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NATIONAL INTEREST AND FOREIGN POLICY
A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1980-90.

by

Golam Mostafa, M.A.

A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December 17, 1992

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NATIONAL INTEREST AND FOREIGN POLICY:
A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1980-1990

submitted by

Golam Mostafa, H.S.C., M.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

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Carleton University
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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union during the 1980s, through the prism of "national interest." The term is defined in a broad, general sense by including not only political, economic, ideological and strategic interests, but also social, religious, moral-psychological, emotional and other interests that are deeply rooted in history and national psyche, and that, therefore, are usually not negotiable.

As an underdeveloped Third World country, heavily dependent on foreign aid, Bangladesh was not particularly interested in improving relations with the USSR during the 1980s. Its main priorities were, rather: to consolidate and strengthen sovereignty and national integrity; to play a more active role in the international arena; to secure more foreign aid, in order to spur the pace of economic growth; to reduce poverty; to maintain political stability; and to cope with recurrent natural calamities and disasters. On the other hand, Moscow's interests in Bangladesh were guided by general Soviet foreign policy goals, interests and priorities in the Third World.

Bangladesh's relations with the USSR during the 1980s were mainly guided and influenced by external factors, particularly the military regimes' security perceptions, and their political and economic interests. India, the main Soviet ally in the non-communist Third World, was considered to be

the primary security threat. Close, friendly relations with the West, China and conservative Muslim states were consequently believed to serve the political and economic interests of the nation. Ideologically, major political parties and social/interest groups in Bangladesh, with the notable exception of the Awami League and pro-Moscow communist parties, were anti-Soviet, disinterested in "Perestroika," and supportive of the governments' generally negative policies towards the Soviet Union. In fact, there was no subjective or objective catalyst for any real improvement of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR created a positive context, conducive to the improvement of Bangladesh's relations with Soviet successor states.

Acknowledgements

In the process of writing this dissertation, I received encouraging help and assistance from many individuals and institutions. At the foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Carl G. Jacobsen, who always encouraged me to write this dissertation, and provided thoughtful and valuable comments and suggestions that helped to improve the work. He meticulously read the manuscript several times and patiently helped edit (and re-edit) the work. I also thank Professor Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, a member of my supervisory board, for her extensive comments and suggestions which led to both substantive and stylistic improvements of the thesis. I also thank Professor Elliot Tepper, another member of the board for his comments. I would like to express sincere thanks to Professor John Sigler who, despite his busy schedule, kindly read the chapter on Methodology, and helped to improve it.

I am greatly indebted to the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka, for granting me study leave to complete the Ph.D. program, and for providing me with all facilities during my field research in Bangladesh. I am particularly grateful to my colleague, Mrs. Saleha Sultana, the Chief Librarian of the BIISS, who took the trouble to send me important documents and other materials needed for my work. I am also thankful to Dr. Iftekharuz-zaman, my colleague and friend at the BIISS, for his valuable help and suggestions. And I would like to thank Mr. A.B.M. Abdus Salam, Counselor of the Bangladesh High Commission in Ottawa, for his generous help and co-operation.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to some special friends and individuals for their help and assistance: Dr. Shaukat Hassan, a former fellow of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security; Dr. Abhijit Karmaker, a former Professor of Dhaka University; Professor Mushtaq-ur Rahim, a Professor of Punjab University, Pakistan; and Mr. Chris Adams, my course-mate and office-mate at the Department.

I would like to thank the AUCC for providing me with a scholarship to complete the program.

Last, but not least, I would never have completed this study without the help and support of my family, my wife Fatema, my son Abed, brother Ali and my parents.

Despite the generous help of all these people, I am fully responsible for any error, mistake and failing of the work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Awami League
ADP	Annual Development Program
BCL	Bangladesh Communist League
BCP	Bangladesh Communist Party
BC & FC	Bangladesh Chemical & Fertilizer Corp.
BJP	Bangladesh Jatio [national] Party
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BOGMC	Bangladesh Oil and Gas Marketing Company
BPC	Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation
BSFIC	Bangladesh Shipping and Fishing Industries Corporation
BTMC	Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation
CCCR	Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CIRDAP	Centre on Integrated Development for Asia and the Pacific
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Comintern	Communist International
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party (Marxist)
CPML	Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
COP	Combined Opposition Party
CSP	Civil Service of Pakistan
EBCP	East Bengal Communist Party
EBCPML	East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)
EPAML	East Pakistan Awami Muslim League
EPZ	Export Promotion Zone
ERD	External Resources Division
FP	Freedom Party
GEM	General Electric Manufacturing
INC	Indian National Congress
IDL	Islamic Democratic League
JRC	Joint River Commission
MP	Member of Parliament
ML	Muslim League
NAP	Natioal Awami Party
NIC	Newly Industrialised Countries
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PDB	Power Development Board
R&H	Roads and Highways
TCB	Trading Corporation of Bangladesh

GLOSSARY

BCPL	Bangladesh Communist Party, Leninbadi [Bangladesh Communist Party, Leninist]
BAKSAL	Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League [Bangladesh Peasants' and Workers' Awami League]
Bangabandhu	The Friend of Bengal
British Raj	British Colonial Rule in India
BSS	Biplobi Shainik Sangstha [Revolutionary Soldiers' Association]
Choy Dafa Davi	Six-Points Demand
Gonotantrik Dal	Democratic Party
Gono Azadi League	Peoples Liberation League
Jawans	Soldiers
JP	Janata Party [Peoples Party]
JSD	Jatio Shamajtantrik Dal [National Socialist Party]
KFP	Peasant Serf Party
Mujibbad	Mujibism, a nationalist ideology centered around Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of the country.
Mukti Bahini	Freedom Fighters
Rakkhi Bahini	Defence Force
RAW	Indian Intelligence Agency
Shadhin Bangla	Independent Bengal
Santi Bahini	Peace Corps
Taka	Monetary Unit in Bangladesh
Upazila	Sub-District
Vostok	Orient
Zaminders	Feudal Land Lords

MAP OF BANGLADESH

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, the former eastern 'wing' of Pakistan, became independent in 1971 as a result of a secessionist movement helped and supported by India and the Soviet Union. Consequently, friendly relations were developed between the Awami League (AL) government and the Soviet Union in the early 1970s within the broad general framework of a Joint Declaration signed in Moscow on March 3, 1972. (Appendix A). The bloody military coup and political change in Dhaka of August 15, 1975, altered the equation; it had a manifestedly negative impact on Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

For the Soviet Union it was difficult to accept the military regime which came to power after forcibly removing the pro-Soviet AL government. On the side of Bangladesh, the military regimes that ruled country after 1975 were suspicious of Soviet motives and attitudes in the region, saw few or no advantages in promoting better relations with Moscow and adopted anti-Soviet policies. By the late 1970s, relations between the two countries reached their lowest ebb. The military regime in Dhaka not only strongly criticised the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, as well as Soviet support for Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, but also repeatedly accused the Soviet Union of interfering in the domestic politics of Bangladesh. As Bangladesh's relations with India and the Soviet Union deteriorated in the mid 1970s, the military

regime in Dhaka took initiatives to improve relations with China to counter Soviet and Indian influence.

The fundamental questions that this study raise are: Why did Bangladesh-Soviet relations deteriorate almost immediately despite crucial Soviet political and diplomatic support for the independence movement of Bangladesh in 1971? Why did the Soviets fail to influence Bangladesh politics? What were Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives in Bangladesh, and what were their limitations and constraints? Did Indo-Soviet relations affect Bangladesh-Soviet relations, and how? Could or should the Soviets have helped Bangladesh to improve relations with India? Why did Bangladesh choose to use the "China card" against the USSR, and was the venture successful? What were the main issues of Bangladesh's national interests in the 1980s, and how they were defined? Did the strong anti-Soviet policy pursued by the military regimes serve national interests of Bangladesh, or did it serve only regime interests? To what extent was the Soviet Union involved in the domestic politics of Bangladesh, and did it pose any serious threat to the stability and security of the country, as alleged by the military regimes?

This introductory chapter is divided into five parts: part I explains the purpose and importance of the study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s; part II discusses the scope of the study; part III examines the conceptual framework to be used in the study; part IV highlights the

problems, shortcomings and limitations that the author observed during the study, particularly in the conduct of field research; and finally part V gives the organization of the study, with an outline of each chapter separately.

I

Purpose and Importance

The purpose of the study is to explore and examine the Bangladesh-Soviet relations of the 1980s from the perspective of Bangladesh's national interests. The study incorporates a review of Soviet foreign policy goals, objectives and limitations in the Third World, as they have influenced Soviet relations with Bangladesh since the country's emergence. However, the study focuses primarily on the issues and events that relate to Bangladesh's national interests of the 1980s, as defined and pursued by the regimes in power.

Bangladesh's national interests are seen from a broader perspective, taking into account the impact of historical events, the roles and functions of various social and political forces, such as political parties, interest groups and the army, and the role of nationalism, national identity and religion, all of which have influenced the formation, definition and redefinition of national interests.

Following the examination of the general framework and historical background view of Bangladeshi society, the study proceeds to examine concrete issues and events important for

Bangladesh's national interests of the 1980s: namely relations with India (military, security and political interests); the ties with the West (economic and political interests); the Muslim countries (economic, political and ideological interests); and China (security interests). The study assesses these issues from the point of view of their importance to Bangladesh's national interests, and the effect they have had on Dhaka's relations with the Soviet Union.

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union does not exist any more as a united state, this study nevertheless remains pertinent for several reasons--sui generis, the present derives from the past.

First; it helps to understand the reasons and underlying causes why Bangladesh-Soviet relations did not improve in the 1980s; and how third party interests, in this case those of India, affected and limited both Soviet and Bangladesh foreign policy options and choices.

Second; it analyses the nature and characteristics of Bangladeshi society, and illustrates how and why its social and political forces and structural and political dynamics and limitations circumscribed the potential for communist/Soviet influence.

Third; it is a case study of how a Third World authoritarian system goes about defining national interests and priorities, and to what extent the interest of the ruling group (the military in this case) has reflected (or failed to

reflect) the national interests of the country as a whole

Fourth; it illustrates the impact of the Soviet Union's final "Perestroika" and "New Thinking" reform era on Soviet-Third World relations in general, and Soviet-Bangladesh relations in particular.

Fifth; it gives a retrospective insight into factors that may influence future prospects and problems in Bangladesh's relations with Soviet successor states, and may thus help pave the way for better relations with them.

Finally; the study fills a serious gap in the literature. No substantial study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980's exists either in Bangladesh or in the Soviet Union--although other areas of Bangladesh's foreign policy have been well covered and studied.

II

Scope

The scope of this study is limited and specific. It confines itself to the study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s from the perspective of Bangladesh's national interests, as these have emerged in the last decade of the Soviet Union's existence. It is comprehensive in nature, and addresses all aspects (political, military, strategic, economic and socio-cultural) of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. In view of the recent developments, an attempt is made also in the final chapter to focus on the

prospects and problems of Bangladesh's relations with the new states that have emerged as the result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The study does not cover the whole gamut of Bangladesh-Soviet relations. Nor does its purview extended to coverage of the Soviet role during the Bangladesh crisis of 1971; this is well covered elsewhere.¹ It does not deal with Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the early 1970s, when the pro-Soviet AL Government was in power. The Soviet reaction and response to the political change in Dhaka in 1975, is also not covered. This is not a study of Bangladesh politics as such, or, for that matter, its foreign policy. It deals only with the issues of foreign policy considered to be crucial and important from the perspective of Bangladesh's national interests. Although the study raises several fundamental issues and conflicts concerning Bangladesh's relations with India, this is not a study of Bangladesh-India relations. These topics are dealt

¹. Some of the major works on the Soviet role during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 are: Jaglul Alam, Emergence of Bangladesh and Big Power Role in 1971, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Progoti Prokashani, [Progrss Publishers]), 1990; G. W. Chowdhury, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Major Powers: Politics of a Divided Subcontinent, (New York, London: The Free Press), 1975; B.S. Gupta, Soviet-Asian Relations in the 1970s and Beyond: An Interperceptional Study, (New York: Praeger Publishers), 1976; K.D. Kapur, Soviet Strategy in South Asia: Perspectives on Soviet Policies Towards the Indian Sub-continent and Afghanistan, (New Delhi, India: Young Asia Publications), 1983; and M. Mohiuddin Khan, The Bangladesh Crisis: The Role of Great Powers. (M.A. Thesis. Ottawa, Canada: The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University), 1979.

with only as a function of their importance to Bangladesh's national interests, and of their ramifications for Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. The concept of "national interest" is used in the study as a conceptual framework, but this is also not a general study of national interests. Rather, the work focuses on the economic, political, security and ideological interests of Bangladesh only as these impact on its relations with the Soviet Union during the decade in question.

III

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical literature on international relations is rich and divergent, and offers alternative models and approaches. Although many of them provide valuable insights for the understanding of Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s, none of the models preferred is fully adequate to understanding the nature of the subject.

The concept of "national interest" is adopted here as a conceptual framework to study the subject.² The concept is chosen for this particular case study for several reasons: first, it is one of the few or maybe the only concept used in the study of international relations that provides an optimal, broad analytical framework that is commonly applicable to the

². Conceptual limitations and theoretical framework of the study is dealt with separately in Chapter Two.

study of two totally different types of states (Bangladesh and the Soviet Union); second, it is flexible enough to allow for different interpretations and perspectives. The study, however, does not use the concept as defined and used in the extant literature; rather it is redefined so as to better suit the specific purposes of the study.

As defined here, national interests are those interests, which are formulated by national leaders in the contexts of the country's core values and traditions, and are pursued by them on behalf and with the support of the majority of the population of a nation-state.

The concept is used here in a general context which combines the common features of a nation-state system and the particulars and local realities of Bangladesh. The main thesis of the study is that: Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union during 1980-1990 were in fact shaped by and reflected Bangladesh's national interests which were rooted in the objective needs and requirements of the society.

Like many other terms used in the study of international relations, the concept of "national interest" has been controversial. There is no agreed-upon common definition; neither are there common criteria to judge or measure the congruity of a particular policy with particular national interests. Often the term appears to be vague, and provides few guidelines for policy-making. Thus, it is often difficult to differentiate between interests are crucial and which are not, and where

compromise is possible and where it is not. National interest may be interpreted and influenced by such subjective factors as the likes or dislikes of leaders and policy planners. There may be conflicts and contradictions between national and international interests, and on the question of how to draw lines between them--in other words, on where national interest ends and international interest starts? Or can national interest be separated from the international one?³

Notwithstanding above criticisms, the study argues that the term "national interest" can be used credibly as the organizing concept for the study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s--within a limited and well-defined framework.

IV

Limitations and Shortcomings

There are always difficulties in a study, where subjects of enquiry are different in systemic terms and have divergent interests shaped by differing, often contradictory, policy goals and objectives. The literature is huge and varied in approach and logic. The issue of general Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World, for example, is well covered both in Soviet and Western literature. Some Third World scholars,

³. For critical discussion of the concept of "national interests", see Fredric S. Pearson and J. Martin Rochester, International Relations: The Global Condition in the Late Twentieth Century, 2nd edition, (New York: Random House), 1988, p. 150

particularly from India, have also made notable contributions to the subject.⁴ But, as mentioned earlier, the literature on bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union is weak and insufficient. Most of it is unidimensional, and deals with issues and problems of one country only. Earlier periods of Bangladesh-Soviet relations are well covered by Soviet, Indian and Bangladeshi authors. But there is no serious literature on the subject in the decade of the 1980s. In the 1980s, three major texts were published in Dhaka on Bangladesh foreign policy, but none of them has a chapter on Bangladesh-Soviet relations.⁵

This study is principally based on secondary sources; books, journals, magazines, periodicals, occasional papers and newspapers published in Bengali, English and Russian. Official documents, treaties, agreements, reports, statements and government publications were also widely used. For the methodological section, the study makes extensive use of theoretical literature in the fields of International Relations (IR) and Comparative Politics. But for its primary

⁴. A review of literature on Soviet-Third World relations is done in Chapter Three.

⁵. Emajuddin Ahamed, ed. Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: A Small State's Imperative, (Dhaka; University Press Limited), 1984. Abul Kalam, and Muzaffar Ahmad, eds. Bangladesh's Foreign Relations: Changes and Directions, (Dhaka; University Press Limited), 1989. Shaukat Hassan and M.G. Kabir, eds. Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges, (Dhaka; Bangladesh Society for International Studies), 1989.

area focus the study depends heavily on the above-noted sources--journals, periodicals, newspapers, yearbooks, documents, official publications, et.al.

Survey and interview methods have also been used. A three-month field research in Bangladesh was undertaken during the period December 1990 to March 1991. A cross-section of officials, experts and academics, including three ex-Foreign Ministers, several ex-Ambassadors, high-ranking government officials and a number of Army officials, both retired and in active service, were interviewed (some on conditions of confidentiality). An exclusive interview with the Soviet Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dr. Vitali Smirnov, provided Soviet views and positions on certain issues. See Appendix D.

The research in Bangladesh confirmed a number of points:

First, as mentioned, there exists no serious study on Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s, and there is a severe shortage of materials on the subject;

Second, the perceptions of Bangladeshi elites towards the Soviet Union were affected by a number of subjective and objective factors. There apparently was very little or no interest in the Soviet Union on the part of Bangladeshi officials and policy planners, even though it was a super-power and directly helped to create Bangladesh; the same was true for the Bangladeshi public at large, except for a few hard-core communists.

Third, despite radical changes and reforms in the Soviet

Union in the names of "Perestroika" and "New Thinking," in the late 1980s, Bangladeshi political elites remained strongly skeptical of these reforms, and suspicious towards Soviet policies.

Lack of funds precluded analagous field research in the Soviet Union, but this did not limit or hinder the completion of the study. Considering the nature of the topic, the character of Soviet bureaucracy, and the chaos and unrest in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, a visit to Moscow would not have added much new material to that which was already published and available.

V

Structure of the Study

The study is organised into eight chapters.

Chapter One is introductory, and addresses issues, purpose, importance, relevance and scope. The importance of the topic, the main thesis of the study, the organizing framework, parameters and methodological issues are elaborated here. The chapter also touches on the limitations and shortcomings of the research project, and contains the author's field research observations. The structure of the study, chapter by chapter, is addressed.

Chapter Two is devoted to methology. It analyses the concept of "national interest" and foreign policy in the context of theoretical paradigms, and their historical

development and evolution. Since national interests are defined by nation-states and reflected in foreign policy, a brief review of the concept of state and foreign policy is also provided. Finally, the chapter addresses the applicability of the concept of "national interest" to this particular case study.

A state's foreign policy is a product of historical evolution and the interaction of multiple internal and external factors and forces; thus Chapter Three provides a brief historical review of Soviet policy towards the Third World. This chapter analyses general Soviet foreign policy goals, objectives and motives in the Third World, its changes and evolution over time, the strategy and tactics used for achieving these goals, and their constraints and limitations. It also provides a brief historical background to the Soviet Union's relations with Bangladesh, in order to put the subject into perspective.

Chapter Four tries to define the national interest of Bangladesh by charting the emergence of Bangladesh and its national identity, and analyzing its political culture, and the role of the main social and political forces that shaped its interests--such as political parties and the armed forces. This chapter also attempts to prioritize Bangladesh's national interests and their changes and evolution over time.

Chapter Five raises several key issues/areas of Bangladesh's national interests: Bangladesh's relations with India,

China, the West and the conservative Muslim states; and Dhaka's reaction and policy toward the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This chapter also analyses how Bangladesh's relations/positions vis-a-vis these states/issues affected its relations with the Soviet Union.

Chapter Six focuses on the domestic dynamics that affected definitions of the national interests of Bangladesh. This chapter analyses the domestic policies and priorities of the military governments in Bangladesh in the 1980s, and their implications for Bangladesh-Soviet relations. The role and activities of pro-Soviet communist parties and their manipulation by Moscow are discussed here. The activities of pro-Beijing communist parties/groups and Islamic parties/groups are also analysed, as they affected Bangladesh-Soviet relations. Finally, this chapter argues that there were no subjective or objective pre-conditions existing in Bangladesh in the 1980s that called for improved relations with the USSR.

Chapter Seven deals with economic interests. This chapter discusses the economic interests and priorities of Bangladesh, reviews Bangladesh's economic relations with the Soviet Union during the 1980s, and analyses whether these relations served Dhaka's national interests. This chapter concludes that economic relations between the two countries developed satisfactorily, and served the interests of both countries.

Finally, the concluding Chapter Eight examines the validity of the organizing concept of "national interest" that

is used in the case study. The findings of the study are summarized, and the problems of generalization discussed. Last, but not least, this chapter makes an attempt to analyse the prospects and problems for Bangladesh's future relations with the successor states.

Chapter Two

METHODOLOGY

Well-defined methodology is an essential precondition for a valid inquiry in social science research. But as objects of inquiry vary widely so do the methodologies, and no single theoretical framework is sufficient to explain a total picture of social reality. Theorizing in social science is a difficult task, as described by Talcott Parsons:

the development of effective concepts of wide applicability, like establishing a formal garden in the wilderness, necessarily involves a great struggle to bring order out of obscurity and chaos, and a great deal of systematic planting and cultivation after the initial clearing and pruning has been done.¹

The problem is more acute and complex in the study of IR, because of the ever-changing nature, and fluid and dynamic character of the field where multiple actors, issues and events interact with multidimensional goals and objectives. The concept of "national interest" is selected as an organizing principle, thus making it possible to avoid getting involved in the complex paradigm debates or categorizations employed by IR theories.

This methodological chapter is divided into several parts: part I analyses the concept of national interest, its origins and historical evolutions; part II analyses how the concept is viewed by the realist school of IR; part III

¹. Talcott Parsons, "On the Concept of Influence," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 27, Spring 1963, P. 37.

focuses on the neo-realist perception of national interest; part IV deals with liberal-behavioralist notions of national interest; part V discusses various Marxists and neo-marxist approaches to national interest; and, finally, part VI looks into the post-modernist views of national interest.

I

The Concept of National Interest

The modern concept of "national interest" in the study of IR originates in the emergence of nation-states. Thus, it is a relatively new concept. Ancient Greeks, Persians, Egyptians and Romans also pursued the interests of their territorial/political entities; but these interests were customarily defined either in religious or in dynastic terms. The use of the concept of "national interest" in a modern sense began with the emergence of European nation-states in the 16th and 17th centuries. The date is usually given is that of the Westphalian state system that was established in 1648.²

The essence of national interest has, more or less, remained the same, before and after the 1648 divide, but in the modern context it has been explicitly linked to the concept of a nation-state which had emerged as the supposed

². The Westphalian state system recognised equal sovereignty of European states, territorial integrity, neutrality as well as the right to preserve and promote their national interests. See Lynn H. Miller, Global Order: Values and Power in International Politics, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), 1985, pp. 17-34.

"natural" organizing principle of humanity. In many ways the notion of "national interest" is a fiction adopted to legitimize the interests of a state and its rulers. The concept of national interest comes from the notion of the (king) state as the all-powerful unitary actor which serves the interests of all in a nation-state. National interests are usually pursued by the rulers in the name of or on behalf of a state, and they are supposed to represent "distilled" interests of a "nation" that is assumed to be covered by a state umbrella, regardless of whether or not the state's citizens are a nation in ethno-cultural terms. But it is complex and difficult to measure whether and to what extent the rulers actions/policies reflect the interests of the actual sub-groups and ethnic communities living in that state.

The emergence of nationalism, perceived as the key social organizing principle of human communities, has had different impacts on different states depending on their national/ethnic composition. For uninational nation-states it actually has worked as an integrative force, helping in the consolidation of their national identity and the pursuit of their national interests. But in the case of multinational states it has been a centrifugal force challenging the notion that the interests pursued by the state are actually the interests of a supposed "nation," i.e. all of the citizens who in fact are divided into diverse ethno-national communities. These forces are less strong in countries with democratic traditions, where

national interests are presumed to reflect the broad interests of the public having been aggregated via a democratic political process. In authoritarian and totalitarian states, national interest is usually defined and pursued by a particular leader, a group of leaders or a party in their own particular interests. Historically, the term "national interest" has been discredited because it has been defined solely in terms of power and security, and frequently in order to justify or legitimize expansionist and criminal acts by dictators of autocratic and totalitarian regimes.

National interest refers to matters important enough to a nation-state to become a goal of national policies. There are different types of national interests; political, economic, ideological, military-security and socio-cultural. National interests are reflected both in domestic and external policies. Shifts and changes in domestic coalitions and in international relations may require a redefinition of national interests by a nation-state. Political, economic and technological changes also redistribute power, both at domestic and international levels, which may likewise compel nation-states to redefine their national interests.³

Although the term "national interest" has been widely used in the post-World War II period, particularly in defining and executing US foreign policy, the concern among analysts,

³. Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1981, p. 13.

leaders and policy planners for what comes to be seen as national interests started long ago. For example, in the late 19th century, Alfred Mahan described national interest as the prime consideration of diplomacy, and claimed that:

Self-interest is not only a legitimate, but a fundamental cause for national policy; one which needs no cloak of hypocrisy.....it is vain to expect governments to act continuously on any other ground than national interest. They have no right to do so, being agents and not principals.⁴

In the inter-War period the idealist-utopian views predominated in IR theory, but national interest continued to be the guiding force for US foreign policy. As the then US Secretary of State Charles Hughes said in 1924, "Foreign policies are not built upon abstractions. They are the result of national interest arising from some immediate exigency or standing out vividly in historical perspective."⁵ Writing in 1934, Charles Beard described national interest as "a pivot of diplomacy" which was "universally employed in international relations." He also believed that the main function of diplomacy was "to maintain, advance and defend national interest by various means and instrumentalities of power."⁶

Ever since Beard made this statement, international

⁴. Alfred T. Mahan, The Interest in America in Seapower-Present and Future, (Boston: Little and Brown), 1898.

⁵. Charles Hughes, International Conciliation, No. 194, January 1924, p. 3

⁶. Charles Beard, The Idea of National Interest: An Analytical Study of American Foreign Policy, (New York: Macmillan Company), 1934, p. 21.

politics has undergone various phases of changes, and power has been shifted and redistributed at the global level. Yet it still remains the crucial variable in the achievement of national goals and national interests. But at the same time, the perception of power and its instrumentalities have been changed and modified. In the earlier version, national attributes such as geography, population, economic capability and military preparedness, were seen to be the main components of power; later versions placed major emphasis on military might, level of economic development and technological advancement, as well as ideology, as an instrument for the pursuit of national interests. Occasionally, other attributes were also used to advance national interests. Former US President Jimmy Carter, for example, introduced the defence of human rights as an instrument for the pursuit of US national interests abroad.

National interest may be pursued for both offensive and defensive purposes, and may thus be defined in an expansionist as well as in defensive matrix. It has been used to justify expansion and promotion of political, economic and ideological objectives globally, as well as to secure the minimalist objectives of survival and the protection and preservation of a nation-state's sovereignty.

The concept of "national interest," has to be differentiated from concepts such as "national honour," "national prestige" and "vital interest." If national interest is

defined in terms of physical gains and benefits, both politico-military and economic, it differs from national honour and national prestige both of which are psychological phenomena, and thus indivisible. Consequently, national interests are negotiable and may be subject to compromise, while national prestige and honour are not. According to Douglas Kinney,

National Honour is less concrete than National Interest.....National Honour is most interesting as a political phenomenon and most important as a factor in decision-making when it tempers or contradicts concrete National Interests in favour of standing in the system.....National Interestsare the stuff of solutions, and National Honour the essence of problems.⁷

Robert Gilpin views national prestige through the prism of power and capabilities, and defines it in terms of economic development, technological advancement and military power. According to him,

Whereas power refers to the economic, military and related capabilities of a state, prestige refers primarily to the perception of other states with respect to a state's capabilities and its ability and unwillingness to exercise its power.⁸

The concept of "vital interest" fits somewhere between the indivisible and the negotiable realms. Vital interests are usually the interests that are not a subject for compromise; their defence may require supreme sacrifices on the part of a

⁷. Douglas Kenney, National Interest/ National Honour: The Diplomacy of the Falklands Crisis, (London, New York: Praeger), 1989, pp. 4-5.

⁸. Robert Gilpin, op. cit., p. 31.

nation-state including a resort to war. According to Nuechterlein,

An interest is vital when the highest policy-makers in a sovereign state conclude that the issue at stake in an international dispute is so fundamental to the political, economic and social well-being of their country that it should not be compromised further, even if this results in the use of economic and military force.⁹

As in the case of other IR concepts that of "national interest" is debatable and can be controversial. The term has been widely used by analysts, political leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats, but it has never been properly conceptualized. Various criteria have been used to define national interests. Stephen Krasner, for example, considers material objectives and ambitious ideological goals as national interests.¹⁰ Donald Nuechterlein uses four basic matrices to define national interests. These are:

Defence interest; the protection of the nation-state and its citizens from the threat of physical violence by another country...

Economic interest; the enhancement of the nation-state's economic well-being in relations with other states.

World-order interest; the maintenance of an international political and economic system in which the nation-state can feel secure.....

Ideological interest; the protection and furtherance of a set of values which the citizens of a nation share and believe to be universally

⁹. Donald Nuechterlein, "The Concept of 'National Interest': A Time For New Approaches," Orbis, Spring 1979, p. 85.

¹⁰. Stephen Krasner, Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials, Investments and US Foreign Policy, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1978, p. 10.

good."¹¹

National interest can be used both as an analytical tool and an instrument for policy action. Nuechterlein's analysis provides a useful general framework for understanding the concept of "national interest" in its objective aspects. But it overlooks the subjective aspects that can be crucial because national interest is often defined and influenced by such intangible factors as attitudes, perceptions and priorities of given regimes, leaders or societies. In general, the pursuit of national interest can be defined as a policy or policies designed to promote and protect interests of a particular nation-state at a particular period of time, as contested with differentiated interests of individuals, groups, or sub-groups, or the interests of mankind as a whole. Since nation-states are the products of historical experience, national interests are also shaped by history. They change, reform and are modified by the changes in priorities and demands both in domestic and international politics, and in the economy. During the Cold War, for example, national interest became almost synonymous with national security. But now that security perceptions are changing, many nations have become more concerned with their social, economic and environmental interests. If isolationism served American national interests before World War II, it was redefined in global terms after 1945, and become identified with all those who

¹¹. Donald E. Nuechterlein, op. cit., p. 76.

opposed communism world-wide.

In the absence of a universal definition of what constitutes national interest, there is lack of consensus also on what should be its scope and boundaries; should the scope be limited to political, economic and military interest of a nation only, or should it also include other interests, defined by environmental, social, psychological and spiritual needs? The realists view national interests in terms solely of material gains--military, political and economic. (The realist view is discussed later). Others, on the other hand, insist that national interest should be defined more broadly. James Billington, for example, argues that national interest should be understood both in terms of material and nonmaterial aspects.¹² According to Arnold Wolfers, apart from the issue of national survival, the interpretation of what constitutes vital interests and what actions should be taken in their defence, has been a question of moral value judgement in every case.¹³ Then the question of whether national interests should be delivered in terms of immediate interests only, or should they seen on a long term continuum. Interpretations of national interest vary in accordance with ideological and

¹². For details, see James H. Billington, "Reflections on the Nonmaterial Aspects of National Interests" in The National Interests of the United States, ed. by Prosser Gifford, (Washington, D.C., Woodrow Wilson Centre for Scholars: University Press of America), 1981, pp. 180-183

¹³. Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics, fourth edition, (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press), 1975, p. 60.

philosophical positions and preferences of analysts. The following sections critically review the concept of "national interest" as defined by the major paradigms of IR theory.

II

Realism and National Interests

Political realism has had a long, checkered historical tradition. Realist perception of national interest and foreign policy has been seriously influenced by the ideas and writings of such political philosophers and thinkers as Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius and Carl von Clausewitz. But, the contemporary realist understanding of "national interest" started with the seminal works of E.H. Carr, and Hans Morgenthau.¹⁴ Subsequently, the concept was developed and modified by other realists, such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, Charles Kindleberger, Stephen Krasner and others.

The realist perception of a state is based on several premises; that the state is the best available type of political organization; that a state's drive for power is inherent and thus requires the maintenance of a capacity to

¹⁴. For earlier realist view of national interest, see E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years of Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations, (London: Mcmillan), 1942. Hans J. Morgenthau developed the classical realist notions of national interests in his works, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1948, and In Defence of National Interest, (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf), 1952.

defend itself; that states enjoy absolute power and authority in domestic politics, but in international arena, where they interact with others, they have to negotiate and compromise on national interests (except the core ones); that international order is anarchic and power is the determining feature of relations; and, finally that states must acknowledge that their capacity to influence the international system depends on their power capabilities. Thus, in the international arena, states are assumed to behave rationally.¹⁵

For the realists the laws and principles that govern domestic politics apply also in international politics. As Morgenthau wrote, "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature."¹⁶ For Morgenthau international politics is a struggle for power, and all politics, domestic and international, are motivated by the desire either to keep, or to increase, or to demonstrate power. Morgenthau's concept of power is derived directly from the Machiavelli's notion of "morality as the product of power". His notion of interest is influenced also by the Thucydidesian, Hobbesian and Weberian concepts of state

¹⁵. R.D. McKinlay and R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press), 1986, pp. 84-87.

