Chapter I

DETERMINANTS OF BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN POLICY
A FLOWCHART OF THE DETERMINANTS OF BANGLADESH’S FOREIGN POLICY

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The determinants of foreign policy are broadly of two types—domestic and external.¹ These variables play a pivotal role in the conduct of the foreign policy of any country. They act as capability (as a source of strength) and constraint in the foreign policy formulations. Broadly, the nature of these variables as capability or constraints is determined by domestic, regional and international environment in which the country has to operate. Domestic factors can be divided into tangible and intangible.² Tangible factors are related to the geographical and material conditions whereas intangible factors comprise human resources and organisational capabilities; however, both tangible and intangible factors are interdependent and overlapping. Intangible factors have an empirical base and hence can be evaluated, whereas tangible factors can only be analysed according to their behaviour. External factors on the other hand, comprise regional as well as the external environment stemming from the existing structure and state of region and international system. Here an attempt has been made to study the role of these variables in determining the foreign policy of Bangladesh (as shown in the chart).

**TANGIBLE FACTORS**

**GEOGRAPHY**

The geography of any country has a decisive impact on its foreign policy. What Napoleon said, goes to corroborate that the foreign policy of a country is determined by its geography.³ It is the

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most permanent variable of capability. Although the theory of geopolitical determinism of foreign policy has assumed less importance, consequent to the technological development, even then the influence of geopolitical factor in foreign policy of states remains considerable. There are four major geographical factors, size, topography, location and climate which influence the foreign policy of a country. Undoubtedly, geographical factors are also important to varying degrees for Bangladesh's domestic and foreign policy. These have been discussed further under separate heads:

**Size**

The land area of any country is in itself an element of power. Its significance varies considerably with changes in other elements of national power. A country which is large in size and is endowed with better natural resources accommodates a larger population. Simultaneously, for a developing country which is small in size and has limited resources becomes its weakness and increases its dependency. At the same time developing of means of transportation and communication is cumbersome, and maintenance of the political unity among the people in a widely dispersed area is also difficult. Therefore, size has both positive as well as negative implications.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, it is a country of moderate size, neither small nor big. The total area of Bangladesh is 55,598 square miles or 143,999 square km which includes both inland and estuarine water surface.⁴

Topography

Topography is the configuration of the land surface or the general physical features — the location of mountains and the plains and the direction of the flow of rivers. The fall of rivers may be adequate for the production of enormous amount of hydro energy and rivers and lakes may facilitate the means for extensive irrigation. Mountains act as barriers from foreign invasions but at the same this may become a hindrance to trade. These rivers and mountains provide a topographical unity which to a certain extent enhances cultural unity. Topography has an important bearing on the economy and the culture. It provides the geographical setting of the nation state and is a significant element of military and economic strength.\(^5\) It has an important strategic value vis-a-vis other nations and sometimes set limits on expansion.

Bangladesh is the world's largest delta area criss-crossed by a network of rivers, rivulets and streams.\(^6\) The deltaic plain is formed by three major rivers — the Ganges, the Brahmaputra which is locally known as the Jamuna and the Meghna. The other important rivers are Tista, Karotoya, Atri, Mahananda, Gunti, Karnabulli, Kaboolak Auspha, Amal Khan and Madumati. Bangladesh is basically a flatland regularly washed by water whether it is rain or flood. This aspect is very important since the country's culture and economic base is agriculture. Mymensigh and Sylhet are the small hilly regions which

are an extension of the Meghalya Plateau of India. The coastline of Bangladesh along the Bay of Bengal extends 370 miles from a western projection on Myanmar to the beaches of West Bengal. There is a dense forest in the South-west of the country known as the Sunderban. In the South-west lies the Chittagong Hills rising somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 feet. This has a dense forest cover. Absence of a plateau is the cause of the non-availability of minerals in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is topographically linked with India. The main rivers Ganges and the Jamuna (Brahmaputra) passes through India before entering into Bangladesh. The third major river Meghna has its catchment area the north-eastern plateau of India. Therefore, its river system have a deep impact on Bangladesh’s culture, economy and politics. The rivers have less than the required amount of water in the dry season and cause floods in the monsoon. The river system creates an ecological imbalance in Bangladesh. For optimum utilization of the water resources necessary for long term development, the enhancement of the river water flow in the dry season and control of the flow in the monsoon is necessary. This kind of water management cannot be possible without friendly relations with India. The nondiversion of water in monsoon increases the possibility of flood in Bangladesh. Topographical dependence as a permanent factor has influenced Bangladesh’s foreign policy.

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Climate

Climate is one of the determinants of the culture and the economy along with the natural resources.\(^8\) It has a direct effect on the health, energy and vigour of the people and productivity of the soil. There is a need for sufficient heat, a long growing season, sufficient rainfall (or irrigation possibilities) and soil of optimum quality in order to produce crops. Lack of any one of these, leads to dependency on foreign sources. It has been very aptly suggested that a great power cannot exist outside of the temperate zones.\(^9\)

Bangladesh has a sub-tropical monsoon climate and suffers from periodic cyclones. The climate is characterized by high temperature, high humidity, heavy rainfall and marked seasonal variations.\(^{10}\) Like India, Bangladesh also experiences three seasons -- the rainy season, the winter and the summer. The location of the Himalayan mountains in the north, the Bay of Bengal in East and the Indian Ocean in the South, controls the weather phenomena of Bangladesh. Rainfall quite often is accompanied by cyclones, storms and tidal bores. Torrential and incessant monsoon rainfall in Bangladesh followed by the increased flow of rivers carrying monsoon waters from India often results in heavy flood in this agriculturally low yielding land. It is estimated that out of the total river flow in

\(^8\) Norman, D. Palmer and Howard, C. Perkins, n.5, p. 39.


Bangladesh as much as 85 percent comes from India, and the rest is from rainfall within the country. No less than about 94 rivers flow into Bangladesh from India.\textsuperscript{11} Natural calamities pose a major challenge to the economic development of Bangladesh. These calamities are so frequent that they render a pathetic image of Bangladesh to the International public.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Location}

Location of a country is of utmost importance in the formulation of foreign policy and the strategy adopted by that country. Who is or who is not one's neighbours has significant strategic implications and can have considerable impact on one's national security.

