3.1: Introduction
As part of the Indian subcontinent, the geographical area which constitutes the present-day Bangladesh had historical relations with China. The rulers and people of these two geographical regions had defied the barrier of the formidable Himalaya and exchanged cultural and commercial interests. After the partition of British India, contemporary Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) became a part of Pakistan. Even in those days China had a cordial relationship with East Pakistan. However, this relationship experienced a jolt in 1971 when China stood by Pakistan during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The Sino-Soviet rift and the strategic alliance of Pakistan, China and the US prevented China to support the Liberation War of Bangladesh. This jolt hindered the process of normalisation between Bangladesh-China in the post-liberation period. In the meantime, the coups of 1975 altered the political scenario in Bangladesh. The military coups followed by the regime change facilitated China to resume its relationship with Bangladesh. The military regime of Bangladesh and China were abided by the common anti-Indian factor. So after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, bilateral relations between Bangladesh and China became an unsurpassable saga of comprehensive political, economic and military cooperation. Meanwhile, China has emerged as one of the most prominent and trustworthy extra-regional allies of Bangladesh. Likewise, Bangladesh has also favoured Chinese cause in many international and regional platforms. After more than one and a half decade of military rule, democratic regime came into power in Bangladesh in 1991. This development facilitated the comprehensiveness and multilateral participations of Bangladesh-China relations. In the post-cold war period, both Bangladesh and China have shown pragmatism over ideological values and multilateral engagement over bilateral synchronism in their bilateral relations. Though, as a small country Bangladesh is no match to China, still its importance as the other half of Bangladesh-China relations are not meagre.

3.2: The Historical Linkages
As an independent nation state, Bangladesh, might have formalized her diplomatic tie
with China in 1975 but the amicable relationship of this geographical area with China dates back to the early part of 15th century AD. Historically, there are ample evidences to prove that ancient China and India had cultural and commercial linkages under various dynasties. In ancient time sea routes were the paramount means of transportation and communication. The Chinese sailors had often been attracted by the contemporary Bengal due to its connectivity to the Bay of Bengal.

After the sea routes were discovered, to connect Central Asia and South East Asia, the coastal regions of India were linked to the maritime channels. The then geographical area of the present day Bangladesh was linked with China due to its location. It was known as Munjala among the Chinese sailors and they used to call the Bay of Bengal as Munjala Hai (Tajuddin, 1996:18). The sea route of the Bay of Bengal was one of the important routes for China to access the countries of South East Asia. Historical findings are there to prove that the Sultan of Bengal Ghiyas-ud-din Azam Shah used to share gifts and friendly gesture with emperor Yung-lo of the Ming dynasty of China (Majumdar, 1967:337). Buddhism played a vital role to further these linkages. This association had been fortified by the visit of Chinese travellers Fa-Hien in 399AD (during the reign of Chandragupta II of the Gupta Dynasty) and also by the visit of Hiuen Tsang in 630 AD (during the reign of Harsha Vardhana) (Das, 1998:96). Though these visits were pilgrimages to the “Holy Land of Buddhism”, they later on come to be perceived as the beginning of China’s linkages with the South Asian region (Smith, 1998:169). Similarly, it was Atisa Dipankar, a Buddhist preacher from Bengal, who preached Buddhism in Tibet and China. As an Indian originated religion, Buddhism encouraged the commercial relations between China and ancient India because of China’s initial import of religion related commodities from India (Sen, 2004:142-79). Both Bangladesh and China later on replicated these historical linkages to full-fledged bilateral relations.

3.3: China’s Relations with Pakistan: The Post-Partition Period

After the partition of British India, East Pakistan developed its closeness with China under the rubric of Pakistan-China relations. Like other major states, China had her consular office in Dhaka. The Pakistan-China relations developed and deepened during the heyday of the Cold War. Earlier, the ideological dissimilarities restrained
both the countries to have normal relations until the late 1950s. In Chinese
assumption, Pakistan was a close ally of the US. The anti-imperial and anti-western
notion of China’s foreign policy tried to observe the whole development through the
prism of the Cold War. Nevertheless, Pakistan’s covert keenness to strengthen a
positive tie with China can be judged from the statement of Zafarulla Khan, the
Pakistan representative in the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25
September 1950. He said: “… China is not applying for admission to the UN. It is a
Member State, a permanent member of the Security Council, one of the Big Five”
(Bhola, 1986:65).

After this initial hiccup Pakistan became the first Muslim State to recognize the
People’s Republic of China in 1950 and both the countries formally established
diplomatic tie on 21 May 1951. The subsequent years witnessed more deteriorating
anxiety in their bilateral relations due to the Korean War and Pakistan’s entry into
eThe real development of their bilateral cooperation germinated at the Afro-Asian
conference held in Bandung in 1955. At that conference the Chinese Premier Chou
En-lai not only met his Pakistani counterpart Mohammad Ali Bogra, but also
surprisingly came out with a statement in the political Committee of the Bandung
Conference. There he disclosed the assurance given by Prime Minister Bogra that,
though Pakistan is in a military treaty with America, it is not against China. The end
part of the 1950s again experienced a lower intensity of their bilateral cooperation.
Pakistan’s stand on the issues of Tibet, Taiwan and Chinese highway construction
over Karakoram Range further widen their gap. Therefore, the first decade of China-
Pakistan relations was more ambivalent in scholarly observations.

3.4: Pro-Chinese Forces of East Pakistan and China-Pakistan Relation
The pro-Chinese forces of East Pakistan played the role of a balancer when the
China-Pakistan relations were dwindling with Pakistan’s increasing strategic
solidarity with the US. The pro-Chinese intellectuals of East Pakistan had several

1 The Chinese Premier Chou En-lai revealed in his statement that:
“… [A]lthough Pakistan was party to a military treaty, Pakistan was not against China.
Pakistan had no fear China would commit aggression against her. As a result of that, we
achieved a mutual understanding… The Prime Minister of Pakistan further assured that if the
United States should take an aggressive action under the military treaty or if the United States
launched a global war, Pakistan would not be involved in it” (Jain,1984:5-6).
times been invited by China to attend conferences meant for African and Asian scholars (Tajuddin, 1996:18-19). Leaders like Mian Iftekhar-Uddin, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani were ardent supporters of the Left ideology in Pakistan. For the Left leaders of East Pakistan, China was the perfect role model of anti-imperialism and peasant-workers’ revolution. The pro-Peking Left leaders were assuming that even after the end of British rule, Pakistan could not free itself from imperialism. Their ‘interpretation was based on Lenin’s theory of imperialism’ and they were in favour of using the Maoist tactic to establish peasant-workers’ democracy in Pakistan (Maniruzzaman, 1975:13). Similarly, the Left leaders were critical about Pakistan’s strategic proximity to the US. They openly condemned Pakistan’s decision to join American sponsored defence pacts. Thus, the anti-American ideology, that these Left leaders propagated, brought them closer to China.

The Communist Party was banned in Pakistan in 1954 and in compulsion these leaders joined other parties. Though pro-Chinese forces were quite active in Pakistan, the initial phase of China-Pakistan relations were not based on ideological motivation. Chinese leaders were well convinced that the domestic constraints and social composition of Pakistan is inimical to Communist ideology. A society based on Islamic principles and rigidity hardly incorporates class-consciousness and revolution against the established feudal order. Therefore, the immediate priority of China was to ‘gain a foot- hold’ in Pakistan, rather than to make any serious attempt to export Communist ideology (Bhola, 1986:53).