¹⁶. Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, sixth edition, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1985 p. 4

and individual.¹⁷ The national power of a state is assumed to be based in two sets of factors; stable (tangible) and unstable (intangible). The stable factors include geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population and national character; the unstable; national morale, quality of diplomacy, and quality of government.¹⁸ Foreign policy is seen as an instrument at the disposition of a state for safeguarding its national interests by means of its power (overt and covert).

The realist view of national interest is mainly derived from the notion of raison d'état or state interest. For them national interest is "an objective category which is universally valid," and is, "unaffected by the circumstances of time and place."¹⁹ Classical realists consider national interest as a "perennial standard" or a "motive force" by which political actions of states should be judged and directed. Morgenthau made it clear that:

It is not only a political necessity but also moral duty for a nation to follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule of action: The national interest.²⁰

Realists define national interests in terms of "high

¹⁷. For Max Weber, "Interests (material or ideal), not ideas, dominate the actions of men." Maurine Weber, Max Weber, (New York: Wiley), 1926, p. 347.

¹⁸. Ibid, pp. 127-169.

¹⁹. Hans J. Morgenthau, (1985), op. cit. p. 10

²⁰. Hans Morgenthau, (1952), op. cit. p. 252.

politics" (politics, military and security), not "low politics" (trade, finance and monetary-exchange). Classical realists are less interested in ideology, economy, morality or other aspects of national interest. As Morgenthau wrote,

It [the US] can not afford to jeopardise its own interests by indulging its domestic political preferences and moral judgements of other nations. It should make a pact with the devil himself....if it is in the national interest to do so.²¹

States interact in the international system for the purpose of maximizing their interests, but in doing so they have to take into account interests of other states. As Thompson observes, "there must be reciprocal process of recognizing each other's vital interests and avoiding collisions and conflicts insofar as it is possible through the compromise of divergent interests.....the one thing which saves the idea of the national interest is its essential reciprocity."²²

The realist view of national interest seriously influenced US foreign policy planning and execution in the post-World War II era. Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew

²¹. Hans J. Morgenthau, (1985), op.cit. p. 388. E.H. Carr also believed that "relations between states are governed solely by power and that morality plays no part in it." E.H. Carr, op. cit. p. 153. Richard Steel also shared the similar view when he said, "As far as the national interest is concerned it makes little difference what kind of ideology a government professes, so long it does not follow policies which are not hostile or dangerous." R. Steel, Pax Americana, (New York: The Viking Press), 1967, p. 322.

²². K.W. Thompson, Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1960, p. 169.

Brzezinski, were two of the realists who held high office in US Administrations, and brought new meanings and understandings to the concept of national interest in foreign policy. Both defined US national interest in terms of security and defence. Henry Kissinger's main preoccupation was to maintain international order, security and legitimacy. According to him, stability comes from legitimacy, and a legitimate order limits the scope for conflicts and guarantees the interests of all states by maintaining equilibrium.²³

In his early writings Brzezinski emphasised the use of power and attainment of geostrategic superiority for the protection of US national interests. In the late 1980s, he appeared to have modified his position, following changes in international relations, particularly in the US-Soviet relations. He still defined national interest in terms of power and security, but involved wider considerations of political statecraft, economic strength, technological innovation and ideological vitality.²⁴

The realists view national interest in terms of power and security, and for them all other interests are subordinate to

²³. For details of Dr. Kissinger's views on security and national interest, see Henry Kissinger, World Restored, (New York: Library Grosset & Dunlop), 1964, and American Foreign Policy, expanded edition, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.), 1974.

²⁴. For earlier views see, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era, (New York: The Viking Press), 1970. For later views, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, In Quest of National Security, (Boulder & London: Westview Press), 1988, p. 1.

political and security interests. But there are many problems with the classical realist notion of national interest: first, the classical realist notion of human behavior is drawn a priori; second, the notion that laws, norms and principles that govern domestic politics also guide international politics, and that "foreign policy is a continuation of domestic politics" overlooks or ignores the context of interactions of states and systemic pressures and limitations imposed and exerted by other actors competing in the same system; third, since classical realists use the same criteria for defining national interests of all states, they can not explain variations and changes; and finally, by defining national interest only in terms of power and security, they overlook a number of other important factors such as economy, ideology, morality, and psychology.

III

Neorealism and National Interests ²⁵

Classical realism dominated the study of foreign policy

²⁵. Such terms as 'structural realism,' 'new realism' and 'institutional realism' are also used to refer to neorealism. See works of Robert Keohane, ed. Neorealism and its Critics, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1986, Robert Gilpin (1981), op. cit., Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company), 1979, and George Modelski, Principles of World Politics, (New York: The Free Press), 1972. Richard Ashley calls it "post-structural realism." See, Richard Ashley, The Political Economy of War and Peace: The Sino-Soviet-American Triangle and the Modern Security Problematique, (New York: Nichols), 1980.

in the immediate post-World War II decade. But already in the late 1950s, the realist view of state-centric analysis of international relations was challenged from within the same paradigm. Kenneth Waltz accepted the classical realist view of human behavior as the root of all political actions (the first image), but added two new "images"; man lives in society, so his behavior is conditioned by the society (state) he lives in (the second image), and a state's behavior is conditioned by the international system within which it interacts with each other (the third image).²⁶ For Waltz, the international system is an anarchic one where there is no controlling authority, and interests of competing actors are in perpetual conflict. He wrote,

Each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways it judges best. Force is a means of achieving the external ends of state because there exist no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy.²⁷

According to Waltz, force does not have to be actually used to be effective, but has to project a realistic capability to be used. For him, the use of one image only is not adequate for analysis of foreign policy behavior of states. But at the same time, he emphasised the importance of the "third image," when he said, "There is a constant possibility

²⁶. Kenneth Waltz, Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis, (New York, London: Columbia University Press), 1959, p.3

²⁷. Ibid. p. 238

of war in a world in which there are two or more states and having no agency above them upon which they can rely for protection."²⁸

In the 1970s when realism came under serious attack from the behavioralists who denounced it as "unscientific," Waltz (1979) abandoned his first two images, focusing instead on the anarchic nature of the international order. He attempted to provide a structural explanation of international relations, by differentiating between the national and international politics. According to him, national politics are hierarchic, vertical, centralised, heterogenous and directed; international politics, on the other hand, are anarchic, decentralised, horizontal, undirected and mutually adaptive. He challenged the classical realist view of a state's capabilities to maximize its interests in the international arena, by arguing that the state's options at the global level are limited and conditioned by the system within which it interacts with others. Thus, implications of a state's interactions cannot be known without the knowledge of the situation where these interactions occur. Waltz believes that national interests and foreign policies of states are conditioned and dictated by forces and factors working at the international level, rather than at the national level. He also argues that states cannot maximize interests; because of the need for self-preservation, their interests are served best by main-

²⁸. Ibid, p. 227.

taining a balance of power.²⁹

Robert Gilpin shares Waltz's assumptions, but attempts to broaden his definition of power by including economic and technological capabilities of states. He believes that interests of nations change with the redistribution of power (which is a continuous process) caused by economic, technological and other developments. Those states which gain more power seek to alter the system in favour of their national interests, but these pursuits are calculated in terms of balancing costs and benefits. Thus, Gilpin, along with Kindleberger, Krasner and others, suggests that in order to avoid the perpetual power struggle international regimes, controlled and supervised by a hegemon, should be formed. These regimes would deliver public goods such as order and stability and would safeguard interests of every state.³⁰

Despite differences, the neorealists, in general, continue to analyse national interests in terms of power, but they define power broadly to include economy and technology along with military and strategic factors. They recognize the role of the state, but, for them, states are not the only actors in the international arena, and their roles and actions

²⁹. Ibid

³⁰. For details see, Robert Gilpin, (1981), op. cit. Charles Kindleberger thinks that only a stabilizer, one stabilizer can ensure interests of all states by providing public goods. For Krasner's views on regime, see "Structural causes and regime consequences: Regimes as intervening variables," International Organization, Volume 36, No. 2, (Spring) 1982.

are dictated and dominated by the international structure within which they interact. The neo-realists usually use deductionist methodology and separate foreign policy (the domain of a state) from international relations (dominated by major powers). Thus, they overlook the internal dynamics of the state and ignore the notion of state sovereignty.

To narrow the gap between "inside-out" explanation of the classical realists and "outside-in" analysis of the neorealists, Robert Cox suggests that international structure constitutes parameters or frameworks for action, and shapes and limits the functions of the actors, but the actors are also a product of history and their functions are conditioned by social, economic and military pressures of their environments.³¹ Stephen Krasner also argues that in striving for national interests, states confront internal as well as external resistance. So, national interest is not only determined by external factors, but also "depends upon the instruments of control that states can exercise over groups

³¹. Robert Cox rejects structuralism and offers historical structures as a "guide to research program" for understanding of social changes which, according to him, can be analysed at three inter-related structures; the organization of production, the form of state and structure of world order. For details see, Robert Cox, "Production, the State and Change in World Order," in Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics, James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds. (Lexington, Toronto: Lexington Books), 1989, p. 39.

within its own society."³²

IV

Behavioralism, Liberal-Internationalism and National Interests

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the behavioral-scientific approach became dominant in the study of international relations. The behaviorists and scientifically-minded realists (the Vasquez school) challenged the realist school for its "unscientific" conceptualization. The behaviorists did not share the neo-realist view of an anarchic nature of world politics; rather, they developed a framework to explain international relations in a "scientific" way by utilizing conceptualization of social science, quantification of variables, testing of hypotheses and model building.

James Rosenau, a propagator of a behavioral-scientific approach, believed that the method of scientific enquiry that unravelled the mysteries of an atomic structure, could also reveal the dynamics of social behavior.³³ The post-behavioralists were encouraged by the World War II international stability, the formation of effective international organizations, and the success of American foreign policy worldwide.

By testing international relations within a matrix of

³². Stephen Krasner, op. cit., p. 11. For similar views, see John G. Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," International Organization, Vol. 36, No. 2, (Spring), 1982.

³³. James Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, (New York: The Free Press), 1971, p. vii.

dependent, independent and intervening variables, the behaviorists attempted to provide a scientific explanation of foreign policy and national interests.³⁴ They are highly critical of realist view of power. For them, components of power are disputable and cannot be measured. As Rosenau wrote, "Power is as elusive and ambiguous a concept as is interest."³⁵ He is not only critical of the concept of national interest, but argues that it cannot be defined objectively, because of the presence of conflicting groups and interests within a nation.

To overcome the problems of the levels of analysis Rosenau tried to combine external-internal causes and factors for the analysis of foreign policy behavior of states. But the problem is how to theorize these variables, and how a "scientific" foreign policy can be built on the basis of variables that are in variance and are constantly changing and reforming? It is true that various forces and factors, often with conflicting and contradictory interests, are interacting at national levels, but at the same time a continuous process of reconciliation and trade-offs among them is also taking

³⁴. James Rosenau considered behavior, attitudes, decisions and policies-as dependent variables; size, economy, role of individual, accountability-as independent variables; and government, system and society-as intervening variables. See Ibid. p. 43.

³⁵. James Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, revised and enlarged edition, (London, New York: Frances Pinter Publishers, Ltd., Nichols Publishing Company), 1980, p. 288.

place in the society. It seems that Rosenau was trying to distribute the classical realist notion of power into multiple actors, both at internal and external levels, empirically.

For the behavioralists, the concept of national interest is too vague and represents little more than preferences of particular leaders. In the words of James Rosenau, "The national interest is whatever the officials of a nation seek to preserve and enhance."³⁶ Edgar Furniss and Richard Snyder agree: "The national interest is what the nation, i.e., the decision-makers, decides it is."³⁷

The modernists like Robert Jervis explain foreign policy in terms of decision-making. For them the process of foreign policy-making is not based in objective factors, but is a product of "images" of decision-makers.³⁸ However, to analyse foreign-policy only in terms of the perceptions of decision-makers, overlooks a host of other factors, including objective elements interacting both at the internal and external arenas.

As an anti-state ideology classical liberalism had no theory of state or foreign policy. For classical liberals, state is nothing more than a "referee" in the society, and they strongly advocate a reduction in the role and influence

³⁶. Ibid. p. 286.

³⁷. Edgar Furniss and Richard Snyder, An Introduction to American Foreign Policy, (New York: Rinehart), 1955, p. 17.

³⁸. Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1976.

of the state. Classical liberals also call for "as little intercourse as possible between governments, as much connection as possible between nations of the world."³⁹ Thus, they deny that the state has any role to play. But they do not have an answer either on who should interact in the international system or how.

Unlike classical liberals, liberal-internationalists do believe that the state performs more important roles in international affairs. They recognise the state as one of many actors interacting in world politics, in addition to other international actors, such as multinational corporations and international organizations and institutions, who also perform important roles in the international arena. Liberal internationalists criticize the realist notion of power as being "unitary and homogeneous." According to them, power is parsimonious, disintegrated, and there can be different power models.⁴⁰ Unlike neorealists, liberal-internationalists put primary emphasis on the domestic, internal or societal variables, rather than on the state in keeping with the prevailing anti-statist bias of liberal thought.

The implications are that international order and security which are defined solely in terms of power and authority cannot effectively ensure national interests;

³⁹. J.A. Hobson, Richard Cobden: The International Man, (New York: Halt), 1919, p. 34.

⁴⁰. For details, see Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence, (Boston, Mass.: Little Brown), 1977.

rather, they can be served best through trade and cooperation. Bruce Russett, for example, believes that the world is interdependent, but that interdependence is based in an objective harmony of interests, and there it is possible to achieve "collective goods."⁴¹ The liberal-internationalists recognize the existence of national interests, but see them in a relationship of a "perpetual harmony" between all nations because of the interdependent and cooperative nature of the world system.

To summarize, the scientific-behavioralists do not have a concept of national interest, except as a subjective perception of national leaders. But the denial does not help to define and analyse the objective factors that influence nation-states' policies in the international arena. The liberal-internationalists, on the other hand, analyse the international system as an arena where multiple actors interact with different but harmonious interests. However, their concept of national interest is not clear primarily because of their anti-state bias.

⁴¹. Bruce Russett, World Politics: A Menu for Choice, (San Francisco: M.H. Freeman), 1981. Richard Rosecrance believes that nations do benefit from trade and the growth of trade makes international cooperation possible. The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World, (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers), 1976. Richard Mansbach and John Vasquez argue that the world should be considered as disintegrated issue areas. In Search of Theory: A New Paradigm for Global Politics, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1981.

V

Marxism, Neo-marxism and National Interests

Like other theorists, the Marxists and neo-marxists are also divided in defining the state, foreign policy and national interests. Following are some of the Marxist and neo-marxist approaches and interpretations of state, foreign policy and national interests.

(a) Classical Marxist/instrumentalist approach

For classical Marxists the state is either an "instrument of the dominant class" which is used as an "instrument for exploiting wage labour and capital" or a "committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."⁴² According to classical Marxists, foreign policy and national interests reflect interests of the hegemonic class of the society. In fact, Marxist notions on state, foreign policy and national interest come from their interpretations of history, society and production relationships. Marxist thought of foreign policy and national interests was seriously influenced by their understanding and interpretation of Lenin's theory of

⁴². Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels developed their theory of the state in The Communist Manifesto, (1848), (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts), 1955. K Marx, The German Ideology, (1845-46), (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1964. F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, (1884), (New York: International Publishers), 1968. For Lenin's views on state, see The State and Revolution, (1917), (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1970.

"imperialism" as the "highest stage of capitalism." ⁴³

(b) Dependency Theory

Dependency theorists have a different approach to the state, national interest and foreign policy. Gunder Frank characterizes international relations as metropolis-satellite relationships where metropolitan states structurally dominate satellite states through expropriation of capital. Thus, according to him, the process of capital accumulation and international division of labour, results in the dependency of Third World states on the stronger metropolitan states. They become dependent--financially, techonologically and institutionally--and in the process become incorporated permanently into the world capitalist economy.⁴⁴

Frank's structural-functional interpretation of the relationship between metropolitan and satellite states is economically deterministic. States' behavior is explained only in terms of economic interests, and thus denies the existence of other forces and factors interacting both at the national and international levels. Moreover, states do not act internationally for economic gains and interests alone. Dependency

⁴³. See V.I. Lenin's work, "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism" (1902), Collected Works, Vol. 22, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1966. For neo-Marxist views, see Paul Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1942, and Paul Baran, The Political Economy of Growth, (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 1973.

⁴⁴. For details, see Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, (London: Penguin), 1971.

theory does not allow for changes and variations and establishes rigid static dichotomy. For Frank, all metropole states are absolutely autonomous and free to maximize their national interests, while all periphery states are fully and equally dependent and unable to pursue any interests of their own.

Dos Santos explains dependency using trade as a criterion. He distinguishes three types of dependency; colonial dependency, financial-industrial dependency and a new post-War dependency.⁴⁵ Another dependency theorist Samir Amin analyzes underdevelopment and dependency of Third World states in a double perspective; seen in a local context the Third World states appear to be strong and autonomous vis-a-vis their own bourgeoisie, but they are weak and dependent when dealing with strong international capital.⁴⁶

Dos Santos' and Samir Amin's analyses help in understanding the dependency patterns, but they explain state behavior solely in economic terms either in a domestic or an international contexts.

(c) The Historical-Structural Approach

To bridge the external-internal gap of dependency theory, Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto suggest that dependency

⁴⁵. For details see, Dos Santos, "The Structure of Dependence," The American Economic Review, Vol. 60, No. 2, May 1970.

⁴⁶. Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, (New York: Monthly Review Press), 1978.

should be understood in terms of a "series of events and situations that occur together, and to make empirical situations understandable in terms of the way internal and external structural components are linked."⁴⁷ Thus, they try to link the internal underdevelopment of states to the international system. For them, the structure of dependency is, in turn, dependent upon relations of domination. In order to understand the structure and function of dependency, according to Cardoso and Faletto, it is required to analyse the internal social groups and classes and their interests.

In his historical study of the development of capitalism in Brazil, Peter Evans shows that the state is not merely an object of external exploitation, but an active partner in the formation of a "triple alliance" with local bourgeoisie and foreign capital. And in the process of economic development, the states' main function is to successfully mediate between local bourgeoisie and foreign capital.⁴⁸

The historical-structural theorists use multiple variables and categories, and do not place all periphery states in one category; for them state autonomy is not permanent, but varies depending on the historical circums-

⁴⁷. Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 1976, p. 15

⁴⁸. For details, see Peter Evans Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinationals, State and Local Capital in Brazil, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 1979.

tances. The interests of states vary in time and space, and are mainly determined by interaction between the internal and external forces.

(d) The World System Theory

The world system theory is not unlike the dependency approach, but it differs in two major aspects: first, dependency theorists try to explain the dependency syndrome of periphery states only in terms of economic relations with the metropole, while the goal of world system approach is to explain economic, political and social development and underdevelopment of the entire world; second, the world system approach attempts to explain the fate of various parts of the world in various historical periods within a broad historical framework.⁴⁹

Immanuel Wallerstein explains the underdevelopment of periphery states in terms of the capitalist world system. The starting point of his world system theory is the capitalist development in Europe. As he says, "the system emerged in Europe and gradually expanded all over the globe." Wallerstein divides the world capitalist system into three components; core, periphery and semi-periphery. According to him, the states in the periphery are weak and can not control their fate, while the states in the core are economically, politi-

⁴⁹. Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, (New York: Macmillan), 1987, p. 410

cally, militarily and socially powerful and they "reproduce" the system.⁵⁰ For Wallerstein, the notions of state, politics, economy and nationalism are important but they have to be understood and analysed only in terms of the world capitalist system. As he says, states, nations, classes, ethnic groups, households all exist only in terms of the world system.⁵¹

Other globalist theorists share Wallerstein's views, but put more emphasis on interdependence of political, economic and other variables. For example, Chase-Dunn notes that the capitalist mode of production exhibits a single logic in which the political and military power, and exploitative economic processes all play an integrated role.⁵² Johan Galtung tries to provide a structural explanation of the exploitation and expropriation within the world system. For him, there is a harmony of interests between center nations, but there is

⁵⁰. Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System : Capitalist, Agriculture and the Origins of European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century, (New York, London: Academic Press), 1974, p. 349.

⁵¹. Immanuel Wallerstein, "The State and the World System in the Institutional Vortex of the Capitalist World Economy," International Social Science Journal, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1980, p. 745.

⁵². Christopher Chase Dunn, "Interstate System and Capitalist World-Economy: One Logic or Two", in World System Structure: Continuity and Change, eds. by W. Ladd Hollist and James N. Rosenau, (Beverly Hills, C.A: Sage Publications), 1981, p. 31. Patrick McGowan and Bodhan Kordan hold the similar view and note that, "Accumulation, imperialism and conflict can be considered part of a single dynamic whereby a hegemonic core state in an increasingly competitive world-system attempts to ensure its own stability, prosperity, and primacy." Ibid, p. 78

disharmony of interests within the periphery nations, and between the center and periphery nations. The world system is structurally dominated by imperialism through political, economic, military, cultural and communication means.⁵³ He tries to provide a social and cultural explanation of exploitation within the world capitalist system.

Marxists and neo-marxists do not believe in the concept of "national interest", because for them international relations are structurally deterministic reflecting the priorities and interests of the hegemonic class and the needs and requirements of the world capitalist system, as defined by the ruling class. The main problem with the Marxist and neo-marxist theories is that they are static and do not account for the dynamic of changes that are constantly occurring in the field of international relations, including the concept of "national interest."

Dependency school ignores the communist world because of an ideological bias and an unwillingness to admit domination and exploitation there. The world system theorists did not recognize the separate identity of the Second World, but lump it together with the Third and First Worlds. By using a "holistic" methodology, they use the world system in totality as a unit of analysis. For Wallerstein, the existence of the state can only be defined in relation with other states. He

⁵³. Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," Journal of Peace Research, 2 (1971), pp. 81-116.

assumes that the world system is prior to the state and society. As Wendt points out, Wallerstein's holism is premised on the notion that the whole is ontologically prior to its parts.⁵⁴ Wallerstein, like some other dependency theorists, particularly Frank, provides a structural-functional explanation of international relations where all issues and events are viewed only in terms of functions of the system. For Wallerstein, the parts (states, nations) do not exist outside the whole; there is nothing external to the system and no interaction between parts and the whole. So, according to Wallerstein, periphery states can not have any foreign policy and national interest; rather, it has to be defined and understood in terms of the world capitalist system that is dominated by the Center powers.

VI

Post-Modernists and National Interests

Post-modernists not only suggest a need for a radical restructuring of international relations theory, but also a need to redefine the theory of history by analyzing the past as well as the process of continuous historical change.⁵⁵ They

⁵⁴. E.O. Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," International Organization, Vol. 41, No. 3, (Summer 1987), p. 347.

⁵⁵. Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," in Robert Keohane, (1986), op. cit. p. 209. Mark Hoffman advocates that the critical theory can go beyond the inter-paradigm debate and better explain the future study of IR. See M. Hoffman, "Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate,"

argue that the search for a resolution of theoretical debates and "intellectual dogmatism" within IR should be abandoned; emphasis should be on "intellectual openness" and a "pluralism of interpretation."⁵⁶ In their pursuit of "universalistic claims," the post-modernists deny the role for existing theories and models in the study of IR. They propose to reduce or eliminate the role of theory to an "ensemble of free floating unsystematized 'theories'", redefined as "heterio-logical, multipolar grids of knowledge practice."⁵⁷ Post-modernists put more emphasis on "language, symbols, alternative discourses and meaning rather than goals, choices, behaviour, attitude and personality."⁵⁸ Post-modernists urge the forging of new connections between diverse academic points of view and between academic inquiry and social movements so that international relations transcend "the institutional limitations, classes, occupational categories, genders and races."⁵⁹

Millennium, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1987, pp. 231-49.

⁵⁶. Pauline Rosenau, "Once Again into the Fray: International Relations Confronts Humanities," Millennium, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1990, p. 102.

⁵⁷. J. Der Derian and M. Shapiro, International/Intertextual Relations: Boundaries of Knowledge and Practice in World Politics, (Mass.: Lexington), 1989, p. 6.

⁵⁸. Pauline Rosenau, op. cit. p. 105.

⁵⁹. Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, "Reading Dissidence/ Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1990, pp. 394-95.

Post-modernists contribute to the conceptualization of national interests by recognizing cultural diversity as well as historical specificity. For Edward Said, a hermeneutic post-modernist, ideas, cultures and histories form and influence identity and interests of nations, and these can not be understood or studied without knowing the forces and configurations of power in those societies.⁶⁰

The post-modernists are strongly critical of the realist perception of international relations. They call for evaluating theoretical constructs so that theories can be reexamined in terms of their historical context, their ideological underpinnings, the form of society in which they foster or sustain, and the metaphors and literary hopes that inform their construction.⁶¹ They reject conventional IR theories, yet, at the same time, conspicuously refuse to build an alternative theoretical structure. As Andrew Linklater puts it, "Beyond that, what post-modernists stand for is more difficult to pin down although for its advocates this is a sign of strength rather than a manifestation of poverty and weakness."⁶²

⁶⁰. Edward Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage Books), 1978.

⁶¹. Yosef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1989, p. 250.

⁶². Andrew Linklater, "The Question of the Next Stage in International Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View," Millennium, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1992, p. 89.

VI

Conclusion

As the review above shows, there are no common standards or general consensus on how to define national interests. The concept of "national interest" is not conceptualized well in the extant literature. Nuechterlein's definition is useful for defining national interests of powerful states, but inadequate for a weak, underdeveloped state like Bangladesh, where survival has been the main concern.

Classical realists define "national interest" as "an objective category which is universally valid", "unaffected by the circumstances of time and place," and "one guiding star, one standard of thought, one rule of action." For liberals and modernists the concept of "national interest" is "a question of moral value judgement," or "what the decision-makers decides." In defining "national interest" the realists focus solely on objective factors, while the liberal-modernists emphasize the subjective factors only.

For the purposes of this study some aspects of the theoretical paradigms above have been useful, but many others failed to provide an adequate explanatory framework. This study does not accept the classical realist notion view of state as the all powerful actor and sole agent for definition and maintenance of national interests. The "inside-out" explanation of state and its foreign policy is necessary but not sufficient to analyse the concept. The systemic-structural

explanation of international relations by the neorealists also fails short of explaining the dynamics of domestic forces and its interactions in defining and defending national interests.

Scientific-behavioralists help us to understand the state behaviors, and issues and conflicts in international politics, but fails to provide analytical tools for their conceptualization. Marxist and neo-marxist analysis of national interest is also limited and incomplete because of its instrumentalist bias and the exclusion of the communist world.

There is also a serious operational problem in using class analysis for this case study. Because Bangladesh is an underdeveloped country, it is difficult to divide its society into classes. At the same time, the USSR, ruled and controlled by a single party, had always claimed to be a classless society. The post-modernists have tried to expand the scope of the study of IR by freeing it from existing theoretical constructs and including new agents and priorities. Their use of multiple approach helps to understand better the non-Western societies, but in an absence of a methodological framework it cannot explain various concepts used, including that of national interest. Although the concept of national interest is not well developed by the historical-structuralist theorists, their analysis distinguishes forces that shape and limit national interests both at the national and international levels. It helps not only to examine historical specificities, but also to understand the roles and functions

of different social forces and classes, both internal and external, in influencing and defining national interests. Because "national interests was largely developed through the compromise between interests dynastically conceived and interests as interpreted and enforced by the rising class power, and later by popular power."⁶³ For analytical purposes, the study uses the historical-structural approach because its flexibility allows to define and understand Bangladesh's national interests in terms of its history and interactions of political, social, economic and other needs.

The concept of "national interest" is used here in a broad and general sense; it includes economic, political and security interests, as well as ideological, moral-psychological, ethno-linguistic, historical-traditional and religious interests. For analytical purposes, the study considers those interests, both material and non-material, that are defined and pursued by national leaders, and that are deeply rooted in the core values and traditions of the society and supported by (or not opposed by) the majority of the population of a nation-state, as national interests.

Such perception reflects state behavior common to all the Westphalian actors, yet respects the existence of cultural differences and indigenous values and preferences which must be taken into account in defining national interest. Despite the problems in defining the concept, it is argued here that

⁶³. Charles Beard, op. cit., p. 23.

it can be used for the specific studies, but it must be redefined for the purpose to suit the specific requirements.

An effort to develop a common criterion for defining national interest so far has been defeated because of the plurality of states, existence of more than one civilization in world politics, and the imposition of concepts and theories, derived largely from the experiments and experiences of the Western societies, on non-Western culture and behaviour unilaterally.⁶⁴ The problem is more acute for small and weaker nations. In their efforts to survive, smaller states cannot isolate themselves, but have to exercise their preferences in choosing, supporting or promoting such values of world system that suit them best. Unfortunately, for smaller states, those choices are severely limited.

It is difficult to define a common criterion that can be used as a category of national interests in cross time and space. So, for analytical purposes, it is essential to have an operational definition before using the concept of "national interest" for a case study. In the case of Bangladesh, national interest is defined in terms of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, socio-political, ideological and ecological interests and economic survival.

⁶⁴. Rob Walker, One World, Many Worlds: Struggle for a Just World Order, (Boulder, Colorado: Rienner), 1988.

Chapter Three

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE THIRD WORLD, AND A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BANGLADESH-SOVIET RELATIONS

The Soviet Union's relations with Bangladesh come under the general heading of Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World. Thus a brief review of Soviet-Third World relations provides essential background to the attempt to understand and to analyse the principles, goals and objectives that guided Moscow's relations with Bangladesh in the 1980s.

The problem is how to approach general Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World. There is no consensus among experts on interpretations of Soviet Third World policy. According to some authors there was nothing new in Soviet foreign policy; rather it was a continuation and extension of pre-revolutionary imperialist/ expansionist policy.¹ There are other authors who believe that there was no blueprint or masterplan for Soviet policy towards the Third World; rather it was cautious, calculative, selective, restrained, "opportunity-seeking," and reactive to Western policies.² A third group of authors attempt to explain Soviet-Third World

¹. Adam Ulam, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Vernon Aspaturian and Alvin Rubinstein share this view. For details of their works, see Bibliography.

². The works of George F. Kennan, Raymond Duncan, William Griffith, Rajan Menon, Jerry Hough, Roger Kanet, Walter Laqueur and Stephen Page reflect this approach. For details of their works, see Bibliography.

relations in terms of Marxist-Leninist ideology.³ Another believes that Soviet foreign policy was deeply rooted in the domestic political and economic needs of the society.⁴ Samuel Sharp and others apply the concept of "national interest" to explain Soviet foreign policy behavior in the international scene.⁵

The resulting debate is outside the scope of this paper. The study argues that Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World was evolutionary and ever-changing; it was ideologically motivated, but at the same time realistic. It was also flexible enough to allow different leaders to define and redefine national interests in order to achieve particular goals and objectives.

This chapter is divided into several parts: part I briefly reviews general Soviet foreign policy goals, objectives and motivations towards the Third World, and how these changed over time; part II analyses the strategy, tactics and instruments used for the implementation of these goals; part III deals with the constraints and limitations affecting Soviet policy in the Third World; part IV gives a background

³. The works of Bhabani Sen Gupta, Jaan Pennar and Daniel Papp reflect this view. Their works are listed in the Bibliography.

⁴. Seweryn Bialer, Stephen Cohen, Carl Jacobsen, David Jones, Paul Marantz and Elizabeth Valkenier belong to this group. For details of their works, see the Bibliography.

⁵. For Samuel L. Sharp's view, see Soviet Conduct in World Affairs: A Selection of Readings, compiled by Alexander Dallin, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1960.

of Bangladesh-Soviet relations since the emergence of Bangladesh, in order to place the analysis in perspective.

I

Goals and Objectives

Immediately after the revolution of 1917, the main foreign policy goals and objectives of the Bolsheviks were: to protect the revolution; to consolidate Soviet power in the vast territory of Tsarist Russia; to protect the infant Soviet state from external aggression; to promote and propagate communist ideology; and to export revolution to Europe.⁶

The Bolsheviks strongly believed that the "chains of imperialism" would "be broken in the first place" in the West, and did not spare any opportunity to expedite the revolutionary process in Europe. All eyes were fixed on Germany with the expectation that revolution was imminent there.⁷ At the same time, however, steps were also taken to improve relations with Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey, in order to ensure the security of Russia's southern flank, and weaken British colonial influence in these countries.⁸ As the revolutionary

⁶. Franz Borkenau, World Communism: A History of the Communist International, (Ann Arbor, USA: University of Michigan Press), 1963, chapters I and II.

