000	46,250
11-20	74,000	31,250	42,750
21-28/29	70,000	31,000	39,000
Mar 1-10	65,250	26,500	38,750
11-20	63,500	25,500	38,000
21-31	61,000	25,000	35,750
Apr 1-10	59,000	24,000	35,000
11-20	55,500	20,750	34,750
21-30	55,000	20,500	34,500
May 1-10	56,500	21,500	35,500
11-20	59,250	24,250	35,000
21-31	65,500	26,550	39000

Source: Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. XXVIII, 1982, p. 255.

Both the leaders agreed to resolve the dispute over the ownership of New Moore Island/South Talpatty. They also emphasized the need to stop illegal immigration of people across the borders. The Joint Economic Commission which was established soon after the liberation of Bangladesh remained active only for a couple of years, and then the commission went into a long period of hibernation until it became dead. As a result a new Joint Economic Commission was set up in 1982, but could not make any headway in its required agenda. Since its establishment it has met only thrice in 1986, 1990 and 1993 (Jayapalan, 2001).

Both the governments extended the bilateral trade pact from 1986 to October 1989. In addition an inland trade and transit protocol allowing Indian vessels to pass through Bangladesh, exemplified a maturing cooperative relationship necessitated by Bangladeshi's geo-political situation. The original protocol was signed in November 1972, renewed in 1984 and extended in 1986 on a quarterly basis. The agreement was later renegotiated and according to its provisions remained effective until October 1989. By this India agreed to pay transit charges and port fees. The ability of both governments to compromise on economic issues boded well for the possibility of future bilateral agreements (Singh, 2003).

Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister of India was assassinated on October 31, 1984. She was killed by two of her Sikh bodyguards, Satwant Singh and Beant Singh,

to avenge the military attack on the Harmandir Sahib (Sikhism's holiest shrine, also called "The Golden Temple") during Operation Blue Star. Her son Rajiv Gandhi took office of Prime Ministership at the age of 40 after his mother's assassination and became the youngest Prime Minister of India (Meena Agarwal, 2004).

The Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi was trying to play a role of a Big Brother with the neighboring countries (Agrawal, 2004). The foreign policy goals he set himself were based on a desire to improve India's relations with its neighbors, as well as the super-powers and reaffirmed his faith in Non-alignment principles and United Nations Origination. His statements were widely taken to mean in the west, especially in the United States, that he would move away from the Soviet Union, which had traditionally been close to India. This view was further strengthened by Mr. Gandhi's many statements about the need for economic liberalization in his country. His ambition was to make India a model industrial power in the developing world. This would naturally require large-scale imports of industrial goods as well as the sophisticated technology which only the west could offer. The hope, therefore, had been that as India's dependence on the west would increase, so its political ties with the Soviet Union would loosen (Tripathi, 1988).

The Bangladeshi President General Ershad paid several

visits to New Delhi during Rajiv Gandhi's rule and the Indian Prime Minister also reciprocated in the same manner (Jayapalan, 2000: 133-34). Rajiv Gandhi visited Bangladesh twice in 1985. He was on one day visit to Bangladesh in the aftermath of the severe cyclonic devastation in the coastal belt on June 2, 1985. He expressed his sympathy and solidarity on behalf of the people of India with the people of Bangladesh at the time of crisis. He even visited the worst affected island, Urrir Char, and offered material help for the cyclone affected people and demonstrated goodwill towards Bangladesh. After Rajiv's visit a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of India visited Bangladesh in June 1985. It was hoped that the agenda was to find out a lasting solution to the sharing of Ganga Water, which had been the bone of contention among the two countries since long (Agrawal, 2004).

Again the two leaders met at Bahamas during the Commonwealth Summit in October 1985, and decided to cooperate in each and every way to improve their relationship. The cooperative endeavor of the two countries resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding at a Ministerial level on November 22, 1985 on the sharing of Ganga Water during the lean season for the next three years (1986-88) with a provision to work out a scheme to augment the flow through a joint study of the experts of the two countries within a year's duration (Ghosh, 1989).

In July 1986 the Bangladesh President General Ershad visited India and conducted wide ranging talks with the Indian leaders. The two countries agreed to cooperate in checking cross-border insurgency and resolved to find an amicable solution to the river water issue. Bangladesh further agreed to take back all measures for enabling the Chakma tribals who have illegally entered Tripura. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Ershad agreed that negotiations on the maritime boundary between the two countries in the Bay of Bengal region be resumed. They also considered steps necessary for giving an impetus to the economic relations as well as accepted the need for an early convening of the Joint Economic Commission. India further assured Bangladesh of its commitment to transfer Teen Bigha enclave. The talks were held in an atmosphere of "cordiality which led to "a greater degree of understanding between the two countries and a willingness to cooperate in solving bilateral problems" (Jayapalan, 2000) Farakka issue, however, continued to

be the major problem of Indo-Bangladesh relations. It was hoped that the two countries would be successful in resolving the issue through mutual efforts.

