INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is generally understood as the course of actions and decisions that a country undertakes in its relations with other countries to achieve its national objectives and to promote national interest. It implies principles, which influence actions or objectives. It also embodies the elements of continuity and change, which emerge with the changing needs and interests, as well as, the changes in the internal and external dynamics of a nation. This tendency is inherent in all the social systems given the multiplicity of their internal structures and external challenges. An eminent scholar Northedge is of the view that foreign policy constitutes an endless dialogue between the powers of continuity and the powers of change. Foreign policy having its roots in a country's traditions and ways of thinking is characterised by continuity, at the same time, inherent in its nature, are the changes in the policy formulations, which are made to suit the ever changing internal and external dynamics of the nation. In determining the foreign policy of a nation both the external and internal factors assume equal importance. Thus while the national interest of a country becomes the basis to its policy formulations, at the same time the foreign policy also accommodates interests of the other countries.

The broad foreign policy objectives of all countries appear to be similar to an extent, which are reflected in the safeguarding of national sovereignty, territorial integrity promoting national interest and international co-operation for peace etc. The interpretation of these universally-shared objectives are as diverse, as the nations are
different in size, population, geographic location, resources, social, economic and political systems. Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation in 1971 after breaking away from the United Pakistan comprising of West and East Pakistan. After its liberation, East Pakistan was called Bangladesh. Bangladesh’s foreign policy also came to be based on universally shared objectives, like self-preservation, economic advancement, safeguarding and augmenting national power in relation to other states, maintaining its own ideology of non-alignment and the portrayal of a favourable image in the international arena.

Successful secession and securing a place in the comity of nations during a short period makes Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy pursuits evident. Apart from the various socio-economic problems faced by other developing countries, Bangladesh faces natural calamities frequently. Due to severity of its problems the pessimists call it an ‘international basket case, and optimists call it ‘a test case of development, and the strategic analysts describe it as ‘tyranny of geography’. Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy is constantly striving to remove all these problems as also making an effort to play a concrete role in achieving its objectives and safeguarding its national interest.

Article XXV (i) and (ii) LXIII and CVL of the Bangladeshi constitution provides the conceptual and legal basis of Bangladesh’s foreign policy. Article XXV (i) is the most pertinent one in which the core principles of its foreign policy have been mentioned, like respect for national sovereignty and equality; non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; peaceful settlement of international
disputes; respect for international law and the principles enunciated in
the United Nation's Charter. On the basis of these principles the
government should strive for the following: the renunciation of the use
of force in international relations and for general and complete
disarmament; uphold individual rights to freely determine and build up
the socio-politico and economic system; and supporting the oppressed
throughout the world and fighting a just struggle against imperialism,
colonialism or racialism.

Some changes were introduced in the constitution by the Zia-
ur-Rahman government (1975-81), which reflected important shifts in
the domestic and foreign policies of Bangladesh. First, a new clause
XXV (ii) was added by Zia-ur-Rahman that reads: 'the state shall
endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations
with Muslim countries based on Muslim solidarity.' During H. M.
Ershad period Islam (1982-91) was declared the state religion of
Bangladesh under the Article VIII of the constitution. Second a new
article CVL-A was inserted into the constitution which reads: "all
treaties with foreign policies shall be submitted to the President who
shall cause them to be laid before Parliament unless the President
considers it to be against the national interest to do so.” The Article
gives full authority to the President to sign a treaty. He is not
accountable to the Parliament in this matter. It also implies that the
President may sign a secret treaty with another state. In 1991, with
the restoration of the Parliamentary system, the President's role has
been reduced to that of a titular head of state.
A foreign policy is usually based on the domestic policy requirement of nation. In the case of Bangladesh the perennial political instability, massive economic vulnerability and major ideological differences have left a considerable impact on its foreign policy pursuits. Bangladesh, according to its population is the eighth largest state in the world. In economic and military strength it ranks amongst the weakest and the most disadvantaged in the area of international politics. Almost 60% of its annual budget and nearly 80% of the development budget is financed by external assistance. Essentially envisioned as an instrument for garnering material support in the international arena, foreign policy for Bangladesh is basically an instrument for realising its socio-economic and political interests.

An attempt has been made, to build a theoretical framework on the basis of the variables that effect the structuring of foreign policy of any country in general, and of Bangladesh in particular. The categorization of foreign policy variables following (James. N. Rossenau), namely are idiosyncratic, role, bureaucratic, national and systemic variables. These have been discussed under separate headings.