⁷. Ibid., Chapters III-XVI.

⁸. Afghanistan was the first country to recognize communist Russia and sign a Friendship Treaty on February 28, 1921. See Shams Ud Din, Soviet-Afghan Relations, (Calcutta, New Delhi: K.P. Bagchi and Company), 1985.

For details of Soviet relations with Iran and Turkey, see

wave in Europe crested, and then waned, the new communist state started to concentrate more on the periphery regions and the eastern and colonial peoples. Colonial issues and peoples were used both as a tactic to consolidate Soviet power in periphery areas, and as a strategy to weaken European colonial powers. Lenin noted: "as a result of revolutionary movements among hundreds of millions of oppressed peoples of the East international imperialism has proved unable to strangle Soviet Russia."⁹

As Stalin consolidated his power and position, the Soviet state gradually took control over the Comintern, and the colonial question became less important in Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives. Stalin believed that the victory of socialism depended on the final victory of socialism in the Soviet Union.¹⁰

During World War II, the colonial issues in Soviet foreign policy were overshadowed by the war and the imperative of survival. At the end of the War, when the Red Army occupied vast territories in Eastern Europe, national interest was

Alvin Rubinstein, Soviet Policy Towards Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence, (New York: Praeger), 1982.

⁹. V.I. Lenin, "Theses for a Report on the Tactics of the RCP, Third Congress, Communist International, June 22-July 12, 1921," Collected Works, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1966, Vol. 32, p. 453

¹⁰. Naomi Williams, ed. Socialism Victorious, (Moscow-Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR), 1934, p. 92.

redefined in terms of broader geostrategic gains and benefits, so that colonial and semi-colonial issues remained of secondary importance. The focus of Soviet foreign policy instead was on immediate interests in Eastern Europe and the Far East.

Stalin's death in 1953 eased East-West tensions and created an atmosphere propitious to the improvement of the Soviet Union's relations with the newly independent post-colonial states. Significant changes took place in Soviet policy towards the Third World.¹¹

Nikita S. Khrushchev was interested in using the newly emerged countries as allies in his ideological struggle against capitalism. He wanted to widen the Soviet support base in the Third World, and believed that nationalist, anti-colonial, democratic forces would be more powerful and effective allies than the communists or other radical elements in those countries. Priorities were given to improve relations with bourgeois-nationalist states like India and Egypt.

Khrushchev rejected war as a means for achieving political goals because war was no longer "winnable," due to nuclear destructiveness.¹² However, he did not abandon the hope for world revolution, and strategies aimed at enhancing

¹¹. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ed. The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union, (New York: Random House), 1960, pp. 282-83.

¹². Speech at Reception of Graduates of Military Academies on November 14, 1958. N.S. Khrushchev, For Victory in Peaceful Competition with Capitalism, (London: Hutchinson), 1960, p. 750.

the power and prestige of the Soviet state, but he did not have necessary means to pursue an optimal policy and support dozens of small and big revolutions all over the world.¹³

Khrushchev came to believe in peaceful coexistence and detente with the United States, while hoping to expand Soviet foreign policy influence in the Third World by supporting national liberation movements and by offering limited economic and military assistance.¹⁴

Brezhnev's initial policy towards the Third World was more cautious than that of his predecessor. He was less interested in and enthusiastic about prospects for the success of socialism worldwide, and the use of Third World revolutionary regimes in furtherance of that purpose; rather, he redefined Soviet interest in global term and was interested in improving relations with all Third World states, and, particularly, with rich, strategically important ones.

One of the major foreign policy priorities of Brezhnev was to improve relations with China.¹⁵ However, the rivalry was re-invigorated as a function of Mao Tse Tung's launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1965, and continued to affect and limit Soviet power and influence in the Third World, parti-

¹³. For details see, A. Wreth, Russia Under Khrushchev, (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications), 1961, pp. 327-29.

¹⁴. H. Hanak, "Foreign Policy," in Khrushchev and Khrushchevism, ed. by M. McCauley, (London: Macmillan), 1987, p. 192.

¹⁵. Carl G. Jacobsen, Sino-Soviet Relations Since Mao: The Chairman's Legacy, (New York: Praeger), 1981, p. 53.

cularly in South Asia. As the promise of Sino-Soviet rapproachment faded, Brezhnev proposed an Asian Collective Security system in 1969, designed to contain and control China's growing influence in Asia.¹⁶ He also added new dimensions to the Soviet Union's Third World policy in the early 1970s; he expanded Soviet military presence by seeking and acquiring base facilities in strategically important Third World countries; and he expanded and improved economic relations, including arms sales, to Third World countries.¹⁷

Although the two superpowers agreed upon a "code of conduct" in the international arena, in Moscow's perception detente created more favourable conditions and brought new opportunities for revolutionary movements in the Third World.¹⁸ Soviet interests in the Third World were defined primarily in terms of Moscow's geo-strategic interests, and balance of power with the US. According to Geoffrey Jukes the Soviet objective in Asia was to earn for itself equal access

¹⁶. For details of Brezhnev's Asian collective security plan, see Ivan Kovalenko, Soviet Policy for Asian Peace and Security, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1976, and V. Pavlovski "Bor'ba SSSR za mir i kollektivnuiu bezapastnost' v Azii," [Struggles of the USSR for Peace and Collective Security in Asia], in Novaia e Noveishaia Istoria, [New and Modern History], No. 2. 1974, pp. 3-19.

¹⁷. Alvin Rubinstein, Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: Imperial and Global, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop Publishers), 1981, p. 221.

¹⁸. For details, see Karen Brutents, (1974), (1977), and Roy Allison, Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-alignment in the Third World, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1988, pp. 82-83.

with the United States to the lands and waters and human and natural resources of this "mother of continents."¹⁹ By supporting the war of independence for Bangladesh in 1971, the Soviet Union, for the first time, took the risk of a possible simultaneous confrontation with both the US and China.

In fact, by the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union was more confident and willing to use force for the "complete elimination of all vestiges of the system of colonial oppression and infringements on the equality and independence of peoples, and of a hotbeds of colonialism and racism."²⁰ It was seen not only as an ideological power; it had become a military superpower, confident, less adverse to risk-taking in regional conflicts, and could intervene not only in its traditional sphere of influence but in remote places like Africa and South/Central America, i.e. with a global scale.²¹

In the early 1980s, the foreign policy perceptions and

¹⁹. Geoffrey Jukes, The Soviet Union in Asia, (Berkeley, California: California University Press), 1973. Roger Kanet, Asia in Soviet Global Strategy, (Boulder: Westview), 1987. For US-Soviet rivalries in Asia in the 1980s, see Fred Halliday, Cold War, Third World, An Essay on US-Soviet Relations, (London: Hutchinson Radius), 1989.

²⁰. Leonid I. Brezhnev, "Report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 24, 1976," Current Soviet Policies, Vol. VII, (Documentary Record of the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). Compiled by Rebecca Grulow, (Columbus, Ohio: American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies), 1976, p. 11.

²¹. For details of Soviet risk-taking behavior, see Hannes Adomeit, Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1982.

priorities of the post-Brezhnev leaderships changed. Cognizant of the economic plight at home, Andropov sought an end to the arms race, and discarded illusions of attaining military superiority over the West. He committed himself to detente and arms control, and sought improved relations with the US; there was clear realization in the Kremlin that the Soviet economy was not able to pursue intensive arms races with the United States. He was clearly in favour of reducing military expenditures for overseas adventures.²²

Gorbachev in his initial years appeared to maintain the globalist nature and ambition of Soviet foreign policy. But he, like Andropov, realized the danger and difficulties and costs of pursuing such policies, and he soon advocated radical new visions and thinking in foreign policy perception and execution. He had a pluralistic vision of politics, and put more emphasis on economic and technological cooperation than on ideological and political competition. He strongly believed that Soviet interests would best be served through collaboration and cooperation with the West. He re-defined Soviet national interests, and put emphasis on collective security and mutual cooperation with the United States.²³

One of the major foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union

²². For details of Andropov's policies, see New Times, No. 48, 1982, p. 1

²³. For details of Gorbachev's visions, see Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and for the World, new, updated edition, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers), 1988.

in the 1980s was to improve relations with China, because the post-Brezhnev leaders were neither able nor willing to fight against two rivals--China and the US--simultaneously. The Soviet leadership was furthermore convinced that improved Sino-Soviet relations would not only end ideological rivalry, but, in fact, bring wider opportunities for economic cooperation with Beijing.²⁴ Gorbachev's visit to Beijing in May 1989 was a recognition of the diversity of the world communist movement, of China's brand of communism, and of its chosen course of reforms.²⁵ The Soviet Union's reluctance to criticise the crack-down on the pro-democracy movement in China and the massacre of Tienanmen Square further solidified the new improved state of Sino-Soviet relations.²⁶

The economic success of some Third World countries, particularly OPEC and the Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC) challenged and undermined the communist economic system, and the Soviet model of development. By the early 1980s, the Soviet economic goal to build a "socialist economic world

²⁴. For Sino-Soviet relations during the initial years of Gorbachev era, see Carl G. Jacobsen, "Sino-Soviet Relations: New Perspectives," in Soviet Foreign Policy: New Dynamics, New Themes, ed. by Carl G. Jacobsen, (London: Macmillan), 1989, pp. 148-163.

²⁵. New Times, Moscow, No. 21, 1989, p. 6.

²⁶. Although Gorbachev did not officially criticise China for the action taken by the Beijing Government against the pro-democracy movement, he did not support it either. Later, in his speeches in Germany and elsewhere he left no doubt about his own personal distaste for China's "human rights" policies. Time, June 26, 1989, pp. 12-18.

order" competing with the capitalist one was a definite failure. Soviet commentary came to reflect the growing belief that Moscow's involvements in the Third World were too costly in proportion to any political and economic gains that derived from the effort. The Soviet leadership apparently embraced a "cost-accounting and self-financing" approach to foreign policy.²⁷ Moscow was still interested in expanding economic relations with developing countries, but now changed its focus toward rich, developed Third World countries, primarily the NIC; the Least Developed Countries (LDC), like Bangladesh, became further marginalized.²⁸ Objective economic needs and requirements severely limited Soviet foreign policy options, and ideological factors became less and less important.

In a broad, general framework, Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives in the Third World (to increase and enhance Soviet power, prestige and influence there, and to use it for the purpose of Soviet political, economic and strategic interests) remained mostly unchanged, but strategy and tactics and instruments chosen to realize these goals changed with the changes in the Soviet Union itself and in global politics.

²⁷. Andrei Kozyrev and Andrei Shumikhin, "East and West in the Third World," International Affairs, (Moscow), No. 3, 1989, p.71

²⁸. Alexei Izyumov and Andrei Kortunov, "The Soviet Union in the Changing World," International Affairs, (Moscow), Vol.8, 1988, p.54

II

Strategy and Tactics

In the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, strategy and tactics have specific meaning and understanding. According to Joseph Stalin, the strategy and tactics of Leninism "constitute the science of leadership in the revolutionary struggle of proletariat." Strategy deals with the main forces of revolution and determines the "general direction" of the "revolutionary movement of proletariat." It is a long policy, while tactics "are part of strategy, subordinate to it and serving it."²⁹

The strategic goals of the new Soviet communist state in the early 1920s towards the colonial peoples were: to use them in consolidating and expanding power in the periphery areas of Tsarist Russia; to improve relations with the bourgeois-nationalist regimes; to categorize and adopt different strategies for different colonial peoples.

The success and failure of the world revolution was seen in terms of the survival of socialist government in Russia. Under the pressure of Bolsheviks, the main slogans of the Comintern during 1919-21 became: "hands off Soviet Russia;" "de jure recognition of Soviet Russia;" and "anything that strengthens Soviet Russia, weakens the world bourgeoisie."³⁰

²⁹. Joseph Stalin, "Strategy and Tactics in Communist Thought," Problems of Leninism, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1953, pp. 80-95.

³⁰. V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), Vol. 31, 1966, p. 428.

Lenin viewed the success of the Red Army as "an epochal significance for all the peoples of the East," and asked the colonial peoples to form their own army.³¹

The revolutionary strategy of the Bolsheviks included immediate revolutions in Europe, particularly in Germany. But the revolutionary crest in Europe waned, and success and hope turned into defeat and despair. As a result, colonial peoples acquired renewed importance and priority in the revolutionary strategy and tactics of the Bolsheviks. Out of desperation Trotsky wrote in 1919: "The path to Paris and London lies through the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal."³²

At the Baku Congress of 1920, Zinoviev asked colonial peoples to "proclaim a true holy war against the robbers, against the Anglo-French capitalists," to "create a Red Army in the East," and "cut down every impudent British officer who has been accustomed to being master in Turkey, Persia, India and China."³³

³¹. V.I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East," Collected Works, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1966, Vol. 30, p. 154. Also, see Branko Lazitch and Milorad Drachkovitch, Lenin and the Comintern, Vol. I, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press), 1972.

³². Quoted by T.T. Hammond in Red Star Over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion, and their Consequences, (London: Westview Press), 1982, p. 83.

³³. Speech by Zinoviev at the First Plenary Session of the Congress, September 1, 1920, "The Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East," in Soviet Russia and the East 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey, ed. by X.J. Eudin and R.C. North (Stanford, New Jersey: Stanford University Press), 1957, p. 167

The Comintern was directed to maintain contact and liaison with communist and workers' parties in the East, and develop appropriate revolutionary strategy and tactics for new and specific circumstances developing there.

For strategic reasons, the new Soviet state also improved relations and sought alliance with Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, King Amanullah in Afghanistan, Reza Khan of Persia and Abd-el-Kerim of Morocco, who pursued authoritarian and dictatorial policies, and left socialism and proletarian class-struggle outside the scope of Soviet interest and support.³⁴

National interests took priority over ideological rhetoric. Where interests of the state were at stake, colonial peoples and revolutionary slogans were either forgotten or compromised. For the sake of strategic advantage, the concept of the East was re-defined, and differing strategies and tactics adopted for different types of colonies, as dictated by Soviet interests.³⁵ The new line was made clear by Stalin, in a speech delivered at a meeting of the students of the University of the Peoples of the East on May 18, 1925.³⁶

³⁴. Franz Borkenau, op. cit. P. 290.

³⁵. The definition of the East was expanded. For the Soviet Union, the East was not only the oppressed Asian continent but it also meant the whole colonial world, the world of the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and South America. Novyi Vostok, [New Orient], (Moscow), 1921, No.9.

³⁶. For details of Stalin's proposed revolutionary tactics for different types of colonies, see Joseph Stalin, "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East,"

Because local communists failed to gain control over nationalist and anti-colonial movements, the Soviet Union concluded that direct support for nationalist forces best served its interests in the colonies. Support to the Chinese nationalist forces led by the Kuomintang, rather than the weak and disorganised communists, reflected a general trend of Soviet policy towards the East during the late 1920s. The Chinese case demonstrated the Stalinist leadership's willingness to subordinate the interests of fellow communists for the sake of the security of Soviet frontiers, and national interests.³⁷

With the "success" of collectivization and industrialization at home, in the early 1930s, Stalin declared that the Soviet model of revolution was obligatory for colonial nations and concluded that victory of socialism in colonial countries depended on the "final victory of socialism" in the USSR.³⁸

The colonial questions and peoples were, thus, used

in Marxism and the National and Colonial Question: A Collection of Articles and Speeches, (New York: International Publishers), pp. 216-17.

³⁷. Adam Ulam described the Chinese case as a "facet of Soviet and Comintern policies in the Orient or the colonial and semi-colonial world as a whole." Adam Ulam, (1976), p. 168. Carl G. Jacobsen believes that the roots of Sino-Soviet ideological rivalries in the 1960s go back to the 1920s and 1930s. Carl G. Jacobsen, (1981), op. cit. p.49. See also, Franz Borkenau, and Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, Marxism and Asia: An Introduction with Readings, (London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press), 1969.

³⁸. Naomi Williams, op. cit., p. 92.

either to enhance the power and prestige of the Soviet state directly, or to strengthen the world revolutionary movement that was its proxy. Anti-colonial movements and international communism were sacrificed wherever and whenever warranted by the interests of the Soviet state.³⁹

As World War II created new opportunities for establishing communist regimes in Eastern Europe and exporting revolution elsewhere, the Kremlin became less and less interested in colonial peoples and issues. Defence and conquests of socialism was not only considered as a national interest but also as the international task of the Soviet state.⁴⁰ Nationalist leaders, like Gandhi, were labelled "counter-revolutionaries;" Nehru was portrayed as "a traitor to the cause of emancipation of the Indian people from British imperialism," and expelled from the League Against Imperialism.⁴¹

A decade later, Nikita Khrushchev again redefined Soviet national interests, and modified foreign policy strategy and tactics to better accord with new and evolving circumstances. Peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries was now not only thought possible, but essential, and cooperation with

³⁹. Ibid

⁴⁰. Carl G. Jacobsen, Soviet Strategic Initiatives: Challenge and Response, (Praeger Publishers, New York), 1979, p. 28.

⁴¹. J. Degras, selected and edited, The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents, Vol, 111, 1929-1943, (London, New York: Oxford University Press), 1965, p. 157.

strategically necessary for the fight against capitalism.⁴²

In regard to Third World countries, Khrushchev not only recognised nationalist patriotic forces there, but considered them "natural allies" in Moscow's anti-imperialist struggle vis-a-vis the West. Economic and military aid to Third World countries was established as a new strategy for Soviet policy and influence.⁴³ Khrushchev created a new image of Soviet policy and leadership.⁴⁴ He also invited many Third World leaders to Moscow, to expand relations and widen the support base for Soviet foreign policy. He pursued an offensive policy in the Third World, but at the same time tried to avoid direct confrontations with the US.

Simultaneously, revolutionary strategy and tactics were also changed and modified so as to "fit" ideology into the realities of newly emerged countries. The theory of the Non-Capitalist Road (NCR) of development was formulated and

⁴². N.S. Khrushchev elaborated his policies in the Report to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, on "The Present International Situation and the Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union, December 12, 1962," in N.S. Khrushchev: Prevent War, Safeguard Peace, Progress publishers, Moscow, 1962, pp. 342-392.

⁴³. Joseph Berliner, Soviet Economic Aid: The New Aid and Trade Policy in Underdeveloped Countries, (New York: Fredrick and Praeger Inc.), 1958.

⁴⁴. During his visit to India in November 1955, Khrushchev went to almost all big cities in India, used native foods, native costumes and raised the slogan "russi-hindi bhai bhai" [Russians and Indians are brothers]. See K.P.S. Menon, The Flying Troika: The Political Diary of India's Ambassador to Russia 1952-61, (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press), 1963, p. 130.

Capitalist Road (NCR) of development was formulated and introduced to accommodate the wide variety of Third World states and their developmental efforts.⁴⁵ The theoretical debate on the NCR to development, "national democracy" or "socialist oriented state," was created for tactical purposes, accomodation with and satisfaction of the newly emerged Third World countries.⁴⁶

During the Brezhnev period, the Third World was no longer considered as a single entity. It was divided according to the degree of various states' allegiance towards Moscow, rather than according to ideological typologies. Separate tactics were adopted for different states and regions, within a broad general framework of foreign policy.

The Moscow Congress of the Communist and Workers' Parties in 1969 recognised the importance of unity among communists and revolutionary forces in the Third World. The 24th Congress of the CPSU authorised the Central Committee to expand and strengthen ties with revolutionary democratic parties in the

⁴⁵. According to R.A. Ul'ianovskii, the "noncapitalist road of development means the necessary preconditions for the transition to the construction of socialism are created". R.A. Ul'ianovskii, Socialism and the Newly Independent Countries, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1972, p. 9. For more about the same debate see, Karen Brutents, National Liberation Revolutions Today: Some Questions of Theory, part II, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1977.

⁴⁶. See William D. Graf, "The Theory of the Non-Capitalist Road," in The Soviet Bloc and the Third World: The Political Economy of East-South Relations, ed. by Brigitte H. Schulz and William W. Hansen, (Boulder, London: Westview Press), 1989, pp. 27-52.

Third World.⁴⁷ Ideology was replaced by pragmatism, and aid, both military and political, was given primarily for immediate political and strategic gains.⁴⁸

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, several developments in international politics and in US-Soviet relations created new opportunities affecting Soviet strategic thinking and interests in the Third World.

(i) The steady growth of the power and strength of the Soviet Armed Forces influenced Soviet globalist ambitions. According to military experts, the Soviet Union had reached strategic parity with the US by the late 1960s, and Soviet military and strategic doctrines underwent dramatic shifts and changes. In 1966 Marshal Grechko defined the "internationalist duty" of the Soviet Armed Forces as not only to defend the 'homeland,' but also to block "imperialist efforts at exporting counter-revolution" to suppress national liberation struggles.⁴⁹ In the 1970s, a new function for the Soviet Armed Forces was added, "to assure the peace and security of all

⁴⁷. Documents of the International Meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow, 1969, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1969, pp. 28-29, and Materials and Documents of the 24th Congress of the CPSU, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1972, p. 216.

⁴⁸. O. Cooper and C. Fogarty, "Soviet Economic and Military Aid to the Less Developed Countries, 1954-78," in Soviet Policy in the Developing Countries, ed. by Raymond Duncan, (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company), 1981, p. 12

⁴⁹. A. A. Grechko, Krasnaya zvezda, [Red Star], February 23, 1966.

nations".⁵⁰

(ii) The economic crisis in the industrialized countries, the oil embargo, domestic political scandals in the US, and the growing difficulties of US policy in Vietnam, created favourable conditions for Moscow to pursue an aggressive forward-looking policy in the Third World, including South Asia.

(iii) The emergence of radical regimes in many Third World countries opened new opportunities for Moscow. During the period of 1971-72, the Soviet Union signed Friendship treaties with three important Third World countries--India, Egypt and Iraq. Revolutions in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Laos, and the victory of the nationalist forces in Bangladesh in 1971, further strengthened Soviet power and prestige in the Third World.

(iv) The fall of the Portugese colonies in Africa created still other opportunities for Moscow. The Soviet influence in Africa increased significantly in the 1970s; it faced little resistance either from the West or from China.

⁵⁰. A. Monks, Soviet Military Doctrine; 1960 to the Present, (New York: Irvington Publishers), 1984, p. 86. V. M. Kulish, ed. Voennaya sila i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniye, [War Power and International Relations], Moscow: International Publishing House), 1972, p. 137. Marshal Crechko also asserted in 1974 that the Soviet armed forces "are not restricted" to the defence of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries alone, but they might operate in any regions in the world where the Soviet interests would be at stake. H. F. Scott and W. F. Scott, The Armed Forces in the USSR, (London: Westview Press), 1984, p. 59

However, Soviet foreign policy strategy and tactics in the Third World had its own problems and limitations. The loss of already-achieved strategic gains in some key Third World countries, like Egypt, Somalia and Bangladesh, in the mid 1970s, because of conflicts in national interests, compelled Moscow to review and restructure its Third World policy. The new CPSU policy was to develop closer political alliances with radical "socialist oriented states" like Angola, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria and Laos, rather than to "bourgeois nationalist" regimes like India, Egypt and Somalia. Soviet Third World experts increasingly emphasised the need to develop political infrastructure, and, in particular, to build Leninist-type communist parties in socialist-oriented countries.⁵¹

By the late 1970s, with the invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union was engaged in global competition for influence in the Third World with the United States. Soviet interests in the Third World were defined in juxtaposition to US power and influence. Any regime or movement that pursued anti-American policies was deemed to be serving Soviet interests, and was supported by Moscow regardless of their political and ideological character. Soviet support for the Iranian revolution in 1979 was a case in point. However, because of its lack of military, strategic and economic importance (relative to India), Bangladesh did not fit into that category.

⁵¹. Y. Trotsky, "Socialist-Oriented Countries: The National Question," International Affairs, (Moscow), No. 4, April 1977, p. 39.

The growing Soviet political involvement in the Third World was accompanied by economic and military aid and assistance in order to secure strategic gains. In fact, military aid was one of the most effective vehicles for Soviet influence in the Third World.⁵² But because of India's security interests and its sensitivity to the region, the Soviet Union made no effort to develop security relations with other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh.

With the deterioration of East-West relations in the early 1980s, the Soviet Union became more cautious, calculating and less willing to take risks in its policy towards Third World. As the Jacobsen Report of 1984 showed, the Soviet Union under-estimated the potential of the Nicaraguan revolution, and shied away from direct involvement; Moscow expressed "solidarity" with and accorded "full political support" to the Sandinista regime, but focused on improving relations with a wider spectrum of South American institutions and countries.⁵³

The post-Brezhnev Soviet leaders were not in a position

⁵². Soviet economic aid to non-communist developing countries increased from \$167 million in 1971 to \$199 million in 1979, while military aid increased from \$2.2 billion to \$8.3 billion for the same period. Dina R. Spechler and Martin C. Spechler, "The Economic Burden of the Soviet Empire: Estimates and Reestimates," in Limits to Soviet Power, edited by Rajan Menon and Daniel Nelson, (Lexington and Toronto: Lexington Books), 1989, pp. 34-35.

⁵³. For details of Soviet role and attitude towards Central American revolutionaries in the early 1980s, see The Jacobsen Report, "Soviet Attitudes Towards, Aid to, and Contacts with Central American Revolutionaries," prepared by Carl G. Jacobsen for US State Department, April 10, 1984, p.7.

to continue globalist policies. Andropov reduced commitments and planned a gradual withdrawal from Third World regional conflicts, including Afghanistan.⁵⁴ He also asked Third World allies to take on more responsibilities, and cooperate among themselves.

Gorbachev realized and recognised the limitations of Soviet power and capabilities in the Third World. He asserted the need for cooperation with the West, and for coordination of policies in international fora such as the United Nations, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice, in order to preserve and maintain international peace and security.⁵⁵ Gorbachev's policies were motivated by the need to scale down armament expenses, and secure Western help for "Perestroika."

Gorbachev recognised the interdependent nature of world politics, proposed "deideologization" and "demilitarization" of international relations, and offered a series of proposals for political and economic reforms in interstate relations.⁵⁶ Many of the earlier Soviet perceptions and policies towards the Third World were not only re-evaluated, but discarded altogether.

⁵⁴. For details of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, see The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan, eds. by Amin Saikal and William Maley, (London: Cambridge University Press), 1989.

⁵⁵. The New York Times, October 8, 1987.

⁵⁶. Gorbachev's speech at the UNGA in December 1988. The New York Times, December 8, 1988.

By the mid 1980s it was widely recognised that the previous over-ambitious Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives in the Third World had met their limits, and the time was ripe for "orderly political retreat." By the late 1980s the main focus of Soviet national interest was to gradually withdraw from Third World conflicts.⁵⁷

In line with the strategy to reduce and gradually discard ideological conflict, steps were also (as mentioned) taken to improve relations with China. Because the Soviet Union was now engaged, first and foremost, in confidence-building measures in East-West relations in order to get more economic and technological support and assistance from the West, Third World issues and problems were relegated to positions of less or no importance on Moscow's overall foreign policy agenda.⁵⁸

III

Constraints and Limitations

Despite Soviet claims that the USSR was the driving force behind the decolonization process, and that the Third World countries were "natural allies" of Moscow, there were fundamental differences and contradictions between the interests of

⁵⁷. New Times, (Moscow), No. 52, 1990, p. 26

⁵⁸. In the Gulf crisis of 1990, the Soviet Union abandoned its old ally Iraq for economic gains from the West and from the oil-rich Arab states. For details of Soviet gain, see Soviet-US Joint Statement in Helsinki, (Press Release), (Information Department of the USSR Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh), P.R. No.07/110, September 11, 1990.

the newly emerged nations and the Soviet Union. From the beginning, Soviet revolutionary goals and objectives in colonial areas also faced other serious problems and challenges: the conflicts between the interests of the Soviet state and those of communists from Eastern nations; differences between the Comintern and the Soviet leadership concerning revolutionary strategy and tactics in the colonies; contradictions between the European communists and communists from the East; contradictions within the Comintern about its role and position towards nationalist forces in China and elsewhere; and finally, contradictions between the supporters of "world revolution," headed by Trotsky and "socialism in one country," headed by Stalin.⁵⁹

Colonial peoples were asked: to form united fronts in cooperation with other forces, including bourgeois-democrats; to "ally with the proletariat of the advanced countries," and to have close alliance with the proletarian Soviet state as a "key-note" to their success.⁶⁰

⁵⁹. For details of Comintern's policy towards colonial peoples, see Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform, (New York: Penguin), 1975. For Soviet views, see A.N. Heifetz, Sovetskaya diplomatia i narodi vostoka 1921-27, [Soviet Diplomacy and the Oriental Peoples 1921-27], (Moscow: Nauka Publishers), 1968.

⁶⁰. For details of Lenin's colonial policy, see V.I. Lenin, "Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, July 26, 1920," Collected Works, (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House), 1966, Vol. 31, p. 241. For details of Comintern's policies, see A. Adler, ed. Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International, (London: Inn Links), 1980, pp. 413-17.

Communists from the East however, including those in the periphery regions of Russia, demanded that priority be given to the revolutionary potentials of the East, and that the specificities of their societies be recognised. But the Comintern, with its Euro-centric vision and domination rejected these notions, and asked the peoples of the East to remain a secondary force supporting the world revolution. It also refused to recognise the assertedly irreconcilable differences between the proletariats of the East and the West, and rejected the demands of Eastern representatives that their religious and cultural heritage be integrated with and into communism.

Lenin's goals and objectives also differed fundamentally from those of the Asian communist leaders like M.N. Roy, and leaders from the Russian periphery regions like Sultan Galiev. At the Third Congress of the Comintern M.N. Roy opposed Comintern's support for "bourgeois-democratic liberation movements in the Eastern countries," and asked instead for assistance in the "creation and development of the communist movement alone." He also asserted that:

the fate of the revolutionary movement in Europe depends entirely on the course of revolution in the East. Without the victory of revolution in the Eastern countries, the communist movement in the West would come to nothing.⁶¹

Lenin rejected Roy's thesis on the grounds that it was "framed

⁶¹. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, op. cit. p. 151.

chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian countries oppressed by Britain."⁶² What emerged was a fundamental conflict between the expectations of communist leaders from the East and Soviet policy. Communists in colonial countries hoped and expected to lead anti-colonial movements and to acquire power with the help of the Soviet state; likewise the Asian communists from the Russian East viewed the revolution in Russia as an opportunity for freedom, and emancipation of their national identity.⁶³ When Soviet power was consolidated in the Russian periphery, many Muslim communist leaders, including Sultan Galiev, became the victims of repression.⁶⁴

Lenin's support for nationalist forces in the colonies was based in pragmatic considerations; the appeal of communism in the East was minimal, and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia had not there created the support and enthusiasm that

⁶². For details of the Lenin-Roy debate, see E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, (London: Macmillan), Vol. Three, 1966. For Soviet view, see A.B. Reznikov, "The Comintern's Oriental Policy," in The Comintern and the East: A Critique of the Critique, ed. by R.A. Ul'ianovskii, (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 1978.

⁶³. For details of conflicts of interests between the Soviet state and communists from the East, see Seton-Watson, The Pattern of Communist Revolution: A Historical Analysis, (London: Methuen and Company Limited), 1960.

⁶⁴. Soviet power in the periphery regions was challenged by nationalist communist leaders like Sultan Galiev, Hanafi Muzzafar, Gabidullah and others, but they were brutally suppressed. For details, see Helène Carrère-d'Encausse and Stuart R. Schram, op. cit. pp. 31-38.

Soviet leaders might have hoped or envisaged.⁶⁵ In fact, Lenin's colonial policy, guided by the interests of the Soviet state, was consequently seen by many communists of the East as a betrayal of their efforts.

The success of communist revolutions in North Vietnam, China and North Korea in the post-World War II period expanded the list of communist countries, but rivalries between Moscow and Peking (evident by the late 1950s) over revolutionary strategies and tactics undermined and limited Soviet capabilities in the Third World. Polycentrism seriously undermined both the success of revolutionary movements and Soviet interests in the Third World. Ideological division in communist parties not only became a reality, but it seriously affected and undermined the unity of the communist movement. Poor Soviet economic performance, technological backwardness and rivalry with the US for influence further limited Soviet capabilities.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s the Soviet Union had attained a rough strategic parity with the United States--though Soviet military technology remained largely inferior to that of the United States.⁶⁶ The perception of Soviet military

⁶⁵. According to Franz Borkenau communism in the East was more of an element of native risings which had little connection with Moscow, and the Bolshevik revolution had hardly any appeal to the colonial peoples. Franz Borkenau, op. cit. pp. 288-89. See also, Gunther Nollau, op. cit.