President Ershad again visited India in September 1988 and discussed the various aspects of bilateral relations which included occurring of the floods in Bangladesh. The Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assured him to solve the problem of floods caused by the Ganga and Brahmaputra jointly and both agreed to form a task force to look after the short and long term measures of flood management of the Brahmaputra and the Ganga rivers and utilization of surplus waters. The agreement was contained in a short communiqué issued at the end of six hour talks between the two governments in New Delhi on September 29, 1988 (Banerjee, Hazarika and Samaddar, 1999). The Indian Prime Minister rejected Bangladesh's proposal for the involvement of third country in solving the problem and made it clear that there can be no departure from the policy of bilateralism on such matters. Bangladeshi President became successful in persuading India to have a new look into flood management. On the other hand India succeeded in steering Bangladesh away from its efforts to involve other countries in the bilateral issues (Bammi, 2010). The improvement of relations under Indra Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi regimes in India, despite Bangladeshi governments following of all irritants, viz; Islamisation, relation with Islamic and anti-India powers etc. indicates the fact that the Indo-Bangladesh relations depends on the whims of the leaders of both sides rather than the objectives circumstances. The relations between India and Bangladesh got tense when India decided to fence the border, due to the large number of refugee influx in India from Bangladesh which had aggravated the economic conditions of north-east in India. The Bangladeshis in search of employment and due to economic crisis in their own country illegally crossed border and entered into the north-eastern states of India, which further caused various problems to the native inhabitants of the area. India requested Bangladesh to stop the illegal infiltration of the Bangladeshis and deport back those who had entered the Indian Territory. It was also during Ershad's regime that Bangladesh became more receptive to separatist elements from India and the activities of the Inter-Service Agency of Pakistan.

In 1989 general elections were held in India to elect the members of the Lok Sabha. The result was a loss for the

Indian National Congress and Rajiv Gandhi, because all the opposition parties formed together a minority government under the leadership of V.P Singh and the National Front. The National Front was able to secure the first minority government since 1947 independence. During the regime of the National Front in India the External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujral visited Bangladesh in February 1990 as part of a new peace offensive to promote good relations with the neighboring countries. He persuaded the Bangladesh government to revive the Joint Rivers Commission (Asian Recorder, 1979). The two sides decided to work out a long term formula for resolving the water sharing issue, discussed the immediate deportation of refugees which was causing the economic social and political problem in the north-east states and besides this India agreed to transfer the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh. But there was a delay in transferring the Teen Bigha enclave to Bangladesh by India because of political factors in West Bengal and the issue having become subjudice proved a bone of contention.

Meanwhile in Bangladesh there was also a change of government from military to democracy. The democratic wave in Bangladesh shook the foundations of the Ershad government amid awful crisis- political, economic and institutional fomented by students, gathered momentum in early November 1990. The main stream opposition parties issued a joint declaration that Ershad should resign and hand-over power to a care-taker government for holding a free and fair parliamentary elections (Islam, 1987). The authority of Ershad was challenged by the two party groups, first group was led by Begum Khaleda Zia (wife of Late President Ziaur Rehman) who was leading the seven party alliances group and the second group of eight party alliances which was led by Hasina Wajed (daughter of Late Prime Minister Sheikh Mujib). The Ershad government could not stand against the streams of forceful and continuous mass movement knelt down, appointed Shahabuddin Ahmed – the Chief Justice of Supreme Court, as the Vice-President, resigned and hand over power to him as the Acting President. Soon Shahabuddin Ahmed formed a Care-taker government and holds the elections of Jatiya Sangsad on February 27, 1990. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) emerged victorious with single majority in the parliament followed by Awami League (Baxter, 1991).

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some recommendations for improving bilateral relations

are mentioned below;

The bilateral relations can never mature if the concerned sides are not sincere to each other. Both sides should respect each other so that both can grow and can enjoy the fruits of friendly atmosphere.

The unwarranted intervention is against the spirit of the relations. Both nations should respect each other's sensitivity particularly India should respect the smaller neighbors sovereignty and integrity.

The domestic milieu should not hinder the foreign policy of both nations. This kind of development has long lasting repercussions and which in turn are dangerous for the bilateral relationship.

The policy makers of the both nations should have inclusive information about the different dimensions of the bilateral problems so that long lasting and win-win solution can be found to the vexed issues.

The policy makers of both nations should never lose this fact that sector wise solution to the issues is difficult because these issues are inter-related and there must have a very comprehensive bilateral framework.

The relations between the two nations should not be confined to the elite class only but it should go down to the common people, only then it can be everlasting and sustainable.