Bangladesh is situated in the south of the Asian continent. It stretches latitudinally between $20^\circ 34'$ and $26^\circ 38'$ North and longitudinally between $88^\circ 1'$ and $92^\circ 4'$ East. It is on the cross-roads of two sub-continents - South East Asia and India.\textsuperscript{13} The geographical proximity of Bangladesh to the Bay of Bengal and to the Indian Ocean, triggered off the competition between the then Super Powers during the Cold War period. Its locational relationship to South Asia and South East Asia increases its geo-strategic importance in world politics. The Late U.S. President Eisenhower had termed it as a 'perpetual crisis', a crisis which owed its origin to its strategic positioning where the interest of two former superpowers and a third


\textsuperscript{13} Philip Gain, n.11, pp.31-35.
force, China lay. It can be exemplified by the conflicting role played by the major powers and the realignment of global powers on the eve of the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971. It has a common border with India and Myanmar. Bangladesh is surrounded by India. It has a 1740 miles long land border with India on all sides except the south. India has a long sea coast from west to east deep into Bay of Bengal and in the south. In the Bay of Bengal Bangladesh’s maritime border with India has not been settled. In the east, it has a 180 miles border with Myanmar and 370 miles coastline along the Bay of Bengal in the South. Other countries near to Bangladesh without common borders, in the north are Nepal, Bhutan and China. Its locational weakness in comparison to India dictates that it should maintain good relations with India.

Hence, geographically and strategically Bangladesh becomes more vulnerable as it is land locked within India, also effecting its contacts with other regions.¹⁴

**POPULATION**

The second tangible factor that influences the foreign policy of any country is that of its population and manpower. Generally the population is considered in terms of the birth-rate and the death rate, sex-relation, education and health, skilled and unskilled manpower, who are earning or are dependent. It is examined in terms of its size, productive, density and educational level. It is a determining factor in defining the foreign policy, the relationship of population size to

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capability of a nation is such that it is practically impossible to be a medium or great power without a relatively large population. Hans J. Morgenthau states, "no country can remain or become a first-rate power which does not belong to the more populous nations of the earth."\(^{15}\)

The logic behind this argument is that a large population is necessary to have an effective military force. It is true that there has been no modern military. It is also true that despite the advanced technology, large masses of human beings still fight many wars. Moreover, large modern armed forces require as large number of people to manufacture, supply, operate and repair their highly sophisticated weapons and support systems. However, these statements are accurate only to some context since there are other types of conflict where this concept is inappropriate. Strictly speaking, this argument deals primarily with one kind of military conflict, a conventional war. The development of nuclear capability does not necessarily require a large population, nor does it enhance the ability to launch a decisive first strike attack with highly sophisticated forces against technologically inferior and less trained opponents. None of this is to the benefit of the potential military advantage that a large population can yield, it mainly depends on the nature of the conflict and the parties involved.\(^{16}\)

The second reason for having a large population is usually important in context to a region's economic strength. It can also


\(^{16}\) Robert, L. Wendzel, n.9.
provide a potential market for others. Population becomes a liability when any increase in the overall population is higher than the quantity of goods and services available for it. Population explosion is one of the major challenges to any country’s foreign policy as it slows down the rate of economic growth and creates dependency on other affluent countries for capital and technical know-how. Thus, overpopulation detracts the capability of a nation.

The economic problem which Bangladesh is facing frequently, is population explosion. It has been declared as a primary problem. Officially Bangladesh has a population of 112 million as per the census of 1991 and estimated at some 124 million in mid 1997.\textsuperscript{17} The gravity of the situation is candidly depicted in these words: “the ultimate demographic tragedy... so overpopulated that none can survive, perhaps it would lead to a term of collective suicide”.\textsuperscript{18}

Population density in Bangladesh is highest in the world (about 900 persons per square kilometer) after Hong Kong and Singapore. It is three times more crowded than India. The population of Bangladesh continues to grow at a rate of about two per cent a year.\textsuperscript{19} At this rate, it will double in twenty three years, its density rising to some 3,000 people per square mile.\textsuperscript{20}

The annual growth rate of the population has declined from three percent in the 1960s to about two percent in the 1990s,

\textsuperscript{17} Philip Gain, n.11, p.1.
\textsuperscript{19} Philip Gain, n.11, p.77.
\textsuperscript{20} A. Jeyaratham Wilson and Dennis Dalton, n.4, p. 265.
however even with this decline in the growth rate, the population is projected to increase by another 50 percent over the next century, from 120 million in 1995 to 173 million by 2020.21

Providing basic necessities to the fast growing population is a great challenge faced by Bangladesh. Due to the acute poverty, revenue generation is low, savings are small and capital formation is slow. A huge investment is required for the optimum utilization of the exploited resources and extensive exploitation of the untapped resources, which is very difficult without the mobilisations of the domestic resource. Over population will continue to be drain the country's resources, preventing it from achieving even moderate objectives in its foreign policy without incurring excessive costs.

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

The possession of large quantities of high quality resources decides a country's self-sufficiency and independence providing the base on which the foreign policy can be built. The industrial and military capabilities of a nation as well as its economic well-being are dependent upon the existence of natural resources. It includes minerals, the flora and fauna, waterfalls and fertility of the soil. These are also dependent on various other factors such as capital, labour, organisation and technology and the ability to convert them into actual utility goods. If a country has minerals, it has the potential to become an industrial power.

21 Philip Gain, n.11, p.43.
Bangladesh has quite a few proven resources. The only extensively available and directly economically usable natural resource is the natural gas, which is present in great abundance. In 1997 Bangladesh’s seventeen gas fields were estimated to hold reserves of about 350,000 m.cu. metres and an annual average of about, 2,300 m.cu metres of natural gas was being produced. A total reserve of 389 million tons\(^2\) of coal is available at the depth of 890 to 1072 meters below the surface.\(^3\) The other important mineral which is available is limestone. Other minerals, some of which being exploited are white clay and glass land. Still unexploited but under the process of exploration are peat, construction material and mineral sand containing heavy metals. Considerable deposits of peat have been found, which can be easily used for brick burning and household energy. There is possibility of availability of off-shore oil. Exploration surveys are on to find petroleum reserves in the off-shore areas. A small deposit of oil has also been discovered in Haripur Sylhet.\(^4\) About 3 million tons of lignite has been discovered in Bhangarghat-Lamatota area of Sunomganj district.

The vital natural resources of Bangladesh are rivers and the high yielding deltaic soil. The rivers are considered the living arteries of Bangladesh, which have made the delta, provided irrigation water and cheap means of transportation. The annual flow of all rivers is about 37,590 cubic meters of water per second which is the second

\(^3\) Ibid., p.13.
\(^4\) Ibid.
highest flow in the world, second only to the river Amazon in South-America. The lion’s share of water comes from India through the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and hundreds of their tributaries. The fertility of the soil has also a tremendous capacity to produce enough food grain. Historically, the fertile soils of East Bengal provided food for much of the sub-continent. Its agricultural land is among the most fertile in the world, but it is grossly under utilized. Farming is done for subsistence, the production techniques are traditional which has resulted in very low yield per acre. The annual shortage of food grain runs between 1.8 and 2.3 million tons.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, lack of irrigation facilities in the dry season is a big cause for the low production of food grain. Control of the flow of the river water is essential for checking the damage caused by floods to crops and to facilitate water management for irrigation in dry season. If modern agricultural technology is applied, Bangladesh cannot only be self-sufficient to feed her own people, but can also export foodgrains to foreign countries.