⁶⁶. For issues and problems of strategic parity between the Soviet Union and the USA, see Carl G. Jacobsen, "Soviet Strategic Policy Since 1945," in Strategic Power: USA/USSR,

superiority--nurtured not least by American advocates of increased military spending--was used for political and strategic purposes by both superpowers to justify the military build-up and the arms race.⁶⁷ However, in the final analysis, the prowess in the Soviet military domain failed to translate into other spheres, and to bring expected results. Soviet policy in the Third World did not succeed as expected, mainly for two reasons: first, conflicts of national interests between the Soviet Union and client states; second, the polycentrism in world communism, which also grew from the divergence of differing national interests.

The success of the "socialist oriented states" was less satisfactory than expected; their overall economic performance proved much worse than those of capitalist oriented countries. Nationalism was another stumbling block in Soviet efforts to consolidate its power and position in the Third World. The Soviets, no doubt, underestimated the power of nationalism in the Third World; in most cases, Marxism had little or no appeal to the general populace, and remained a "much less potent force than local nationalism or, in some regions,

ed. by C.G. Jacobsen, (London: Macmillan), 1990, p. 112, and Rajan Menon, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶⁷. For example, the US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger declared in 1982: "The Soviet Union has pushed its traditional policy of global expansionism to a new dimension in recent years and has emerged as a global mature power. It now has the power to challenge our interests almost anywhere in the world;" Caspar Weinberger, Remarks before the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, April 20, 1982.

religion."⁶⁸ According to Mohammad Heikal, Soviet policy in the Third World failed primarily because of

the contradiction between the internationalist claims and superpower status, rigidity and inflexibility in power structure, misconception of reality and insensitive attitudes toward the local issues, and inability to communicate at the human level.⁶⁹

Clashes of interests between regionally dominant powers and the Soviet Union, and problems of controlling client/proxy states also severely limited Soviet foreign policy options and capabilities in the Third World.⁷⁰ The issues of local nationalism, religion and "third party" interests also severely undermined and limited Soviet ability to influence Bangladeshi politics.

⁶⁸. Francis Fukuyama, "The New Marxist-Leninist States and Internal Conflict in the Third World," in Third World Marxist-Leninist Regimes; Strengths, Vulnerabilities and US Policy, eds. by Uri Ra'anan, Francis Fukuyama et. al. (New York: Pergamon), 1985, p. 18. For analysis of conflicts between nationalism and Marxism-Leninism see, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, op. cit. p. 44

⁶⁹. Muhammed Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commisar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Middle East, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers), 1978, pp. 278-88.

⁷⁰. There appeared to have conflicts of interests between India and the Soviet Union in several occasions, particularly during the Sino-Soviet war in 1962, the Indo-Pakistani conflict in 1965, the Bangladesh crisis in 1971, and the Afghan crisis 1979; see, Jyotirmoy Banerjee, India in Soviet Global Strategy, (Calcutta: South Asian Books), 1977, and Robert Horn, op. cit. The Soviets also had problems in managing and controlling such client states as Egypt, Ethiopia, Cuba, Iraq, Syria and Vietnam; see Melvin Goodman, "Third World Clients and Third World Dilemmas for Soviet Foreign Policy," in Limits to Soviet Power, pp. 177-203. Mohammed Heikal (op. cit.) also noted that there were serious cultural clashes between the Soviet "specialists" stationed in Egypt and the local people.

Although the Soviet Union tried to expand economic relations with Third World countries, it was constrained and limited by several factors.

(i) The Soviet model of development was not attractive to most developing countries. The poor performance of the Soviet economy further discredited the model.⁷¹

(ii) The Soviet Union was basically a military superpower, and was not able to provide the type and amount of aid, investment and technology that the developing nations needed for their national reconstruction.

(iii) The Soviet Union often exported lower quality machinery and equipment to developing countries, and in exchange demanded that they export their traditional goods to the USSR; this asymmetry dissuaded many Third World countries from expanding trade with the USSR.

(iv) There was also significant lack of political will and understanding among Third World leaders and elites for arguments promoting economic cooperation with the USSR.⁷²

Domestic problems, particularly ethnic unrest and the crippled economy, also severely limited Moscow's ability to pursue an active foreign policy in the Third World. As Dina

⁷¹. See, Y. Novopashin, "Vozdeistvie real'nogo sotsializma na mirovoi revolyutsionnyi process: metodologicheskie aspekty," [Influence of Real Socialism on World Revolutionary Process: Methodological Aspects], Voprosy Filosofii, [Questions of Philosophy], No. 8, 1982, p.9

⁷². W. Raymond Duncan and Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl, Moscow and the Third World under Gorbachev, (Boulder, San Francisco: Westview Press), 1990, pp. 31-32.

and Martin Spechler concluded, "Economic stringency has led the Soviets to scrutinize all expenditures more carefully and has made them more impatient with allies who are perceived to squander Moscow's resources."⁷³ The sluggish Soviet economy was in no position to pay for over-expensive foreign policy burdens in the 1980s. There were growing demands for redirecting resources from foreign policy adventures to domestic economic developments. Gorbachev himself noted;

Foreign policy activity should increasingly contribute to releasing the country's resources for peaceful construction, for perestroika, and should be closely tied in with the democratization of society, including decision-making and verification of compliance with the decisions made.⁷⁴

Offensive policies adopted by the United States in the 1980s under the Ronald Reagan presidency also seriously undermined and limited Moscow's options and choices in the Third World. Aggressive Soviet policy in the Third World in the late 1970s, particularly the invasion of Afghanistan, also helped reinvigorate the Cold War, yet the ailing Soviet economy was in no position either to withstand growing isolation, or to finance the mounting costs for Third World operations.⁷⁵

⁷³. Dina Spechler and Martin Spechler, op. cit. p. 44.

⁷⁴. Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika, op. cit. p. 266

⁷⁵. The cost of military operations in Afghanistan increased from \$1.2 billion in 1980 to \$2.0 billion in 1984. Dina Slechler and Martin Spechler, op. cit. pp.35-36. But the political cost was higher and much more damaging. For the first time, the Soviets faced criticisms from almost all Third World countries. Relations with such close allies like India

The ongoing arms race with the threat of the militarization of space further limited and influenced Soviet strategic thinking towards the Third World.⁷⁶ By the late 1980s, it became abundantly clear that the Soviet Union was not in position to compete with the West in the Third World.

As the above discussion shows, general Soviet policies and interests in the Third World were defined and redefined by Soviet leaders taking into consideration changes and opportunities created both at national and international levels. The national interest of the Soviet state, defined by the CPSU, was identified with professed ideological goals, and there were no inherent conflicts between the interests of the state, society and the Party. Both ideology and national interest were defined in general terms, so that they could provide a wide spectrum of options, and hence flexibility, for the leaders. H. Adomeit described Soviet national interest thus;

a highly subjective and ambiguous concept, capable of manipulation and almost limitless interpretation, so that in reality leaders were faced with a complex tangle of interests (in the plural), always changing according to specific social, economic, military, political and ideological conditions...⁷⁷

and Iraq were also affected. See, Melvin Goodman, op. cit. pp. 179-203.

⁷⁶. Peter W. Schulze, "Socialist Transformation and Soviet Foreign Policy in the Gorbachev Era," in The Soviet Bloc and the Third World, op. cit. p. 72. For details of Soviet policy towards Third World during the Gorbachev era, see Raymond Duncan and M.C. Ekedahl, op. cit.

⁷⁷. Hannes Adomeit, op. cit. p. 334.

Even the interests of the world socialist system and world revolutionary movements were defined and viewed in terms of Soviet national interests.

Moscow's relations with Bangladesh during the 1980s, were guided and limited by the general Soviet foreign policy pattern in the Third World. However, in defining its interests towards Bangladesh in particular the Soviet Union had to take into consideration two special, important factors.

First, India was both a dependable and the closest Soviet ally in the non-communist Third World, even though the strategic goals and objectives of the two countries were not always in agreement. In pursuing its interests in South Asia, Moscow always had to take into consideration India's strategic interests and aspirations.

Second, Soviet interest in Bangladesh was challenged and severely limited by the Chinese influence there. The Soviet Union, for obvious reasons, wanted to reduce Chinese influence in Bangladesh, while the military regimes in Dhaka tried to use the 'China card' effectively to counter-balance both India and the USSR.

Proceeding from this framework of general Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World, and more specificity towards Bangladesh, the following section presents a detailed analysis of the historical background underlying Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

IV

Genesis of Bangladesh-Soviet Relations

To understand and analyse Bangladesh-Soviet relations of the 1980s, a brief historical review is essential in order to put the subject into perspective. Historically, the area of South Asia was never considered a serious security threat to Moscow, due to its separation from Soviet territory by high mountain ranges that created natural barriers. Yet the Soviets had a clear and abiding interest in a stable and peaceful South Asia, particularly after Sino-Soviet rivalry became virulent in the late 1950s. Moscow was worried that any crisis or instability in South Asia would involve China, and seriously undermine Soviet interests in the region.

During the 1960s, the main Soviet interest in South Asia was to remain a neutral power and to maintain friendly relations with all states in the region. At the Tashkent Conference of 1966 Moscow successfully mediated the Indo-Pakistani conflict (the first success of Soviet diplomacy in mediating between two Third World states).⁷⁸ After the Tashkent diplomacy, the Soviet Union's relations with Pakistan improved, particularly after the visit of President Ayub Khan to Moscow in September 1967, and Soviet Prime Minister

⁷⁸. Although the Soviets claimed a great victory for their diplomacy in Tashkent, fundamental differences on major issues between the conflicting parties remained. For details of the Tashkent Conference and the Soviet role, see G. W. Chowdhury, op. cit., pp. 49-54.

Kosygin's visit to Pakistan in April 1968. Soviet economic assistance to Pakistan also increased. For example, Soviet economic aid to Pakistan increased to \$84 million in 1966, from \$51.7 million in 1965.⁷⁹ During the visit of a Pakistani military delegation to Moscow in July 1968, the Soviet Union agreed to supply limited arms to Pakistan. Pakistan, thus, became the only country to get arms simultaneously from the USA, China and the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

So, when the Bengali nationalist movement began, in the mid 1960s (discussed in Chapter Four), the Soviet Union did not rush to support it, all the more so because Moscow was clearly aware of the fact that the movement was spearheaded by the AL, a party of bourgeois middle class intelligentsia, with no adherence to socialism.⁸¹ On the other hand, the growing support for and popularity of pro-Chinese forces and groups in East Pakistan--particularly in rural areas--challenged the

⁷⁹. For details of Soviet-Pakistan economic relations, see Charles B. McLane, Soviet-Asian Relations, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1973, and S. M. Burke, Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Historical Analysis, (London: Oxford University Press), 1973, pp. 365-66.

⁸⁰. The report on the Soviet arms supply to Pakistan was published in The New York Times, July 10, 1968.

⁸¹. For an analysis of the anatomy of the party AL, its class character, ideology and role in Pakistani politics, see, Rashiduzzaman Khan, "The Awami League in the Political Development of Pakistan," Asian Survey, Vol. X, Number 7, 1970, pp. 574-88. Talukder Maniruzzaman, Bangladesh Revolution and its Aftermath, 2nd ed. (Dhaka: University Press Limited), 1988, and Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Emergence of Bangladesh and the Role of Awami League, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House (Pvt). Limited), 1982.

interests of both India and the Soviet Union.⁸² The Soviet Union was sympathetic to the cause of nationalist forces in East Pakistan, and when the actual crisis broke out in 1971 Soviet policy towards South Asia found itself in a dilemma. From the Soviet point of view, the push for secession threatened the breakup of Pakistan, which could bring chaos and instability to the whole region. Unrest and instability could spread germs of secession all over the subcontinent, and could, in turn, bring external forces, particularly China, onto the scene.⁸³ The Soviet Union realised that encouragement to or support for the Bengali secessionist movement would jeopardise relations with Pakistan, and thus seriously undermine Moscow's credibility as a mediating power in South Asia. But at the same time, Soviet leaderships were worried that if they failed to support the nationalist forces in East Pakistan, China might intervene, and seize the opportunity for itself.

Thus, the initial Soviet response towards the Bengali nationalist movement was restrained, although India did openly support and help the Bangladesh Movement. Soviet officials

⁸². Marcus Franda provides a detailed analysis of the emergence and growing popularity of pro-Chinese communist parties/groups in India and Pakistan, see "Communism and Regional Politics in East Pakistan," Asian Survey, Vol. X, Number 7, 1970, pp. 588-606.

⁸³. Regional conflicts in South Asia were always susceptible and vulnerable to external interventions. For details see, S. D. Muni, "South Asia," in Conflict and Intervention in the Third World, ed. by Mohammad Ayoob, (London: Croom Helm, 1980.

repeatedly refused to meet the members of the Bangladeshi Government-in-exile in India. The Soviet Foreign Minister, while visiting India in August 1971, refused to visit the Bengali refugee camps. The Soviet Union also refused to use the term "East Bengal" to refer to "East Pakistan," despite pressure from India to do so.⁸⁴

During the first weeks of the crisis Moscow maintained an official silence and the Soviet press described the situation as "unfortunate" and "complex;" it described the Pakistani army's intervention as "crude arbitrariness and violence" carried out by a "group of army hawks."⁸⁵ Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, in his letter to Yahya Khan on April 3, 1971, advised the Pakistani Government to solve the "complex problem" politically, without the use of force, "in the interests of preserving peace in the area," and in the interests of "the entire population of Pakistan."⁸⁶ The Soviet Union was apparently in favour of preserving the territorial integrity of Pakistan, and solving the crisis through negotiations between the parties involved.

But some major developments in international politics in 1971, particularly the US and Chinese support of Pakistan

⁸⁴. For details, see Jaglul Alam, op. cit.

⁸⁵. Current Digest of the Soviet Press. Vol. X111, 1971, No.1

⁸⁶. The author has underlined these words to add emphasis. For the full text of President N. Podgorny's letter, see Ibid, No. 4

against India, and the former US Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing on July 9, 1971 (arranged and facilitated by Pakistan), drastically changed Moscow's strategic calculations towards South Asia.⁸⁷ On August 8, 1971, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko hurriedly visited New Delhi, and on the next day a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the two countries which qualitatively changed the alignment pattern in South Asia.⁸⁸ The main strategic purpose of the Indo-Soviet treaty was to limit US presence, and challenge Chinese influence in the region.⁸⁹

Moscow, however, continued to support the status-quo and to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis. In a joint Soviet-Algerian communique of October 8, 1971, the Soviet Union pledged "to respect the national unity and territorial integrity of both India and Pakistan."⁹⁰ The Soviet Union relentlessly tried to persuade the AL leaders-in-exile "to

⁸⁷. For details of Kissinger's secret visit to China, see Henry Kissinger, White House Years, Vol. 1 (Boston: Little Brown and Company), 1979, pp. 698-763.

⁸⁸. For the full text of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, see Pran Chopra, Before and After the Indo-Soviet Treaty, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, Pvt. Limited), 1971, pp. 162-66.

⁸⁹. B. Bhaneja, The Politics of Triangle: The Allignment Pattern In South Asia, 1961-71, (New Delhi: Research), 1973, pp. 122-23.

⁹⁰. New Times, (Moscow), No. 42, October 1971, p.37

accept autonomy for Bangladesh within a single Pakistan."⁹¹ But when the situation worsened and Mukti Bahini [Freedom fighters] liberated vast territories of East Pakistan, and the military regime in Islamabad failed to show any interest in a peaceful settlement of the crisis--with both China and the USA stepping up their support to Pakistan--the Soviet Union saw no other option than to support fully the independence movement of Bangladesh.⁹²

When the Indo-Pakistan war over the Bangladesh crisis broke out in December 1971, the UN Security Council voted two draft resolutions (on December 4 and 5) calling for cease-fire and troop withdrawal (in each occasion 11 members voted in favour, two abstained and two opposed). The USSR vetoed both resolutions. Moscow instead put forward its own proposal, urging political settlement, but this was vetoed by China (12 other members of the Security Council, including the US, abstained). The Soviet diplomatic support evidenced in these votes proved crucial to the creation of Bangladesh.⁹³

⁹¹. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Firiyobin met the Bangladeshi leaders in New Delhi on October 24, 1971, and tried to persuade them to settle the crisis through negotiations with Pakistan. The meeting was reported in The Times, (London), October 25, 1971.

⁹². For a chronological account of the events of Bangladesh conflict in 1971, see Robert Jackson, South Asian Crisis, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: A Political and Historical Analysis of the 1971 War, (New York: Praeger), 1971.

⁹³. Chronology of the United Nations 1971, ed. by A.G. Mazerik, Vol. XVII, No. 107, pp. viii-ix.

However, there is no unanimity in the assessment of Soviet attitudes towards Bangladesh's independence movement in 1971. Most Soviet and Indian authors argue that the Soviet Union had "no hand in the dismemberment of Pakistan," but, rather, sought "to prevent the third India-Pakistan war which led to Pakistan's breakup," and tried to

bring home to the military junta in Islamabad the need for seeking a political solution in East Pakistan, believing that this was the only way to keep Pakistan united, to maintain peace and to check the interference of Beijing and Washington in a region close to the USSR.⁹⁴

Pakistan, on the other hand, blamed the Soviet Union, along with India, for escalating the Bangladesh crisis from the beginning, in order to create an "unique opportunity to weaken and humiliate China and also to further its global interests vis-a-vis the United States."⁹⁵ Pakistan also accused Moscow of being "a party to Pakistan's dismemberment."⁹⁶

No matter how the Soviet role during the Bangladesh

⁹⁴. V.S. Budhraj, "Moscow and the Birth of Bangladesh," Asian Survey, Vol. XI, No. 5, 1973, p. 482. See also Diplomatia razvivaushshikhsvia gosudarstvo, [Diplomacy of Developing states], ed. by V.P. Nihamin, (Moscow: International Relations Publications), 1976, pp. 157-167.

⁹⁵. G. W. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 214. For similar views, see Zubaida Mustafa, "USSR and Indian Action in East Pakistan," Pakistan Horizon, Vol. XXIV, 4th Quarter 1991; Zulfiqar A. Bhutto, The Great Tragedy, (Karachi: Peoples Party Publications), 1971.

⁹⁶. Z. A. Bhutto in his speech at the UN Security Council accused the Soviet Union for trying to dismember Pakistan. The Dawn, (Karachi), December 13, 1971.

crisis in 1971 is interpreted, the fact remains that a negotiated settlement of the crisis within the framework of a united Pakistan, brokered through Soviet mediation, would probably have best served Soviet interests in the region. Moscow attempted this route, but political issues and developments, both at regional and international levels, undermined, limited and ultimately doomed those efforts.⁹⁷

The Soviet Union did support India, and thus Bangladesh independence, once the war broke out in 1971. As soon as the crisis was over, however, Moscow immediately began to push for a process of normalization of relations among the countries of the region--in part so as to deny any role either to the USA or to China in post-1971 subcontinental affairs; in part to revive and embed its own mediating role in the region.⁹⁸

The Soviet Union pursued or attempted to pursue multiple interests in supporting the Bangladesh movement in 1971. First, it strove to cement Indo-Soviet relations, and to bring

⁹⁷. For a balanced view of the Soviet role during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971, see M. A. Khan, op. cit.

⁹⁸. Moscow welcomed the rapprochement of Indo-Pakistan relations in 1972, praised Pakistan's decision "to withdraw from the imperialist SEATO military block," and "to accord diplomatic recognition to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and establish full diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic and the Korean People's Democratic Republic." P. Kutsobin and V. Shurygin, "South Asia: Tendencies Towards Stability," International Affairs, (Moscow), No. 4, April 1973, pp. 46-47. For Soviet policy in South Asia in the post-Bangladesh crisis, see K. D. Kapur, Soviet Strategy in South Asia: Perspectives on Soviet Policies Towards the Indian Ocean Subcontinent and Afghanistan, (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications), 1983.

India into the Soviet strategic alliance system (which India had always declined). Second, Moscow sought to minimize the United States' influence in South Asia, and emerge as the dominant external power in the region. Third, it wished to limit China's influence in South Asia. As two Soviet authors, P. Kutsobin and V. Shurygin, wrote, "from the Soviet perspective," Moscow's support to Bangladesh was "a blow not only to the plans of imperialism in that area, but also to the Great-Power chauvinistic policy of Peking leaders."⁹⁹ The Soviet role and policy toward the Bangladesh crisis in 1971, thus, was not simply dictated by the political developments in East Pakistan or the nature and characteristics of the independence movement, or Moscow's own ideological commitment to "export revolution" to another underdeveloped country, but was, in fact, affected and determined by global strategic interests and considerations deriving from complex triangular relationships between Moscow, Washington, Beijing and New Delhi.

In the post-1971 period, the Soviet Union would obviously have preferred to see Bangladesh adopt socialist-oriented policies, the Soviet economic and developmental model, and serve Soviet interests in the region. But as far as Bangladesh was concerned, in 1971 its only interest was to create an independent statehood, and consolidate and strengthen territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The Dhaka Government was not interested in Soviet domination or tutelage and

⁹⁹. P. Kutsobin and V. Shurygin, op. cit. p. 44.

preferred to diversify external relations, including the sources of foreign aid and trade.

The Soviet Union provided significant help and assistance to Bangladesh immediately after its independence, but it was neither enough nor sufficient to meet the growing needs and requirements of the new Republic. Domestic political and economic developments also left no hope for socialist transformation in Bangladesh. Global political issues and developments also severely limited Soviet options for playing any major role in Bangladesh in its post-independence period. By the end of 1973 the Soviets came to the conclusion that Bangladesh, with its very small and fragmented national bourgeoisie, strong Western-educated elite and intelligentsia, and a divided and fragmented Left, could not be developed into a socialist-oriented state. As the prospect of turning Bangladesh into a non-capitalist country receded, the Soviet Union became less interested in undertaking any serious reconstruction effort in Bangladesh. At the same time, the government of Bangladesh chose not to ask the Soviet Union for more involvement, because of apprehension that the political cost might be too high, and not commensurate with the uncertain economic gain that might ensue. Moscow, however, blamed right-wing forces and pro-Chinese radical groups for undermining Bangladesh-Soviet relations.¹⁰⁰ Thus, within a very short period, both sides lost much of their original enthusiasm (or

¹⁰⁰. Ibid. p.46.

hope) for the other.

By the mid 1970s the situation in Bangladesh deteriorated further; hoping to rescue the country from economic and political chaos, the Government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dissolved Parliament in January 1975, and set up one-party rule, by bringing together all patriotic pro-independence forces--as pro-Moscow communists had demanded from the beginning. However, the situation did not improve, and on August 15, 1975, the government was overthrown through a violent military coup. A pro-Western, pro-Chinese regime came to power (for details of the political change in 1975, see Chapter Four).

In fact, the great power rivalries at the core of the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 were far from over. Notwithstanding world economic crisis, the great powers worked actively, often surreptitiously, through their proxies and allies, for dominance and influence in the subcontinent. The inexperienced Government of the AL was under severe, and unrelenting domestic and international pressure; the resource constraints and overwhelming dependence on foreign aid also limited the Government's options and choices.¹⁰¹ In fact, the alliance pattern that formed during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 (China-USA-Pakistan vs USSR-India-Bangladesh) influenced

¹⁰¹. For details of external limitations of Bangladesh foreign policy, see Mizanur Rahman Shelley, Emergence of a New Nation in a Multipolar World: Bangladesh, (Dhaka: University Press Limited), 1979.

and determined subsequent Bangladesh-Soviet relations. By the late 1970s, however, it was clear to the Kremlin leadership that it had lost another battle in the Third World.

VI

Conclusion

Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives towards the Third World were mainly defined in terms of Soviet state interests. As priorities changed, national interests also changed and policies were modified accordingly. In the initial years, the interest was defined primarily in terms of the security of communist regime, protection of the homeland and propagation and furtherance of communist ideology. In the post-World War II period, Soviet national interest was defined in global strategic terms--in the physical expansion of communism worldwide and the enhancement of Soviet power and prestige vis-a-vis the West. But in the 1980s, severe domestic political, economic, social and ethnic problems and unrest forced the Soviet Union to retreat from globalism, and national interest was increasingly defined in terms of domestic political order, stability, national harmony, and the economic well-being and psychology of the Soviet people. Tactics and tools used for achieving national goals were changed and modified to accord with changes in international politics and means. In the initial years, ideology played a dominant role in defining national interests, and the

Comintern was used to pursue policy towards colonial peoples. But as priorities changed, in the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet state assumed dominance, defining national interests in politico-military, economic and strategic terms, and relegating colonial issues to lesser or no priority.

Nevertheless, ideology was not abandoned; rather, it was redefined to suit political, military, economic and strategic goals and objectives. One of the major reasons for the failures of Soviet policy towards the Third World was that the Soviet ideology undermined or failed to address the power and importance of traditions, religions, customs, values and forces of nationalism in those countries. After independence, deep-rooted, fundamental structural changes took place in the socio-economic, political and cultural fabrics of Third World societies. But the Soviet Union either overlooked those changes for ideological reasons, or failed to understand them. In the second stage of nation-building processes, the emerging needs, priorities, policy preferences and agendas of the developing nations were quite different from and often contradictory to those of the Soviet Union.

Soviet developmental model not only failed to attend the issues and problems faced by the developing nations, but in most cases worsened their conditions. None of the developing countries that adopted paths of non-capitalist development were able to transcend the category of LDCs, even after two-three decades of their acceptance of that model. Internal

social, political, economic, religious, ethnic and other changes in the developing countries compelled Soviet leaders and academics to review, rethink and redefine their policy towards them. But because of the Cold War, and ideological blinkers, it was not until the late 1980s that the Soviet leaders recognised reality, and their real constraints and limitations in the Third World.

During the second half of the 1980s, fundamental changes and reforms took place in Soviet foreign policy perceptions and behavior towards the Third World. However, most Third World leaders remained either skeptical about or indifferent toward those changes, and did not engage in any serious relationships with the USSR. Both subjective and objective factors and considerations influenced and limited the Soviet Union's relations with Third World countries, including Bangladesh.

As an ideological and military power the Soviet Union could influence and intervene in support of the national liberation movements of colonial peoples at the initial stage of their struggles, i.e. in the fight for independence and statehood. In many cases Soviet support was crucial, and decisive. On the other hand, revolutionary movements and radical Third World states served Soviet interests by opening new opportunities for Moscow. But as those nations entered into the second phase of their national liberation movement, and started the nation-building process, they needed different

types of assistance--foreign aid, investment, capital, technology and expertise for national reconstruction and economic development--which the Soviet Union was neither able nor willing to provide.

Bangladesh represents a typical case of Soviet policy towards the Third World. As elsewhere, the nationalist forces in Bangladesh needed and welcomed Soviet help and support for the success of their movement, and the creation of statehood, and, after the successful seizure of power, attempts were made to develop relations with Moscow.¹⁰² But as soon as the euphoria was over, core differences surfaced, and nationalist leaders realised that their own national interests would be best served by broadening co-operation with the West and other developing countries, rather than by adopting the role of "proxy state" to Moscow.

The general Soviet interest in Bangladesh in the late 1970s and early 1980s was to see a democratic, nationalist government in Dhaka with anti-American and anti-Chinese postures, but having friendly relations with India. On the other hand, the main priorities of the military regime in Dhaka were: to develop and maintain close friendly relations with the West, China and the conservative Muslim countries; to

¹⁰². The Soviet Union recognised Bangladesh on January 24, 1972, and within two weeks Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the President of Bangladesh was invited to visit Moscow. On February 7, 1972 the Aeroflot started operating in Bangladesh, the first air linkage for the new state. For details of early Bangladesh-Soviet relations, see B.S. Gupta, (1976), op. cit., pp. 157-162.

raise and seek solutions of bilateral disputes with India. As far as relations with the Soviet Union were concerned, the Dhaka Governments saw no priority.

The following chapter attempts to explain Bangladesh's national interests in the 1980s by analysing the domestic social, political, economic and historical forces and factors that influenced, moulded and defined them.

Chapter Four

BANGLADESH: SOCIETY, STATE, POLITICAL PARTIES, MILITARY AND NATIONAL INTERESTS

To understand and analyse national interests of any particular state, it is important to know its history, society, culture and political evolution all of which have shaped and maintained such interests. For Bangladesh, it is of special importance because of its long history, complex past, turbulent present and uncertain future.

This chapter introduces Bangladesh and explores the sources of its national interests through the prism of its society, history, political parties, military regimes and all other relevant issues. It is divided into several parts: part I deals with the formation of Bangladesh, and its historical background; part II reviews the political developments in the 1970s; part III discusses the issue of nationalism and national consensus; part IV analyses the political system, political parties and their relative strength, and ideological orientation and constituencies; part V looks into the military, and its influence on defining the country's policies and priorities; finally, in part VI an attempt is made to define the spectrum of national interests of Bangladesh and to analyse how they were reflected in Bangladesh's relations with the USSR in the 1980s.

I

Historical Background

Bangladesh is a new state in an old setting. The history of the Bangladeshi society is a thousand years' old. The roots and origins of the people who are now living in Bangladesh are obscure. According to the Oxford History of India, "No definite affirmation of any kind can be made about specific events..... in Bengal before 300 B.C."¹ Historians assume that peoples, who were displaced by the Indo-Aryans about 1000 B.C., particularly the Dravidian groups, came and settled in the delta lands of Bengal. Among the migrants there was a group called 'Bang' from which the name Bengal (later Bangladesh) was derived. Subsequent to this, the area was ruled by various tribes and dynasties of Indian origins, and by invaders and conquerors of diverse ethnic roots and religious persuasions.²

Bangladesh is located in the north-eastern part of South Asia, and borders on India on three fronts; east, west and north. Bangladesh has only a short border with Burma in the south-east. In the south lies the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh is one of the least developed countries in the Third World and is

¹. Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, 3rd edition, (Oxford, England; Clarendon Press), 1958, p.71

². For the early history of Bengal, see Romila Thapar, A History of India, Vol.1, (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin), 1972, and M.A. Rahim, Social and Cultural History of Bengal, Vol.1, (translated into Bangla by Md. Asaduzzaman, Dhaka: Bangla Academy), 1982.

heavily dependent on foreign aid. With the exception of a few island-states like Singapore and Hongkong, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world. A poor resource base, chiefly unskilled labour, lack of capital, shortage of raw materials, political uncertainty and labour unrest, further constrains and limit the scope and potential for its industrial development. Floods and recurrent natural disasters have made the situation even worse.

As Table 1 shows, Bangladesh exports only a few primary products, the prices of which depend on world market fluctuations. At the same time, it has to import almost everything which makes for a perpetual negative trade balance. Exports can finance only 40% of the imports.³ As a result, the country is overwhelmingly dependent on foreign aid which, in turn, limits its foreign policy options and choices.

Due to economic poverty and resource constraints, Bangladesh has been unable to maintain a strong modern army even though its population is eighth largest in the world. Its geo-political location was also of little or no strategic importance to the superpowers.

Historically, the area that is now Bangladesh was neither poor nor underdeveloped in comparison with other parts of India. To understand why a strong political, economic and

³. Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1991, (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund), p. 95.

Table 1. Bangladesh: A Country Profile

Date of independence	16 December 1971
Area	143,999 sq. km.
Population	108.8 million (1990)
Ethnic groups	98% Bengali, 2% other ethnic groups
Religions	87% Muslims, 11% Hindus, 3% Buddhists and Christians
Natural resources	poor, no known resources except natural gas
Agriculture	underdeveloped, primitive, contributes 50% of the GDP, employs 60% of the labor force
Industries	jute, textile, leather, carpet, paper and newsprint, contribute 12% of the GDP, employs 9% of the labor force
Annual growth	slow, about 1% during 1980-90
GNP per capita	US \$170 (1990)
Foreign aid	heavily dependent on foreign aid, about 60% finance of developmental budgets comes from foreign aid
Major sources of foreign aid	OECD countries and international financial institutions/organizations
Principal imports	oil, manufactured goods, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals
Principal exports	jute, jute products, ready-made garment tea, frozen fish, leather
Major trading partners	USA, Japan, Singapore, China, UAE Germany

Source: Bangladesh Statistical Yearbook, 11th ed. (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1991.

military power could not have emerged in the area despite its affluent and glorious history, one has to look into the past, particularly the process in which the Bangladeshi society was formed and developed.

The fertile land, rich culture and affluent economy of the region attracted conquerors and immigrants from all over India and from outside, and each group of new settlers affected the social, economic and cultural fabric of the Bengali society by mixing cultures and religions.⁴ Even before the Muslim conquest, proponents of two major faiths--Hinduism and Buddhism--fought for domination and control of Bengal.⁵

Muslims from Turkey, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and West Asia came to Bengal between the ninth and the twelfth centuries; but Muslim domination and control was first established in the early thirteenth century. Muslims ruled over Bengal for 550 years (1202-1757) and their rule left behind a permanent impact on the society and culture.⁶

⁴. The impact of various conquerors in Bengal is well documented by historians like Jadunath Sarker, History of Bengal, Vol. 2, (Dhaka: University Press Limited), 1943, and Romila Thapar, op. cit.