The relationship between the two neighboring countries should be institutionalized and it should not be confined to the regimes only. The strong institutions are the basic pillars of the everlasting friendly bilateral ties.

The issues between the two countries should be resolved because of the fact that unresolved issues are not in any country's advantage. The two nations should felt the pulse of the time and should come out of this psychological syndrome so that win-win solutions can be found.

Last but not least both nations should accept this fact that friends can be changed but not neighbors. The two countries have to live with this fact that they have to march together in this new geo-strategic world.

The fragile political atmosphere should not hinder the bilateral economic relations.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The period from 1975-1990 has remained important for relationship between the two countries as it shaped the future course of their relations. The relationship between two countries during this sensitive period showed both positive and negative signs. This period witnessed the assassination of Mujibur Rehman which



was followed by military Raj in Bangladesh. Though, some agreements were signed but it did not prove fruitful for the overall bilateral relations between the two countries. It was this phase which gave rise to another party founded by Ziaur Rehman (Bangladesh Nationalist Party), which is a counterpart to Awami League in domestic politics. The ideologies of the two parties are poles apart as far as the relations with India are concerned. Awami League on one hand is very close to India keeping in mind the fact that it was Awami league which fought liberation struggle of Bangladesh with the support of India, whereas on the other the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was the offshoot of post Mujib assassination which is not in the good books of India due to its anti-India posture. Thus, the fact of the matter is that whenever Awami League comes to power, the relations between two countries remain cool and friendly but when BNP comes to power the relations between the two countries do show some kind of mistrust and distrust. This was the direct legacy of this particular phase.

Another important fact of this period is that there are still some unresolved issues like water sharing problem, illegal migration, boundary dispute, and reverse possession of territories etc. which are the direct offshoot of this period. Third important fact is that this period changed the future domestic politics of Bangladesh as the military establishment not only entered into the politics of Bangladesh but also share and enjoy the power of the country. After 1975 the friendly environment could not sustain and it was only Janata Regime which tried to follow a beneficial bilateralism towards the neighbors unfortunately could not last long. Although both sides maintained government to government relations but the people to people relations were never given a priority which in turn derailed the peace process and resolution of the unresolved issues. In short we can say that the period, understudy is very important as far as the present and future relations between the two countries are concerned.

To sum up, bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh as well as international relations in the South Asian region in general, would always be affected by the geopolitical fact that some countries which are big, developed and powerful, would always tend to expand their power and influence by the factors of narrow nationalism, psycho-pathological phenomenon

of being dominated, oppressed, insecure, weak and deprived, on account of being small in size and deficient in resources. The Indo-Bangladeshi relationship witnessed many turmoil and transitions during this period 1975-1990. Given the same parameters of global and regional politics there is scant possibility of any radical transformation of the Indo-Bangladeshi relationship. Meanwhile, bilateral cooperation on a State-to-State basis in a business-like fashion shall go on uninterrupted as is the case in the bilateral interactions of India and other small regional States.

#### REFERENCES

- Abass, B. M. (1982). *The Ganga Water Dispute*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 55.
- Agrawal, Meena. (2004). *Rajiv Gandhi*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd., 141.
- Ahamad, Emjuddin & D. R. J. A. Nazneen. (1990). Islam in Bangladesh: Revivalism or Power Politics? *Asian Survey*, vol. 30, 4-5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2644499>
- Ahmed, Moudud. (1983). *Bangladesh: Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*. Dhaka: The University Press Ltd., 23.
- Ahuja, B.N. (1972). *Liberation of Bangladesh and a Peep into its Future*. New Delhi: Varma Brothers, 12.
- Asian Recorder*. Morarji Desai's Visit, (1979, May 22-June 3), 3.
- Bammi, Y. M. (2010). *India-Bangladesh Relations: The Way Ahead*. New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 70.
- Banerjee, Paula, Sanjoy Hazarika, Monirul Hussain & Ranabir Samaddar. (1999). Indo-Bangladesh Cross-Border Migration and Trade. *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, 4-5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4408366>
- Baxter, Craig. (1991). Bangladesh in 1990: Another New Beginning? *Asian Survey* 31, University of California Press, 3-4.
- Bhasin, Avtar Singh. (2003). *India-Bangladesh Relations Documents 1971-2002: Commerce, Economic, and Transport*. New Delhi: Geetika Publishers, 1394-1395.
- Bindra, S. S. (1982). *Indo-Bangladesh Relations*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 53.
- Deo, Arvind. R. (1991). "South Asian Neighbours", *World Focus*, p. 29.
- Dixit J. N. (1999). *Liberation and Beyond: Indo-Bangladesh Relations*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 64.