Presently the river system is unmanaged and uncontrolled, so it creates the problem of excess water that cause floods in monsoons and less water in dry season which affects irrigation. The flood water, of course, brings trillions of tons fertile alluvial deposits which in the next cropping season normally gives a bumper production of crops although it causes a lot of devastation. Management of water resources is greatly complicated by the seasonal aspect of the rain. Despite the huge availability of water, there is not much scope for hydro-electric power generation as most of the land in Bangladesh is

\textsuperscript{25} A Jeyaratham Wilson and D. Dalton, n.4, p. 265.
The only hydro-electric power station is on the Karnabulli river at Kaptai in the Chittagong Hills which generates twenty-five per cent of the country’s electricity.

Water is not to be considered as merely an input. It is in itself an output, because within water bodies there exists many different plants and animals, which create a valuable living biomass. The harvesting of plants and animals from aquatic habitats is a major economic activity. It is from the living waters, that Bangladesh gets millions of tons of fish, turtles, crabs, shrimps, and possibly an equal amount of plant products. Thus, Bangladesh may not be utilising its water as a chemical element but its potential as a biological agent is optimally realised.

Bangladesh’s forests are also important natural resources. Various industries like newsprint,, matchbox, pencil and timber are supplied as raw materials by the forests. The mangrove forests particularly the Sundarbans (the world’s largest single tract mangrove patch) provides excellent timber, fish, honey, wax-shell, orchids etc. The Sunderbans are not only important for economic benefits per se, but also provide protection against coastal erosion and cyclones. Because the natural forests are so diversified they not only supply timber and fuel wood, but are also sources of medicinal plants and habitats for a rare wildlife, thus playing a decisive role in defining the domain and action agenda of its foreign policy. Unfortunately, the forest cover has shrunk to merely six percent today from 20% in

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1927. In the rivers and creeks of Sundarbans, fish, shells, skin of lizards, reptiles etc. are found in abundance. The Bangladesh Forest Industry Development Corporation [BFIDC] is the main body incharge of the development of forest resources and its optimum utilization. Quick growing foreign trees and commercially valuable plants like rubber and coffee are being planted to generate more resources.27

NATIONAL ECONOMY

The national economy of a country determines its strength. The status of a country as developed or developing depends mainly on the performance of its national economy. If a country is producing surplus food and surplus finished industrial products, it is independent of other states for its needs. It will sell the surplus products to another country which is deficient in that product. An economically deficient country is a weak power, because it is dependent upon others for its needs. Persistent underdevelopment and deprivation of economic well-being adversely affects the balance of payments. Being in such a predicament, its economic dependence on external assistance makes Bangladesh's vulnerable and consequently its bargaining power in international relations is minimised.

Bangladesh is among the least developed countries in the world. After the liberation war many outsiders doubted that Bangladesh could become an economically viable nation. Robert Dorfman of Harvard said that 'from an economic point of view East

Pakistan is simply a mistake.\textsuperscript{28} The economy of Bangladesh has been pessimistically levelled as an 'international basket case'.\textsuperscript{29} The more optimist economists termed it as a 'test case of development'.\textsuperscript{30}

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world in terms of the per capita income of about US$220 and of the total population of 115.2 million. Of that, 60 million have no public health expenditure as percentage of GNP is 0.6 which is lower than any other country in South Asia other than Pakistan. Public expenditure on education as percentage of GNP was 1.3% in 1986, which was lowest in South Asia. Judged by the share of official development assistance (ODA) spent for social investment, Bangladesh with 5.6% ranks very low whereas countries like Bhutan and Sri Lanka spent 29.3 and 38.3% respectively of the ODA for the same purpose. In other words, of the total population, 59 million have no access to safe pure drinking water, 103 million are denied access to sanitation, 41 million are totally unlettered and 91 million live below the subsistence level.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} A.M.A. Munith, n.7, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{29} Roger Reville, "Possible Futures for Bangladesh", Asia, vol. 29 (Sprint 1973), p. 34, cited in J. Wilson and D. Dennis, n.4, p. 289.
constant at about 2.5% of GDP between 1981-90, which is well below the amount required.\textsuperscript{32}

Bangladesh is an overwhelmingly agricultural economy. Out of the total land, the net cultivated area is about 60 per cent which is the highest in Asia. The share of agriculture to GDP has fallen to 32 in 1996-97 (which further declined 28.9% in 1997-98) from 55 per cent in 1970. But it still employs the largest part of the population.\textsuperscript{33} With the present size of population, Bangladesh’s agriculture supports 14 persons per hectare of arable land, comparable only with levels in South-Eastern China and Java (Indonesia) the most intensively cultivated regions of the world. In general we can say that in Bangladesh one third of gross domestic products is being produced in the agricultural sector, two thirds of which is crop output and the remaining one third is equally shared by fisheries, forestry and livestock output. Agricultural products, for instance, raw jute, jute products, tea, hides and skins and fish account for about 90 per cent of export earnings.\textsuperscript{34} The share of industry to GDP has increased to 17.5 per cent in 1997-98 from 9.1 per cent in 1972. But in spite of this increase, the industrial sector comprised only 9.6 per cent of total employment in 1995-96.\textsuperscript{35} The policies of 1980s New Industrial Policy and Revised Industrial Policy (NIP and RIP) significantly liberalized

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 280.

import and relaxing the import procedure. But this increase in import hardly facilitated industrial growth.

In Bangladesh, industries are characterized by outdated technology, unskilled labour and poor management. Furthermore, these low productivity industries receive high protection. Cost of production have been kept down artificially through fiscal and monetary assistance which had, in fact negative impact on the growth of these industries. Little attention has been given in the past to reduce costs and increase growth through raising skills and developing innovations.\(^{36}\) The economy has major structural problems in balance of payments and fiscal concerns. The diversification of export basket in the real sense has not been achieved. The state of supporting a network for private sector activity is far from satisfactory. Stagnating rates of investment by both the public and private sectors have adversely affected the growth of economy. Inadequate domestic savings is also a serious obstacle to the development of Bangladesh. However, the situation seems to have been improving, as the domestic saving as percentage of GDP which was 3.8\% in 1989-90, became 8.6\% in 1994-95.\(^{37}\)

Physical infrastructure in energy distribution, transport, communications, irrigation, drainage is not very satisfactory. There has not been much progress in the social sector after independence. The literacy rate has not improved significantly. The allocation for the

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 112.

education sector has been at a consistent low level (around 2 per cent of GDP and 3 per cent of development expenditure of the government).\textsuperscript{38} Opportunity to seek higher education and access to health services have become more unequal. The lack of educational resources in the education sector has prevented the achievement of an efficient education system. Income distribution is unequal and poverty is more widespread.