⁵. For this period of Bengal history, see A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India, (New York: Grove Press), 1954. The most authentic study of the Hindu period of Bengal was done by Ramesh Chandra Majumder, see R. C. Majumder, History of Bengal, Vol. 1, (Dhaka: University Press Limited), 1943.

⁶. The Muslim rule in Bengal is well documented by authors like, Abdul Karim, Social History of Muslims in Bengal Down to A.D. 1538, (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Pakistan), 1959. Muhammad Yasin, A Social History of Islamic India 1605-1748, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manaharlal), 1974. Khandkar Fazle Rubee, The Origins of the Musalmans of Bengal, (Dhaka: Society

European traders appeared in Bengal first in the 16th century and established settlements there long before the establishment of British control. The Portuguese were the first European traders to land in Chittagong in 1517, and to establish settlements. The Dutch, followed by the French, came to Bengal in 1602 and set up trading enclaves.⁷ The British took full control of Bengal after the battle of Plassey in 1757. By the time of Indian independence in 1947, there remained only a few French enclaves in Bengal.⁸

Bengal, particularly the eastern part, was always a hotbed of anti-colonial activities in British India. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, anti-British propaganda, publicity, revolts and violent protests were common phenomena in Bengal. Thus, the British had no interest in the industrial development of Bengal. The industrial and commercial development that took place in British India had little or no impact on the area that is now Bangladesh. For political and geographical reasons, Bengal remained a hinter-

for Pakistan Studies), 1970. Rafiuddin Ahmed, ed. Islam in Bangladesh: Society, Culture and Politics, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Itihash Samiti, [Bangladesh History Association], 1983. Humaira Momen, Muslim Politics in Bengal, (Dhaka: Sunny House), 1972.

⁷. For details of early European settlements in Bengal, see Harun-ur-Rashid, Geography of Bangladesh, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), 1977. p. 171, and Charles P. O'Donnell, Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation, (Boulder and London: Westview Press), 1984.

⁸. Craig Baxter, Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting, (Boulder and London: Westview Press), 1984, p. 15.

land to the new growing administrative, commercial, industrial and intellectual centers of India.⁹ Mighty rivers, inaccessible terrain and an underdeveloped infrastructure also hindered the process of industrial development in Bengal.

Consequently, the Bengalis became increasingly angry and frustrated. This anger was directed not only against the British, but against the Hindus who were better treated by the British because of their support for and cooperation with the Raj (though Muslims were majority in Bengal). The British had little interest in mediating the emerging ethno-religious strife because it served their political and administrative purposes.¹⁰ British patronage extended to the Hindus, escalated Hindu-Muslim rivalries. In particular, an economic nationalism emerged in the eastern part of Bengal in protest against the British patronised Calcutta-centered development of Bengal.¹¹

The situation in Bengal was not unique, Muslims in other parts of India experienced a similar treatment. But because of the geographic concentration of the Muslims in east Bengal and

⁹. Harun-ur-Rashid, op. cit. pp. 180-81.

¹⁰. For impacts of the British rule in Bengal see John H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, (Berkley, C.A.: University of California Press), 1968, and Leonard A. Gordon, Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1974.

¹¹. Sarder Fazlul Karim, "The Role of Nationalism," in Bangladesh, (Dhaka: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), December 16, 1972.

and the nature of their political culture, they were able to develop political activism and strong leadership there, and to pursue their cause more vigorously than Muslims in other parts of India. In the early 20th century, the situation became so complex that British administration had no option in 1905 other than to divide Bengal into East and West, despite strong opposition from the Hindu population.¹² The Muslims were delighted, and the Muslim League party was formed in Dhaka in 1906 to preserve and promote Muslim interests.

But the Hindus strongly protested and organised resistance against the partition. The Hindus organized some terrorist activities, boycotted British goods and established non-English language schools. In 1911, when King George V visited India, he announced the revocation of the partition, and effective of 1912 Bengal was reunited. The Muslims were bitter and disappointed.¹³

Meanwhile, the Muslim League gradually turned into an elitist party and failed to protect and promote the interests of ordinary Muslims particularly the peasants. To fill the gap, the Krishak-Praja Party (KPP) [Peasant Serf Party] was formed in 1919 by Fazlul Huq, a popular leader of rural origin. The KPP sought an alliance with the Hindu-dominated

¹². The British Viceroy in India, Lord Curzon, divided Bengal in 1905. For details, see, W.H. Moreland and Atul Chandra Chatterjee, A Short History of India, 4th edition, (UK: Longmans), 1956, pp. 426-41.

¹³. For details, see Craig Baxter, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

Indian National Congress (INC) with a view to resolving Hindu-Muslim problems. But the INC, under pressure from the Hindus, failed to cooperate with the KPP.¹⁴ Thus, communalism was allowed to have its sway in Bengal.

Nonetheless, Bengali Muslims did not give up their hope to establish a state of their own in the sub-continent, the sentiment on which the Muslim League capitalized. At its 27th Congress held in Lahore on March 23, 1940, the League adopted

Table 2. Periodization of Bangladesh History (prior to independence)

1000 B.C.	The Dravidian peoples came from different parts of India and settled in the prosperous delta region.
From 2nd to 12th century	There were sporadic clashes between two major religious kingdoms--Hindu and Buddhist--for control and domination.
From 1202 to 1757	Bengal was ruled by various Muslim rulers and conquerors.
From 1757 to 1947	The area was ruled by the British. In 1905 Bengal was divided into East and West. The Muslim League was formed in Dhaka in 1906. Bengal was reunited in 1912.
In 1947	Pakistan was formed comprising the East Bengal, Sind, Beluchistan, North-West Frontier, part of Kashmir and Muslim majority areas of Punjab.
From 1947 to 1971	East Bengal (renamed East Pakistan) was ruled by Pakistan.

¹⁴. For details of KPP's alliance with the INC and the Muslim League, see S.K. Chakrabarti The Evolution of Politics in Bangladesh, 1947-1978, (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House), 1978, pp. 10-15.

its historic Lahore Resolution which stated that, "the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority.....should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."¹⁵

Unfortunately, the hopes and aspirations of Bengali Muslims were not realised in 1947, when the British withdrew and India and Pakistan were created. They were given neither autonomy nor sovereignty under a united Pakistan; instead, they found themselves in a situation similar to that which existed prior to Partition. Their dreams were shattered, and they were discriminated against by the Pakistani leaders. As a result of discriminatory policies by the West Pakistani ruling elites in the fields of economy, administration and social welfare, hardly any developmental activities took place in East Pakistan. It remained the supplier of raw materials and primary goods to West Pakistani industrialists, and had to purchase finished goods from the same industrialists (an analogous situation prevailed during the British period, when East Bengal supplied raw materials to Indian industries).

Table 3 shows some areas of discrimination. Anger and frustration among the people of East Pakistan grew, and in the 1950s and 1960s radical nationalism emerged with strong demands for more provincial autonomy, decentralization of power, more financial power and economic control by the

¹⁵. For the full text of the Lahore Resolution, see Kalim Siddiqi, Conflict, Crisis and War in Pakistan, (London: Mcmillan), 1972, Appendix 1, p. 186.

provinces, fair share in foreign aid and foreign trade and more provincial say in security matters.¹⁶ It was spearheaded by the AL. The agenda of the nationalist forces in East Pakistan was not to become separated from Pakistan, but to resolve the country's "inter-wing political and economic problems" on a more fair and equitable basis.¹⁷

Table 3. Imbalances of East Pakistan and West Pakistan

<u>Population</u>	<u>West Pakistan</u> 42%	<u>East Pakistan</u> 58%
1. Exports (1952-57)	45%	55%
2. Imports (1952-57)	70%	30%
3. Foreign aid	90%	10%
4. Central Civil Service	84%	16%
5. Foreign Service	85%	15%
6. Army	95%	5%
7. Navy	90%	10%
8. Air Force	89%	11%
9. Number of Doctors (1969)	12,400	7,600
10. Rural Health Care Centers	325	88

Sources: S.K. Chakrabarti, op. cit. p. 88, and Bangladesh, op. cit. p. 53.

The military rulers in Pakistan, however, interpreted the nationalists' demands as a threat to national unity and territorial integrity of Pakistan. They failed to realize the gravity of the situation and instead of trying to attend to

¹⁶. The main demands of the nationalists were elaborated in Choy Dafa Davi [Six-Points-Demand] by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the AL on March 23, 1966. Bangladesh Documents, (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), 1972, Vol. 1, pp. 23- 34.

¹⁷. Ibid. P. 33

the grievances and to remove causes of frustration, they adopted repressive measures to subdue the movement in East Pakistan. The situation became volatile; emotions were running high and all-out civil disobedience broke out in East Pakistan in 1968. Finding no other alternative, President Ayub Khan of Pakistan resigned in 1969 and transferred power to a military government headed by General Yahya Khan.

The new military regime promised to hold a general election on December 7, 1970. The election, the first free general election in the history of Pakistan, was held as scheduled, and the AL won a majority of the seats (160 out of 300 in the Pakistani Parliament).¹⁸ But, instead of transferring power to the newly elected representatives, the military regime, pressured by the army, chose the path of repression; the AL and its leaders were declared to be "traitorous" and "enemies of Pakistan;" martial-law was reimposed and the nationalist movement brutally crushed.¹⁹ Civil war broke out

¹⁸. For details of 1970 election and its subsequent impacts on the creation of Bangladesh, see Saleem Qureshi, "Critical Elections and State Destruction: The Election of 1970 and the Emergence of Bangladesh," in Bangladesh: Society, Politics and Bureaucracy, ed. by Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and John P. Thorp, (Dhaka: Center for Administrative Studies), 1984, pp. 1-30.

¹⁹. President Yahya Khan in his speech to the nation made these accusations. The Dawn, (Karachi), March 27, 1971. For details of why Pakistan failed to preserve its national integrity, see G.W. Chowdhury, Last Days of United Pakistan, (Bloomington: The Indiana University Press), 1974, Rounaq Jahan, Pakistan: Failure in National Integration, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1972, and A.M.A. Muhith, Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Books International Limited), 1978.

as a result in East Pakistan, and after a long and costly war (3 million people died), Bangladesh emerged as an independent state on December 16, 1971.²⁰

II

Political Developments, 1970-80

Bangladesh became independent in 1971 with Soviet and Indian help and support. It got quick recognition from the Western countries, including the US.²¹ By the end of 1972, Bangladesh became a member of all important international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the International Development Association.²² Bangladesh also received unprecedented amounts of foreign aid and assistance from the international community. Unfortunately, the new nation failed to utilize this aid for the purposes of development, mainly for political

²⁰. For details of the Bangladesh independence war, see A. Mascartenhas, The Rape of Bangladesh, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing Pvt. House Limited), 1971.

²¹. By the end 1973, within one year of its independence, Bangladesh was recognised by 97 countries, including all major powers, except China. The US recognised Bangladesh in April 1972, just after four months of its independence. For details of Bangladesh-US relations, see Ishtiaq Hossein, op. cit.

²². Bangladesh and the United Nations, compiled and edited by Waliur Rahman, (Dhaka: External Publicity Wing, Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1986, Appendix II, p. 45.

reasons.²³

The AL, the party that led the nationalist movement and the war of independence, ruled Bangladesh from December 1971 to August 1975. But growing domestic economic problems, political instability, sharpening conflicts among various social forces, a misuse of power, widespread corruption and a general failure by the ruling party to govern the country adequately caused a rise in popularity both for the radical right-wing and left-wing parties. The situation was further aggravated by severe droughts, floods and other natural calamities. The famine of 1974, for example, left behind serious political impacts.²⁴ Gradually, the ruling party lost its popularity and bases of support. By 1974 the situation became ungovernable; the influence of radical pro-Chinese groups increased in many rural areas. Under pressure from Moscow, the Government invited the Bangladesh Communist Party (BCP) and the National Awami Party (NAP) to form a coalition in order to stop the radical "anti-state" elements and "agents of foreign power" (namely elements supported by China).²⁵ The

²³. See, Rehman Sobhan, The Crisis of External Dependence: The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited), 1982, and Just Faaland and J. Parkinson, Bangladesh: The Test Case of Development, (London: C. Harst and Company, London), 1976.

²⁴. For details of the 1974 famine, its social, political, economic implications, and international context, particularly its impacts on Bangladesh-Soviet relations, see Habibul Haque Khandker, "The Famine of 1974," in Mohabbat Khan and John Thorp, op. cit., pp. 43-67.

²⁵. The Banglar Bani, [Voice of Bengal], October 15, 1973.

BCP and the NAP joined the Government and masterminded its transformation into a one party system--the Bangladesh Krishak Shramik [Peasants' Workers'] Awami League (BAKSAL)--in February 1975.

The situation was, however, far from stable. The army remained utterly dissatisfied with the AL Government because of its neglect of military demands to strengthen the national army and to create para-military troops, the Rakkhi Bahini (RB)--the Defence Force. Finally, on August 15, 1975, the AL government was overthrown and the army took control of the country.²⁶

The new government was headed by K.M. Ahmed, a close associate of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The August coup, however, failed to bring peace and stability. It was organized and carried out by a few junior army officers, and had little support among senior cadre. On November 3, 1975, senior army officers led by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf, staged another coup. It failed, however, and its leader was killed, because the jawans (soldiers) and the general public saw it as "an attempt by the Delhi-Moscow axis to reestablish their control over Bangladesh."²⁷ A counter-coup mounted by the anti-Indian, anti-Soviet and pro-Chinese forces in the army, which received

²⁶. For details of the military coup in 1975, see Lawrence Lifschultz, Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution, (London: Zed Press), 1979.

²⁷. Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of the Mujib Regime and Its Aftermath," Asian Survey, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1976, p. 125.

wide support from the soldiers and the public, succeeded instead, and the leadership was taken over by General Ziaur Rahman. General Rahman's regime (which was civilianized by parliamentary elections of 1978), ruled the country until his assassination in May 1981. As Table 4 shows, from May 1981 to

Table 4. Periodization of Bangladesh History

From December 1971 to August 1975	Bangladesh was ruled by the Awami League.
From August to November 1975	Bangladesh was ruled by the military, headed by K.M. Ahmed, a civilian president.
From November 1975 to June 1978	The country was under the military rule of Ziaur Rahman.
From June 1978 to May 1981	The BNP, headed by President Ziaur Rahman, ruled the country.*
From June 1981 to March 1982	The BNP, headed by Justice Abdus Sattar, ruled the country.
From March 1982 to May 1986	The country was ruled by the military regime of General Ershad.
From May 1986 to December 1990	The BNP, headed by General Ershad, ruled the country.*
From December 1990 to March 1991	A transitional government, headed by Shahabuddin Ahmed, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court ruled the country.
From March 1991-	The country has been under civilian democratic rule by the BNP.

* Parliamentary elections were held, the parties claimed their regimes as democratic, yet reportedly there was massive fraud and rigging, and real power rested with the army.

March 1982, the country was ruled by a civilian regime headed by Justice Abdus Sattar. This Government was overthrown again by the military, headed by General Ershad. Ershad, like Zia, civilianized his regime through parliamentary elections in 1986, and remained in power until December 1990 when he was overthrown by popular movements (see Table 4).

As mentioned in the introduction, this is not a study of Bangladesh politics. However, this brief review helps to understand the very complex nature and characteristics of Bangladesh politics, and the issues and debates on its national interests, and illustrates high-level of political instability and constant shift between the civilian and military rule, that have plagued the country.

III

Nationalism and National Identity

Questions of national identity and national consensus are of serious importance for defining core national values and interests. The complex interaction of various political forces in Bangladesh, and the volatile character of the political scene of its first two decades of independent existence had a strong impact on the formation of Bangladesh's political identity of its underlying core values.

As noted earlier, the land of Bengal became the focus of many beliefs, religions and civilizations. Sporadic battles and violent struggles continued all through its history

favouring the dominance of one group or another.²⁸ But Bengali Muslim nationalism emerged already in the late years of the British Raj in response to internal exploitation and external domination. Islam supplied a common identity, yet it nourished and developed nationalist ideology. In 1906, the Muslim League was formed in opposition to the secular nationalist ideology of the INC. The word "Muslim" was used mainly to distinguish the Muslims from the Hindus. The Muslim League was, in fact, a communal, nationalist, anti-colonial party whose leaders were members of modern, Western-educated elites, a party that did not espouse Islamic fundamentalism. But Islam was needed as a unifying force for the creation and sustenance of the Pakistan movement, and was used for this purpose by the leaders, despite their secular-nationalist views. This was particularly clear in 1947, when Pakistan was created and Islam was widely used both as the means and as an end to establish a separate Muslim state in the sub-continent. G.P. Bhattacharjee argues that the leaders of the Pakistan movement, including Mohammad Ali Jinnah, were in reality secular nationalists and modernists. But because the Pakistan movement generated such strong "religious fanaticism" the leaders had no courage to counteract it directly; rather, they turned religious sentiments to advantage for the achievement

²⁸. Harun-ur-Rashid, op. cit. pp. 170-185.

of their political goals.²⁹

The Muslim League used the "two-nations" theory--the Muslims and Hindus in India were said to be fundamentally different and thus could not live in one state. The theory was necessary to mobilize and organize the Muslim population in order to create Pakistan. But the national integration on the basis solely of religion proved inadequate for Pakistan, as shown by its disintegration and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Regional discrimination and exploitation of East Pakistan by Pakistani leaders (as shown in Table 3), provided further impetus to the growth of an economic and eventually political nationalism there. The AL, with its secular, nationalist, "socialist" and anti-imperialist policies (evident from Table 5) led this new nationalist movement demanding autonomy for the people of East Pakistan. In doing so, however, the AL did not use Islam as an organizing factor, as had happened in 1905 and 1947. The nationalism which emerged in East Pakistan was secular, despite the peoples' strong religious beliefs.³⁰

The Bangladesh movement was organized and consolidated by

²⁹. G.P. Bhattacharjee, Renaissance and Freedom Movement in Bangladesh, (New Delhi: The Minerva Associates), 1973, pp. 42-114.

³⁰. Akbar Ahmed provides a socio-cultural and anthropological explanation of the role of Islam in Pakistan and in Bangladesh. See, Akbar Ahmed, Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: Order and Conflict in Pakistan, (Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press), 1983.

the AL under a secular, nationalist and anti-imperialist ideology. Socialism was added mainly in order to satisfy the radical leftist elements of the party and to get support from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It should be mentioned here that not all political parties in East Pakistan supported the nationalist movement. The Muslim League, the Jamat-i-Islami and other religious parties, opposed the the movement, stood for a united Pakistan and cooperated with the Pakistani military regime. The radical pro-Chinese groups also did not support the Bangladesh movement because of their anti-Indian posture and China's opposition to the creation of Bangladesh (ideological positions and orientations of these parties are shown in Table 5).

It was, therefore, not easy for the post-independence leadership to identify the basic principles of the new state and to define its national identity. The Bangladesh constitution of 1972 stipulated secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism as the basic principles of the state.³¹ Nonetheless the break-up of Pakistan and the propagation of secular-nationalist ideology did not mean that Bangladesh was interested in joining West Bengal, although it had common

³¹. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, (Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka), 1972.

history, language and traditions.³²

Independence was followed by a growing economic crisis, social unrest, and political instability. In the deteriorating situation, secular, socialist ideology espoused by the ruling party proved inadequate, and was rejected not only by the political parties that opposed Bangladesh in 1971, but also by the public at large. By the mid 1970s, religious ideology reappeared and proved to be more popular and powerful than secularism of the political leadership. This was illustrated by the political change of August 1975. The political change in 1975 was a victory of religious nationalism and radicalism, and a defeat of secular nationalism.³³

The military regime of Ziaur Rahman redefined national identity from "Bengali" to "Bangladeshi," to distinguish them from the Bengalis living in the Indian state of West Bengal. Changes and reforms were brought into the constitution in order to satisfy the domestic constituency as well as some Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states.³⁴ Even so, however, the military regime did not

³². For details of the formation of the Bangladeshi nationalism in its initial years, see Dennis Wright, Bangladesh: Origins and Indian Ocean Relations 1971-75, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Limited), 1988.

³³. Habiba Zaman, "The Military in Bangladesh Politics," in Mohabbat Khan and John Thorp, op. cit., pp. 88-102.

³⁴. Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in early 1974. Recognition from Saudi Arabia did not come until the political change in 1975. For constitutional changes in 1976, and its implica-

plan to turn Bangladesh into a fundamentalist Islamic country.

As shown in the discussion above, strong religious emotions and secular feelings are both deeply rooted in the fabric of the Bangladeshi society. Secular Muslim nationalist leaders used religion as an organizing concept for the creation and sustenance of the state of Pakistan. Yet, secular-nationalism soon posed the most serious challenges to the new Islamic state. On the other hand, the secular-nationalist forces that helped to create Bangladesh, were immediately challenged, in turn, by the proponents of religious nationalism, and, in fact, were defeated by it. So, in both the cases, neither the religious nationalism nor secular nationalism was able to maintain a dominant position for long.

Thus, both religious and secular aspects of nationalism played important role in Bangladesh politics during the 1980s. Depending on the circumstances, political parties and leaders used either or both as a means to achieve desired political goals and objectives. In fact, Bangladesh politics, including the relations with the Soviet Union, have been characterized as a continuous struggle between these two forces. When proponents of one ideology try to adopt or implement certain policies, the other side usually rejects it or tends to resist it with all possible means, including the use of violence; and

tions for Bangladesh's relations with the Muslim countries, see Golam Mostafa, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor," BISS Journal, (Dhaka), Vol. 7, No. 1, 1986.

vice-versa.³⁵

The politics of Islamization, colonization, Pakistanization, secularization, nationalization and internationalization brought numerous experiences, and created foci of interests and/or conflicts. These interactions of opposing forces has been seen as "historical impediment.....to the achievement of a central and sustained authority structure in Bangladesh politics."³⁶

As a result, it was difficult to reach a national consensus on such core issues as national identity, the nature of the political and economic system. In the absence of defined and agreed-upon core values, the perceptions of national interests have been shifting from one extreme to another defined and used by successive ruling parties and elites. Nonetheless, on some major issues of foreign policy, particularly on the relations with India, the West, the Muslim world and the Soviet Union, a broad consensus appeared to have emerged. The following pages analyse the political parties of Bangladesh, their ideological orientations and political

³⁵. Excellent studies have been done on Bangladeshi nationalism. See S.H. Osmany, "Cardinal Elements of Nationalism in Bangladesh," BISS Journal, (Dhaka), Vol. 12, No. 2, 1991, pp. 217-35, M.G. Kabir, "Post-1971 Nationalism in Bangladesh: Search for a New Identity," in Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect, eds. by M. Abdul Hafiz and Abdur Rob Khan, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), 1986.

³⁶. Mohammad Shahidullah, "Political Underdevelopment in Bangladesh," in Mohabbat Khan and John Thorp, op. cit., p. 187.

positions vis-a-vis India and the former Soviet Union.

IV

Political Parties

The main purpose of a political party is to "place and maintain in public office persons who will control, alone or in coalition, the machinery of government."³⁷ Political parties perform multiple functions in a political system; the most important of which is to aggregate public interests and to channel them into the political process. According to Samuel Huntington, the institutionalization of a political party can be measured through adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence.³⁸ But the functions and activities of political parties also depend on and/or are limited by the political system and the nature of the regime under which they operate. It is not within the purview of this study to analyse political parties and their general characteristics, except in relation to the political parties in Bangladesh, their ideological orientations and functions they performed in the 1980s, particularly in regard to Dhaka's relations with the Soviet Union.

The history of political parties in Bangladesh dates to

³⁷. Joseph LaPalombara, Politics Within Nations, (Englewood, California: Prince-Hall), 1984, p. 509.

³⁸. Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1968, pp. 408-12.

pre-independence. As noted before, the Muslim League was formed in Dhaka in 1906, and many of the political parties operating in Bangladesh in the late 1980s trace their origin to the League. More than 150 political parties were officially registered in Bangladesh in 1990. Table 5 lists some of the major ones, including the year of their formation, and ideological orientation. According to the latter, political parties in Bangladesh can be divided into four broad categories: right-wing nationalist parties; centrist or left of center parties; leftist and radical leftist parties; and religious parties.

(a) Right-wing nationalist parties

The Muslim League, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Bangladesh National Party (BJP), the Democratic League (DL) and the Freedom Party all are important right-wing nationalist parties in Bangladesh. The Muslim League ruled Pakistan for about 10 years (1947-56). Yet due to internal factionalism, leadership crisis, and organizational weakness, it quickly lost popularity, and finally, in 1958, lost power to the military.

The BNP was formed in 1978 by General Ziaur Rahman (while still in power) who brought together the right-wing elements from the AL and other leftist parties, the retired bureaucrats (both civilian and military), businessmen, landed aristocrats, and professionals. The BJP was formed in 1986, by General

Ershad, in a similar way, and for the similar purpose--to legitimize military power via democratic process. Many political analysts wonder whether the parties, like the BNP and the BJP, are political parties in a true sense. Emajuddin Ahamed argues that:

When political parties are formed by the generals in power, these parties always remain far off from the centre of power. These parties continue as a kind of B Team in the game of politics.³⁹

The DL was formed in 1976 by K. M. Ahmed, a right-wing AL Leader. The Freedom Party was formed by Colonel Faruq Rahman, a right-wing army officer, who killed Sheikh Mujib and his family. The Muslim League was formed by the Muslim nationalist, anti-colonial leaders in 1906.

In the economic sphere all the right-wing parties believe in a free market, privatization and the need to increase foreign investment. In foreign policy, they have been anti-Indian (although while in power they preferred to maintain a 'normal' working relationship with India), strongly anti-Soviet, and in favour of close cordial relations with the West, the Islamic countries and with China. In the early 1980s, these parties stepped up anti-Soviet propaganda by capitalizing on the issues of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Soviet support to Vietnam. Their perception of

³⁹. Emajuddin Ahamed, "National Community and Political Institutions," in Abdul Hafiz and A.R. Khan, op. cit., p. 202.

Table 5. Major Political Parties in Bangladesh

<u>Name</u>	<u>Ideological orientation</u>	<u>Year of formation</u>	<u>Years in power*</u>
AL	Secularism, socialism, Bengali nationalism, anti-imperialism. Dominated by petty-bourgeois middle-class <u>intelligentsia</u> , academics and professionals. Ideological changes; for more liberal free market economy.	1954**	1971-75
BNP	Anti-communism, Islamic nationalism. Free competition and market economy. Dominated by landed aristocrats, industrialists, retired bureaucrats and army generals.	1978	1978-82 1991-
BJP	No fundamental ideological differences with the BNP.	1986	1986-90
Jamat-i Islami	Islamic/free-market economy, anti-communism, anti-Indianism, close relations with the West and Islamic countries.	1971***	Nil
Muslim League	Islamic nationalism, pro-Pakistan, pro-West, anti-Indianism, anti-communism, free-market economy.	1906	Nil
CPB	Socialism, secularism, planned economy, anti-imperialism, close relations with the USSR and India.	1951	Nil
NAP (pro-Moscow)	Anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, close, friendly relations with the USSR and India.	1957****	Nil
NAP (pro-Chinese)	Anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, anti-Sovietism, anti-Indianism, close relations with China, supports "peoples democratic revolutions."	1966	Nil

* Parties in power only during Bangladesh period.

** In 1954 the AL was formed by the radical nationalist elements of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League.

*** The East Pakistan wing of the Jamat-i-Islami of Pakistan formed the Jamat-i-Islami, Bangladesh. For its pro-Pakistani stand during the war in 1971, the party was not allowed to function openly until 1975.

**** Radical leftist elements of the AL formed the NAP.

national interest sees India as the main threat to Bangladesh, and believes that friendly relations with the West, China, and the Islamic countries can best serve the country's interests. This view was seemingly shared by the broad spectrum of the population.

(b) Centrist or left of center parties

As mentioned earlier, the AL was formed in the mid 1950s by the secular nationalist elements of the Muslim League with the demand for more power and autonomy for East Pakistan. From the ideological point of view the AL was a petty-bourgeois middle class nationalist party with no real commitment to socialism.⁴⁰ Most political analysts in Bangladesh believe that the AL adopted socialist rhetoric (as was fashionable in many Third World countries) in its policies and postures in order to get support from the Soviet Union. The AL included the word "socialism" in the Constitution mainly to satisfy the students and more radical elements of the party who demanded "nationalization of banks, insurance companies and all big industries."⁴¹ In the post-independence period, the AL adopted radical policies partly to satisfy young members, but partly for economic reasons; most of the industries in East Pakistan

⁴⁰. For the class character of the AL, see M. Shahidullah, "Class Formation and Class Relations in Bangladesh," in Middle Class in Dependent Countries, ed. by Dale Johnson, (London, New Delhi: Sage Publications), 1985, pp. 183-190.

⁴¹. The Sangbad, (News), January 6, 1970.

were owned by West Pakistani industrialists, and when they left in 1971, the Government simply did not have any other alternative than to nationalize those debt-ridden inefficient industries. According to Talukder Maniruzzaman, it was the pressure of events rather than force of convictions that led Sheikh Mujib and his party to add the slogan of socialism to their platform.⁴²

In reality, the AL Government's main preoccupation in the post-independence era was to establish "Mujibism", a progressive ideology centered around a personal cult of the nationalist leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was advertised as the road to build socialism through peaceful means without bloodshed.⁴³ According to Jayadeva Uyangoda, the purpose of "Mujibism" was to monopolise the politics of nationalism by using the state and transforming the counter-hegemonic political essence of nationalism into an appendage of the ruling class ideology and practice.⁴⁴

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a patriotic nationalist leader,

⁴². Talukder Maniruzzaman (1988), op. cit. p. 236. When the author interviewed Talukder Maniruzzaman in Dhaka in December 1990, he elaborated this issue. The information provided by Professor Maniruzzaman from the experience of his extensive interviews of the AL leaders indicate that this view was widely shared by senior party leaders.

⁴³. Khandoker Mohammad Illyas elaborated and rationalised the ideology of "Mujibism" in his book, Mujibbad, (Dhaka: National Publications), 1972.

⁴⁴. Jayadeva Uyangoda, "Indo-Bangladesh Relations in the 1970s: Bangladeshi Perspectives," in South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspectives, ed. by Shelton U. Kodikara, (New Delhi: Sage Publishers), 1990, p. 77.

welcomed Indian and Soviet support for the independence of Bangladesh, and accepted their help in the reconstruction of war-ravaged country. However, he was not a socialist and was unwilling to turn the country into a socialist state based on the Soviet model. In March 1971, in an interview with La Monde he stated his preferences clearly, "is the West Pakistan government not aware that I am the only one able to save East Pakistan from communism?"⁴⁵

Notwithstanding an occasional expression of anti-communist sentiments by its leaders, the AL maintained close, friendly ties with India and the USSR while in power. Later, in the late 1980s, the AL modified its 'socialist' manifesto and tried to distance itself from the Soviet Union. But it still remained the best organised and most popular political party with a secular, "socialist" image.

In respect to the domestic economy, it stood for a mixed-economy, with both private and public control of key economic sectors. In foreign policy, during the 1980s it still believed that a close, friendly relations with India and the Soviet Union safeguarded best interests of Bangladesh.

⁴⁵. La Monde, (Paris), March 31, 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reportedly supported Pakistan's decision to join the SEATO and SENTO. He also made it clear to the US leadership that had the Americans supported the election results of 1970, the AL would never had been forced into a strategic alliance with the USSR. Sse, Ishtiaq Hossein, op. cit., p. 73

(c) Leftist and radical leftist parties;

This group was composed of two main pro-Moscow communist parties--the CPB and the NAP--as well as dozens of small, fragmented pro-Chinese communist groups. Communist parties and groups in Bangladesh fall broadly into two main categories; pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese.

The BCP was formed by Indian Communist Party (ICP) members who decided to remain in East Pakistan during the partition of India in 1947. The East Pakistan Communist Party (EPCP) was formed in 1951. The NAP was formed in 1957 by the radical, left elements of the AL on the policies of "anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism and the right of self-determination for linguistic minorities of Pakistan."⁴⁶

Supported by the Soviet Union, the pro-Moscow communist parties viewed the Bangladesh independence war as a national liberation, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist war. During the war of independence in 1971, the AL widely recruited members and supporters of the pro-Moscow communist parties as "freedom fighters," in order to satisfy Moscow. But in the post-independence period, like in many other Third World countries, the communists became the victims of suppression by the ruling party. Ideologically, as Table 5 shows, both the CPB and the NAP believed in socialism, secularism, planned economy, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and in having close relations with the USSR and India.