Idiosyncratic variables, which are concerned with the perceptions, images and personal characteristics of the makers of foreign policy in divergent types of political systems. In an authoritarian system, the role of the personal traits of decision makers are more readily reflected in all categories of decisions including foreign policy decisions. Whereas, in democratic systems the role of
personal variables is restricted as decision-making authorities always remain subject to scrutiny of governmental checks and balances.

In the case of Bangladesh, for sixteen out of the twenty-nine years of its history (1971–2000), the country was under direct or indirect authoritarian or military rule. Most of the time, Bangladesh's foreign policy formulations and implementations have been dependent on the personal characteristics of authoritarian regimes. This explains the different types of foreign policy orientations of Mujib-ur-Rahman, Zia-ur-Rahman, H.M. Ershad and Begum Khalida Zia.

The ROLE variables are usually defined as job profiles or expected rules of behaviour for the President, the Cabinet Ministers, or the Bureaucrats etc. Basically, these variables include all those members of the elite who influence, formulate and implement Foreign Policy. In the context of ROLE variables there are two types of Foreign Policy decisions. When a country practices parliamentary democracy, the Prime Minister becomes the key figure. Under the Presidential system the President plays the important role. In the matter of Foreign Relations, the titular president enjoys only formal and ceremonial powers. This can be exemplified by comparing the role of Mujib-ur-Rahman in the making of Foreign policy as a Prime minister of Bangladesh, with both, Zia-ur –Rahman and H.M. Ershad who were both Executive President and Chief Martial Law Administrator individually. Except a brief period of the titular President in Mujib’s period, Bangladesh had experienced Executive President (as Chief Martial Law Administrator like Zia and Ershad), who enjoyed almost the sole prerogative to make and implement Foreign Policy.
Other members of policy making like the Cabinet, the Council of ministers, did not have any substantive role in the making of foreign policy. Thus in the absence of any control over foreign affairs by the cabinet, monopoly in the conceptualisation, definition and handling of foreign policy issues was obvious.

The, BUREAUCRATIC variables are concerned with the structure and processes of a government and their influence upon Foreign Policy. It has been noticed that the conflicting interests of various bureau like the military services, and subdivisions thereof, constantly compete to maintain their bureaucratic survival and growth by maximising their involvement and influence in the policy making process. In the case of Bangladesh there has been a preponderance of military-bureaucratic influence on foreign policy making and this may be exemplified by the allocation of a major portion of the revenue budget for defence.

The category of National variables comprises a vast number of national attributes that influence foreign policy outcomes. These mainly include environmental variables, such as the size, climate and resources; Population attributes, size and density of the population of a country; and political, economic, social systems that influence the foreign policy of any country.

Bangladesh is a part of South Asia. From the standpoint of boundary, Bangladesh is encircled by India on almost three sides, west, North and East. It is linked and in many ways dependent on India. Most of its rivers pass through India before entering Bangladesh. A direct impact of Geography has been reflected in the
foreign policy formulations of Bangladesh towards India. (as discussed at length in chapter II)

Bangladesh lags behind in natural resources like coal, oil and iron etc. It has reserves of natural gas and a high yielding soil and rivers that have potential for generating hydro-electric power. It has a lack of mineral resources. The lack of technology and capital to convert these resources into assets has imposed limitations on its foreign policy and brought it to a state of dependency, even for food and other consumer goods, which acts as constraints on its freedom of action while formulating its foreign policy.

The political institutions in Bangladesh are constantly evolving. The process of democracy has been rather volatile and has frequently been interrupted by military regimes. Although the Parliament has been guaranteed a clear constitutional role, the nature of power structure and lack of national consensus in Bangladesh, has not allowed it to grow and develop as an evolved institution, particularly in foreign policy making.

The process of development in Bangladesh has been slow. It is under great demographic pressure. Its weak economy puts innumerable constraints on its foreign policy. With regard to social variables, the elites in Bangladesh have been divided in their attempts to use religion and ethnicity in foreign relations. They have attempted to forge foreign relations on the basis of Bengalee identity and Islamic ideology. The former is the result of the ethno-linguistic influence of India and the latter as an influence of religion and closeness with Islamic countries. A clear influence of these social variables has been
seen in the foreign policy followed by governments of the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party time and again.