3.4.1: The Pick-up Phase of Pakistan-China Relations
The whole 1960s had witnessed a robust engagement of Pakistan with China. The reasons behind this development were more global than regional. Firstly, Pakistan realized that in the new scenario national ‘Self-reliance’ couldn’t be replaced by the policy of ‘collective security’ and ‘alliance’ making. The instant spread of thermonuclear weapons along with multilateral delivery system has synchronized the possibility of any major war, due to the high level of ‘mutually assured destruction’. Secondly, with the end of the Cold War in Europe, military alliances started loosing their meaning (Jalalzai, 2000:170). At the same time cooperative engagement and interdependence among states prevailed as the new policy in international relations.
Further, the non-aligned countries started getting recognition of the Super Powers rather than the alliance states. All these developments guided Pakistan to think about a new engagement with the superpowers beyond any ideological constraints.

At this juncture the 1962 Sino-Indian border war provided an opportunity for both China and Pakistan to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation. In Pakistan’s interest China emerged as the most reliable strategic partner than the US. On the other hand, China, guided by the principles of ‘Real Politik’ and ‘Enemy’s Enemy is Friend’, seriously engaged with Pakistan to contain India. It has been believed that Maulana Bhasani when led an official delegation to China in 1963 to attend the anniversary celebration of the October Revolution, he was advised by Mao Zedong to go slow against the Ayub Khan regime in the fear that it may adversely determine China-Pakistan relations (Tajuddin, 1996:20). At this point of time China started flooding military assistance to Pakistan. To further strengthen their bilateral cooperation, Pakistan and China signed a crucial border agreement on 2 March 1963, an air service agreement in August 1963 and a cultural agreement in March 1965.

3.4.2: Sino-Soviet Rift and Sino-US Détente

In the 1960s some crucial development occurred in the international level. Ideological differences and border disputes cracked the strategic affiliation of the USSR and China. Drifted by the Cold War havoc, the two Asian Communist giants started getting hostile to each other. American penetration at this juncture coloured the spectacle differently (Joshi, 1974:282-85). The common strategic interest of the US and China in South Asia against the Soviet Union compelled them to nurture a more favourable equilibrium in Asia (Accinelli, 2005:9). Facilitated by Pakistan, the then National Security Advisor of the US, Henry Kissinger, paid a secret visit to China. This visit redefined not only the Sino-US relations but also facilitated the new strategic axis of the bipolar world. This situation again fragmented by an undeterred “India-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation” in 1971.

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2During the early part of 1950s both the Super Powers had not considered non-alignment movement with favour. But after the mid-1950s, the Super Powers did not consider it as “immoral” (Bhola, 1986:83).
3.5: China and the Liberation War of Bangladesh

Though People’s Republic of China (PRC) emerged out of a bloody war against the “reactionary rule of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism” (*The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1978:3), she failed to stand by the same ideology during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. China’s hostility with India, border and ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union, and her robust linkages with Pakistan compelled her to become more pragmatic rather than being solely driven by its communist ideology.

Guided by these developments China made her stand clear in the Liberation War of Bangladesh. At the peak of the Liberation War of Bangladesh the first Chinese reaction came on 11 April 1971. The People’s Daily criticised the government of India for interfering in Pakistan’s ‘internal affairs’. The Radio Pakistan did broadcast the first official support of China on 11 April 1971. Chou-En-lai in his message assured Yahya Khan that China will protect Pakistan from external threat.

Amidst this strategic development India and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. The South Asian equation started shifting in favour of India due to the strategic importance of the treaty. At this point of time Z. A. Bhattu paid a visit to Peking in November 1971 and China again made her stand clear. In his welcome speech at the banquet in honour of the visiting Pakistani delegation- Mr. Chi Peng-Fei, China’s Acting Foreign Minister, offered to “… support the Pakistan government and people in their just struggle to defend their state sovereignty and national independence” (Jain, 1984:184-85). This offer was mainly a reaffirmation of Chou-En-lai’s message to Yahya Khan. Therefore, China’s support was for Pakistan’s sovereignty and independence rather than for any military initiative for the protection of its territorial integration.

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3 China’s stand during the Liberation War of Bangladesh contradicts the promises fostered in the preamble of The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. The preamble reads: “… [W]e should strengthen our unity with the proletariat and the oppressed people and nations throughout the world … we should unite with all countries subjected to aggression, subversion, interference, control and bullying by the imperialist and imperialist superpowers… and strive for the progress and emancipation of humanity” (*The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 1978:5).

4 The People’s Daily wrote “…the Indian reactionary came forward in a great hurry to openly interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan” (Jain, 1984:182).
However, two major factors stood on China’s way for a direct military intervention in 1971. First is the *Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation*. Beneath the security umbrella of the Soviet Union, India could hardly be challenged as the comparative military edge was placed in favour of the Soviet Union rather than in favour of China. The second is a technical constraint, as in the month of December the Himalayan Passes were blocked by snow and became impenetrable for China to mobilize its troops (Haider, 2000:762). There are also some speculations that if the liberation war had lasted for a longer period China’s military presence might have been there.

3.6: The Pro-Peking forces of East Pakistan and the Liberation War

The ‘Left’ propagators of the East Wing of Pakistan had a diversified stand over the East Pakistan crisis. Even among the pro-Peking force bifurcation emerged regarding the ideology and the freedom struggle. The pro-Peking groups were quite cynical about the role, objective and composition of Awami League, the main propagator of the Liberation War. According to their observation, the Awami League was a ‘bourgeois national party’ and its aim was to establish the Bengali bourgeois social order. So the East Pakistan Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (E. P. C. P-ML) led by Mohammed Toaha and Abdul Hug adopted a strategy of “at best ambiguous and at worst collaborator” (Lifschulth, 1979:21-22). The EPCP-ML considered the Chinese stand towards Bangladesh’s Liberation War as a wrong step and also criticized the Awami League led movement as a “conspiracy of Indian expansionism and Russian Social Imperialism” (Maniruzzaman, 1975:21-52).

Another pro-Peking group under the banner of the East Bengal Communist Party (E.B.C.P) and led by Abdul Matin and Aladdin Ahmed promulgated a different strategy. They argued that independence of East Pakistan could be achieved under the proletariat leadership of the workers and peasant community of East Pakistan. For them, this was also the strategy to flourish Socialism in East Pakistan (Lifschulth, 1979:23). The third pro-Peking group the National Awami Party headed by Moulana Bhashani rendered their unconditional support to the freedom struggle of Bangladesh.

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5 This treaty has also been accepted as the Soviet strategic move to use India as a countervailing force against “the combined pressures of the United states and China” (Ayoob and Subrahmanyan, 1972,290).
3.7: Post-War Responses of China
The post-1971 which altered the balance of power of South Asia was against the strategic interest of China. According to some strategic analyst, the liberation of Bangladesh had severely curtailed the influence of both China and the US over the South Asian region. China’s image in Pakistan as an ally and a ‘revolutionary power’ in South Asia were ruined. At the same time, American credibility as a “guarantor of security against nuclear threats” received a serious setback (Ayoob and Subrahmanyam, 1972:270). China branded the new government headed by Mujibur Rahman as “the quisling government” set up by New Delhi. China viewed the new state as a product of Soviet ‘imperialism’ and Indian ‘expansionism.’ This mindset provoked China to block the smooth progress of Bangladesh’s entry into the UN.