⁴⁶. Talukder Maniruzzaman, (1988), op. cit. p.39

The Sino-Soviet rivalry seriously affected the communist movement in Pakistan, as elsewhere in the Third World. In 1966, the EPCP broke up and the pro-Chinese section, EPCP-ML, was officially formed. The party denounced "Indian expansionism" and "Soviet social imperialism," accepted the strategy of establishing "peoples democratic revolutions," building a socialist economy on the Chinese model, supporting the policy of anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, anti-Sovietism and anti-Indianism, and, advocating close relations with China.⁴⁷

(d) Religious parties:

The Jamat-i-Islami, a fundamentalist religious party, was formed in 1941 with a view to establishing a "true" Islamic society in future Pakistan. During the 1960s, the party worked with fanatical zeal to counter the secular-nationalist policies of the AL. As a pro-Pakistani, religious party, the Jamat-i-Islami opposed the Bangladesh independence movement seeing it as a Hindu-atheist conspiracy headed by both India and the USSR against Muslim Pakistan. As mentioned in Table 5, the party was permitted to function openly in Bangladesh only after the political change of 1975. Ideologically, as Table 5 shows, the Jamat-i-Islami is a religious party with a goal of establishing an Islamic society in Bangladesh. In foreign policy, it is strongly anti-Soviet and anti-Indian, and promotes Islamic solidarity and close relations with the West.

⁴⁷. Ibid, p. 21

In summary, all major political parties in Bangladesh in the 1980s, except the AL and pro-Moscow Communist parties, were anti-Soviet and anti-Indian, and promoted liberal free market economy and open economic competition. In the absence of democratic traditions and periodical elections in an open and free environment, it is difficult to judge or measure the popular support or relative strengths of each political party. From the number of seats won in the parliamentary elections, we know the trend and direction of supports and popularity of various political parties.

Table 6 shows the results and positions of major political parties in six parliamentary elections (the first was held in Pakistan in 1970, the subsequent five were held in Bangladesh). The AL won the elections in 1970 and 1973, but in all other elections it remained the main opposition party. The BNP won the parliamentary election of 1978 with a huge majority. Yet there were widespread allegations of fraud and vote rigging. In the parliamentary election of 1991 (which was considered by foreign journalists and observers as the most free, fair and impartial election in the history of Bangladesh) the BNP won 144 seats. The BNP also won the 30 reserved seats in the Parliament for women. According to the seats won, the third major political party in 1991 election was the BJP. The BJP won a majority of seats in both the parliamentary elections of 1986 and 1988. The elections were held under military rules, and there were widespread allegations of fraud

and vote rigging. Moreover, the BNP boycotted the election of 1986 in protest against the military rule in the country. On the same grounds, the 1988 election was boycotted by all major political parties, including the BNP, the AL, the Jamat-i-Islami and the communist parties. As Table 6 shows, support

Table 6. Seats Won by Parties in Parliamentary Elections *

Years	1970	1973	1978	1986	1988	1991
Awami League 160**		293	41	76	***	84
BNP	-	-	207	***	***	144
BJP	-	-	-	153	251	35
Jamat-i-Islami 4		-	-	10	***	18
Muslim League 18 (all factions)		x	20	4	***	x
JSD	-	1	8	7	2	1
CPB	x	x	x	5	***	5
NAP (pro-Moscow)	6(a)	x	x	2	***	1
NAP (pro-Chinese)	x	x	x	5	x	1

* There were 300 seats in the parliament. From 1978, 30 more seats were reserved for women.

** The AL won 160 seats out of 162 in East Pakistan, but no seats in West Pakistan.

*** Parties boycotted elections in protest of military rule in the country.

(a) All 6 seats won by the West Pakistan branch of the NAP.

x Denotes participated, but did not win any seat.

Sources: T. Maniruzzaman, *op. cit.* (1988), pp. 74, 156 and 225. S. Abdul Hakim, *Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh: A Political Biography*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Limited), 1992, p. 82, *Keesing's Record of World Events*, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXII, 1986, p. 34482, Vol. XXXV, 1989, p. 35836, and Vol. XXXVII, 1991, p. 38007.

for the Jamat-i-Islami increased [from 10 seats in 1986 to 18 seats in the 1991 election]. Support for pro-Moscow communist parties remained low. As evident from Table 6, the ruling parties won absolute majorities; the AL in 1973 (293 seats), the BNP in 1978 (207), the BJP in 1986 and 1988 (153 and 251 respectively), in elections held while they were in power. This, naturally, raises serious doubts about the fairness and impartiality of each of those elections.

Although there was no shortage of political parties in Bangladesh (in the parliamentary election of 1991, 93 parties participated), very few were "well organized, well-knit and spread up to grass-roots levels, having definite programs and actions."⁴⁸ Intense factionalism and weak organizational structure severely limited their mobilization, participation and representation capabilities. All political parties in Bangladesh, without exception, suffered from factionalism. Political patronage, corruption, and military regimes' policy of buying supports by paying cash and offering other benefits aggravated the situation further.⁴⁹ The following charts show the divisions in major political parties.⁵⁰

⁴⁸. Emajuddin Aahmed, "Crisis of Democracy in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Today, Vol. 2, No. 16, 1985.

⁴⁹. A.N. Shamsul Haque, "Nation-Building of Bangladesh: The Process of Institution Building," in Abdul Hafiz and A.R. Khan, op. cit. p. 169.

⁵⁰. The charts have been prepared from two original charts from M. Rahman, "Factionalism in Bangladesh Politics: A Trend Analysis," BIISS Journal, Volume 7, No.1, 1986, pp. 75-76, and information from T. Maniruzzaman, (1988), op. cit. pp.36-49.

CHART I SPLITS IN THE AWAMI LEAGUE*

Abbreviation and Glossary

Jatio League(JS)

JSD

BSD

Gono Azadi League

BAKSAL

Janata Party

BNP

* Names in brackets denote the name of the party leader

:National League

:National Socialist Party

:Bangladesh Socialist Party

:People's Freedom League

:Bangladesh Peasants Workers Awami League

:People's Party

:Bangladesh Nationalist Party

Chart I shows that the Awami League which broke up itself from the Muslim League in the mid-1950s, was divided into--NAP and AL--in 1957. In the 1960s, there was a minor faction (JL), but it did not have a serious impact on the party. In the post-independence period of 1973, the radical, left elements of the AL broke up and formed the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) [National Socialist Party]. Ideologically, the JSD believed in socialism based on the Chinese model, secularism, anti-Sovietism and anti-Indianism. However, the JSD was further divided into various groups. After the fall of the AL Government in 1975, the party suffered from intense divisions and factionalism. The right-wing elements of the AL broke away and formed a number of parties, just as the DL, JP and AL (Mizan). All were weak, poorly organized, and had little public support. Despite internal divisions and leadership crises, the AL, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, survived and remained one of the major political parties in Bangladesh during the 1980s.

Chart II shows in 1966, the EPCP was divided into pro-Moscow and pro-Chinese factions. In 1970 the EPCP-ML, the pro-Chinese faction, was divided into four groups: The East Pakistan Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist (ECPML); The East Bengal Communist Party (EBCP); The Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (CCCR0); and, the East Bengal Workers Movement (EBWM). As it appears from Chart II, the pro-

CHART II SPLITS IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY*

Abbreviation and Glossary

Gonotantrik Dal	:Democratic party
Samarik Andolon	:military movement
UPP	:United People's Party
Purbabangla Sarbahara Party	:East Bengal Proletariat Party
Shammobadi Dal	:Equality Party
Gonotantrik Andolon	:Democratic Movement
Bangladesher Biplobi Party	:Revolutionary Party of Bangladesh
Gono Biplobi Party	:People's Revolutionary Party
Majdoor Party	:Workers Party
GMP	:Democratic Marxist Party

* Names in brackets denote the name of the leader .

Chinese parties are more factionalised than the pro-Moscow ones. There might have been several reasons for this.

First, many of the pro-Chinese groups in East Pakistan emerged in the 1960s as radical, extremist organizations and worked under-ground. They did not have the necessary organizational structure and other properties characteristic of a political party.

Second, China did not support the Bangladesh movement; rather, it helped Pakistan in quest of its territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The pro-Chinese communist parties were divided on the issue whether to support the Bangladesh movement or not.

Third, unlike the Soviet Union, China did not take serious steps in controlling "their" communist parties, either politically or financially and resolving intra-party disputes and conflicts.

Finally, the pro-Chinese communist parties were not immune from the problems and difficulties suffered by other political parties of Bangladesh.

Like the CPB, in the mid 1960s, the NAP was also factionalised into pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese groups. As Chart III shows, the two main factions later sub-divided into multiple factions mainly because of leadership conflicts and personal rivalries.

As chart IV shows, the Muslim League, the party that spearheaded the Pakistan movement, was divided into two groups

CHART III SPLITS IN THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY*

Abbreviation

Ekota party: unity party

PL: People's League

* Names at the bottom of the parties indicate the name of the leader,

CHAART IV SPLITS IN THE MUSLIM LEAGUE*

Abbreviation

ML :Muslim League
 GML :Gonotantrik (Democratic)
 Muslim League

* Names in brackets denote the name of the party leader

in 1962; the Convention Muslim League and the Council Muslim League. The former East Pakistan branch of the Muslim League formed the Bangladesh Muslim League; it was further factionalised due to leadership conflicts and personality clashes.

Despite the common support for the building of an Islamic society in Bangladesh, the religious parties were also factionalised although less severely than the leftist parties. They were mainly divided on the issue of how to establish Islam in Bangladesh, and the form which it should take; modern or traditional. The modernists, headed by the Jamat-i-Islami, were well organised and had more popular support than the traditionalists.⁵¹

Restricted and limited political participation under military rules further sharpened ideological divisions and made the parties weak, underdeveloped and disorganized. Three major factors may have contributed to the dismal situation of the political parties in Bangladesh in the 1980s.

(i) Political parties were being suppressed by the government and had never been "a decisive institution in framing public policy or in projecting alternate program."⁵²

⁵¹. Razia Akhter Banu has done a recent study on the nature and characteristics of Islam in Bangladesh from a sociological and anthropological point of view, see U.A.B. Razia Akhter Banu, Islam in Bangladesh, (New York: E.J. Brill), 1992.

⁵². Mahbubur Rahman, "Dysfunctional Aspects of Political Order in Bangladesh," The Jahangirnagar Review, (Savar, Bangladesh), Part II: Social Science, Vols. XI & XII, 1986-88, p.57.

(ii) Intense factionalism and fragmentation also seriously undermined their development.

(iii) Political parties were formed by military rulers to 'civilianize' their regimes and the army continued to play the dominant role in the political process from behind the scene.

Politics was largely determined by narrow personal or group interests, and as a result, no consensus or unity could be achieved on broad national objectives and interests.⁵³ As one Bangladeshi political scientist put it,

The endemic poverty of the people, intense factionalism among the various social groups and classes, and a network of patron-client ties, reaching from the grass roots to the central politico-bureaucratic elites at the national level, have resulted not only in organizational weakness and a very low level of institutionalization in the polity, but also institutional fragmentation.⁵⁴

As the discussion above shows, political parties in Bangladesh do not have the properties as defined by Huntington and LaPalombara, and they are unable to fulfil their proper political functions for reasons discussed above.

⁵³. A recent study on the issues and problems of national unity is done by Abdur Rob Khan, "Jatiyo oikkomoter sandhane: bigoto shamashsha abong vobishshot shambhabona," [Bangladesh: Towards National Consensus], BIISS Papers, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), No. 12, July 1990.

⁵⁴. Emajuddin Ahamed, "National Community and Political Institutions," in Abdul Hafiz and A. R. Khan, op. cit. pp. 202-3.

v

The Military

In most Third World countries the army always attempts to intervene in politics. The following section deals with the role of the army in Bangladesh politics, its priorities and perceptions towards the national interest, and its policy towards the Soviet Union during the 1980s.

For 16 out of the 19 years of its history (1971-1990), Bangladesh was under either direct or indirect military rule. In fact, the country was ruled by the civilian administration only for a short period (1972-1975) immediately following independence. Military intervention in politics is not unique to Bangladesh, but has been very much a pattern in the post-colonial Third World. In many of the Afro-Asian and South American countries the military intervened and played a key role in politics. Political scientists have explained this phenomenon from different perspectives.

According to Samuel Huntington, Third World societies are "praetorian" societies where all sorts of social forces, including military, are involved in the political system, and in the absence of political organizations or institutions, no consensus exists among conflicting groups thus resulting in the army becoming "the most modern and progressive force," and a symbol of national unity takes on.⁵⁵

⁵⁵. For details, see Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit. pp. 193-263.

M. Janowitz gives a social and structural explanation of Third World military interventions in politics. According to him, the army intervenes in politics because of the "characteristic of the establishment" and their "middle class and lower middle-class social origins and internal cohesion."⁵⁶

C.H. Dodd blames the leadership and political parties for military interventions in politics. He believes that "If leadership and organised political parties fail to provide leadership, the one force in developing countries that can, and will, take over power is the military."⁵⁷

S.E. Finer analyses military's political interventions in terms of culture. According to him, the propensity of military interventions in politics depends on the specific political culture. The developing societies are more prone to military intervention due to having low political culture.⁵⁸

If earlier theorists focused mainly on the causes of military interventions in politics, the later studies, particularly of the 1970s, put more emphasis on the impact and implications of the military rule. In the 1980s, studies focused on the potential and possibilities of transition to

⁵⁶. Morris Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1964, pp. 27-29.

⁵⁷. C.H. Dodd, Political Development, (London: Mcmillan), 1972, p. 15.

⁵⁸. For details, see S. E. Finer, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics, (London: Pall Mall Press), 1969.

democratic rule.⁵⁹ This is, however, not within the purview of the paper.

In the developing countries, military has acted either against unpopular autocratic, monarchical regimes (as in the cases of Egypt, Syria, Libya and Iraq) and sponsored reforms and modernization or against radical socialist/communist leaders (as in the case of Chile) and acted to re-establish status-quo. In either case, the military was usually supported and backed by external powers. In the case of Bangladesh, however, the army did not act as an agent of any particular power, but the repeated coup d'état occurred mainly because of anger, frustration, and growing dissatisfaction among the army (as well as in the populace) with the Government because of its corruption, nepotism, incompetence and gross economic and foreign policy mismanagement. In the specific case of the AL Government, the formation of the RB, as an Indian-supported paramilitary force, caused serious concern among the members of the national army. The RB was better trained, better equipped, and got better material, financial and other benefits than the national army.⁶⁰ It was seen as threat both

⁵⁹. Talukder Maniruzzaman, Military Withdrawal from Politics: A Comparative Study, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company), 1987.

⁶⁰. A Presidential Order in 1972 elaborated details of the RB. The Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, March 8, 1972. For India's role in helping the formation of the RB see, Shaikat Hassan, op. cit., 1988.

to the regular army and to the country's independence.

Three factors might have influenced the politicization of the army in Bangladesh: first, after 1971, the army was frequently used by the AL government to respond to crisis situations; second, the deteriorating economic situation and a threat to its status helped the politicization of the army; and third, the AL government failed to resolve the sectional conflicts in the army (or did not recognize them), particularly the conflicts between the officers and the jawans (soldiers), and conflicts between those who participated in the war of independence and those who were later repatriated from Pakistan.⁶¹ By capitalizing on the dissatisfaction of the public with the AL Government and on popular anti-Indian sentiment, the army moved in and took control of the country.

However, the army was far from united. During 1975-76, there was an intense power struggle between the radical extremist forces (pro-Chinese) and right-wing nationalist forces (pro-Western and Islamic). The pro-Chinese political parties, particularly the JSD had strong influence in the military. Under the influence of the JSD, the Biplabi Shainik Sangtha (BSS) [Revolutionary Soldiers' Association], was formed under the leadership of colonel Abu Taher and Colonel Ziauddin, two radical revolutionary army officers, who demanded restructuring of the army and building it as "the

⁶¹. Zillur Rahman Khan, "Politicization of the Bangladesh Army: A Response to Perceived Shortcomings of Civilian Government," Asian Survey, Vol. XXI, No. 5, 1981.

defender of interests of the country's oppressed classes."⁶²

But the nationalist, conservative, pro-Western, and pro-Islamic forces in the army proved stronger; the BSS was declared illegal; pro-Chinese political parties and groups were banned, their leaders were arrested, and Colonel Abu Taher was sentenced to death in 1976. Thus, by the early 1980s, the military regime was successful in removing the pro-Soviet, pro-Indian, and pro-Chinese elements from the armed forces.

There is no serious study of the class character and social origins of the Bangladesh army. However, from the information available, it appears that the majority of officers have come from urban middle class families with strong religious and liberal economic values. The political socialization of the army was also very important. High officials in the Bangladesh army, as a part of the Pakistani army, were socialized in communal ideals and indoctrinated in anti-Indianism and anti-communism.⁶³ But, unlike Pakistan, in the Bangladesh army there were no clear-cut horizontal cleavages between the upper class and lower class, or vertical

⁶². The Revolutionary Soldiers' Association also put forward a 'Twelve Points Demand' for restructuring the army. For details, see Far Eastern Economic Review, December 05, 1975.

⁶³. The social and ideological indoctrination of Pakistani army officials took place in military training academies in Pakistan. For details of the Pakistani army and its social and ideological training, see Stephan P. Cohen, The Pakistani Army, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1984.

differences along linguistic, ethnic and regional lines.⁶⁴

The military rulers of Bangladesh did not have any sympathy for socialism, but they had strong political commitment to Islamic values. During an interview in 1978, President General Ziaur Rahman said, "Socialism and Marxism are nothing.....Today what is necessary is to establish social justice. Islam teaches us how to establish social justice."⁶⁵ The principle of secularism in the 1972 constitution was replaced by the words "Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be basis of all actions."⁶⁶

In fact, after 1975, the military government vigorously pursued the policy of Bangladeshi nationalism (as opposed to Bengali nationalism) which had a covert connotation of anti-Indianism and anti-Sovietism. The main priorities of the military regimes, both for Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad, were; to consolidate power and position of their regimes, to bring about political, economic and administrative reforms and changes, starting from the local levels of government, and, to limit and restrict participation of all political parties in the political process. In the economy, the military regimes pursued a policy of denationalization and privatization, and

⁶⁴. Tushar K. Barua, "Military Regime in Pakistan: A Contrast in Political Processes," in Mohabbat Khan and John Thorp, op. cit., p. 85.

⁶⁵. The Sunday Times, (London), August 5, 1978.

⁶⁶. Article 8(IA) Article 12, Proclamation (Amendment) Order No. 1, 1977.

encouraged free and open competition and foreign investment. In foreign policy, the priorities were: to develop and maintain close friendly relations with the West and oil-rich Arab countries in order to ensure maximum inflow of resources; to improve relations with China; and to play an active role in international arena.

Clearly the military regimes of Bangladesh had no interest in improving relations with the Soviet Union; and their hidden hostility towards socialism and nationalist postures has already been noted. The Soviet Union, however, did not criticize the military regimes directly; rather, Moscow blamed the "right-wingers," "left-extremist groupings" with "pseudo-revolutionary slogans" to create problems and "split the ranks of national patriotic forces" for undermining Bangladesh-Soviet relations.⁶⁷ In Soviet eyes the fact that military regime of Ziaur Rahman brutally cracked down on the pro-Chinese groups and parties in the late 1970s, was more than compensation for its lack of enthusiasm for Soviet ties. However, China was less interested in what happened to the pro-Chinese communist parties in Bangladesh, rather, was more interested in maintaining and improving state-to-state relations with Dhaka.

⁶⁷. P. Kutsobin, and V. Shurygin, op. cit. p.46.

VI

National Interests

National interests of a particular nation for a particular period of time are defined by the ruling elites on the basis of objective and subjective factors as well as strengths and weaknesses of the state. National priorities, the public mood, ideological orientations of political parties, interest groups and other social forces are also taken into consideration in defining national interests. The question of who defines national interest and whether it reflects the interests of the whole people (at least of a majority), depends on the political system and nature of the government. However, in any case, the state leaders claim that they act on behalf of the nation and their policies reflect hopes and aspirations of the entire nation.

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in 1971 with a remarkable show of unity, yet with fragmented authority and alternative sets of values. Foreign invasions, colonial discrimination and exploitation, and regional domination, had serious implications for the Bangladesh society, and at the time of independence, the society remained deeply-divided and fragmented. The people of Bangladesh desperately sought statehood and got it, but "without achieving the status of a well-knit nation."⁶⁸ As a result, the task of defining the

⁶⁸. Mizanur Rahman Shelley, "Political Development and Nation-Building in Bangladesh," in Abdul Hafiz and A.R. Khan, op. cit. p. 192.

national priorities and interests was not an easy one for the leaderships in Bangladesh.

Weak objective factors such as the country's size, economy, resource base, geo-physical location and military might severely limited the nation's scope for defining and pursuing national interests. At the same time, subjective factors such as the type of political system, national consensus, political stability, and leadership were also weak, divided and fragmented. Weak and disorganized political parties with conflicting and contradictory ideologies, underdeveloped political institutions, weak democratic organizations, discontinuity in the political process, and frequent military interventions in politics had further limited Bangladesh's ability to define its core values, and for that matter, national interests.

Despite weaknesses in most of the important variables of national unity, as an underdeveloped Third World state, Bangladesh had also some strong points: ethnically and religiously, it is the most homogeneous nation in South Asia, and one of the most homogeneous nations in the world; it has inherited a skilled, well-trained bureaucracy and an active, patriotic population. Yet, the negative factors outplayed the positive images and these could not be translated into the sequence of "authority-unity-equality," required for building an effective nation and for completion of the nation-building

process.⁶⁹

Although it is difficult to categorize the national interests of Bangladesh for reasons discussed above, from the rulers' perspective it appeared that immediately after independence, the principal interests of Bangladesh were: to preserve and maintain its hard-won sovereignty; to get recognition from the world community; to reconstruct the war-ravaged economy; and, to ensure the supply of the basic needs of its people for survival. The secondary interests were: to develop and nourish friendly relations with those countries that helped Bangladesh during its war of independence; to become members of regional and international organizations, like the UN, the non-aligned movement and the OIC; to reform and reorganize political, economic and administrative systems in accordance with the ideology of the ruling party.

To pursue those goals, the leadership of the new state declared its foreign policy to be "friendship with all malice towards none."⁷⁰ Article 25 of the Constitution of 1972 declared,

The state shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the

⁶⁹. D.A. Rustow, A World of Nations, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute), 1976, p. 267.

⁷⁰. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made this statement in London in January 1972 after he was released from detention in Pakistan. The Times, (London), January 15, 1972.

United Nations Charter....⁷¹

One of the main priorities of the AL Government was to improve relations with India and the Soviet Union--the two main supporters of the Bangladesh movement. In February 1972, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, visited India and the two countries agreed to sign a defence treaty. On March 13, 1972, India and Bangladesh signed a 15-year Defence Pact similar to the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971.⁷² In early March 1972, Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited the Soviet Union (this was the first and only high level visit between the two countries) and at the end of the visit a Joint Declaration was signed which provided a general framework for the development of bilateral relations between the two countries (see, Appendix A).

After the political change in 1975, national priorities and interests were changed and modified. The euphoria of 'socialism' was over, and relations with India and the Soviet Union suffered numerous set-backs. While the postulates of sovereignty and survival remained the same, the perceptions of how to achieve these ends changed. The military regime's main foreign policy priorities were: to improve relations with the West; to nourish and develop relations with China and the oil-rich Arab countries; and to actively participate in the

⁷¹. The Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, op. cit. Article 25, p. 8

⁷². For details of the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of 1972, and its implications, see Shaukat Hassan, (1988), op. cit.

international arena. In the domestic economy, policies were adopted for economic reforms, including the denationalization (privatization) of industries, incentives for private investors, promotion of exports, and changes and reforms in tariffs and taxes in order to encourage exports and investment. In external economic relations the main goals were: to ensure the maximum inflow of foreign aid to the country, to diversify trade and sources of foreign aid, to tap resources from the oil-rich Arab countries, and to encourage foreign capital and investment.

President Ziaur Rahman in his speech at the Bangladesh Parliament in 1980 defined his foreign policy goals as: to consolidate and safeguard independence and sovereignty; to develop bilateral, regional and international cooperation with a view to accelerating the process of economic and social development of the country; and, to cooperate with the international community in promoting peace, freedom and progress.⁷³

Islam, as a fundamental religious, social and political values in the society, was widely used by the regimes for consolidation of power both in domestic and in international arenas. One of the main priorities of the military regime of General Ershad was to widely use religion as a political instrument in order to get popular support and consolidate

⁷³. Address by President Ziaur Rahman at the Bangladesh parliament, Dhaka on February 9, 1980.

power. Speaking at a conference of teachers from religious schools in Dhaka in 1983, General Ershad declared; "Islam must occupy its rightful place in all spheres of life, including the constitution, and Bangladesh must be converted into an Islamic state."⁷⁴

In early 1988, President Ershad expressed his readiness to introduce a bill "to provide religious identity to the nation by incorporating Islam as a state religion."⁷⁵ In June, the government brought the 8th Amendment of the Constitution to Parliament, which proclaimed Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh.⁷⁶ According to political observers in Dhaka, Ershad's motivations for establishing Islam as the State religion were four-fold: first, to gain favour among those in the Arab world who could provide support, both financial and political, to the regime; second, to appease orthodox Muslims, who had always demanded the transformation of Bangladesh into a truly Muslim country; third, to neutralise religious fundamentalist parties who were campaigning for the establishment of an Islamic state in Bangladesh; and finally, to legitimise the otherwise illegal regime.⁷⁷

⁷⁴. The Bangladesh Observer, January 15, 1983.

⁷⁵. Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXIV, 1988, p. 35836.

⁷⁶. Ibid. Vol. XXXV, 1989, p. 36558.

⁷⁷. Dr. Muhammad Solaiman, Politics of Islamization in Bangladesh. A paper presented at the Sixth National Conference of the Bangladesh Political Science Association held at Jahangirnagar University, Savar, February 15-16, 1991, p. 10.

On the other hand, growing economic demands and needs compelled the regimes to define the country's foreign policy orientation in terms of economic interests. Shifts and changes in the direction of foreign policy were explained and justified by a former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Muhammad Shamsul Huq, in the following way;

As a part of her strategy of providing strength and balance to her foreign policy and also accelerate the pace of economic development a special thrust of Bangladesh foreign policy has been in the direction of promoting closer economic cooperation with the industrial countries and multilateral institutions.⁷⁸

Despite radical changes in foreign and domestic policy after 1975, the military regimes in Dhaka took measures to mend fences with New Delhi. No such priority was given to Bangladesh-Soviet relations, however because in the scale of Bangladesh's national interest, relations with its immediate neighbour, India, was much more important than the more distant Soviet Union.

The military regime of President Ziaur Rahman was strongly anti-communist, and was not interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union; rather, it took steps to improve relations with China as a counterbalance to both India

⁷⁸. Inaugural Address by Muhammad Shamsul Huq at a Seminar in Dhaka on Foreign Policy Objectives of Bangladesh, organised by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh, on December 1, 1984.

and the USSR.⁷⁹ General Zia wanted to reduce the Soviet influence in Bangladesh, and pursue an offensive anti-Soviet policy in the international arena, particularly on the issues of Afghanistan and Kampuchea. But at the same time, he had no intention of going into a direct confrontation with the Soviets. He wished to maintain "reasonable relations with each [superpower]."⁸⁰

Despite political change in 1982, general foreign policy interests and priorities of the new regime remained the same: to continue efforts, both at the bilateral and multilateral level, to resolve outstanding issues with India which were considered to be real threats to Bangladesh's national interests; to maintain and develop close friendly relations with the West, the Islamic countries and China; to actively participate in international arena and to pursue strong anti-Soviet policy, particularly on the Afghan issue; and, last but not least, to attend to economic issues and problems at home by ensuring the steady inflow of foreign aid, investment, and transfers of technology. (The issues of economic interests are dealt separately in Chapter Seven).

⁷⁹. For details of how the 'China factor' affected Bangladesh-India, Bangladesh-Soviet and Indo-Soviet relations in the late 1970s, see Robert Horn, op. cit.

⁸⁰. Ifekhar A. Choudhury, Bangladesh, External Relations: The Strategy of a Small Power in a Subsystem, (Canberra: Australian National University, Ph.D. Thesis), 1980, p. 193.

VI

Conclusion

Due to weakness and/or absence of objective and subjective factors of national strength and power, it was not easy for Bangladesh to define its national interests and priorities. A fragmented political culture, intense divisions and factionalism among political parties, personal rivalries and incompetent leadership did not help promote a healthy political system. While political parties suffered from internal strife, rift and divisions, political leaders craved for power, patronage and privileges. Furthermore, in the absence of a national consensus, lack of unity and respect for authority, it was difficult to define the core values of the nation, and no consensus emerged on broad major national issues. Debates on national identity--whether Bengali, Muslim, or Bangladeshi--are still not resolved. As a result, a very complex and often contradictory national psyche evolved in Bangladesh. The society remained deeply divided and fragmented without definite causes and reasons.

All these created enough of a pretext for the Bangladesh army to intervene in politics and destroy and/or weaken political institutions. But the question remains as to whether the military acted for its own interests alone or whether their policies reflected broad national interests. There is no doubt that one of the primary interests of the military regimes was to stay in power and control and dominate the

political process. Yet, at the same time, it is important to remember that the Bangladesh army was not an "alien" army, an "occupant force," or a "peoples army" with the task of establishing a specific ideology.

As mentioned earlier, the social base of the Bangladesh army was broad and recruitment was from almost all layers of society. Moreover, since there is no serious tribal, ethnic, religious or linguistic problem in Bangladesh, the army did not have to represent or serve interests of any particular group or class. The smallness of the country, extensive family/social interactions, the cohesiveness of the elites, and a concentration of political activities (mainly in Dhaka), helped the regimes to keep open informal/traditional channels of communications with the public, and, thus, popular demands and wishes of the public appeared to have transmitted to the rulers. So, when decisions were made and policies were adopted by the military regimes, particularly on the issues of external relations, they were broadly supported by the public.

From the point of view of national interests (security, political, economic), Bangladesh's relations with India, the West, China, the Islamic countries were the most important ones. The following chapter analyses why and how these relations were important, how the governments dealt with them, and implications they had for Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

Chapter Five

BANGLADESH-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1980-90: EXTERNAL FACTORS.

The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 affected the power rivalries of four major powers: China, the USSR, the USA and India. In the final showdown of the 1971 crisis, the Soviet Union and India, which supported Bangladesh's independence, were successful, while the USA, China and the conservative Muslim states, supporters of Pakistan, lost out. As a result, during the initial years of its existence, Bangladesh's external relations reflected the pattern alliances of 1971: close, friendly relations with India and the Soviet Union; complex, difficult and often uneasy relations with the West; and non-recognition from China and Saudi Arabia.

But the 1975 political change in Bangladesh brought fundamental changes in its foreign policy direction and priorities. The shifts were based on differing perceptions of Bangladesh's national interests, defined in terms of national security, territorial integrity and economic survival. Neutrality and non-alignment in foreign policy, and Islamic solidarity with fellow Muslim countries, were (now) considered the main principles and conditions for the achieving of national goals and objectives.

However, in pursuing these newly-defined national interests, Bangladesh faced serious challenges from India, because of a number of outstanding issues and bilateral disputes. As analysed in the previous chapter, these bilateral

disputes and conflicts between Bangladesh and India were not new; most of them were inherited from Pakistan. The pro-Indian, pro-Soviet Government which was in power in Dhaka during 1972-1975, did not raise these potentially troublesome issues, which remained unresolved.¹ In 1975 when the AL government was overthrown and a military regime came to power in Dhaka, India was unwilling to collaborate with the new regime in Bangladesh. Perhaps it was in Bangladesh's national interest to maintain good relations with India in the post-1971 period, so as to better deal with areas of conflict. In the post 1975 reality, however, this was not possible, although the Dhaka government tried to address these core issues, because: India was unwilling to cooperate with the new government in Dhaka: India viewed the new foreign policy initiatives by the military regime in Dhaka as inherently unfriendly and offensive to its interests; China's quick recognition to the military regime in Bangladesh created further doubts and suspicions in New Delhi; finally, and most importantly, in the mid 1970s, anti-Indian sentiment was clearly rising in Dhaka, for reasons discussed in Chapter Four. The military regime in Dhaka, however, did not view its policies as contrary to the country's national interest; rather, it deemed that it was India that started hostilities, by refusing to cooperate with it.

¹. For details of Indo-Bangladesh relations during the early 1970s, see Shaukat Hassan, (1980), op. cit.