Therefore, the structural problems, food deficit and urgency of the development of the Bangladesh economy demands very active economic foreign policy to get foreign assistance, promote trade and attract foreign investments. Through active aid diplomacy, Bangladesh can procure different kinds of foreign assistance from different sources. Recently, Bangladesh has stressed on the important role of economic diplomacy. In line with the policy thrust on economic diplomacy, a high level government committee named 'Morshed Khan Committee' was set to coordinate external relations issues and suggested changes in the conduct of official business to suit Bangladesh's pro-economy foreign policy agenda.\textsuperscript{39} The objective of economic diplomacy is to promote economic advancement through pursuing trade, investment and financial relations with other countries. The continued operation of the liberalisation policies and various kinds of export incentives provided to the export trade helped the promotion of export earning of Bangladesh. The export earning increased by 38.12 percent to US dollar 3500 million compared to

\textsuperscript{38} Abul Kalam, n.33, p. 175.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Financial Express}, 26 July, 1995.
2534 dollar in 1994-95. The trade deficit in the fiscal year 1994 was US$ 1650 million compared to $1848 million in 1993. Because of its weak economy a negative image of Bangladesh is projected in the international fora, for instance, Bangladesh suffers from the shortage of food which really constraints its freedom of action in international affairs to a great extent.

**MILITARY CAPABILITY**

Military capability is an important factor in determining the foreign policy of any country. Military capability comprises of the size and quality arms, and equipment and manpower of the military. Generally, the size of the armed forces includes the army, airforce and the navy. Here arms and equipment must be considered in terms of quantity and quality, modernity and sophistication, fire power and delivery power. The quality aspect of the manpower in military can be analyzed on the basis of training, discipline, morale and character. The capability of a country in terms of military capability is also dependent upon the level of self-sufficiency in arms production as well as the arms imports from other countries.

To a certain extent, the making of the foreign policy of any state depends on its military capability. Military capability is a prerequisite for the achievement of politico-strategic objectives of the

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foreign policy. Bangladesh’s military forces were formally organized after its break up from the armed forces of united Pakistan which participated in the war of Independence\textsuperscript{43} and repatriate Bengali soldiers from West Pakistan.\textsuperscript{44} There was a deep chasm between the 'freedom fighters' and the 'repatriates' because the freedom fighters were highly politicized on the ideological line in the process of liberation war. The appellation ‘Freedom Fighters’ was considered as a badge of valour, whereas the word ‘Repatriate’ became a term of derision for the returnees.\textsuperscript{45} The Mujib government raised a parallel armed force called the Jatiya Rakhi Bahini (National Security Force or JRB), a para-militia group of 25,000 men drawn mainly from the group of freedom fighters loyal to the Mujib government.\textsuperscript{46} It was the presidential guard, the secret service and an alternative army wrapped into one. JRB was abolished and absorbed by Zia-ur-Rahman. After the liberation war, the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) was reorganized as Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43} The regular armed forces who fought the liberation war was constituted from the deserters of the East Bengal Regiment, the East Bengal Rifles, Policemen and Ansacs. The regular forces who fought the liberation was is known as 'Mukti Bahini' or Mukti Fauj'.

\textsuperscript{44} The repatriate Bengali forces were in the divisions of West Pakistan. During the war, they were stranded there. They returned to Bangladesh after the April 1973 tripartite agreement between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.


Ideologically the armed forces were divided into different groups during Mujib and Zia's periods. Apart from the ideological divisions, there was antagonism, grouping, factionalism, rivalry, jealousy vis-a-vis different and wings within. The feeling of being discriminated against on the part of repatriates vis-à-vis the freedom fighters adversely affected the military's morale, accelerated the process of polarization of the two and strained the command structure of the defence services.

On the whole, the armed forces in Bangladesh was of Pakistani origin and took an activist, self-righteous nationalist form in the war of independence. The amalgamation of these two trends is the key to Bangladesh's military ethos. In Bangladesh, the armed forces were not only dissatisfied with the poor handling of the defence services, but also resented the foreign policy pursued by the Mujib government, particularly Mujib's repeated emphasis on Bangladesh's cordial ties with India. There were various political and ideological reasons behind the anti-India feeling among the armed forces. The first reason was their perception that the Indian army got credit and acclaim for the liberation of Bangladesh, by its intervention at the last

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51 Lawrence, Lifschultz, Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution (London: 1979), pp. 32-34.
moment, while they did the actual fighting before the intervention. The Bangladesh's armed forces that fought in the liberation war had the feeling that the Indian forces “just walked into Bangladesh when we had already finished the job”, thus robbing the Mukti Bahini of the glory of liberation. Secondly, the Indian army removed and transported to India all sophisticated weapons and vehicles captured from Pakistani army, which the Bangladesh's armed forces felt, should have been given to them. Thirdly, the armed forces perceived India’s role in the indifferent attitude of Mujib’s regime towards them and resented Mujib signing the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship Cooperation and Peace, which they perceived would make Bangladesh a client state of its neighbour, India. The treaty, according to them, made obvious the need for an effective fighting force and the country’s defence establishment assumed a ceremonial role of reduced to police keeping. Subsequently, Bangladesh' military was divided along various lines: pro-Indian vs. anti-Indian, socialists vs anti-socialists, freedom fighters vs repatriates, secularists vs Islamists, and interventionists vs constitutionalists.

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President Zia strengthened the military establishment which was his power base. He increased the share of defence expenditure in the budget from 13 per cent in 1974-75 to 32 per cent in 1975-76 and maintained this trend in increase by in the subsequent years: from 1972 to 1981, when it rose by approximately 186 per cent. He tried to bring stability within the army by raising one more division. He increased salaries, promoted people of merit of higher ranks quickly purged the radical ranks swiftly and out of turn, established the military academy and staff college, provided modern weapons and established impressive training and recruitment facilities. Zia re-organized the military to reduce categories within it and to stabilize it.

Inspite of all this restructuring and modernization, Zia had to face more than twenty six coups. In fact, Zia himself once admitted that he had a mutinous army.

Ershad’s nine years of rule had been characterized by the conspicuous absence of any abortive coup or uprising among the soldiers. He restored some semblance of discipline among the rank and file of the army. The regime introduced various credit facilities for the soldiers and their family members. They were offered expensive plots of land and house building loans on easy terms. In contrast to

58 Ibid.
the policy followed by the previous governments, the new pay scales enforced in August 1985 brought about parity of salaries between the civilian and the military employees. Formal allocation to defence in the annual revenue budget increased on an average by 18 per cent while the total yearly budget increased by 14 per cent.60 He wanted to institutionalize the role of armed forces in government for checking a coup against him. Thus, the process of militarisation of the civil administration, initiated by Zia, was pushed to its extreme by infiltrating a large number of military personnel in different civilian positions at home and abroad.