3.8: A Reluctant China and Bangladesh’s Entry into the United Nations
The UN membership was a gateway to Bangladesh to get aid and assistance from other independent states. Formally Bangladesh applied for the UN membership on 8 August 1972. As it was expected China vetoed the application in the Security Council. China’s action was based on two conditions. China’s first official statement in the UN’s Security Council came on 24 August 1972. The Chinese representative Huang Hua designated the application of Bangladesh as “contrary to the letter and spirit of the Charter” and voted against it. According to Shyamali Ghosh, the Chinese action was more a face saving device particularly on two accounts- to nudge a symbolic protest against the enhancing Indo-Soviet supremacy in South Asia and to appease a disgusted Pakistan as it failed to render military support during the 1971 war (Ghosh, 1994:306). The Chinese obstruct was based on two demands. Firstly, China was demanding complete withdrawal of Indian forces from Bangladesh’s soil. Secondly, China was asking for the repatriation of 90,000 POWs and civilian detainees of Pakistan (Jain, 1984:212). China was more sceptical about the presence of Indo-Soviet axis in Bangladesh reconstruction. India and Pakistan signed the repartition agreement on 28 August 1973 and Pakistan finally recognized Bangladesh on 22

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6 It had been mentioned that: “If the Soviet Union, India and other countries… try to press the Security Council for the admission of “Bangladesh” into the United Nations in the present circumstances the Chinese delegation, in… the interest of the people on the South Asian subcontinent, will categorically vote against it.” (Jain, 1984:210-211).
February 1974. As Pakistan-Bangladesh relations became normal, the Security Council reconsidered the membership application in May-June 1974 without any Chinese constrain. Finally, on 17 September 1974 Bangladesh became 136th ‘full-fledged member’ of the UN.

3.9: Bangladesh-China Relations during the Tenure of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

In the post liberation period both China and Bangladesh were concerned about their respective interest. China was worried about the emergence of a pro-Indian and pro-Soviet nation not far away from her border. On the other hand, Mujibur Rahman was also aware of the significance of China’s support to become a member of the UN (Tajuddin, 2001:9). The “economic compulsion” of Bangladesh was pushing Mujib forward to furnish a cordial relationship with China. Nevertheless, the respective international compulsions of China and Bangladesh made their cooperation more sluggish. Mujibur started tuning down the volume of his fiery speeches meant for China, which he often used to vomit against China during the peak days of the Liberation War. Bangladesh’s enthusiasm can also be noticed from the letter of foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad to the Chinese premier Zou En-lai in January 1972. The context of the letter was Bangladesh’s desire to ‘have good neighbourly relations’ with China (Mahanty, 1984:146). The Chinese authorities had begun to soft their voice against Bangladesh 7. In October 1974 Bangladesh experienced a disastrous flood. This time the Chinese Red Cross Society remitted 5,000 tons of wheat, 40,000 cotton blankets and other warm clothes of 2,00,000 Yuan to help the flood victims (Singh, 2003:276). As Mujib was visually closer to India and the USSR, China nurtured little bilateral cooperation with Bangladesh.

3.10: Post-Mujib Period: Convergence of Interests

One of the potent questions that can be raised here is did China recognize Bangladesh on 31 August 1975 due to the regime change? It has often been accepted that the Chinese policy shift towards Bangladesh moulded out of the assassination of Mujibur

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7 In his UN’s General Assembly statement the Chinese representative Huang Hua said “we are not fundamentally opposed to the admission of Bangladesh to the United Nations. China has always cherished profound friendly sentiments for the people of East Pakistan.” See statement made by the Chinese representative Huang Hua in the UN General Assembly, 29 November 1972(Jain, 1984:221-224).
Rahman and the overthrow of pro Indo-Soviet regime in Bangladesh. However, China’s policy shift can be noticed from the mid 1974. The thaw between Bangladesh-China, China’s green signal to Bangladesh’s membership of the UN and China’s informal economic aid to flood ravaged Bangladesh- indicate the changing notion of Bangladesh-China relations. In this period of time China’s realist foreign policy was looking for every possible slot to deter further progress of the Indo-Soviet axis in South Asia. In a sequence where both China and Bangladesh were ‘strategic requisite’ of each other, they were slowly progressing towards a rapprochement. China was at the brink to recognize Bangladesh, even the recognition could have been expected without the regime change in Bangladesh (Ghosh, 1994:305). Therefore, China’s step to recognise Bangladesh, after the assassination of Mujib, was more a coincidence than an ‘incidence- driven policy change of China’.

The main propelling force behind Chinese enthusiasm to expand cooperation with Bangladesh was its geo-strategic location. Strategically, Bangladesh’s geographic location has made it a significant country of the region (Bhardwaj, 2005:43). During the first phase of Bangladesh-China relations it was even more significant due to the Sino-Indian hostilities. Bangladesh is geographically proximate to India’s North Eastern region. Furthermore, the location of Chittagong port has greater strategic significance as it is providing a naval access to the Bay of Bengal. China was aware of India’s strategic vulnerability from the eastern sector through Bangladesh. In fact China had earlier reflected its enthusiasm by enhancing strategic cooperation with East Pakistan. The post-1975 development in Bangladesh helped China to regain its strategic hold on South Asian region.

3.11: Beginning of the First Phase of Cooperation: Ziaur Rahman Regime

The real Bangladesh-China relations started during the military regime of Ziaur Rahman. Zia’s regime made all possible arrangements for the sustainability of a pro-Chinese atmosphere. China recognized the post-Mujib regime on 31 August 1975 and both the countries established diplomatic relations on 4 October 1975.

3.11.1: New Political Engagement

Ziaur Rahman, the real architect of Bangladesh-China relations, visited China as
Chief Executive of Marshal Law and Chief of the Army Staff of Bangladesh in January 1977. This visit had multilateral implications for Bangladesh. Firstly, the visit happened at a time when Bangladesh was looking for aid and assistance to stabilize her war shaken economy, which was time and again worsened by natural disasters. Secondly, the visit took place at a time when the Ganges water sharing issue was solidified as the apple of discord between India and Bangladesh. Zia’s visit opened the door of Chinese support to Bangladesh on Ganges water sharing issue.8 Thirdly, the visit empowered Bangladesh to play China Card against her giant neighbour India.

After Zia’s China visit, Bangladesh got an option to deter India as both India and China were experiencing an inimical relation at that time. For China the visit was an opportunity to fortify her hold on Bangladesh to regain the strategic stability which was dwindling against her after the liberation war of Bangladesh. China glorified the attempts made by Ziaur Rahman and his immediate predecessors to establish a regime change in Bangladesh9. The Chinese authorities branded the coups as Bangladesh people’s just struggle “to safeguard national independence and state sovereignty”. In Chinese perspective the regime change was a success against “hegemonies” and “expansionism”. During this visit Zia openly confirmed Bangladesh support to the One China Policy. The Press Communiqué on the visit of General Zia revealed Bangladesh’s “support to the Chinese people in their sacred cause of liberating Taiwan and reunifying their motherland”. On economic front also an agreement was signed to enhance ‘Economic and Technical cooperation’. Vice Premier Li Hsiennien of China reciprocated Zia’s visit. In March 1978 he visited Bangladesh. During this visit both the countries signed the Agreement of Cooperation

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8 General Zia raised the Ganges water issue and the enhancing tension in Indo-Bangladesh border without naming India. Speaking at the banquet organized in his honour by the Chinese authority, Zia said:
“[t]he stress and strain in the affairs of the subcontinent have not deterred us in our resolve to consolidate our sovereignty safe guard our genuine and true independence. We have presided in this in spite of the loss of many valuable lives and notwithstanding the disruption caused among the inhabitants of our border areas and the hardship caused by diversion of the waters of the river Ganges”(Jain,1981b:264-265).

9Zia’s immediate predecessors were part of the murder of Mujibur Rahman and the military coups. Chinese Vice-Premier, Li Hisen-nien’s in his speech at the banquet given in honour of Chinese Martial law Administration of Bangladesh, Major General Ziaur Rahman, spoke:
“[I]n recent years … particularly in the past year the Government of Bangladesh led by Major General Ziaur Rahman defraying duress and pressure, have firmly defended their national independence and state sovereignty”(Jain,1981b:262-263).
in Economy, Science and Technology. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Xiang also paid a visit to Bangladesh in 1981.