In fact, by the late 1970s, Bangladesh viewed the preponderant Indian role in the region and India's hegemonic attitude towards neighbours, as a distinct threat. Bangladesh sought support from outside powers in order to preserve and promote its interests. Thus, for political and strategic reasons, the military regime in Dhaka developed and maintained close, friendly relations with the West, China and the Muslim countries--including Pakistan, its former enemy.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not threaten Bangladesh's national interests directly. But Dhaka's reaction was strong and immediate. Two factors influenced Bangladesh's prompt reactions: first, Afghanistan was an Islamic non-aligned country; second, India's postures and policies toward the issue.

This chapter deals primarily with the external components and elements of Bangladesh's national interests. By raising the main issues and priorities of Bangladesh's national interests in terms of external relations, this chapter analyses how these relations affected Dhaka's relationship with Moscow during the 1980s. The chapter is divided into five sections: part I raises some of the disputed issues with India which Dhaka considered as serious threats to its interests, and discusses how these issues affected Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union; part II analyses the importance of Bangladesh's relations with the West, and their role and place in serving Dhaka's national interests, and their impact on

relations with Moscow; part III deals with Bangladesh's relationship with China, and its implications for Bangladesh's relations with both India and the USSR. Because of the Islamic character of the society, Bangladesh had special interests in developing and maintaining close relations with the Muslim states; part IV reviews these relations in terms of Bangladesh's national interests, and their ramifications for relations with the Soviet Union; part V analyses Bangladesh's policy and attitudes towards the Afghan issue, and its implications for Dhaka's relations with the Soviet Union.

I

Bangladesh-India Relations

As analysed earlier, the issues and problems of Bangladesh-India relations, which were deeply rooted in history, were further complicated and exacerbated by political developments in the region; new problems emerged and old conflicts resurfaced. Most important among them in the 1980s were: the sharing of the water of the Ganges; the delimitation of the land border and maritime boundaries; the Indian support for insurgency groups inside Bangladesh; and differing security perceptions.

(a) The water-sharing issue

As a riverine country, the economy of Bangladesh, and, for that matter, the very survival of its people, are inex-

tricably linked with the free flow of the waters of its rivers. The diversion of silt-free water from the Ganges by India passed more silt into the Bangladeshi part of the Ganges, lifting the river bed, and ultimately bringing drought in the dry season and flooding in rainy season.² According to experts, it also adversely affected other river systems in Bangladesh, and substantially decreased the capacity for irrigation; it furthermore affected the livelihood of millions of fishermen, due to the depletion of fish resources that it caused.³ A Soviet geologist, Dr. Valery Krashinnikov, acknowledged that continuous interference in the normal flow of the Ganges water would upset the ecological balance of the Ganges-Brahmaputra Basin and the eastern parts of the Indian Ocean, and that the cumulative effects of diversion of the Ganges water on Bangladesh would be disastrous.⁴

The dispute over the sharing of the Ganges water started in the early 1950s, when there were reports that India had decided to construct a huge dam (7,229 feet long, worth about \$240 million US dollars) at Farakka on the river Ganges, in order to divert water during the dry season.⁵ In anticipation

². For effects of the Farakka dam on Bangladesh, see, Dr. Hamidur Rahman Khan, "Effects of Farakka Barrage on Bangladesh," The Bangladesh Times, April 11, 1976, and Rafiqul Islam, Ganges Water Dispute: Its International Legal Aspects, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: University Press Limited), 1987.

³. Ibid, Chapter III.

⁴. The Bangladesh Times, March 31, 1976.

⁵. M. Rafiqul Islam, op. cit., p. 3.

of serious adverse socio-economic and ecological consequences, Pakistan strongly opposed the construction of the barrage. Nonetheless, the construction started in 1961, and was completed in 1970.⁶

Immediately after independence Bangladesh entered into negotiations with India on the Farakka dam issue. The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) was formed in 1972, with a view to "working together in harnessing the rivers common to both the countries for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries."⁷ Talks continued and a temporary agreement on water sharing was reached thanks to the friendly relations between the two countries. No long-term solutions were arrived at, however.⁸

After the political change in August 1975, which brought a right-wing, pro-Western regime to power in Dhaka, the new regime found it more difficult to reach an agreement with India on the water sharing issue. The pre-existing agreement expired in May 1975, and until November 1977, there was no new agreement on the issue.⁹ Meanwhile, when successive attempts at reconciliation failed, Dhaka proceeded to internationalize

⁶. Ibid. p. 5.

⁷. "Statute of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission, November 24, 1972," Record of Discussions of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commissions, (Dhaka: Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 1985.

⁸. M. Rafiqul Islam, op. cit. pp. 102-110.

⁹. Ibid p. 105.

the issue, in 1976. First, Bangladesh raised the issue before the OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference in Istanbul in May 1976.¹⁰ A few months later, the issue was again raised, this time before the Non-aligned Summit in Colombo. Finally, in desperation, Bangladesh took the issue to the 31st session of the UN General Assembly in November 1976.¹¹ Under the pressure of international community, India agreed to resume negotiations, with the result that three rounds of ministerial level talks were held in 1976. However, no progress was made until the change of government in New Delhi in March 1977. In November of that year, a five-year agreement was signed between Bangladesh and India on the issue which, according to most observers, served the interests of both parties.¹²

With Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in early 1980, India's attitude towards Bangladesh stiffened again. Two more "Memoranda of Understanding" on the sharing of Ganges water were signed in 1982 and 1985 respectively, but these were again temporary arrangements that failed to meet Bangladesh's

¹⁰. Bangladesh received widespread sympathy and support, and the Joint Communique issued by the Conference expressed deep concern over the problem. See Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1976: Struggle for Survival as an Independent State," Asian Survey, Vol. XVII, 1977, p. 193.

¹¹. The issue was included on the agenda, but was referred to the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly for discussion. A 'consensus resolution' was adopted, and the parties agreed to continue bilateral negotiations and to report to the 32nd session of the General Assembly. The Bangladesh Observer, November 17, 1976.

¹². M. Rafiqul Islam, op. cit. pp. 158-162.

growing need and demand for water.¹³

Instead of committing to a long-term solution, India preferred short-term agreements on the issue in order to exercise political influence on the Bangladeshi leadership. Bangladesh, on the other hand, always called for a permanent solution to the problem. The Ganges is an international river and Bangladesh had insisted on involving other regional states (Nepal and China) to resolve the dispute.¹⁴ After the devastating floods in 1987 and 1988, President Ershad of Bangladesh visited India, Nepal and China to discuss the possibility of a regional solution to the problem. India denounced the idea, and criticised Bangladesh for involving Nepal and China in an issue that, according to New Delhi, was a bilateral matter.¹⁵

As observed, the Farakka issue was not only a water-sharing problem, but was also an issue of economic and ecological survival for Bangladesh. On such an important issue of national interest, Bangladesh did not get any support or

¹³. Ibid, Chapter X.

¹⁴. According to experts, the Ganges is an international river and Bangladesh had legitimate rights to involve other basin states to resolve the issue. Both Nepal and China had a similar view, but India considered it as a bilateral issue and sought to resolve it bilaterally. For Nepalese views, see Chitra K. Tiwari, Security in South Asia: Internal and External Dimensions, (New York: University Press of America), 1989, p. 216.

13. Iftekharuzzaman, "Political Instability, External Vulnerability, Underdevelopment: The Vicious Circle for Bangladesh," in Development Politics and Security: Third World Context, eds. by M. Abdul Hafiz and Mizanur Rahman Khan, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), 1990, p. 68.

sympathy from the Soviet Union. In 1976, when Bangladesh raised the issue before the UN General Assembly, the Soviet Union criticized the move and protested against including a bilateral issue in the General Assembly agenda.¹⁶ In the 1980s, even when various scientific studies warned about the consequences of the Farakka dam, and the international community expressed concerns about ecological impacts and recurrent floods in Bangladesh, the Soviet Union gave its full support to India.

It could be argued that had Bangladesh maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, then Soviet influence could have been used to make the Indians more amenable to Bangladesh's needs and demands on the water-sharing issue. Yet as Chapter Six discusses, there were other factors that made it difficult, if not impossible, for Bangladesh to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union. Moreover, with India's increased importance to Moscow after the invasion of Afghanistan, the leadership in Bangladesh was convinced that the Soviets were neither able nor willing to put any pressure on India in support of the interests of Bangladesh.

(b) Territorial disputes and the delimitation of maritime boundaries.

For any sovereign nation no other issue can be more important to and crucial for the national interest than its

¹⁶. Talukder Maniruzzaman, op. cit. (1977), p. 193.

territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The issue of sovereignty is non-negotiable, and citizens are usually ready to make supreme sacrifices to preserve it. Although India provided direct military, economic and diplomatic help to Bangladesh in 1971, some of the territorial disputes and boundary issues between the two countries, inherited from the Pakistani period, were not resolved.

As was the case in many post-colonial states, at the time of national independence the colonial boundaries were drawn arbitrarily, without always taking into consideration local demands and specificities. The South Asian region was no exception. In 1947, when India and Pakistan became two independent states carved out of British India, a number of territorial issues and disputes remained unresolved, which continued to poison their bilateral relationship. Bangladesh, as a successor state to East Pakistan, inherited most of the problems with India. The final demarcation of boundaries between India and Bangladesh has still not taken place.

After 1971, it was hoped and expected that the outstanding issues between the two countries would be resolved without much trouble. However, India showed no urgency and was not in a hurry to attend these issues. After continuous pressure from the Bangladesh Government, a land boundary agreement was finally signed on May 16, 1974. The agreement identified all the areas of land boundary disputes and noted the parties' desire to "define more accurately at certain

points and to complete the demarcation of the land boundary between Bangladesh and India."¹⁷ The two sides also agreed to expedite the process of solving other boundary issues.

After 1975, India changed its position and, as on the water-sharing issue, showed no interest in resolving boundary issues. It even refused to meet earlier commitments. In the Land Boundary Agreement of 1974, it was agreed that

India will retain the southern half of South Berubari Union No.12 and the adjacent enclaves, measuring an area of 2.64 square miles approximately, and in exchange Bangladesh will retain the Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves. India will lease in perpetuity to Bangladesh an area of 178 meters x 85 meters near 'Tin Bigha' to connect Dahagram with Panbari Mouza (P.S.Patgram) of Bangladesh.¹⁸

Bangladesh handed over its enclaves to India in 1974, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement; India, however, did not live up to its commitment, and, as of 1990, the issue had still not been resolved. Meanwhile, the people living in the Bangladeshi enclaves, surrounded by India, were uncertain about their future; they were often harassed and tortured by Indian border guards.¹⁹

As Bangladesh-India relations deteriorated in the mid-

¹⁷. "Text of Agreement Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of India Concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary between Bangladesh and India, and other Related Matters, Signed on May 16, 1974," Bangladesh Documents, (Dhaka: External Publicity Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh), Vol.2, #4, 1974.

¹⁸. Ibid. Article, 14.

¹⁹. Iftekharuzzaman, op. cit. p. 69.

1970s, boundary issues became a matter of serious concern for Dhaka. Bangladesh felt genuinely threatened and insecure when some sections of the Indian press claimed that there were errors in the British population survey that underlay the border delineation, and therefore the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) areas should have been assigned to India at the time of the 1947 partition.²⁰ Other sectors of the Indian press reported that India might claim Sylhet, the area of Bangladesh that is richest in oil and gas reserves. While the Indian High Commission in Dhaka downplayed the importance of such press reports, the people of Bangladesh generally took these reports seriously.²¹ Their concern was heightened because of the often bitter historical memories, and because of their obvious vulnerability vis-a-vis India.

In the absence of clear boundary demarcations and good neighbourly relations, cross-border smuggling and clashes between the border security forces of the two countries almost became regular phenomena in the 1980s. On June 2, 1987, Bangladesh television reported that 50 Indian Border Security Force entered a Bangladeshi village and massacred 11 people. The news was broadcast by the Bangladesh Television in its evening news on June 2, 1987. The Border Security Force of India denounced the accusation as "baseless and totally

²⁰. Far Eastern Economic Review, August 20, 1987, pp. 21-22

²¹. Ibid.

incorrect."²² However, despite Indian denial, available information does suggest that there were frequent border clashes between Bangladeshi and Indian border troops during the 1980s. Rampant smuggling also affected Bangladesh's economy, particularly in border areas. Dhaka protested, and occasionally the parties agreed to hold "flag meetings" between the border security forces of the two countries; the situation, however, did not improve--and obviously would not improve until relations between Dhaka and New Delhi improved.

The decision by the Indian government in early 1984 to construct a 3,200 km barbed wire fence along the Bangladesh-India border, in order to prevent "illegal immigration" and "border smuggling," further worsened relations between the two countries.²³ Bangladesh strongly objected to India's decision to construct the fence on the 'zero-line' of the international boundary, on the ground that the border agreement signed between the two countries in 1975 stipulated that there would not be any defensive structure within 150 yards of the border on either side.²⁴ In the end, the barbed wire fence was not constructed, due to domestic, regional and international criticisms; but the very fact that the idea was launched caused new and additional tensions and suspicions between the

²². Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London, Longman), Vol. XXXIII, 1987, p. 35574.

²³. For details, see Ibid, Vol. XXXII, 1986, p. 34483.

²⁴. India Today, May 15, 1984.

two neighbours. The original Indian decision might have been taken to satisfy the ultra nationalist forces in Assam, who demanded the expulsion of the alleged illegal Assamese of Bengali origins. In any case, the Dhaka Government viewed India's decision as not only unfriendly, but also illegal.

Unlike land boundary issues, the maritime boundary was not a very contentious issue in Bangladesh-India relations during the 1970s. But as a new island called South Talpatti, or New Moore island (as the Indians call it), emerged in the waters of the Bay of Bengal, near the southern-most boundary of India and Bangladesh, it became a contentious issue between the two countries. Both India and Bangladesh claimed sovereignty over the prospective island. In April 1979, when Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai visited Bangladesh, the two sides agreed to conduct a joint survey to determine the island's exact location and ownership.²⁵ However, Mrs. Gandhi's Government refused to implement the agreement, and in 1981 India unilaterally claimed ownership of the island. An Indian Naval Survey ship anchored off the island and landed personnel.²⁶ Bangladesh authorities viewed the Indian action as a very real threat to their security and national integrity. The incident had serious repercussions in Bangla-

²⁵. Azizul Haque, "Bangladesh 1979: Cry for a Sovereign Parliament," Asian Survey, Vol XX, No. 2, 1980, p. 228.

²⁶. Shaukat Hassan, "Environmental Issues and Security in South Asia," Adelphi Papers, (IISS, London), No. 262, Autumn 1991, p. 54.

desh. Massive anti-Indian demonstrations took place throughout the country, and the Government demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Indian personnel from the disputed island.²⁷ Although India subsequently withdrew its personnel from the island, New Delhi continued to claim the ownership of the island, and as of 1990 no progress had been made to resolve the issue.²⁸

As with the water-sharing issue, Bangladesh did not get any support or sympathy from the Soviet Union on these very important issues for its national interests. The Soviet Union had not criticized the Indian landing, but when the Bangladesh Navy, as a self-defence measure, began to patrol the Bay of Bengal in protest against India's decision to land personnel on the disputed Island, Moscow criticized the move.²⁹

(c) Indian support to political dissidents and insurgents

Although Bangladesh is the most homogeneous society in South Asia, it did experience some ethnic problems with tribal

²⁷. Bangladesh's position on the issue was elaborated in the White Paper on the South Talpatti, (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), May 26, 1981.

²⁸. There were also technical and legal problems for the delimitation of maritime boundaries between Bangladesh and India. For details, see M. Habibur Rahman, "Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries: A Survey of Problems in the Bangladesh Case," Asian Survey, Vol. XXIV, No. 12, December 1984, pp. 1302-17.

²⁹. Leonid Zhegalov, "Who is Destabilizing the Situation?", New Times, (Moscow), No. 34, 1981, p. 27.

peoples living in the CHT. The main reasons for the discontent of the tribal peoples were: the growing settlements of non-tribal peoples in the CHT area; government pressures for cultural and economic integration of the tribal peoples with the rest of the country; and continuous government harassment against the tribal peoples.³⁰ They formed their own resistance force, the Shanti-Bahini [peace corps], and occasionally attacked the settlers. However, the insurrection did not pose any serious threat to Bangladesh's national security--until thousands of tribal people took shelter in India, and India began putting pressure on Bangladesh for creating the conditions that would facilitate their return. There was also a dispute about the actual number of refugees. India claimed the number was 64,000, while Bangladesh insisted that the actual number was only 30,000.³¹ Since the same tribal people live on both the sides of the border, it was not possible to determine the actual number. The situation became more complicated when the dissidents, with the alleged support of India, pursued armed struggle against Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Government accused India of providing training and military support to the tribal people; India categorically

³⁰. For details, see Syed Nazmul Islam, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh: Integration Crisis Between Center and Periphery," Asian Survey, Vol. XXI, No. 12, December 1981, pp. 121-22.

³¹. Keesings World Record of Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXVI, 1990, p. 37205, and Ibid, Vol. XXXV, 1989, p. 36579.

denied this.³²

In fact, the South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, were always concerned and worried about India's motives and ambitions in the region. Bangladesh became particularly concerned when the Indian press proposed a treaty with Bangladesh, similar to the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan treaty, on military help, to regulate the problems of the CHT area.³³ Dhaka officially criticised the Indo-Sri Lankan treaty and categorically dismissed the idea of using Indian troops to resolve the problems in the CHT.

India was also accused of providing shelter and supplying arms and training to other insurgents, particularly those who opposed the political change in 1975.³⁴ India provided assistance to such political dissident groups as the Shadhin Bangla [independent Bengal] activists.³⁵ There were also reports confirming the involvement of the Indian Intelligence

³². Bangladesh army officials who served in the CHT areas confirmed during interviews with the author that India was actually providing training and supplying arms to the tribal guerrillas. Confidential interviews with army officials in Dhaka, December 1990 and January 1991.

³³. Far Eastern Economic Review, August 20, 1987, p. 22.

³⁴. According to reports, about 6,000 guerrillas, several thousand civilians and three Members of Parliament from Bangladesh took shelter in India after the coup d'état of 1975. For details, see Talukder Maniruzzaman, (1988), op. cit. p. 208.

³⁵. Chitra K. Tiwari, op. cit. pp. 110-114.

Agency (RAW) in anti-state activities in Bangladesh.³⁶ Bangladesh, with its weak military power, political instability and dependence on foreign aid, ipso facto saw such Indian actions as serious threats to national interest and security.

As on other such issues, Moscow was conspicuously silent about India's role and activities in Bangladesh. Since the Soviet Union was in immediate need of India's help and support for its invasion in Afghanistan and other Third World adventures, it was not interested in undermining relations with New Delhi by raising the issues of India's bilateral disputes with neighbours, which in fact angered and frustrated many Bangladeshis.

(d) Differing security perceptions

India's security perceptions and hegemonic ambition opposed the objective interests of small states in the region, including Bangladesh. India considered itself the sole custodian for security in South Asia. According to India's security perception, in the absence of a real 'enemy' Bangladesh just did not have any security threat; Dhaka should not, therefore, be concerned about its security. In fact, New Delhi's ideal preference was to see a government in Dhaka "responsive to India's foreign policy and defence policy

³⁶. India was always considered as a major external threat to Bangladesh's security and stability. See, Ifte-kharuzzaman, op. cit., pp. 65-71.

needs."³⁷ However, the evolution of forces and political developments in Bangladesh took a different course. The military regimes in Bangladesh preferred more Chinese and US presence in the Indian Ocean, in order to maintain a balance of power in the region. India, on the other hand, with its objective hegemonic goals and interests, was against the presence of any external power in the area, including the Soviet Union.

The issues and problems with India constituted both material and non-material aspects of Bangladesh's national interests. The perceptions of Indian threats to Bangladesh's security and national interests were not deceptive or subjective interpretations, but deeply rooted in the objective conditions of the relationships between them. They constituted the issues of vital interests for Bangladesh, and had wide popular support. As Table 5 shows: all major political parties, except the AL, are anti-Indian in their ideological orientations.

Soviet positions and attitudes towards these issues of vital interest for Bangladesh were, to Dhaka, discouraging and frustrating. The Soviet Union supported India on every issue, even when India appeared clearly at fault, and criticised the stands taken by Bangladesh. For example, in the 1970s, when Dhaka took initiatives to develop relations with Pakistan, the Soviet Union accused Bangladesh of playing the role of an

³⁷. Shaukat Hassan, (1988), op. cit. p. 204.

"ally of the Zia ul-Haq regime in its anti-Indian campaign."³⁸

The Soviet Union notably failed to praise initiatives taken by Bangladesh to promote regional cooperation in South Asia. Bangladesh engaged in long and difficult diplomatic efforts to create a regional cooperation organization in South Asia that would bring together all South Asian states: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. After a series of talks and negotiations, the South Asian Regional Cooperation was finally launched at the first Foreign Ministers' conference in New Delhi in August 1983.³⁹

The Soviets were interested in an India-initiated and India-dominated regional organization in South Asia which could serve their interests. As Bangladesh took the initiative, Moscow became concerned and suspicious about the nature of the organization, as well as its future role in South Asia, because of Dhaka's close relations with the West and China. Moscow was worried that such an organization might oppose Soviet policies, not least its invasion of Afghanistan. Pravda warned that any regional cooperation organization in South Asia must not be directed against any third party.⁴⁰ The Soviet Union also emphasised the need for anti-imperialist and

³⁸. Leonid Zhegalov, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁹. For historical background of the formation of regional cooperation organization in South Asia, see S.D. Muni and Anuradha Muni, Regional Cooperation in South Asia, (New Delhi: National Publishing House), 1984.

⁴⁰. Pravda, August 8, 1983.

anti-Western attributes as a sine qua non of regional organizations in the Third World, and advised the member states "to act in an united front to confront the Western industrialised countries and the MNCs."⁴¹

Finally, although the Soviet Union welcomed the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), at the same time it blamed the West, particularly the USA, for creating obstacles to the promotion of regional cooperation in South Asia. Thus, A.E. Granovski wrote;

One major obstacle to promoting extensive economic cooperation is represented by the destabilization policies of the US in South Asia and, in particular, the US' deliberate attempts to prevent the emergence of India as a major world power.⁴²

Relations with India were sensitive and emotional issues in both the domestic and foreign policies of Bangladesh. Even the leader of the unsuccessful coup attempt in 1981, General Manzur, expressed his determination to abrogate the Friendship Treaty with India, and to affirm Bangladesh's claim to the South Talpatti island.⁴³

Bangladesh-India relations had direct bearings on Bangladesh-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union's unequivocal

⁴¹. New Times, Moscow, No. 12, 1984, p. 26

⁴². A.E. Granovski, "The Experience of Economic Cooperation within the CMEA and its Relevance to the Conditions of Developing Countries" in South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio-Economic Approach to Peace and Stability, eds. by M. Abdul Hafiz and Iftekharuzzaman, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), 1985, p. 65.

⁴³. The New York Times, June 1, 1981.

support of India on bilateral issues of dispute between Bangladesh and India was the single most important factor undermining Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s. Although under "New Thinking" fundamental changes took place in Soviet foreign policy perceptions and behavior towards the Third World, there was hardly any change in Soviet attitudes vis-a-vis India's roles and behavior towards its neighbours. Bangladesh-India relations remained cool and tense in the late 1980s, despite the first successful SAARC summit in Dhaka in December 1985.⁴⁴

There were shifts in Soviet policy towards South Asia in the late 1980s. Some Soviet authors began to critically review Indo-Soviet relations. For example, Dmitry Yevstafyev wondered "whether the Indian nuclear potential will really be used exclusively for civilian and scientific purposes," taking into account the "closed character of their nuclear programs and their refusal to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty."⁴⁵ The official Soviet position, however, did not go that far. The Soviet Government only regretted that "India has not yet joined the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear

⁴⁴. The organization was initially named South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC), but in the first summit meeting in Dhaka in 1985, it was changed to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

⁴⁵. Dmitry Yevstafyev, "Arms in the Third World", New Times, (Moscow), No. 34, 1990, p. 9.

Weapons."⁴⁶ Although the Soviet Union recognised "contradictions" in India's relations with its neighbours, including Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Moscow failed to offer any help in addressing or eradicating those contradictions.⁴⁷ Of course, the small South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, view their bilateral issues and conflicts with India not merely as contradictions, but as complex, deep-rooted, socio-political, ethno-religious and security problems created or exploited by India.

By the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union appeared to have finally acknowledged the existence of real bilateral problems between Bangladesh and India, but it was too little and too late. The Soviet Union failed to criticize India's roles because of its obsession with, and biased positions towards, New Delhi. Serious mistrust among the Bangladeshis about Soviet intentions in South Asia did not help to improve Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s.⁴⁸

As a result, a growing popular anti-Soviet sentiment emerged in Bangladesh. The most common Bangladeshi complaint

⁴⁶. A. Alekseyev, "Security in Asia: New Approaches, New Horizons," in Development, Politics and Security, op. cit. p.246.

⁴⁷. Even as late as in December 1989, the Soviet Union did not recognise the existence of serious bilateral conflicts among South Asian countries, instead referring to them as "contradictions." Ibid, p. 242.

⁴⁸. This point was generally shared by almost all officials, leaders and academics who were interviewed in Dhaka by the author in December 1990 and January-February 1991.

about the Soviet Union was that when Bangladesh faced formidable challenges and problems with India, Moscow always sided with New Delhi and failed to show any sympathy for Dhaka. The Soviet Union might have its limitations and the popular perception in Bangladesh that Moscow could influence India's policies vis-a-vis might be wrong, but the common mood in Dhaka was, consequently, "our enemy's friend is our enemy."⁴⁹ This conclusion became so deeply rooted in the psyche of the nation that no political regime (either military or civilian) would make any difference. Bangladesh-India relations not only had ramifications for Bangladesh-Soviet relations, but, in fact, was the focal point for Bangladesh's foreign policy during the 1980s.

II

Bangladesh's Close Relations with the West

As discussed earlier, Bangladesh received recognition from all major countries, excluding China, within one year of its independence. Because of the AL Government's close relations with India and Soviet Union, however, and its 'socialist' policies at home, relations with the West and international organizations, could not develop smoothly. In

⁴⁹. This popular proposition, suggested by Kautilya in his Arthashastra [Economic Science] in the 4th century B.C., was widely used in ancient Indian diplomacy. In the medieval age the Arabs also used this formula in their diplomacy. See, Kautilya's Arthashastra, 8th edition, ed. by Dr. R. Shamastry, (Mysore, India: Mysore Printing and Publishing House), 1967, pp. 295-318.

the post-independence era, Bangladesh needed Western aid and assistance on an emergency basis for its domestic economic needs and requirements. There was also considerable pressure on the Government to redefine and reorient foreign policy goals and objectives. The AL Government was, in fact, initiating a number of steps in improving relations with the West, but it was difficult because of the regime's close alliance with India and the USSR.⁵⁰ The political change that came in Bangladesh in 1975, created a congenial atmosphere for improving Dhaka's relations with the West.

As one of the poorest, underdeveloped and aid-dependent countries, Bangladesh had little choice but to pursue close, friendly ties with the West, particularly the US. The military regimes in Dhaka also needed (and received) political, military and diplomatic supports and recognition from the West, for several purposes: to consolidate and strengthen the power and positions of the military regimes which were under constant pressure for democratization; to satisfy their domestic constituency; to neutralize or counterbalance India and the Soviet Union (because neither India nor the Soviet Union accepted the violent political change in 1975, and the military regime that followed); to diversify foreign policy and sources of aid; and to play a more active role in the

⁵⁰. See Peter Lyon, "Bangladesh: Fashioning a Foreign Policy," South Asian Review, Vol. V, No. 3, April 1972, pp. 231-36.

international arena.⁵¹

Nonetheless, economic interests were the determining factor in Bangladesh's relations with the West. For example, as of June 30, 1989, Bangladesh received about \$19 billion of foreign aid from different sources; more than \$10 billion, i.e. about 53%, came from the OECD countries.⁵² These countries were also the main trading partners for Bangladesh. In 1990 Bangladesh imported \$3,650 million worth of goods, with \$1,546 million's worth, i.e. about 42%, coming from the OECD countries. During the same period Bangladesh exported \$1,671 million worth of goods, with \$1,128 million's worth, or 67%, going to the OECD countries.⁵³ (Economic issues are dealt with separately in Chapter Seven).

By the late 1970s, it appeared that the activist foreign policy and close relations with the West and the Islamic countries had paid good dividends. In 1979 Bangladesh won the Asian seat on the UN Security Council, defeating Japan. Bangladesh's strong stand on the Afghan and Kampuchea issues,

⁵¹. For details of Bangladesh foreign policy, its aims, objectives and goals, see Md. Abdul Halim, "Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: A Framework for Analysis," in Emajuddin Ahamed, (1984), op. cit., pp. 1-15.

⁵². These data are computed from Tables 4.0 of the "Flow of External Resources", op. cit. pp. 15, 18 and 21. This amount of aid was received from 15 OECD countries, namely: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA.

⁵³. These figures have been calculated from the "Direction of Trade Statistics, Yearbook 1991," op. cit. p. 95.

and on other international questions, found support internationally, and were received favourably by the Western countries.⁵⁴ President Ziaur Rahman's visits to Germany, Japan and the USA during 1980-81 further consolidated Bangladesh's relations with the West. Dhaka's strong criticism of martial law in Poland and Soviet policies in Central America and Africa surely satisfied its allies in the West.

President Ziaur Rahman's assassination in May 1981 did not seem to disrupt Bangladesh's good relations with the West. General Ershad, the head of the new military regime that came to power in March 1982 (for details, see Chapter Six), visited the US, Britain, France and Germany, to reassure them of Dhaka's commitment to close, friendly relations with them.

During 1984-85 a number of high US officials and military delegations visited Bangladesh. For example, in 1984, G. Schaffer, Assistant US Secretary of State, General Marshall Lee, Commander of the US Land Forces in the Western Pacific, and Congressman J. Pritchard visited the country. In January 1985 the amphibious assault vessel USN Tuscaloosa, with 12 medium tanks and 20 armoured carriers on board, paid a 'good will' visit to the port of Chittagong.⁵⁵ Although these visits were simply described as 'friendly', observers widely believed that they had political as well as security ramifications. According to confidential reports, those visits took place

⁵⁴. Craig Baxter, op. cit., pp. 107-08.

⁵⁵. Dhaka Courier, Dhaka, No. 14, January 12, 1985.

primarily at Dhaka's initiatives, because some quarters in the Bangladesh army were interested in developing some sort of defence arrangements with the US, and providing base facilities to Washington. The US reportedly was not interested, on the grounds that Bangladesh was strategically 'too far north.'⁵⁶ The Soviets and Indians, however, viewed the development of friendly Bangladesh-US relations with great concern and suspicion. Some pro-Soviet sources in India, particularly the Blitz and the Patriot, were involved in allegations that Bangladesh was providing base facilities to the US.⁵⁷ In early 1984 the Soviet press published a story that Chittagong port and (some) islands in the Bay of Bengal "are being placed at the disposal of the US Navy."⁵⁸ It was also reported in some Dhaka tabloids that during General Ershad's visit to the US in October 1983 "an agreement in principle was arrived at regarding the construction of a refueling station for American naval vessels, which can later

⁵⁶. Geo-strategically Bangladesh is located deep inside the Bay of Bengal, and according to experts, the coastline of Bangladesh is not suitable for construction of military bases. The area is also vulnerable to frequent natural disasters and calamities. This information was received by the author during confidential interviews with senior army officials in Dhaka in December 1990. Dr. Shaukat Hassan, a former fellow of the Canadian Institute for Peace and International Security, shared a similar view with the author during a discussion in Ottawa, on September 15, 1992.

⁵⁷. Alexander Usvatov, "What the Pentagon is After," New Times, (Moscow), No. 16, 1984, p. 18.

⁵⁸. Ibid

be converted into a naval base."⁵⁹

The Soviet press stepped up its anti-American campaign in South Asia. A. Chicherov, in an article published in the Asian Survey, accused the Pentagon of making great efforts to establish bases in Bangladesh, the Maldives and Pakistan in order to surround India.⁶⁰ The Soviet accusation that Bangladesh was providing base facilities to the US was, in fact, not new. As early as February 1981, Moscow radio, quoting an Indian weekly, reported that "Washington has pressed on Bangladesh an agreement on a 100-year lease of St. Martin's Island" in the Bay of Bengal.⁶¹

Both Bangladesh and the US repeatedly denied the existence of any such defence arrangements. The US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Michael Armacost in his Address to the Philadelphia World Affairs Council in December 1984 said,

Let there be no misunderstanding: the United States should not be involved in maintaining regional security and a balance of power in South Asia by establishing military bases or stationing American troops on the subcontinent. We have no desire to dominate the region. Our interests are best served when South Asian states are stable, resilient and strong--capable of preventing outside forces from

⁵⁹. Notun Katha, [new words], Dhaka, March 3, 1984.