The category of National variable also includes national character, as a collective state of mind, which reflects upon the identity of a country. The national character of Bangladeshis has earned compliments for being imaginative and emotional and disparagement as non-enterprising.

**SYSTEMIC variables** are external to a country and include framework of bilateral relations and the structure and function of the whole International system. These are structural units of the International System, International Law, and International Organization and include the actions and intentions of other states, which influence any country’s foreign policy formulations. These variables act as constraints and opportunities that outline the general direction of foreign policy. For a country like Bangladesh, systemic variables present challenges and rarely opportunities. Bangladesh is a member of international institutions like the United Nations, Non-aligned Movement, Group of 77, the OIC and Commonwealth, which strengthen its national interests.

Bangladesh’s priorities in the international system lie in forging relationships with India, United States of America, Soviet Union, China, Japan, Islamic countries including Pakistan and smaller South Asian countries. Bangladesh shares political, economic, social, ideological and strategic interests with these countries so as to serve its own national interests. Among them India occupies the prime position in Bangladesh’s foreign policy. A number of factors have
influenced Bangladesh – India relations in many ways. Nonetheless, other countries like the USA, the former Soviet Union (Russia), China, Japan and the Islamic countries assume equal importance in its foreign policy pursuits. The economic potential and ideological interests of Bangladesh determine its relation with these countries.

As far as smaller South Asian countries are concerned, Bangladesh shared bilateral, regional and global interest with them. A detailed analysis of Bangladesh’s relations with these countries has been made.

The theme of this study moves on two lines- continuity and change. The fluctuations in the policy design of Bangladesh towards developed countries as well as its own counterparts reflects the elements of continuity and change in the period under consideration (1975-96). During this period a clear shift in the direction of Bangladesh Foreign Policy have been seen. This study does not restrict itself to the post 1975 period but analyses the Mujib and pre Mujib period where needed. Trends in Foreign Policy beyond 1996 (the stipulated period for the study) have not been covered but reference to recent trends in foreign policy have been given where it needed.

The main aims of this study are:

To look into the historical aspects of Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy related to its principles, objectives and determinants.

To focus on the internal and external determinants that play an important role towards the steering of Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy.
To examine the dynamics of Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy in its bilateral relations with the United States Of America, the former Soviet Union (Russia), China, Japan, the Islamic Countries and India including other South Asian countries

To interpret the effects of the policies followed by authoritarian regimes of Zia-Ur-Rahman, H.M.Ershad and the democratic government of Khalida Zia resulting in changes in Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy.

To examine the shifts in the Bangladesh Foreign Policy in response to the changing pattern of international environment.

The study formulates the following hypothesis:

Post- Mujib regimes accorded greater priority to Bangladesh’s relation with the USA, China Japan and Islamic countries than with India, Soviet Union.

While national interest demanded continuity in Foreign Policy, the vested interest of post-Mujib regimes influenced a change in the Policy.

Post- cold war developments gave impetus to economic and trade relations.

This study has been divided into five chapters:

The First chapter takes up the determinants of Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy. It identifies the various factors, which determine the Foreign Policy of a nation in the making.
The *Second chapter* emphasises on two important aspects of competition and collaboration determined by Bangladesh’s geographical proximity to India as well as multiple historical, social, linguistic and cultural linkages between the two countries. At the same time a changing trend in Bangladesh’s attitude towards India from post Mujib period has been traced.

The Foreign Policy of Bangladesh towards the major powers including the former two superpowers, (United States of America and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republic), China and Japan forms the *Third chapter*. A brief historical review of the policy of major powers during the Bangladesh liberation movement provides a background to a detailed account of continuity and change in the foreign policy after its independence.

The *Fourth chapter* examines Bangladesh’s foreign policy towards the Islamic countries with which Bangladesh shares ideological affinity. Though some of the Islamic countries have proved to be helpful in improving the economic condition of Bangladesh by employing manpower from Bangladesh and been a source of remittance for Bangladesh. Both ideological affinity and economic interest have been a decisive factor in shaping up of Bangladesh’s policy towards the Islamic countries.

Bangladesh’s relations with other South Asian countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, cannot be ignored. The *Fifth chapter* deals with Bangladesh’s relation with these countries at bilateral, regional and global levels.
The conclusion visualises the elements of continuity and change in Bangladesh foreign policy with reference to the prospects ahead in the future.

**Sources and Methodology:**

The study is based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources have been collected from various libraries in India as well as in Bangladesh. The methodology followed is descriptive and analytical.