3.11.2: China’s Aid Diplomacy

Though China’s economy is not a developed one, she had often used the aid diplomacy in South Asia to strengthen its hold upon India’s small neighbours. Since 1953 China has been playing the role of an aid donor. In the mid of 1970s she had more than 55 recipient countries (Ghosh, 1994:307). In the initial phase China’s aid diplomacy was aimed at two long-standing objectives. The basic motive behind international aid and assistance is to keep a strong hold on the domestic and foreign policy of the recipient country. China was not an exception to this principle. China had used aid as a strategy to mould the balance of power of South Asia in her favour. Secondly Chinese aid diplomacy was part of its mission to project the Marxist-Leninist model of Political and socio-economic development. As in the 1970s India’s Neheruvian model of development was no more in the picture as a role model for the developing country to follow. Further, during this period of time, Chinese aid flows into Bangladesh aimed to gain strategic hold over the South Asian region rather than to spread Communist ideology. Chinese aid was more conducive to the nascent and developing economy of Bangladesh, as most of the assistance was either in the form of project or commodity agriculture based aid. Bangladesh and China first established their formal bilateral economic assistance on 1976 (Ahmed, 1992:272-73).

Zia’s first China visit in January 1977 had opened up whole new vistas in their economic cooperation. During this visit an Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation was signed. Initially its name was Trade and Payment Agreement (TPA). However they replaced this agreement by a Long-Term Trade Agreement (LTTA) in 1980. During Li Hsien Bangladesh visit both the parties signed two more agreements in March 1978. First one was the Economic and Technical Agreement through which

10 The whole 1950s had witnessed a remarkable progress ‘in the economic, social and political field of’ India. The Neheruvian model of (western Liberalism, democracy and the Soviet type of Socialism) development started gaining popularity among the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Possible flourishing of the Neheruvian model of development posed a great threat to the ideologically motivated Chinese model. Even it has been assumed that the 1962 Chinese aggression against India was highly motivated by ideological confrontation. China’s intention behind the war was to compel India for a policy shift from development to defence (which India did in her 3rd Five Years Plan) and to reveal the weakness of the Neheruvian model of development (Bhola,1986:54).
China would facilitate 850 million Taka interest-free loans. The second agreement was a Scientific and Technological agreement aiming at the exchange of export and expertise in the field of science and technology (Ahmed, 1992:272-73). The two parties also signed a Shipping Agreement in November 1978. From 1974 to 1982 Bangladesh had received 27.014 million US$ aids from China. Though the number is relatively marginal to that of the US aid to Bangladesh, still it was significant as it projected a new dimension of Bangladesh-China cooperation.

3.11.3: From Aid Diplomacy to Commercial Partnership

During the Zia’s tenure Bangladesh and China established their commercial relations. From 1979 to 1982 Bangladesh’s total imports from China was 284.52 million US$. In this period of time the total exports of Bangladesh to China was 65.98 million US$ (Haider, 2000:766). This was not a healthy and reciprocal trade as the Balance of Trade was 218.54 million US$ against Bangladesh. Still it is conceived as the beginning phase of Bangladesh-China economic relations. Among various trade items, Bangladesh’s major importing items were coal, cement, liquid industrial products, metals and minerals etc. China’s major importing items from Bangladesh were raw jute, jute goods, leather, leather products etc. (Ahmed, 1992:298-99).

3.11.4: Cooperation in the Field of Defence and Culture

Being a small South Asian underdeveloped state, Bangladesh is more vulnerable to non-military threats rather than any direct military threat. However, like any other nation states, Bangladesh also conceives possession of strong state militia as the symbol of power and development. After the Liberation War, Bangladesh was solely dependent on India and the Soviet Union to protect her domestic and external security. After the regime change the Soviet Union denied to continue its military supply. Here China emerged as the reliable arms supplier in Bangladesh. According to a study from 1975 to 1979 China had supplied near about 78 percent of the total arms imported by Bangladesh (Gilks and Segal, 1985:168-70). China also helped Bangladesh to build arms and ammunition in the country by helping it to establish arms and ammunition factory at Joydevpur. China also took over the Soviet built MIGs that had been refused by Moscow to service after the regime change in Bangladesh. In the year 1977 China had supplied 10 F-9 fighters to Bangladesh.
Again she received 48 F-7 fighters and 36 T-MBT in 1981 (Hasan, 1982:81). Therefore, Ziaur Rahman was also the pioneer of Bangladesh-China military cooperation.

Cultural linkages conceived as one of the important areas cooperation between Bangladesh and China. They signed a cultural cooperation agreement on 17 November 1979. This agreement enhanced cooperation in the fields of literature, visual and performing arts, education and research, science and technology, media and tourism and sports. The Chinese Government was also encouraging various scholarship systems to further Bangladeshi student’s education in China. This was the way to create a pro-Chinese civil society in Bangladesh.

3.12: The New Zero Sum Game of Bangladesh and India
Understanding the beginning of a robust Bangladesh-China relation requires worth mentioning the changed dimension of Bangladesh foreign policy with regard to India. The regime change not only brought political transformation but also established ideological transformation in Bangladesh domestic and foreign policy. The suspicion and fear of India’s domination that were germinating even during the Mujib period got a chance to flourish in a new political set-up. The totally abandoned Socialist pattern of economy and Islamization of Bangladeshi society paved the way for anti-Indianism. Mujib’s gratefulness to India, which was fortified in the form of a 25 year “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace” on 19 March, 1972, received serious negative responses at this new political set-up. The ethos of freedom struggle “nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism” were redefined by Ziaur Rahman. The ‘ Bengali nationalism’ transformed into ‘Bangladeshi nationalism’, the principle of socialism synchronized into ‘economic and social justice’, the presidential form of government reshaped by ending the single party system and by ‘limiting the executive and legislative power of the president’ and the principle of secularism replaced by inculcation of Islam as the state religion (Tajuddin, 2001:69-71).

11 The aftermath of Bangladesh’s liberation war witnessed many unpleasant developments between Bangladesh and India. India’s role in the 1971 war and quick ending of the war, along with settlement of POWs and a 25 years Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace’ encountered unpleasant clamor from various corner of Bangladesh. Some designated these developments as India’s hegemony over Bangladesh( Gulati, 1988:72).
These transformations galvanized the process of anti-Indian and anti-Soviet mindset of the new policy makers of Bangladesh. The Cold War havoc and ‘bloc-politics’ coloured by the principle of Real Politik create a new slot in South Asia. China considered the new development in Bangladesh as an opportunity to regain her lost strategic interest in South Asia. So, the first phase of Bangladesh-China relations structured on the bedrock of anti-Indian commonality of both the countries. The seed of Bangladesh-China relations were germinated at this point of time, though its toxicity started shaking the very root of Indo-Bangladesh relations.

3.13: Replication of Predecessor: The Ershad Regime

General Hussain Mohammad Ershad assumed power through a bloodless coup in 1982. The regime change did not carry out any policy transformation. Bangladesh’s domestic and foreign policy remained as same as that of the Ziaur Rahman. The Indo-Bangladesh relations again soured due to lack of proper negotiation at political level. At domestic front Ershad galvanized the process of Islamization in Bangladesh. He made constitutional amendment and Islam became the state religion of Bangladesh. This development had international implication. It soured Indo-Bangladesh relations and at the same time it fuelled the smooth progress of Bangladesh-China cooperation. In the field of domestic economy Ershad initiated liberalization. He opened up most of the sectors for private investment. He also pleaded for more foreign aid package and “implemented many donor prescribed policies including a structural adjustment program” (Jahan, 2002:19).