Under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia, the Bangladeshi armed forces that had previously looked for any pretext to intervene exhibited signs of restraint and political maturity. The factors that inhibited any disposition to intervene include the factionalised nature of the armed forces, the withdrawal of the military from politics as a consequence of the civilian agitation, the legitimacy of the elected governments, the emergence of the civilian bureaucracy a power broker, and the decisive priority of the external donors for democratic pluralism.61

Since independence, the Bangladeshi army has increased manifold, from 17,000 in 1973 to 101,000 in 1975.62 There has been a notable increase in allotment of funds for arms and ammunition for the army, particularly under the Ershad government. The import of

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60 Talukdar, Maniruzzaman, Politics and Security of Bangladesh (Dhaka: 1994), pp. 82-83.
61 Muhammad, A. Hakim, n.55, p. 298.
arms by Bangladesh averaged $18 million per year during the period from 1972 to 1974, and $30 million per year during the period from 1976 to 1986.\textsuperscript{63} Defence spending of Bangladesh went up to 1.58 per cent of GDP in 1990s. In 1998, budget expenditure on defence was estimated at 27,900 million taka.\textsuperscript{64}

### Table

**SHOWING EXPANSION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THREE DIFFERENT PERIODS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Armed Forces</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Air Force</th>
<th>Para Military</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>25,500</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>66,000</td>
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<td>1988-89</td>
<td>101,500</td>
<td>90,500</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>121,000</td>
<td>101,000</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>49,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows nearly three times expansion in military and more than four times expansion in para-military forces during Zia's regime. During Ershad's era, the military force increased by 31 per cent and para-military decreased by 16.5 per cent. The percentage of armed forces (military and para-military) was 0.1 per cent of the total population in 1987. The chief supplier of arms and equipment Bangladesh's armed forces in the post-Mujib era have been China and Britain. In 1977-1978, China supplied 30F-6S, In 1983, fighting

\textsuperscript{63} Talukdar, Maniruzzaman, n.60, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{64} Asian Strategic Review (New Delhi: IDSA, 1993); Europa World Year Book, n.35, p.562.
aircrafts included 8 MIG-21s supplied by the former Soviet Union during the Mujib period. In addition, the air-force has a French built jet trainers and 4 Soviet supplied transport aircraft, (1 AN-24 and 3 AN-26s), which also date from the Mujib period. Helicopters include 6 U.S. Bell 212s, 4 MIG-8s from the Soviet Union, and 4 Indian made, French-designed chetaks.\textsuperscript{65}

The armed forces of Bangladesh have been an important determinant in influencing the foreign policy of the country. The military has played an active diplomatic role during the regimes of Zia and Ershad. The influence of armed forces’ on foreign relations has been immense. Ershad had inducted military officers in various important positions in Bangladesh's foreign service as ambassadors, ministers and counsellors. He had plans to and had recommended the induction of army officers in the foreign service cadre to make it more what he called 'dynamic'.\textsuperscript{66}

Apart from the diplomatic appointments of the military officers, several military attachments were made in diplomatic missions abroad for defence and security related matters. Bangladesh has 969 personnel serving in nine out of the eighteen on-going peacekeeping missions as of 1st December 1997. With Poland and Russia maintaining a little more than 1000 troops each. Bangladesh is the third largest troop contributing country.\textsuperscript{67} Their active participation

\textsuperscript{65} Craig, Baxter, Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting, (London: 1984), pp.74-78.


helps the country to earn much needed foreign exchange and win the goodwill of the international community and people at home. An ever increasing number of Bangladesh military personnel deployed in United Nations peace-keeping duties in different countries have helped to inculcate a spirit of professionalism in the Bangladesh military institutions. Therefore, Bangladesh’s participation in UN peace-keeping operations has financial political and military advantages.

CONSTITUTION

A constitution for the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was approved on 4 November 1972 and came into effect on 16 December 1972. The newly emerged country enshrined in its constitution her faith in the United Nations Charter, International Law and peaceful means for achievement of its foreign policy objectives. Most of the countries express in their constitutions the broader framework to be followed by the incumbent government in their foreign policy. The constitution of Bangladesh also defines the framework of the foreign policy and its objectives. Thus, the constitution has become a determinant for the foreign policy of Bangladesh. Article 25 of the Constitution defines four principles that determine the foreign policy of Bangladesh. The constitutional history of Bangladesh has not been constant. It was suspended and amended numerous times during the authoritarian rule. The alterations were made in the fundamental principles of the constitution. Secularism was replaced by Islamization

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69 Muhammad, A. Hakim, n.55, p. 297.

70 Bangladesh Documents: Ministry of External Affairs (New Delhi: n.d.).
of the constitution and socialism was redefined as economic and social justice. (These principles have been explained in the Introductory part of this study).

The changes introduced in the constitution by Zia-ur-Rahman's Government reflected important shifts in the domestic and foreign policies of Bangladesh. First, a new clause 25(2) was added in Article 25 by Zia, which read: "The State shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity." 71 Second, a new Article 145-A was inserted into the constitution which read: "All treaties with foreign countries 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". 72 The Article gives full treaty making powers to the President. He is not accountable to the Parliament in this matter. It also implies that the President may sign a secret treaty with another state. Since the reinstallation of the parliamentary government in 1991, a constitutional amendment approved that restores the Prime Minister as the executive head thus reducing the role of the President to that of titular head of the state.

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71 Shuakat Hassan, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy Introductory Remarks" cited in Kabir and Hassan, n.14, p. 3.
72 Ibid., p. 4; Mohammad, A. Hakim and A. S., Haque, "Constitutional Amendments in Bangladesh", Regional Studies, vol.XII, No.2, Spring 1994, pp.73-84.
INTANGIBLE FACTORS

HISTORICAL LEGACY

The historical legacy of a country deeply influences its foreign policy. Nations possessing a unified historical experience pursue an effective foreign policy due to the support of all sections of the society that share the same values and memories, whereas, a country which is historically fragmented cannot pursue an equally effective foreign policy. History as the record of the accumulated experiences of past generations is an important factor for the foreign policy of a country. One of the cardinal principles of international relations is the principle of past future linkages\(^{73}\) for that is predicting the foreign policy behaviour of a state, its past needs to be understood.