- Farakka issue taken off UN General Assembly Agenda. (1976, December). *India and Foreign Review*, p. 6.
- Foreign Affairs Record*. (1977, November). XXIII(11), 216-217.
- Franda, Marcus. (1981) Ziaur Rehman and Bangladeshi Nationalism. *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, 6-7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4369609>.
- Franda, Marcus. (1982). *Bangladesh: The First Decade*. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 222.
- Ghosh, P. S. (1990). Bangladesh Politics Many Imponderables. *Mainstream* XXIX, 3.
- Ghosh, Partha Sarathy. (1989). *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*. Pune: Technical Publications, 77.
- Ghosh, Peu. (2013). *International Relations*. New Delhi: PHI Learning.
- Gulati, C. J. (1990). *Bangladesh Liberation to Fundamentalism*. New Delhi: Common Wealth Publications, 79.
- Habib, Haroon. (2011, July 16-29). Retaining Faith. *Frontline*, 28(15).
- Hussain, Ishtiaq (1981). Bangladesh-India Relations: Issues and Problems. *Asian Survey* 21, 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643997>
- Islam, Muinul, Nitai Chandra Nag, Mahendra P. Lama, Dilli Raj Khanal, & A. R. Kemal. (2010). *Economic Integration in South Asia: Issues and Pathways*, Delhi: Pearson Education India.
- Islam, Syed Sirajul. (1987). Bangladesh in 1986: Entering a New Phase. *Asian Survey* 27, University of California, 7.
- Jahan, Rounaq. (1980). *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*. Delhi: University Press, 205-06.
- Jain, B M. (2010). *India in the New South Asia: Strategic, Military and Economic Concerns in the Age of Nuclear Diplomacy*. New York: IB Tauris.
- Jayapalan, N. (2001). *Foreign policy of India*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist., 337.
- Jayapalan, N. (2000), *India and Her Neighbours*. New Delh: Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 133-34
- Khan, Mohammad Mohabbat & Habib Mohammad Zafarullah. (1980). *Politics and Bureaucracy in New Nation, Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Centre for Administrative Studies.
- Khanna, V. N. (2007). *Foreign Policy of India*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Kodikara, Shelton. U (Ed.). (1981). *Bangladesh: In External Compulsions of South Asian Politics.*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 136.
- Muni, S. D. (1979). India's Beneficial Bilateralism in South Asia. *India Quarterly* XXXV, 3.
- Muni, S. D. (1978). Major Developments in India's Foreign Policy and Relations. *International Studies*, 96.
- Mustafa, Golam. (1995). *National Interest and Foreign Policy – Bangladesh's Relations with the Soviet Union and its Successor States*. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 106.
- Nair, P. S. (2008). *Indo-Bangladesh Relations*. New Delhi APH Publishing House.
- Narian, Verinder. (1987). *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, Jaipur-India: Aalekh Publishers, 181.
- Neacsu, Mihaela. (2009). *Hans J. Morgenthau's Theory of International Relations: Disenchantment and Re-Enchantment*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 102-103.
- Oren, Stephen. (1976). After the Bangladesh Coups. *The World Today* 32 (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London), 18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395247>
- Palmer, Norman. D. (1976). India in 1975: Democracy in Eclipse. *Asian Survey* 16 (A Survey of Asia in 1975: Part II, University of California Press), 95-96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643138>.
- Parua, Pranab Kumar. (2006). *The Ganga: Water use in the Indian Subcontinent*. New Delhi: Springer, 158.
- Rehman, Mohammad Mizanur. (2006). *The Ganges Water Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of 1977 Agreement and 1996 Treaty*. International Water Law Project, 195-208
- Saha, Rekha. (2000). *India Bangladesh Relations*. Calcutta: Minerva Associations, 66.
- Salman M. A & Kishor Uprety. (2002). Conflict and Cooperation on South Asia's International Rivers: A Legal Perspective., *World Bank Publication*, 157.
- Singh, Kuldeep. (1987). *India and Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.
- Singh, Nagendra Kr. (2003). *South Asian Regionalism and Bangladesh, Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.
- Thakur, Ramesh Chandra & Oddny Wiggen. (2004). *South Asia in the World: Problem-solving Perspectives on Security, Sustainable Development and Good Governance*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 258
- Tripathi, Deepak. (1988). India's Foreign Policy: The Rajiv Factor. *The World Today* 44, 1-2

- Weiner, Myron. (1977). The 1977 Parliamentary Elections in India. *Asian Survey* 17, 1.
- Wright, Denis. (1996). The Rise of Zia from Soldier to Politician. In *The Zia Episode in Bangladesh Politics*. Edited by Habib Zafarullah. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 10.
- Ziring, Lawrence, (1992). *Bangladesh from Mujib to Ershad: An Interpretive Study*. New York: University Press, 177.