3.13.1: Political Cooperation

Bangladesh-China relation, during the first half of the Ershad regime, had been moulded by the India-factor. Still Ershad’s enthusiasm can be noticed from his comment: “Peking, I can go to any time. I have a standing invitation; we are on very good military terms” (Ahmed 1992:283). In his nine years reign Ershad paid five visits to China. In this period of time Bangladesh showed her support to the One China Policy by not having any official tie with Taiwan. Many top ranking Chinese

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12 “General Ershad, in his fervent wish to go cheap popularity and woo the fundamentalist political parties (and also to bash Awami League) made the eight amendment to the constitution in 1988; recognize Islam as the state religion” (Ahmed and Ahsan, 2006).
leaders had reciprocated Ershad’s visit. In 1982 and 1986, Chinese president Li Ximannian visited Bangladesh. The Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng also visited Bangladesh in November 1989. These visits from both the side had strengthened their bilateral cooperation on various accounts. The second half of Ershad’s regime had experienced a rejuvenation of Sino-Indian rapprochement. After Rajiv Gandhi’s historic China visit in December 1988, India-China relations turned into normalcy. The new development redefined Bangladesh-China relations. During General Ershad’s Beijing visit in March 1989, the Chinese authorities indicated that Bangladesh could not expect China’s support any more so far as the Ganges water issue was concerned (Ahmed, 1992:291).

3.13.2: Economic Cooperation: Aid and Trade

The economic cooperation became wider and constructive. In order to enhance more cooperation in economic, trade and scientific sectors they established the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) on 2 November 1983. The first meeting of the commission was held in Beijing in September 1985. In January 1985, during its second meeting both the parties discussed on the expansion of trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation (Ghosh, 1995:14). China remitted a number of project assistance during the Ershad regime. Among them ‘Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge on the Buri Ganga was the largest (Tajuddin, 1996:54). The project was accomplished on 15 March 1989. From 1982 to 1990 Bangladesh received 79.687 million US$ as foreign aid from China. Most of the aid was in the form of food, commodity and project assistance.

During Premier Li Peng’s Bangladesh visit in November 1989 both sides signed the ‘Agreement on Mutual Exemption of Visas and the Agreement of Trade’. The whole tenure of General Ershad had witnessed a healthy volume of trade between Bangladesh and China. From 1983 to 1991 the total Bangladeshi imports from China was 20552.4 million Tk., likewise China’s total imports from Bangladesh was 4961.2 million Tk. The balance of trade was a panic experience for Bangladesh, because it stood 15562.7 million Tk. against her. The reason behind Bangladesh’s poor performance in bilateral trade with China was ‘the reluctant mood on the part of certain Chinese Exporting Corporations in accepting the Letter of Credit (L/C) under barter.'
3.13.3: The Enhanced Defence and Cultural Cooperation

Bangladesh and China had further strengthened their military cooperation during Ershad tenure. China supplied a Romeo submarine to Bangladesh in 1984. To strengthen cooperation in military field a Chinese delegation led by General Yag D. Zhi, Chief of General Staff of the Peking Liberation Army, came to Bangladesh on 7 January 1987. During the visits both the parties shared dialogue of mutual interest.13 The visit helped to organize the Bangladesh’s army on Chinese pattern. China also maintained and supervised the Joy Dumpur’s arms ordinance factory. When Ershad paid a visit to Beijing on 29 June 1990, China showed her eagerness to modernize the young Navy of Bangladesh and other wings of the armed forces.

Another major part of their bilateral relations were the cultural linkages. Both sides have developed cooperation in this field through various visits of cultural exchange programs. In 1985 a six-member Chinese Radio and Television delegation paid a visit to Dhaka and identified various possible areas of cooperation with their Bangladeshi counterparts (Ahmed, 1992:265-299). Both Bangladesh and China had also developed extensive cooperation in the fields of education, culture and sports.

3.14: The India Factor in Bangladesh-China Relations

The first phase of Bangladesh-China relations did cluster around India. India-centric strategic calculation worked as the binding force of Bangladesh’s nascent bilateral relations with China. Bangladesh-India relations started worsening in leaps and bounds just after the liberation war. Even the euphoria of freedom and charismatic Mujibur Rahman could not defuse the toxic buzz against India. Assassination of Mujibur Rahman not only staged a regime change but also speeded up the process of anti-Indian sentiment. It did flourish during the military regimes of Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad. In the meantime, fear of Indian domination aggravated Bangladesh to play China Card against India. Bangladesh endeavoured to retaliate any possible Indian expansion through China. Therefore, during the first phase of Bangladesh-China relations, China was a strategic requisite for Bangladesh.

13 During his visit General Yag met Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Atiquan Rahman and the President Ershad. On this occasion the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh told media persons: “We have bilateral cooperation in the military field and this visit will further promote relations between the two countries and their people” (The Times of India, Bombay, 13 January 1987. Quoted in (Ghosh, 1995:16)).
Regime Change and widening India-Bangladesh gap offered an opportunity to China to regain its strategic hold upon India. Since the earlier days of its relation with Pakistan the geo-strategic location of Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) was fascinating to China. In 1971 the geographic bifurcation of Pakistan foiled Chinese strategic hold from the eastern side of India. Even India’s military involvement justified the geopolitical significance of Bangladesh, as East Pakistan was a threat to India’s territorial security of the eastern region. Mutual hostilities of India and China (which worsened after the 1962 war) endorsed Bangladesh as a tool of Zero-Sum-Game. However, China strengthened its strategic grip against India after the regime change of Bangladesh in 1975. As the hypersensitive mutual resentment of Sino-Indian relations remain unchanged up to the end part of the 1980s, India factor continued as the dominating Chinese interest of the first Phase of Bangladesh-China relations.

Guided by the common denominator of India factor both Bangladesh and China became the strategic requisite of each other. The strategic reciprocity of their bilateral cooperation dominated their other fields of cooperation. The shadow of security threat largely affects intra-regional cooperation. One of the major factors behind Bangladesh’s strategic alliance with China was the dominating neighbourhood policy of India. India adopted this regional policy throughout the Cold War days and strategically paid a heavy price for it. However, the latter part of the 1990s witnessed a constructive policy deviation of India by positively engaging with its small neighbours.

From dynastic and historic linkages to the bilateral cooperation of modern nation states Bangladesh-China relations had influenced and determined by the ups and downs of regional and world politics. The bloody emergence of Bangladesh, short prevailing of “Mujibism”, Cold War-driven world politics, regime changes and Islamisation of Bangladesh had time and again internationalized the pros and cons of Bangladesh. Therefore, the whole first phase (1975-1990) of China-Bangladesh relations had witnessed the strategic interest of China along with economic need and India-centric-fear of Bangladesh as the determining factors of China-Bangladesh
relations. As strategic interest dominated the major space, economic relations synchronized to more Chinese aid and assistance. Bangladesh received food, commodity and project aids from China. The project aid of China helped Bangladesh in its industrialization and economic development. However, the security dimension of Bangladesh-China relations closed the door to develop a flourishing bilateral economic cooperation with India. India centric growth of Bangladesh-China relations narrowed down the scope of bilateral cooperation to stately opportunism and brought less positive implications for South Asia as a region.

3.15: Bangladesh-China Relations in the Post Cold War Period

Bangladesh and China have developed comprehensive bilateral cooperation in the 1990s. Their bilateral relations, developed under the shadow of the Cold War driven alliance building policy, was restructured in a multilateral framework after the end of the Cold War. The India factor which was the crux of Bangladesh-China relations did side away, as both of them normalised their cooperation with India. Both Bangladesh and China had experienced a regime change in their domestic level which emboldened their policy change.