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state on 16 December 1971 after nine months of the independence struggle after which the Pakistani army surrendered to the joint command of the Indian and Bangladeshi army. The struggle of national independence of Bangladesh was not only a struggle for the emancipation of its people. It was a struggle for the preservation of democratic human values.\(^{74}\) To quote Talukdar Maniruzzam, "the war created a nation of gallant men who won independence from the brutal perpetrators of genocide and that birth may be the greatest force ensuring the nation's continuity."\(^{75}\) The emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign independent state through a national liberation struggle was in itself a


\(^{75}\) Talukdar, Maniruzzam, n.52, p. 217.
vindication of the principle of self-determination of people and was to commit Bangladesh to a policy of supporting the national liberation struggle. Bangladesh withdrew from military pacts (SEATO and CENTO) to which United Pakistan was member. It committed itself to the pursuit of a non-aligned foreign policy and support for the principles embodied in the United Nations charter. It has used the forums to highlight its special, political, security and economic concerns. Thus a country with a glorious history of struggle for national independence and democratic values, Bangladesh started off well in 1971 with the promises and openings for an accountable democratic system. By the end of 1972, Bangladesh became member of all important international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and also joined the Commonwealth.76

Unfortunately soon after the country came under severe strains and stresses due to various impediments and political dynamics. The domestic political situation was far from stable. The rapid and violent political changes seriously hindered the nation-building process in Bangladesh. Within four years of independence (1971-1975), Bangladesh experienced massive transformation which shattered the democratic set up of the country and created the stage for authoritarian tendencies, which led eventually to a long phase of autocratic rule (1975-1991) either under civilian, military or so-called civilianized military rule. These authoritarian rulers suspended the constitution and revived it section by section through proclamations.

after necessary amendments to suit their political ends. The preamble of the constitution of Bangladesh of November 4, 1972 stated, "we, the people of Bangladesh, having proclaimed our independence on the 26th day of March 1971, and through historical struggle for national liberation, established the independent, sovereign People’s Republic of Bangladesh". In 1977 by proclamation order No.I the phrase “a historical war for national independence” was replaced with, “a historic war for national independence". It has been observed that it did not bring or represented any basic divide in national ideology except for the change at best represents a regime dimension or an act by a new regime in its search for legitimacy in the changed context of national politics. Competition, controversy and even conflict have been evident within and between, secular, Islamic, identity elements at different periods of Bangladesh history.

This led to lack of consensus in the national as well as foreign policy issues and made the foreign policy tasks less effective. The NAM forum was used as an additional forum where it could internationalise because of its bilateral problems with India. It followed the pro America postures in the non-aligned movement.

**IDEOLOGY**

An ideology adopted by the ruling elite of a country determines its foreign policy. The ideology followed by the policy makers reflects

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78 Waliur Rahman, "Normative Trends, Values, and Bangladesh Foreign Policy: A Frame Work", cited in Abul Kalam, n.33, pp.186-192 (This aspect of Bangladesh history was also emphasised by the author during my interview with him).
the future of a nation. It establishes the long range goals of a state’s external behaviour to be promoted through foreign policy. Ideology also serves as a rationalization, justification and guide for the choice of more specific foreign policy tactics.79 The ideology adopted by the constitution of independent Bangladesh includes the doctrine of nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism.80 The nationalism of Mujib was ethno lingual nationalism. The basis was language and culture. The people were called Bengalee’s. Zia redefined nationalism from “Bengali” to “Bangladeshi”.81 Socialism in Bangladesh meant mixed economy. Socialism is still in the constitution but amended by Zia to mean economic and social justice. The pledge to develop socialistic economic system was removed.82 Zia adopted the capitalist path of development. Ershad continued the same and further intensified it. The doctrine of democracy adopted by Mujib was that of parliamentary democracy which failed to work. On January 25, 1975, Mujib amended the constitution to establish a Presidential system and ruled through single party. Zia retained the Presidential system of


80 Bangladesh Documents: Ministry of External Affairs, vol. 2 (n.d.).

81 Bengali nationalism emerged with the rise of a Bengali ethnic consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was one of the greatest advocates of Bengali nationalism. It stood for a composite identity which took into account the experiences, language and literature of all Bengalis irrespective of religious orientation. The notion of 'Bangladeshi nationalism' was put forward by Zia-ur-Rahman in 1978. It asserted the precedence of the political identity over the cultural identity.

government but ended single party system and limited the executive and legislative powers of the President.  

The fourth doctrine of Mujib’s ideology secularism, was a ‘negative non-discriminatory Indian type of secularism’. The adoption of secularism was a historical necessity. Zia completely removed secularism from the constitution and substituted it by a new clause (1A) to Article 8 to emphasize that ‘absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah’ as the basis of all actions. Article 12 which defined secularism, was totally omitted. ‘Bismillah Rahmanirur Rahim’ (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful) was added to the preamble.

When Ershad came to power he laid more stress on the Islamic identity of Bangladesh. Ershad actually went a step further. Islamic religious values emerged as one of the main guiding principles for defining and pursuing national interests. In June 1988, the government under Ershad brought the 8th amendment of the constitution to parliament, which proclaimed Islam as the religion of

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Another major change in the constitution was the deletion of Article 12 which prohibited patronage of any religion by the state.\footnote{Keesing's Record of World Events, (ed.) by Rodger East, vol. xxv (London: 1989), p. 36558. Also see Partha S. Ghosh, n.86, p. 701.}

The present state of national ideology in Bangladesh is very confusing and conflicting. Nationalism and secularism have become controversial and been attached to the national identity: Bangladesh is facing a problem of identity crisis.\footnote{Emajuddin, Ahmed, n.49, p. 88.} It is surprising that Bangladesh being the most homogeneous of the South Asian states is facing problems of identity.\footnote{Azizul Haque, "Politics in Bangladesh: Conflict and Confusion", Foreign Affairs Reports, vol. 35, no. 1 (New Delhi: January, 1986), p. 7.} There are three distinct phases in the quest of identity in the history of Bangladesh. In the first phase when in 1947 East Bengal became East Pakistan, it was a victory of Islam over Bengali culture. Thus, the religion was the chief basis of identity. In the second phase tables turned when in 1971 Bengali language and culture overtook Islam. Thus the language became the basis of identity. The third phase came after the assassination of Mujib in which both religion and language became focus of identity, i.e. Bangladeshi nationalism.\footnote{Myron Weiner, “The Politics in South Asia” in Gabriel A. Ahmond and James S. Coleman, The Politics of Developing Areas (Princeton University, 1960), p. 158. Cited in Talukdar Maniruzzaman, n.83, p. 266.}

On the identity question, Bangladeshi intellectuals are divided into two camps. Bengalee nationalist and Bangladeshi nationalist. The Bengalee nationalists are pro-India, often pro-Soviet and have been represented by the Awami League and its allies. The Bangladeshi nationalists are represented by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiyo Party of Ershad, pro-Chinese Communist parties and other Islamic parties. Therefore, they are Islamists and pro-Chinese. During the successful movement to topple President Ershad in 1990, the BNP alliance was with some of the rightist parties including factions of the old guard Muslim League in the Seven Party Alliance (7 Dal). The Awami League Alliance, however, was with some of the leftist parties in the Eight Party Alliance (8 Dal). The two alliances to an extent represented the opposing pulls of Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism.

The national ideology of Bangladesh has had a deep impact on the nation and implications of its foreign policy. The ideology established by Mujib’s party has been similar to India, implying a close relationship with India, and its allies, particularly the Soviet Union. In the post-Mujib era, Mujibbad was viewed as identification with India and the Indian influence in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi nationalism and Islamic favouritism were measures of differentiation from India in order to minimize the influence of a dominant neighbour. Relations

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with Muslim countries were developed, keeping the same objective in mind.