After the death of Mao Zedong the reform oriented Deng Xiaoping carried out ‘good neighbourhood policy’. The policy reshaped China’s relation with India and also restructured the India-centric Bangladesh-China relations. Return of democracy to Bangladesh furthered its negotiation with India. As Bangladesh’s engaged with India in positive negotiation, the security dilemma of Bangladesh-China relation was marginalised. Melting down of the Cold War havoc did flourish economic cooperation under the rubric of globalisation and liberalisation. Thus, economic cooperation shared space with the political and strategic cooperation of Bangladesh-China relations. Their extensive political and strategic relations have been used to boost economic ties. Bangladesh reiterates its commitment to the One China Policy to solidify its cooperation with China. Likewise, China adopted ‘engagement beyond regime’ to perpetually develop cooperation with the regimes of democratic Bangladesh. Guided by the rapidly integrating world economy beyond the territorial boundary, both Bangladesh and China have been enhancing their cooperation to important regions. Bangladesh’s effort to look beyond China has been mirrored by
political and economic engagement with the East Asian and South East Asian countries. China has furthered its effort to become a member of SAARC with the help of Bangladesh. These developments are the multilateral approach of their bilateral relations- to enhance cooperation with other countries without shaking back the bilateral cooperation. Bangladesh and China have used bilateral visits, agreements and MOUs to strengthen political cooperation. So the second phase of (Post-Cold War) cooperation was more comprehensive and multilateral rather than the synchronised India-centric Bangladesh-China relations of the first phase.

3.16: A Comparative Observation of Bilateral Relations during Cold War and Post-Cold War Period

China recognised Bangladesh on 31 August 1975 after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman and regime change in Bangladesh. They established diplomatic relations by 4th October 1975 (Haque, 1993:166). Chinese intention was loud and clear. The Post-1975 political development of Bangladesh was conducive to China to build cooperation. After a short span of political anxiety the military regime of Ziaur Rahman came into power through a military coup. The regime change offered a platform for the anti-Indian forces to flourish. Consequently, the euphoric India-Bangladesh relations soured and made it easier for China to penetrate. Bangladesh had two extensive reasons to build an alliance with China. Firstly, Bangladesh was looking for more aid and assistance to revive its war ragged economy, which had further been worsened by frequent flood and famine. The failure of Indo-Soviet axis to mitigate the burgeoning demand compelled Bangladesh to look for more reliable donors of the world (options were the US, some Muslim country and China). The process started during Mujib period. The military regime was free from any gratefulness or moral obligation toward India. So under the military regime Bangladesh’s bilateral relations with China flourished with the anti-Indian and anti-Soviet axis. Bangladesh received US$7 million food aid during the tenure of Ziaur Rahman. Likewise, the military regime of General Ershad received US$3. 627

14 India had played a major role during the liberation war of Bangladesh. Its active military support made the freedom struggle of Bangladesh possible. Just after the liberation war for a short period of time both the countries shared the euphoric warm of bilateral cooperation. Mujibur Rahman was extensively grateful to India for the kind of support it rendered. This was reflected by signing a “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace” on 19 March, 1972. After the assassination of Mujibur Rahman the pro-Indian forces drove out of the power. The military regimes did not owe any gratitude to India (Dixit, 1999:138-153).
million food aid from China (Government of Bangladesh, 1990:58). This shows the utter need of foreign aid for Bangladesh. Secondly, the military regime (anti-Indian axis) of Bangladesh was apprehensive about the role of India during the liberation movement and its aftermath. The fear of Indian domination catapulted Bangladesh to make an anti-Indian alliance with China.

From the Chinese point of view its alliance building with Bangladesh was back up by Cold War politics. Sino-Indian border war of 1962 pushed the region towards an alliance building. Pakistan-China relations picked up from this period of time. The Sino-US détente and the Sino-Soviet rift were two international developments that compelled China to become more pragmatic during the liberation war of Bangladesh. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation placed India and the Soviet Union under the same security axis. This made China to accept partition of Pakistan as its major strategic loss in the region due to the geo-strategic location of the East Pakistan. China regained its strategic hold over the region after strengthening relations with Bangladesh in 1975. Most of the Cold War days had seen an India centric South Asian policy of China. Her robust engagement with Pakistan and Bangladesh flourished at a moment when India was sharing an eyeball to eyeball contact with China.

During the entire Cold War period China and Bangladesh were strategically proximate to each other as they had been blanketed by India centric apprehension (Rashid, 2002:73). So the principal objective of their political relation was to strategically contain India. China used financial aid and assistance along with its firm support for Bangladesh’s bilateral problems with India to satisfy its smaller partner. In return Bangladesh remained a reliable strategic ally of China by showing its commitment to One China Policy. Thus, the first phase of Bangladesh-China

15China emerged as a ‘true friend’ of Pakistan in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. At a point of time when India was busy with Pakistan in military confrontation, “China sent a Note to India accusing it of provocative and aggressive activity on Sikkim’s border with Tibet”. The nuance behind sending Notes to India was to double the trouble of India so that Pakistan can enjoy upper hand in the war (Bhutani, 2004:205). China also applied the same method to strengthen her relation with Bangladesh. The assassination of Mujibur Rahman not only brought a regime change but also gave a new twist to India-Bangladesh relations. China easily moulded the anti-Indian military regime in her favour(Tajuddin,2001: 24-25).
relations provoked a security dilemma in the region having less positive multilateral implications.

3.17: Post-1990 Bilateral Relations under Various Regimes
Both Bangladesh and China have been paying official visits to each other to strengthen their bilateral cooperation. A number of agreements, MOUs and deals have been produced as the outcome of these visits. Frequent political visits have also reflected their enthusiasm for robust bilateral relations.

3.17.1: First Tenure of Begum Khaleda Zia
As Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) got an overwhelming majority in the general election of March 1991, Begum Khaleda Zia became Prime Minister. She declared to inherit the internal and external policy of her husband late President Ziaur Rahman. But the changing international and regional sequences were hardly favourable to those Cold War driven policies. In such a changing climate India and China were not at daggers drawn as they were looking for more constructive and positive bilateral cooperation. The solidifying Sino-Indian rapprochement harboured consequential effects for China-Bangladesh relations. Driven by this reality in her first tenure Begum Zia focused more on economic cooperation along with scientific and technological engagement with China.

A series of bilateral visits by leaders and officials from both Bangladesh and China became instrumental to strengthen their bilateral cooperation. After resuming power Begum Zia paid an official visit to China in June 1991. During this visit, Chinese Premier Li Peng attached greater importance to China’s relations with Bangladesh. He assured Bangladesh that any change in the international relations will not change their bilateral relations.

In 1991-1992 a fresh persecution of the Muslims took place in Myanmar. This resulted in the influx of a large number of refugees into Bangladesh. In the meantime, Bangladesh raised the issue at the UN. India and China were against internationalisation of the issue. For a small country like Bangladesh

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internationalisation of any issue was not an option but since she “was pressed to breaking point”, no alternative was left to her other than to bring the issue to the international forum (Rashid, 2002:58). China’s predicament can be judged on two grounds. Firstly, both Bangladesh and Myanmar were closer to China and they were reliable customers of Chinese weapons. Any severe hostilities could double Chinese dilemmas in the region. Secondly, internationalisation of the issue could pave the way for more super power intervention. However, Myanmar was expecting Chinese intervention in the issue (Jha, 1994:296). As the issue was carrying the interest of both Bangladesh and Myanmar, China moreover adopted a ‘silent diplomacy’.

Amidst this hypertension, when a six-member delegation, led by Deputy Head of the Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Jian Guang Hua, visited Bangladesh in April 1992, Begum Zia urged China to influence the Myanmar authorities to expedite repatriation of the Rohingya refugee17. To strengthen their bilateral cooperation with China, Jatiya Sansad Speaker Shaikh Razzaque Ali visited Beijing with a Bangladesh parliamentary delegation in September 1992. Xu Dunxin, the then Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister, reciprocated this visit in November 1992. During his Bangladesh visit both the party extensively discussed on two issues- Rohingya problem and Bangladesh trade imbalance with China.

To further strengthen their political ties an eight-member delegation of the Chinese Communist Party led by Wen Jiabao arrived Dhaka on 13 January 1994. The delegation exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. To intensify the momentum Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen came to Dhaka on 24 February 1994. He stressed more on the role of developing countries to ‘promote common economic growth’ in a changed political and economic spectacle18.

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17 As mentioned in POT Bangladesh, 27 April 1992:1037.
18 This was a part of Qing’s extensive Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Iran visit. Addressing a press conference in Dhaka on February 27, 1994, Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen portrayed the Farakka problem a “bilateral issue” and ruled out the possibility of any Chinese “involvement and mediation”. He also urged India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, through peaceful bilateral negotiations in the “light of the spirit of UN resolution and agreements” (POT Bangladesh, 15 March 1994:237-238).
From Bangladesh side, Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman reciprocated this visit in April 1994.

3.17.2: First Tenure of Sheikh Hasina

In June 1996 there was a change of government in Bangladesh. The Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina formed the government. She rejuvenated Mujib’s principle of “friendship with all and malice towards none” in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. She tried to maintain good relation not only with China but also with India. Coincidentally this phase was also the transforming phase of Indian foreign policy. Prime Minister I. K. Gujral was looking for more constructive engagement with India’s small neighbours. So Bangladesh’s foreign policy clustered around three objectives: preservation of national sovereignty including territorial integrity, the promotion of national economic objectives and consolidation of national identity. By keeping all this development in mind Sheikh Hasina structured Bangladesh’s China policy.

Very soon Bangladesh-China official visits got momentum during Hasina’s government. Their official visits at bilateral level were noteworthy. In their first ever bilateral meeting after the change of government in Bangladesh, the two sides covered the entire gamut of bilateral relations and exchanged their respective views on the international situations, on 23 July 1996. This meeting was the third session of Bangladesh-China bilateral consultations. In September 1996 she paid an official visit to China. This visit generated the Agreement on Encouraging and Protecting Investment, the agreement for the Avoidance of Double taxation and the Agreement on the Prevention of Tax Evasion.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad paid a visit to Beijing on 31 December 1998. The major outcome of this visit was an agreement under which China did agree to provide $24 million interest free loan for the construction of a Convention Centre to hold the NAM summit conference in Dhaka in 2001. China also openly declared her support to Bangladesh’s candidature for a non-permanent seat of the UN Security

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19 As mentioned in POT Bangladesh, 11 April 2000:427.
20 As reported by The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 23 July 1996.
Council. In accordance with the provision, on 12 April 1999 both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chairman of the National People’s Congress (NCP) Li Peng unveiled the International Conference Centre for the NAM summit. During their hour long talk, both the leaders discussed bilateral, regional and international issue of common concern.

To further their bilateral cooperation in telecommunication sector Mohammad Nasim, the Home Posts and Telecommunication Minister of Bangladesh, met the Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji in Beijing on 1 November 1999. During their interaction the Chinese President expressed satisfaction over the installation of the huge digital telephone exchange in Bangladesh by the Shanghai Bell Corporation.\(^{21}\) In the handed over ceremony of Macau to China, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Abdus Samad Azad was present with an official delegation on 19 December 1999. On the sideline of the ceremony he met Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji and discussed some bilateral issues. In a significant bilateral visit Chinese Vice-Minister for Water Resources Zhang Jiyao led an eight member delegation to Dhaka on 20 February 2000. Briefing the news persons Zhang said “China hopes to share its experience on hydroelectric plants in the hilly (Sangu and Matamuhari) rivers in Bangladesh and also wished to extend cooperation in different sectors including flood control” \(^ {22}\). During his visit he called on Water Resource Minister Abdur Razzak. Both the party formed a joint committee for cooperation in the water sector following talks between the two sides in line with the 1997 MOU. Abdur Razzak applauded Chinese help and assistance to construct the Ganges barrage. They also identified flood forecasting, drainage and irrigation as ‘other areas of cooperation’. There bilateral cooperation was also strengthened by the visit of a five-member delegation of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU) in January 2001. The delegation discussed cultural and social aspects of their bilateral relations and emphasized on exchanging more cultural teams. During their negotiation Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad reassured Bangladesh’s commitment to the One China Policy.

\(^{21}\) As reported by The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 2 November 1999.
\(^{22}\) As reported by The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 26 February 2000.
3.17.3: Second Tenure of Begum Khaleda Zia

The BNP led by Khaleda Zia returned to power in October 2001. This phase was passing through many regional and international developments having consequential implications for Bangladesh. After the 1998 nuclear explosion of India and Pakistan, the prospect of a war was looming large. After the September 2001 Twin Tower demolition the South Asian region became strategic throb of the US. Amidst a global consensus against terrorism Bangladesh’s role widened as a moderate Muslim state. The rise of terrorism along with some other trans-national problems, solidifying China-India bilateral trade, rejuvenation of the strategic implication of the region were worked as some of the important determinants of Bangladesh foreign policy. Begum Zia’s regime kept a vigil on the regional and international developments and turned to improve constructive bilateral relations with both China and India.

As part of his two nations (India and Bangladesh) tour to South Asia, the Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji’s first visited Dhaka in January 2002. He held an extensive talk with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. Zhu thanked Bangladesh for her support on Taiwan, Tibet and Human Rights issues. This time Bangladesh and China signed “Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, Certificate of Handover of the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Executive Program of the Cultural Agreement for 2001-2003 and four other agreements”23. Khaleda Zia reciprocated the Zhu’s visit in December 2002. The two parties signed an agreement to exchange letters regarding the loan used for the Project of Bangladesh-China Friendship International Conference, which was converted into a grant. An agreement was also signed on economic and technological cooperation along with two other agreements. In the year 2002 the economic and trade cooperation between China and Bangladesh had considerably developed as the bilateral trade volume amounted to $1.098 billion.

In September 2003, foreign ministers of both Bangladesh and China met each other on the sideline of 58th United Nations assembly. In the same month, a BNP delegation led by Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, General Secretary of BNP and Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, visited China. To further strengthen their bilateral cooperation Jia Qinglin, Chairman of China's

People's Political Consultative Conference, paid a visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Mr. Sircar, Speaker of Sangsad Bhaban in November 2003. Mr. Qinglin not only met leading official and political leaders of the BNP but also shared dialogue with opposition leader Sheikh Hasina. Both sides signed ‘Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation and Executive Program of the Cultural Agreement for 2004-2006’. In May 2004, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia met her Chinese counterpart, Premier Wen Jiabao on the sideline of Global Poverty Alleviation Conference in Shanghai.

A Chinese governmental delegation led by Shao Qiwei, Vice-Governor of Yunnan Province, came to Dhaka in August 2004. In the meeting Bangladesh congratulated China on the successful launch of Shenzhou Five spacecraft and showed grave concern over the breakdown of SARS. On 8 April 2005, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited Bangladesh. Both sides agreed to declare the year 2005 as the Year of China-Bangladesh Friendship in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the diplomatic relation between the two countries (Haque, 2005). During this visit both sides agreed to open direct air link between Beijing and Dhaka via Kunming. Begum Zia reciprocated this visit on 19 August 2005. This time China offered to extend cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy in electricity generation. In a major development China granted zero tariff access to 85 Bangladeshi products under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement, which came into action from 1st January 2006. Foreign Minister Morsheed Khan had paid a visit to Beijing in June 2006. The three day visit had further strengthened their bilateral cooperation.