Leadership

Leadership plays a vital role in the shaping of a country’s foreign policy. Rosenau has said, “a leader’s belief about the nature of international arena and the goals that ought to be pursued therein, his or her peculiar intellectual strengths and weaknesses for analysis, the information and decision making, his or her past background and the extent of its relevance to the requirements of the role, his or her emotional needs and most or other personality traits. These are a few idiosyncratic factors that can influence the planning and execution of foreign policy”. Thus the qualities of leadership have a deep impact on the country’s foreign policy. However, their role is greatly constrained by the governmental and social structure. Strong democratically elected popular and legitimate leaders are a capability for foreign policy. Autocratic rulers who have usurped power through military coups with controversial legitimacy are not taken seriously by other countries with which their governments negotiate on any issue.

The leaders through their will, convert the resources into power. Dynamic leadership can mitigate the weak power status of a country through its active and prudent diplomacy. Without the utilization of the leadership the resources of a country cannot become a source of power. Strategising is an important variable for leadership. For the foreign policy of a country, decision-makers act according to their

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95 Rosenau, n.1.
perception of reality, not in response to reality itself. Of the four rulers (Mujib, Zia-ur-Rahman, H.M. Ershad and Begum Kahleda Zia, during 1971-96) since Independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been ruled by both democratic and authoritarian rulers. Mujib had a political background and emerged as a supreme leader of Bangladesh. Zia-ur-Rahman, who captured state power through a coup, and his regime was characterized by attempts to open up the economy organising a political party called Bangladesh National Party (BNP). H.M. Ershad accelerated the process personalizing the polity. He opted for marginalizing the public sector and encouraged private sector and accorded Islamic character to the country. Even the democratic leader Begum Khaleda Zia did not follow any different path in domestic as well as foreign policy than her predecessors. The qualities of these leaders has left a deep impact on Bangladesh's foreign policy.

**Political Institutions**

The political institution (forms, structures and process of government) in any country greatly influences its foreign policy. Under the authoritarian system quick foreign policy decision are possible as the decision making power rests with an individual assisted by his colleague. There is every possibility of discrepancy between the psychological and operational aspects of the foreign policy as the leaders under this system are isolated from the operational environment and the subordinate policy makers provide the information which is perceived by the superiors. Further, opposition may be oppressed through censorship and promulgation of regulation.

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96 Holsti, n.79, p. 158.
On the other hand, in a country having a democratic structure people may freely express their opinion on the domestic as well as foreign policy. This leaves its impact on the foreign policy of the country.

The difference in political structure within the democratic system has its impact on the foreign policy. Under a parliamentary form of government based on co-operation between the legislature and the Executive the cordial relations between the two wings have a direct effect on country’s foreign policy. Under Presidential system based on the principle of separation of powers, the relations between the two wings remain more strained. This affects the ambiguity or continuity of foreign policy. Under different kinds of party system (one, biparty or multiparty) different foreign policy takes place.

The political institutions in Bangladesh have been quite fragile. The process of democracy has been rather volatile and the frequently interrupted by the military regimes. It has been characterized by the lack of sustained unity among opposition political parties, and suppressive rule of successive authoritarian regimes. As a result of the conflicting tendencies, the road towards democracy has been uncertain and difficult.

After independence, Bangladesh adopted a parliamentary form of government, which in 1975 was replaced by a presidential form of government. 

97 Robert Wendzel, n.9, pp.123-126.
government. The Head of the State or the President, excepting in 1971-74, was the Chief Executive or Head of Government in Bangladesh who was the main decision maker in foreign policy issues. As and when the operation of the constitution was suspended, the nomenclature of the Head of State or the Chief Executive was changed to Chief Martial Law Administrator. Irrespective of the forms of governments, it can be said that in Bangladesh, it has been almost the sole prerogative of the Chief Executive or Chief Martial Law Administrator to make and implement foreign policy. Therefore, the nature of power structure in Bangladesh did not allow the political institutions to grow and develop as an evolved institution, particularly in foreign policy making. The authoritarian nature of Executive Head in Bangladesh did not give the Parliament an opportunity to exercise any meaningful role in the general conduct of foreign policy.99

The parliamentary elections held in 1991 augured institutionalizing a democratic governance system in Bangladesh. But the hope of the evolution of a healthy democracy in Bangladesh was in great peril due to protracted political impasse over opposition’s party demand for holding election under a neutral caretaker government. Political developments following the controversial election (1991) hampered the growth of Parliament as well as independent foreign policy making.

EXTERNAL VARIABLES

India Factor

The most important external factor for Bangladesh foreign policy is its big neighbour, India. Every state's first priority in foreign policy is its neighbourhood. But few countries have to face the 'tyranny of geography' as Bangladesh.\(^{100}\) The dictates of geo-politics have rendered Bangladesh literally land locked within India. India is the pre-eminent power of the South Asian region. For the foreign policy of small countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, India has been an important external variable.

There are three policy options which Bangladesh can adopt towards India: a policy of intransigence, a policy of indifference or a policy of accommodation.\(^{101}\) A policy of intransigence is not feasible considering the capabilities of the two countries and the vulnerability of Bangladesh to India. A policy of indifference towards India is not a sane policy, as Bangladesh has so many problems with India need to be solved. Only the policy of accommodation comes across as a proper policy, since India's cooperation is absolutely necessary for the development and prosperity of Bangladesh.

India watches carefully the policy pursued by Bangladesh. No government in Bangladesh can follow a domestic or foreign policy

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\(^{100}\) Iftekharuzzaman, "The India Doctrine: Relevance for Bangladesh" in Kabir and Hassan, n.14, p. 18.

\(^{101}\) Shaukat Hassan, "The India Factor in the Foreign Policy of Bangladesh" in Ibid., p. 53; Abdul, Sabur, A.K.M, "Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Challenges in the 1990s, BIJSS, vol.12, no.4, 1991, pp.246-91.
posture which India considers hostile and antagonistic to its national security. No government can go beyond a certain limit in its pronouncement and posture against India. Bangladesh is forced by its location to maintain at least normal, if not close relations with India. Its location has seriously circumscribed its maneuverability. The India factor is and remains the central concern in the minds of Bangladesh’s ruling elites, which influences its politico-security dimensions in the South Asian, South East Asian region and with China and Islamic countries.  

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Islamic Factors

Islam acts as an influencing factor in the foreign policy of all Islamic countries, the degree of its role varying from country to country depending on the state ideology. Islam with its doctrine of brotherhood provides a bond for the Muslims of all states. The urge for Islamic solidarity is expressed in the form of Islamic conference. The Islamic states collectively deliberate on the problems of the Muslim ummah and Islamic states in the forum (OIC).

Islamic factor acts independently as a debt on the foreign policy of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has gradually developed a close relationship with the Islamic countries in the post-Mujib period. There are push and pull factors influencing Bangladesh’s relations with

Islamic countries. In the push factors, the first is the religiosity of the masses, who want closer relations with the Islamic countries and identification with Islamic issues. The second is the influence of religious saints on the government particularly on Ershad who sought the Islamisation of the country's domestic and foreign policy. The centralist and the Islamic Parties also wanted closer relations with the Islamic countries. The third push factor is the absence of any Islamic country being a close neighbour as is the case with the other Islamic countries. Bangladesh’s desire for Islamic solidarity has been strengthened by the consciousness of this isolation.

The pull factors include political and economic reasons. Politically the Islamic countries are important for Bangladesh individually and collectively. The Islamic countries supported Bangladesh on the water dispute with India in the UN and its candidature to the UN Security Council. Economically the oil rich Arab Islamic countries are very helpful for Bangladesh in many ways. They provide economic aid most of which is in the form of grants to Bangladesh. The West Asian countries have become the largest market for Bangladeshi labour force both skilled and unskilled. The remittance money has become a vital source of foreign exchange. Trade between Bangladesh and these countries has great prospect which is increasing. The terms of trade are favourable to Bangladesh

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because a major share of the import bill is paid through loans and grants.\textsuperscript{105}

Hence, the push and pull factors guide Bangladeshi diplomacy towards the Islamic countries. Bangladesh adopts Islamic posture on every opportune occasion. The Islamic countries indirectly have influenced the Islamisation process in Bangladesh. Bangladesh actively participates in the diplomacy of Islamic conference and has won a credibility for its diplomacy. In International forums and the UN, Bangladesh highlights and takes a definite stand on the problems of Islamic countries. It co-sponsored the resolutions on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan alongwith Pakistan. In disputes between Islamic countries, it maintains neutrality, impartiality and strives to solve the problem. It has hosted many official and semi-official conferences and congregations of the world Muslim dignitaries since 1982.\textsuperscript{106}

The internal Islamization and the overtly pro-Islamic external policies have positioned it in the Islamic world as the second largest country populated with Muslims. The Islamization process has taken such deep roots in Bangladesh politics that even democratically elected government like Khalida Zia’s could not avoid giving consideration to the Islamic factor its foreign policy formulations. This


is a pointer that goes to show that whichever government comes to power, despite its ideological inclinations has to consider the Islamic factor as a major determinant of foreign policy.

**Aid Dependency Factor**

One of the dominant features of the third world countries is aid dependency for economic growth and development. Foreign aid performs two functions in the receiving country. One, aid provides the necessary capital for investment because in developing countries savings are low. Thus higher investment is essential for their economic growth. Two, it provides foreign exchange for necessary import. The import is higher than the export in these countries. The import is necessary for industrialization so the aid maintains balance of payment position in the receiving country. In countries like Bangladesh aid performs a third function.\(^{107}\) It provides revenues to government through taxes on the aid finance imports and sale of the food aid, Bangladesh needs aid not only for development but even for survival. The volume and value of foreign aid to Bangladesh is high and growing.\(^{108}\)

Bangladesh receives large quantities of foreign aid. It gets approximately 1.5 billion dollars aid every year, which accounts for nearly 50 per cent of its revenue budget and about 10 per cent of the

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Foreign aid accounted for 72 per cent of the total development outlay during the first five year plan (1973-78), 77 per cent during the two annual plans (1978-79, 1979-80), 63 per cent in the second five year plan (1981-85), 65 per cent in the third five year plan (1985-90).

The extent of aid dependence of Bangladesh can be perceived from the fact that employment for rural poor, domestic revenues development expenditure, fixed investments, imports and the balance of payments deficit and level of output in some sectors of the economy are directly or indirectly dependent on levels of aid flow. Bangladesh is integrated into the world economic system as any classically dependent Latin American or African countries.  

The influence of donor countries on decision making of the policy formulation of Bangladesh import policy, food policy and to an extent on foreign policy is immense. This has been aptly corroborated by renowned scholar R. Sobhan that "Bangladesh policy maker wait for decisions in Washington, London, Tokyo, Bonn and Paris to be passed before formulating their annual development budgets, import policy, food policy and even decision about the number of children to be born".

109 "Bangladesh: Rural Poverty and Foreign Aid", The Journal of Social Studies, no. 25, (July 1984), p. 34.


Aid requirements have determined the direction of Bangladesh foreign policy. Multi-laterally and bilaterally, the West is the major donor. Bangladesh’s diplomacy is concentrated in the West and in the Islamic world. The volume of aid depends upon the goodwill of donors. For such goodwill Bangladesh has identified its foreign policy with the West and the Islamic world. In its pronouncements on international issues and diplomatic moves Bangladesh tries to appease the donor countries. For instance in 1974, America insisted Bangladesh stop its export of jute bags to Cuba. Bangladesh had to implement this under the threat perception of sanction that its food aid could have been stopped.112 Dhaka did not condemn the Camp David Agreement, the American attack on Grenada and Libya keeping in view the American sensitivity. It followed the American perception on Afghanistan and Kampuchean crisis. In recent years, some of the important decisions have been announced from abroad. Ershad declared from China in his 1982 visit, that Bangladesh would establish diplomatic ties with Kampuchea.113 These instances shows that aid dependency factor has been the most important external constraint on the foreign policy of Bangladesh.

The determinants of Bangladesh foreign policy directly or indirectly influence the external behaviour of Bangladesh. The identified variables are of general nature applicable to the foreign policy of all the third world countries. They have been applied and


interpreted at a micro level for the study of foreign policy of Bangladesh. All the variables are not equally important for every situation. Some of them may be more important than the others in a particular situation and vice-versa. The perception of these variables by the leadership which takes a diplomatic initiative in a particular situation is very important. The role of the leadership becomes more significant in the third world countries where they have great leverage because there is no pressure of the vocal public opinion since the masses are not interested in the foreign policy issues unless it is directly related with them.

The determinants of Bangladesh’s Foreign Policy has more negative aspects than positive. After analyzing all the elements of geography — size, topography, climate, location — it appears that geography is a constraint rather than a capability to Bangladesh foreign policy. Least developed economy, lack of important natural resources and over population are other weaknesses of its foreign policy. The military capability increased during the period but it is not strong enough to play a role in its foreign policy.

Among the intangible variables historical legacy as perceived by the ruling elites has positive elements. The issue of ideology is related with the problem of national identity. The issue of national ideology is indirectly attached with the nature of relationship with India.

External variables are very important for foreign policy of Bangladesh. Both Zia and Ershad and even democratic rule of Begum Khaleda Zia tried to minimise the influence of the India factor upon Bangladesh and took stands on different international issues which
was disliked by India. These regimes were more responsive to the likes and dislikes of the western donors and Islamic world in their external behaviour.