3.17.4: The Second Tenure of Sheikh Hasina
The parliamentary elections in Bangladesh held on 29 December 2008 reinstated the Awami League regime. The overwhelming victory of Sheikh Hasina has emboldened her regime to carry out bold and decisive policies without any political constraint. Though the Awami League regime does not share a healthy historical bondage with China, over the time both the countries have endorsed pragmatism to wipe out their thorny past. After assuming power Sheikh Hasina paid a visit to China in September 1996. This visit helped China to nudge bilateral relation with Bangladesh beyond the constraint of regime-centrism. In recent times China has shown enthusiasm to further
“comprehensive friendly relationship” with the newly formulated Sheikh Hasina regime. The relationship aims at cooperation in the fields of political, economic and military security. Furthermore, while discussing with the visiting Chinese delegation from Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) on 8 February 2009, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni emphasized further Chinese involvement in the fields of ‘power generation, relocating sunset industries and developing infrastructure in Bangladesh along with new friendship bridges’. During this conversation SIIS President Yang Jiemian emphasized the importance of a “the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and relocation of Chinese small and medium enterprises in Bangladesh”. The new Sheikh Hasina government has reiterated its support to the One China Policy. As both Bangladesh and China are committed to a wide economic and defence relationship, in the coming days, they are going to strengthen their “comprehensive friendly relationship”.

3.17.5: Khaleda Zia’s China Visit

On the invitation of the Communist Party of China, the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia paid a five-day visit to China on 19-23 December 2010. During her visit Khaleda Zia met Chinese Vice President Xi Jingpin and senior leaders of the Communist Party. She discussed economics and various other areas of bilateral interests with these leaders. During his meeting with Begum Zia, Vice President Xi Jingpin said that “China will expand substantial exchanges and cooperation with Bangladesh”. He asserted that “it’s a constant policy of the Chinese Party and Government to consolidate and develop relations with Bangladesh” (Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2010).

Invitation to Khaleda Zia has reiterated China’s confidence and friendliness with the BNP. Ziaur Rahman, the founding father of the BNP, was considered as the architect

24 Liu Hongcai, Deputy Head of International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, during his Bangladesh visit on February 2009, said “In the new international scenario, we would like to work with Bangladesh to strengthen the cooperation and friendship in all the areas and push forward the comprehensive friendship relationship between the two countries.” For more information see, “Bangladeshi PM Meets with Chinese Delegations”, Gov.cn, 14 February 2009,[Online Web] Accessed 12 March 2009 URL: http://www.gov.cn/misc/2009-02/21/content_1237991.htm

of Bangladesh-China strategic relations. Thus, the BNP shares historical bondage with China. By inviting Khaleda Zia, China has expressed intention to continue its strategic relations with Bangladesh. China also indicated that the policy and steps taken by the BNP are more favorable to China in comparison to the Awami League. This action also reflected China’s concern regarding the pro-India approach of the Awami League.

3.18: Bilateral Relations in Multilateral Forums

In a changed international spectacle Bangladesh and China have been erecting their bilateral cooperation in a multilateral framework. ‘Forward along with flock’ is turning out to be the new principle in a globalised world. Economic development entails constructive mutual cooperation along with a peaceful regional and international atmosphere. This has paved way for the set-up of a number of regional and sub-regional organizations. Nations’ enthusiasm to keep parity with changing and competitive nature of the international market has provoked them to endorse policy change and policy transformation. Among the associate multilateral platforms of Bangladesh and China, the Kunming initiative and integration with SAARC resemble significance for their bilateral cooperation.

Bangladesh-China bilateral cooperation is also getting boost from Track-II diplomacy like the ‘Kunming Initiative’ of 17 August 1999. The Kunming Initiative is an attempt in the direction of multilateral engagement among China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The aim is to “integrate BCIM economies through cross-border infrastructure development, including rail, air, and river links and roads” (Aiyar, 2006:64). The widening scope of the proposed cooperation of the BCIM can be judged from the address of Mr. Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East):

In its past meetings, the BCIM Forum has come up with ideas for sub-regional cooperation in some important areas such as trade, transport, tourism, energy security, etc. Some of the interesting ideas include test transportation of cargo from Kunming to Kolkata through Myanmar and Bangladesh, Kolkata-Kunming motor car rally via Bangladesh, enhancement of civil aviation links, and development of tourism circuits and promotion of cultural exchanges between the four countries. I am confident that the same effort will continue in the present
Forum and specific proposals would emerge from its deliberations, for consideration by the Governments of the four countries.\textsuperscript{26}

The Kunming initiative will connect China’s landlocked Yunnan province with Myanmar, India’s North Eastern region and Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{27} Development of transit facility will create more positive stake holders of the participating nations. This development has placed Bangladesh-China relations in a multilateral platform with more positive implications. Sometimes the security concern of India is impinging smooth progress of BCIM. Still apprehensive anxieties can be addressed as the burgeoning bilateral trade between India and China along with India’s constructive Look East Policy will squeeze the security rigidity for better economic flexibility. However, the improving bilateral relations of Bangladesh and China with India will help to materialize this objective.

Another positive and multilateral implication of Bangladesh-China relation is the Chinese quest to become a member of the SAARC. The strategic dimension behind Bangladesh’s initiation for the genesis of SAARC was to dilute the so-called India doctrine\textsuperscript{28}. However, “market-led economic reforms” have been promoting the region as one of the vital economic regions. Under the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Interregional trade has been expected to move forward.\textsuperscript{29} Economically, the region is cynosure of trans-regional cooperation. China is interested to integrate with SAARC by the help of Bangladesh. Since long, Bangladesh has been an ardent supporter of China’s inclusion to SAARC. At present China is enjoying observer status of SAARC. Greater Chinese involvements with SAARC will widen the economic scope of the region and at the same time it will generate positive underpinning of the Bangladesh-China relation.

\textsuperscript{26} This is a part of Rajiv Sikri’s address, delivered at the 6th Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum, New Delhi, on 30 March 2006, [Online: web] Accessed 28 October 2006 URL: http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2006/03/30ss01.htm

\textsuperscript{27} This is a part of the economic side of Bangladesh-China relations. In the later half of 1990s China had attempted to solidify economic cooperation by developing transit linkages. For information see (Bhardwaj, 2005:49).

\textsuperscript{28} As the small neighbour of a regional power Bangladesh has always been passed through the paranoid fear of Indian domination. To reprieve form the fear she has been attempting more super power engagement in the South Asian region. Bangladesh enthusiasm for the creation of SAARC was to build a South Asian collective forum to regionally engaging India. India Doctrine, is the South Asian version of Monroe Doctrine reflects India’s view as the entire region as a single strategic unit and herself as the sole custodian of security and stability in the region ( Sabur, 2000:639-642).

\textsuperscript{29} It has expected that SAFTA will South Asian market more expansive with an integrated market of 1.3 billion people. For further understanding see (Lama,2005:130-131).
3.19: Conclusion

Bangladesh-China relation is an age-old saga which begun with the civilizational linkages and have achieved a status of strategic partnership. Over the years both the countries have surpassed various hindrances and have comprehensively strengthened their relations. Though in the Cold War period the relation was more India-centric in the post-Cold War phase it has incorporated some other areas of cooperation. In the post-Cold War world it is often economy which is determining other areas of cooperation among states. When bilateral relations have structured in a multilateral platform, the economy does act as the principal denominator. Extensive comprehensive engagement between the democratic regimes of Bangladesh and China has promoted positive-sum bilateral cooperation. Appetite of greater economic gain is overshadowing the political malaise of India and China. Though the sole determinant of ‘India factor’ is no more steering Bangladesh-China relations, yet China’s huge economic interest in South Asia propels her to further strengthen relations with Bangladesh. India will continue to be the third covert dimension of Bangladesh-China relations, for good or bad. Thus, the whole second phase of Bangladesh-China relation has been redefined on the verge of the end of the Cold War, global economic integration and Sino-Indian rapprochement along with the expectation of a new world and regional order (as China and India emerge). The second phase of Bangladesh-China relations has not only been flourishing with multidimensional underpinning, but it also shows Bangladesh’s new role as partnership builder rather than as a mere aid recipient country.