⁶⁰. Alexander I. Chicherov, "South Asia and the Indian Ocean in the 1980s," Asian Survey, Vol. XXIV, No. 11, November 1984. PP. 11-24. See also A. Beglova, Bangladesh: iuszhnaya Azia i politika Shsha, [Bangladesh: South Asia and Politics of the USA], (Moscow: Institute of USA and Canada), 1984.

⁶¹. "Moscow Radio, English Commentary for Asia," February 3, 1981.

intruding in their regional affairs.⁶²

The Soviet and Indian press exacerbated the issue of US base facilities in Bangladesh for political purposes. Nonetheless, information gathered by this author suggests the fact that there were, in fact, discussions about the US base facilities in Bangladesh in the early 1980s. The issue was, however, not pursued further because of strategic reasons discussed earlier, and also because of political instability and sensitivity in Bangladesh. The apparent division in the army on the issue also seriously limited the government's options.

During the second half of the 1980s, Bangladesh's relations with the US appeared less cordial than in the earlier period. However, US influence in the country did not diminish. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Humayun Rashid Choudhury, who was also the President of the UN General Assembly, was scheduled to visit Moscow in December 1986, but it was widely believed that the visit was cancelled because of pressure from the US embassy in Dhaka.⁶³

⁶². Michael H. Armacost, "South Asia and US Foreign Policy." Address before the Philadelphia World Affairs Council, December 12, 1984, (Washington, D.C.: The US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs), Current Affairs, No. 645, P. 3.

⁶³. Many officials in Bangladesh whom the author interviewed during his field research in Bangladesh during December 1990- March 1991 shared this view. It was particularly confirmed by a high Foreign Ministry official in Dhaka during a confidential interview. Confidential Interview, January 12, 1991.

As the Soviet Union withdrew troops from Afghanistan in February 1989, the strategic importance to the US of pro-Western South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, was diminished. This was reflected in both political and economic relations. The US aid to Bangladesh gradually decreased in the 1980s.⁶⁴ For example, in 1984-85 Bangladesh received \$195 million aid from the US; the amount was reduced to \$95 million in 1988-89.⁶⁵

As the Cold War was coming to an end, Sino-US, Soviet-US, Indo-US and Sino-Soviet relations were gradually improving. As a result, Bangladesh, along with other pro-Western South Asian states lost their strategic importance and significance to US. However, the strategic importance of Bangladesh to the US appeared to have increased in the late 1980s. In 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and US-led multinational forces were deployed in the Gulf against Iraq, Bangladesh apparently re-acquired a measure of strategic importance for Washington.⁶⁶ For obvious reasons, the US wanted to involve Bangladesh, the world's second largest Muslim country, in the war--and

⁶⁴. Bangladesh's concern over the decreasing US aid was expressed by a high official in the External Resources Division in Dhaka during a confidential interview with the author. Confidential Interview, Dhaka, January 10, 1991.

⁶⁵. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. p. 40.

⁶⁶. For details of Bangladesh's policy towards the Gulf crisis, see Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXVII, 1991, p. 37641.

Bangladesh announced that it would send 5000 troops to Saudi Arabia.⁶⁷

Bangladesh's relations with the West were not always trouble-free. Bangladesh was always critical of US support of Israel on the Palestinian issue. The US-Iranian hostage crisis in 1980 also put Bangladesh in an awkward position. Dhaka criticised the Iranian action, but at the same time did not support the UN proposal to impose economic sanctions on Iran.⁶⁸ Bangladesh denounced the US sponsored Camp David accords of 1979 on Arab-Israeli conflicts. In protest against Egypt's separate peace treaty with Israel, Bangladesh suspended relations with Egypt.⁶⁹

Bangladesh experienced its most violent anti-US demonstrations in January 1991, when the Government supported the US-led coalition forces in the war against Iraq. Nonetheless, the Governments' larger political, economic and ideological interests overwhelmed these occasional problems and conflicts of interests with the US. The military regimes

⁶⁷. Ibid

⁶⁸. Statement made by the Bangladeshi representative at the UN Security Council meeting, on December 13, 1979. Bangladesh Documents, (Dhaka: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of Bangladesh), Vol. 3, No. 2, October-December 1979, p. 30.

⁶⁹. Keesings Contemporary Archives, ed. by Robert Fraser, (London: Longman), Vol. XXVII, 1979, p. 29769.

of both Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad had profound interests in developing and maintaining close relations with the West, and those policies apparently had wide public support.

It is true that the Islamic forces in Bangladesh created occasional troubles for the growth of relations with the West, but, at the same time, they did not create any serious problems because: the majority of the Muslims are Sunni (more than 95%); Bangladesh's Islamic political parties are mainly influenced and dominated by Saudi Arabia; and the Islamic nature of Bangladeshi society is a conservative, not a revolutionary one.⁷⁰

Dhaka's close ties with the West had implications for Bangladesh-Soviet relations. In the early 1980s the general foreign policy practice in Third World countries was that when relations with one superpower deteriorated, steps would be taken to improve relations with the other in order to balance policy postures and strengthen bargaining positions vis-a-vis both superpowers. Bangladesh's options, however, were limited because of the country's overwhelming dependence on the West and OPEC for economic aid and political support, and the leaders' and elites' strong anti-Soviet policy and posture. In fact, anti-Soviet and anti-communist feelings and sentiments among the Bangladeshis, particularly among their leaders, were

⁷⁰. This issue is elaborated in part III of this chapter.

strong, deep and pervasive.⁷¹

Even when the Soviet Union went through profound social, political and economic changes under the banners of "Perestroika" and "New Thinking," withdrew from Third World conflicts, and expressed interests in improving relations with all nations, irrespective of their political orientation and ideology, Bangladesh evinced no corresponding interest in improving relations with the USSR. There may have been two reasons for Bangladesh's benign neglect and indifferent attitudes towards the reforms and changes in the USSR.

First, despite dramatic changes in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and improvements in East-West relations, most Bangladeshis, including their leaders and elites, were either not interested in or were not well-informed about those changes, and, as a result, widespread apprehensions, doubts, suspicions and illusions about the Soviet Union prevailed.

Second, there was apparently broad consensus among Bangladeshi elites, both military and civilian, that they had nothing to gain by improving relations with the crumbling USSR. The regimes in Dhaka were acutely aware of the fact that the kind of economic, political and diplomatic help and support they were looking for could not be expected from the Soviet Union.

⁷¹. Historical experiences, analysed in Chapter Four, contributed to this factor. Western education and political socialization in the conservative religious tradition also contributed to it. For details of Islam and modernization in Bangladesh, see Razia Akhter Banu, op. cit.

III

Bangladesh-Chinese Relations

As mentioned earlier, China was the only major power which did not recognize Bangladesh until the political change in Dhaka in 1975, because of its close alliance with Pakistan, and enmity and hostility towards India and the Soviet Union. China not only refused to recognize Bangladesh but, as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, also voted against Dhaka's entry into the world body. However, the Bangladesh Government avoided criticizing China and expressed hope and interest in improving relations with Beijing.⁷² In June 1974, China, along with all other Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, supported a resolution recommending Bangladesh's admission to the UN. Bangladesh welcomed the move. In his speech on the occasion of the entry of Bangladesh into the United Nations, then Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Hossain said,

Bangladesh has consistently pursued an independent non-aligned foreign policy promoting friendship with all countries of the world on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.⁷³

⁷². Peter Lyon, op. cit.

⁷³. "Speech of Dr. Kamal Hossain, Minister for Foreign Affairs, delivered at the UN General Assembly on the occasion of the entry of Bangladesh into the United Nations," in Ten Years of Bangladesh in the United Nations, Speeches of Heads of State, Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh at the UN General Assembly, 1974-84, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1984), p. 9.

China not only accorded immediate recognition to the regime that seized power in Dhaka in 1975, but also expressed a readiness to provide to it political and military help and support. Close, friendly relations with China were crucial to the new regime for three reasons: first, recognition from a major power like China would help the regime to establish credibility and legitimacy both at home and abroad; second, it helped to neutralize radical, extremist pro-Chinese groups and parties (which were quite powerful and influential) in the country; and third, it helped counter growing threats from India, and served as an insurance chip against the Soviet Union.

During the 1980s Bangladesh's relations with China were built on the common platform of anti-Sovietism and anti-Indianism. China became an important partner of Bangladesh in terms of its political, military and security interests. Clearly ideology did not matter, because the Chinese were as atheistic as the Soviets.

After 1976, high-level official visits between the two countries became regular phenomena. Geographical proximity as well as common and identical views on major international and regional issues helped to cement relations between the two old enemies. There was virtually no major conflict of interest between China and Bangladesh during the 1980s. China supported Bangladesh in its bilateral disputes with India and welcomed

Dhaka's strong anti-Soviet stand, while Bangladesh supported China's positions on Afghanistan, Kampuchea and other regional and international issues.

During his visit to China in August 1980, President Ziaur Rahman reiterated Bangladesh's demands for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea. On the other hand, before leaving for a major South Asian tour, including Bangladesh, in June 1981, Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang commented: "South Asian countries are facing a direct threat from the Soviet Union."⁷⁴ In the early 1980s, Sino-Bangladesh relations blossomed; comments by high-level Bangladeshi leaders and Government officials about China often targeted Moscow. For example, in 1981 Mirza Golam Hafiz, the Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, described China "as a tested friend of Bangladesh," and claimed that "she will stand like a rock behind us in times of our need."⁷⁵ The Chinese press also widely covered the anti-Soviet stand and policies taken by the Bangladesh Government, including the 1982 expulsion of Soviet diplomats from Dhaka. The Chinese press reported that "...to safeguard Bangladesh's national security, it has expelled two members of the Soviet embassy in Dhaka for their nefarious activities."⁷⁶

Bangladesh valued the Chinese support for the causes of

⁷⁴. Chitra K. Tiwari, op. cit. p. 254.

⁷⁵. The Bangladesh Observer, September 5, 1981.

⁷⁶. Beijing Review, Vol. 25, 1982, No. 33, p. 14

its national interest and security. On the other hand, Bangladesh's anti-Indian and anti-Soviet postures continued to serve China's interests. During President Ershad's visit to China in 1985, President Li Xiannian praised Bangladesh for "upholding justice, opposing expansion and power politics and working to develop friendly relations with other countries."⁷⁷

Close, friendly political relations also helped to improve economic relations between the two countries. In November 1983, an agreement was signed between them to set up a Joint Economic Commission. In September 1984, during the first meeting of the Commission, an agreement was signed to finance the construction of a bridge across the river Buriganga, near Dhaka, at a cost of \$15 million.⁷⁸ In March 1986, during his return visit to Bangladesh, the Chinese President announced that China would provide an interest-free loan of 15,000,000 yuan towards the financing of development projects in Bangladesh. In August, an agreement was signed to purchase seven ocean-going vessels from China at concessional rates.⁷⁹

Still, when compared to other countries, Chinese aid to Bangladesh was not significant; until June 30, 1989 Bangladesh had received about \$100 million aid from China, whereas

⁷⁷. Ibid., Vol. 28, No. 28, 1985, p. 5

⁷⁸. V.P. Puchkov, op. cit. p. 189.

⁷⁹. Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXIII, 1986, p. 34483.

India had provided \$364 million aid during the same period.⁸⁰ China was also not a big trading partner; in 1990 Bangladesh exported \$25 million dollar worth of goods to China, while imports totalled about \$124 million dollars.⁸¹

Military cooperation between them developed rapidly. Visits of high-level military delegations between the two

Table 7. Arms Procurement by Bangladesh, 1980-90

<u>Years</u>	<u>Types of Arms</u>	<u>Sources</u>
1980	48 F-7 fighter planes 10 P.B.	China Sweden
1981	36 T-59 MBT 2AN-26 Curl, Transport planes 5 Models 206L and 212 Helicopters	China USSR USA
1982	4 Hainan Class FAC 1 Leopard Class Frigate	China U.K.
1984	36 F-6 fighter planes 2PB-46 type P.C.	China Singapore
1986	6 Romeo class submarine 5 Magister jet trainer	China France
1988	1 AS-332 Helicopter	Indonesia
1989	2 693 class landing crafts	Denmark
1990	16 F-7 fighter planes 40 F-6 fighter planes	China Pakistan

Source: SIPRI Yearbooks 1980-90, World Armanents and Disarmanent, (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: Oxford University Press), 1990.

⁸⁰. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op cit. pp. 58 and 66.

⁸¹. "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1991," op. cit. p. 95.

countries became regular phenomena during the 1980s. During 1983-84 the Chiefs of the Bangladesh Navy and Air Force visited China, and the Commanders-in-Chief of the Chinese Navy and Air Force paid 'goodwill' visits to Bangladesh. According to reports, Chinese warships also visited Bangladeshi ports in 1985.⁸² China replaced the Soviet Union in the early 1980s as Bangladesh's number one arms supplier, as shown in Table 7. During the 1980s, China supplied almost all of the arms that Bangladesh purchased; only two AN-26 transport planes came from the Soviet Union (there were no registered arms purchases during 1983, 1985 and 1987).

To satisfy pro-Chinese groups, the government appointed Kazi Jafar, leader of the United People's Party, a major pro-Chinese group, as Deputy Prime Minister in November 1986. Later, in March 1988, during a cabinet reshuffle, he was appointed political advisor to the President in addition to his duties as Deputy Prime Minister. President Ershad visited China again in November 1988, and signed an agreement to set up a joint expert group on flood control.

Bangladesh welcomed President Gorbachev's visit to China, but was skeptical about the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations. Dhaka also failed to join Western countries (and Moscow) in condemning the massacres of the pro-democracy students' and workers' movement in Tienanmin square in August

⁸². The report was published in Krasnaya Zvezda, [The Red Star], November 19, 1985.

1989.⁸³

Bangladesh and China shared similar views on many international and regional issues and events. For example, on the Afghan issue, despite the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, China accused Moscow for continuing support of the "unpopular Najibullah regime to consolidate the rule of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)," and Bangladesh supported China's position.⁸⁴ With the significant improvement in Sino-Soviet relations (and also Sino-Indian) of the late 1980s, Bangladesh could no longer usefully apply 'the China card.' Nonetheless, China remained an important partner and close ally. In fact, economic interests were not the determining factors in Bangladesh's relations with China. Rather, the military regimes in Dhaka considered Beijing to be an important political and strategic ally.

As observed earlier, both India and the Soviet Union were critical of Bangladesh's close relations with the West, but they were more concerned about the growing military cooperation between Beijing and Dhaka. The Soviet Union, for obvious reasons, did not like Dhaka's courting of Beijing, Moscow's foremost rival in the region, and viewed the development of

⁸³. Bangladesh did not condemn the incident because of its close relations with Beijing. This point was made by a high official in the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka, during a confidential interview with the author, "Interview", op. cit.

⁸⁴. Zheng Rui Xiang, "Regional Security and Cooperation in South Asia," in Development, Politics and Security, op. cit. p. 188.

Bangladesh-Chinese relations with concern and apprehension. The Soviet press strongly criticised China's role in Bangladesh and the activities of pro-Chinese groups in the country. The Soviets accused the pro-Chinese groups in Bangladesh, under instruction from Beijing, along with "reactionary rightwing pro-American parties," of working against Soviet interests there.⁸⁵ Bangladesh's strong stand on the Kampuchea issue both in the UN and the non-aligned movement further damaged Bangladesh-Soviet relations.⁸⁶

The Soviet Union was critical of Bangladesh's close relations with the West and the Islamic countries, but did not find it particularly threatening. Bangladesh's close relations with Beijing, however, genuinely bothered Moscow. For geopolitical and strategic reasons, Chinese influence in any South Asian country was deemed to be detrimental to both Indian and Soviet interests in the region.

IV

Dhaka's Close Relations with the Islamic World

Bangladesh had genuine interests in improving relations with Muslim countries, particularly with Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich Arab countries, for religious, economic and

⁸⁵. P.M. Aslanov, B.A. Bolotin, "Ideologicheskaya ekspansia Pekina v iuzhnoi Azii, na blizhnem e srednem Vostoke," [Ideological Expansion of Beijing in South Asia, Near and Middle East], Narodi Azii i Afriki, [Peoples of Asia and Africa], No. 3, 1981, p. 287.

⁸⁶. Waliur Rahman, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

political reasons. The Bangladesh independence movement, however, was widely misunderstood by the Islamic world--primarily for two reasons: first, Pakistan, as the largest Muslim country, was able to convince fellow Muslim states that the creation of Bangladesh was an Indo-Soviet (Hindu-atheist) conspiracy against Muslim Pakistan; second, Israel's inconsequential endorsement of Bangladesh's independence movement made the Dhaka Government suspect in the Arab and Islamic world.⁸⁷ Immediately following independence, most of the Arab countries recognised Bangladesh, but relations did not improve until Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in early 1974. Bangladesh became a member of the OIC in early 1974. Yet relations with key Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia did not improve until the political change of 1975.

Thanks to the dramatic increase in oil revenues, the economies of oil-rich Arab countries boomed in the early 1970s, and they began to recruit thousands of foreign workers, both skilled and unskilled. Many Bangladeshis believed that improved relations with them would open wide opportunities for the promotion of trade, provide a lucrative labour market, and diversify sources of foreign aid.

Moreover, in the absence of diplomatic recognition, it

⁸⁷. See, Dauglas C. Makeig, "Identity, Aid and Security: Bangladesh and the Islamic World," "Bengal and Bangladesh: Politics and Culture on the Golden Delta," eds. by Elliot L. Tepper and Glen A. Hynes, (Michigan: Michigan State University Press), South Asian Series, Occassional Paper, No. 38, 1990, p. 117.

was difficult for Bangladeshi Muslims to visit Saudi Arabia and perform their religious pilgrimage, which fact angered and frustrated many Muslims.⁸⁸ Public demands for close ties with the Arab countries had been growing since the early 1970s, but it was difficult for the pro-Indian, pro-Soviet and 'secular' AL Government to improve relations with Muslim countries.

Bangladesh had political, economic, social, religious and ideological interests in developing relations with the Muslim countries. As a first step for achieving these goals, the military regime that took power in 1975 brought legal and administrative changes to the constitution. An Islamic orientation was given to the constitution by inserting the words "Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim" [In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful]; the word "secularism," as a basic principle of the state, was replaced by "Absolute Trust and Faith in the Almighty Allah."⁸⁹ A new clause was also added to Article 25 of the 1972 Constitution (related to external relations), expressing solidarity with fraternal Muslim countries. The Clause read;

The State shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve, and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.⁹⁰

⁸⁸. Akmal Hossein, "Bangladesh and the Islamic World," in Emajuddin Ahamed, (1984), op. cit.

⁸⁹. Amendments to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, Proclamations (Amendment) Order, No. 1 of 23 April 1977. Article 8(IA) and Article 12.

⁹⁰. Ibid. Article 25.

Recognition by the Muslim countries was thought to be necessary and essential for the regime, for reasons of both domestic and external legitimacy. As S.K. Chakrabarti noted, Ziaur Rahman's foreign policy was "anti-Indian," "anti-Soviet," "pro-American" and "pro-Islamic," but it essentially reflected domestic needs and demands.⁹¹

Close, friendly relations with Muslim countries helped Bangladesh enhance its international position and prestige.⁹² At its 9th Foreign Ministers' Conference in Dakar, Senegal, in 1978, the OIC endorsed Bangladesh's candidature to the UN Security Council seat for Asia for 1979-80. Bangladesh was also elected a member of important committees like the Jerusalem Committee, the Non-aligned Committee on Palestine and the Islamic Peace Committee to end the Iran-Iraq war.⁹³

On the eve of the 14th OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference, held in Dhaka in December 1983, the military regime deemed it necessary and opportune to intensify its anti-Soviet campaign and propaganda, both at home and abroad, in order to satisfy the West, as well as conservative forces in the Islamic world.

⁹¹. S.K. Chakrabarti, op. cit., p. 239.

⁹². For details of Bangladesh's relations with the oil-rich Arab countries, see Golam Mostafa "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor," BIISS Journal. Vol. 7, No. 1, 1986.

⁹³. For details of Bangladesh's roles and activities in various OIC Committees, see Fourteen Years of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, (Dhaka: Unpublished research paper prepared by Golam Mostafa in 1983 for the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies), 1983.

However, at the Dhaka Conference, Bangladesh's position on Afghanistan was more moderate than it was in previous conferences. The proceedings of the Dhaka conference were widely covered by the Soviet press and media, particularly on those issues and deliberations where the Islamic countries criticized the West (the US policies in Iran and Palestine); on the other hand, they were conspicuously silent on the debates on Afghanistan and Kampuchea. The Soviets appeared, in general, to be satisfied with the outcome of the Dhaka Meeting. A Soviet correspondent in Dhaka, O. Fomin wrote;

The Soviet public has welcomed those positive decisions of the Dhaka conference....The Soviet Union has always regarded Moslem anti-imperialist and anti-zionist unity as a decisive factor in the struggle for a just settlement in the Middle East, for national independence, for the honour and dignity of the Arabs and Moslems.⁹⁴

With improved political and economic relations, by the mid 1980s Bangladesh also became interested in developing some sort of security relationship with the Persian Gulf Arab states, primarily Saudi Arabia. Several factors may have influenced Bangladesh's decisions. First, Pakistan had been providing troops for the protection of Saudi Royal families for a long time; but there were reports of tension and misunderstanding between these Pakistani troops and the Saudi defence forces. The military leadership in Bangladesh thought that the Saudis might be interested in replacing Pakistani

⁹⁴. O. Fomin, "The Dacca Islamic Conference", New Times, (Moscow), No. 1, 1984, p. 11.

troops with Bangladeshi ones. Second, as observed earlier, despite earlier hopes, by the mid 1980s it was clear that the US was not interested in any security arrangement with Bangladesh. Last, but not least, the military leadership in Dhaka was convinced that a close military and security relationship with Saudi Arabia would not only strengthen its power and position at home, but would also bring political, economic and diplomatic gains and benefits. But apparently no progress was made.⁹⁵

Apart from political and ideological interests, Bangladesh had a profound economic interest in improving relations with Arab countries, particularly in terms of promoting and expanding trade, exploring potential job markets for skilled and unskilled manpower, receiving more aid from oil-rich Arab countries and attracting Arab investments to Bangladesh. For example, Bangladesh's exports to 19 Arab countries and Iran increased from 764 million taka in 1975-76 to 4,605 million taka in 1983-84 (the exchange rate was, 24.98 taka=1 US dollar).⁹⁶ Bangladeshi imports from these countries increased from 1,625 million taka in 1975-76 to 7,601 million taka in 1983-84.⁹⁷ Aid from oil-rich Arab countries to Bangladesh also increased in the 1980s. For example, Saudi aid to Bangladesh

⁹⁵. See, Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXIII, 1986, p. 35291.

⁹⁶. Annual Export Receipts 1983-84, (Dhaka: Statistical Department, Bangladesh Bank), pp. 201-212.

⁹⁷. Annual Import Payments 1983-84, Ibid, pp. 162-67.

increased from \$130.4 million during 1971-79 to \$411.3 million during 1980-89.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, more and more Bangladeshis found job opportunities in Middle Eastern countries. According to official reports in 1976, 5,559 Bangladeshis worked in various Arab countries, and their total remittance was 358.5 million taka. In 1984, 328,043 Bangladeshis worked in the Middle East, and the remittance total increased to 12,681.8 million taka--the second largest contributor to foreign exchange earnings, after jute.⁹⁹

The Soviet Union did not challenge Dhaka's close relations with the Islamic countries, but accused right-wing, pro-Western and pro-Chinese forces of exploiting religious sentiments and using them to undermine Bangladesh-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union also clearly did not like Dhaka's strong stand on the Afghan issue and its criticisms of Soviet policies towards its own Muslim populations.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit., Table 5.21, p. 45.

⁹⁹. The Bangladesh Observer, February 5, 1985. For details of Bangladesh-Middle East economic relations, see Golam Mostafa, (1986), op. cit. pp. 43-59.

¹⁰⁰. Despite tense relations, officially Bangladesh never raised the issue of the oppression of Soviet Muslims by the Kremlin regime. But in the 1980s, particularly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Bangladesh press and media along with Islamic parties and groups intensified attacks on Moscow's policies towards its Muslim populations. Two leading Bengali newspapers--Sangram [struggle] and Ingilab [revolution], controlled by the Jamat-i-Islami and a right-wing religious leader respectively--led the campaign.

In the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union started to re-evaluate its policy towards the Gulf countries and tried to improve relations with conservative Arab states, conflicts of interest between Bangladesh and the USSR on Dhaka's close relations with the Muslim countries appeared to have narrowed down. Political reforms in the Soviet Union and increased religious freedoms for Muslims, including permission to take part in religious pilgrimages to Mekka and Madina, were welcomed by Bangladesh, and helped to improve Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

In fact, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union always had identical views on some major issues and events in the Middle East, particularly on the Palestinian issue, the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) and the Gulf war (1991). Bangladesh and the Soviet Union were also on the same side in criticising US policies in Egypt and Libya. Dhaka appreciated and welcomed the help and assistance offered by the Soviet Union in repatriating Bangladeshi workers who were stranded in Jordan by the Gulf crisis in 1990.

V

The Afghan and Kampuchea Issues

As mentioned earlier, the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan did not pose any direct threat to Bangladesh's national interests, but Dhaka viewed it as a serious challenge to peace and security in the region, as well as a clear

violation of the principles of the UN Charter and the Non-aligned movement. Dhaka demanded immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan, and viewed the Soviet act as a "gross violation of a fundamental principle of the UN Charter."¹⁰¹ Dhaka continued its strong stand on the Afghan issue both at regional and international levels, and repeatedly demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, in the interest of peace and stability in the region.¹⁰²

Bangladesh took the initiative of calling an extraordinary session of the OIC Foreign Ministers to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. The extraordinary session was held in Pakistan in January 1980. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Muhammad Shamsul Huq addressed the session:

The presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is a matter of anxiety and pain for us. Bangladesh upholds the sovereign and inalienable right of the people of Afghanistan to determine freely their own form of Government and chose their own political, economic and social system without any external interference or military intervention.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹. Message from President Ziaur Rahman to the 11th Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference held in Islamabad from 17 to 21 May 1980, (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh).

¹⁰². Address of Foreign Minister Professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq at the Eleventh Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference from May 17-20, 1980 at Islamabad, Pakistan. (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), p. 13.

¹⁰³. Address by Foreign Minister Professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq at the extraordinary session of the Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers at Islamabad from January 26-28, 1980, (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the

Committed to the principles of non-alignment and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, Bangladesh also criticised the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea. The Kampuchean issue was one of the first issues brought before the UN Security Council immediately after Dhaka became a member of that body. Bangladesh, along with Kuwait and four other Third World members of the UN Security Council, drafted a strongly-worded resolution demanding the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Kampuchea.¹⁰⁴

A few months later, in January 1980, when the Afghan issue was first debated at the Security Council, Bangladesh, along with other members of the Council, worked hard to secure passage of strongly worded resolutions against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵ Referring to the crises in Afghanistan and Kampuchea, the head of the Bangladesh delegation at the 35th General Assembly of the United Nations expressed the firm view that

the solution of these problems lies in the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops and creating conditions to enable the people of these countries to have a government of their own choice without any external intervention, military or otherwise.¹⁰⁶

People's Republic of Bangladesh), p. 8.

¹⁰⁴. Waliur Rahman, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁰⁵. Ibid. p. 22.

¹⁰⁶. Speech of Professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the 35th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 29, 1980, "Ten Years of Bangladesh in the United Nations," op. cit., p. 83

However, Bangladesh never mentioned the names of the Soviet Union or Vietnam when referring to these issues. In 1982 and early 1983 Bangladesh, apparently, became more conciliatory, and softened its positions on these issues.¹⁰⁷ But Dhaka's relations with Moscow were seriously affected in 1984, when the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister, in his speech at the 39th Session of the UN General Assembly, for the first time mentioned the names of both the Soviet Union and Vietnam. In his words:

We, therefore, view the developments in Afghanistan and Kampuchea with deep concern. In this context, we call upon our friendly country, the Soviet Union, to withdraw her troops from Afghanistan. We believe that the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan is a sine qua non for a satisfactory and viable solution of the Afghan problem. Similarly, we call upon Vietnam to withdraw her troops from Kampuchea.¹⁰⁸

Bangladesh continued its strong anti-Soviet position towards Afghan and Kampuchean issues during the 1980s. In his speech at the 40th regular session of the UN General Assembly, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister expressed Dhaka's "grave concern" over these situations, describing the withdrawals of all foreign troops as the "essential prerequisite for a just

¹⁰⁷. Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Muhammad Shamsul Huq, in his speech at the 36th regular session of the UN General Assembly in September 1981, referred to the Afghan and Kampuchea issues, but the tone was much conciliatory and less critical. Ibid. p. 90.

¹⁰⁸. Speech of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Advisor on Foreign Affairs to the President at the 39th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, October 1, 1984, Ibid. p. 119.

and lasting settlement of the problems in these two countries."¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the Soviet press strongly criticised Dhaka's stance on these issues, warning that

the pressure from the side of imperialism and reaction has the aim of compelling the country (Bangladesh) to follow a policy that is alien to its own interests, and to turn Bangladesh into a base for subversive activity. A clear concession to such pressure were various foreign policy steps recently taken by Dacca and in particular the position it assumed vis-a-vis events in Afghanistan and Kampuchea.¹¹⁰

Bangladesh, however, did not break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet-installed government in Kabul, although a call for such action was made by the OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference in 1980.¹¹¹ In early 1985, a high-level party official from Afghanistan was invited to attend a seminar in Dhaka.¹¹² In 1987, the Afghan ambassador to India, along with a senior Foreign Ministry official from Kabul, visited Dhaka, causing annoyance in Pakistan and China.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹. Address by Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the 40th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 10 October 1985, Waliur Rahman, op. cit., p. 65.

¹¹⁰. Pravda, March 22, 1982.

¹¹¹. Far Eastern Economic Review, March 14, 1980.

¹¹². The seminar was held at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) in Dhaka, in January 1985; President Ershad addressed the inaugural session. Dr. Om Prakash, a high party official from Afghanistan, attended the Seminar.

¹¹³. Far Eastern Economic Review (Asia Yearbook 1988), p. 97.

Bangladesh downplayed the visit, saying that it was not officially approved. At the same time, Bangladesh officially invited Afghanistan to join the Dhaka-based Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).¹¹⁴

Another reason for Dhaka's more conciliatory approach towards the Afghan and Kampuchea issues might be that Bangladesh was working vigorously for the success of the newly formed SAARC, and, since member states were divided on these issues, Dhaka was concerned that its strong position and intransigent attitude might jeopardise the future of the organization. In 1988, when the Geneva agreement for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, by 15 February 1989, was signed, Bangladesh welcomed the move, describing it as a major victory for the United Nations. At the same time, however, Dhaka vowed to continue its endeavours to ensure the restoration of the non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan. Similarly, Bangladesh welcomed the Vietnamese decision to pull out from Kampuchea, but remained suspicious about prospects for restoration of peace and stability in that country.¹¹⁵

Dhaka's strong positions on the Afghan and Kampuchea

¹¹⁴. Ibid.

¹¹⁵. Statement by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh at the Eighteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Riyadh, March 14, 1989, Bangladesh Documents, January-March 1989, op. cit. p. 155.

issues were mainly guided by its principles of non-alignment, Islamic solidarity and non-interference in internal affairs of other states. Dhaka's dependence on the West, the oil-rich Arab states, and close relations with Pakistan, and China also limited and influenced its policy towards Afghanistan. There were also historical, cultural, religious and regio-political reasons and considerations.

First, Afghanistan was a fellow South Asian, non-aligned Muslim country, and had long historical cultural and economic ties with Bangladesh.¹¹⁶ Bangladesh, as a non-aligned Muslim country, respected and supported the non-aligned posture and Islamic character of Afghanistan.

Second, as Afghanistan had troubled relations with Pakistan, it was in its national interests to support the independence movement in East Pakistan. Kabul supported the independence war of Bangladesh and helped many Bangladeshis flee from Pakistan in 1971. Afghanistan was also one of the first Muslim states to recognize Bangladesh.

Third, Bangladesh had long-outstanding bilateral disputes with India, and relations between the two countries had deteriorated in the late 1970s, for reasons discussed earlier.

¹¹⁶. Afghan merchants and traders used to come and conduct trade with Bengal long before other Muslim invaders came to India. Unlike other Muslim invaders in India, the Afghans created a positive image, and developed close relations with the locals. Many Afghan traders settled down in Bengal and influenced the society. For details of the historical relations of Afghanistan with Bengal, see N.B. Roy, "Bengal Under Imperial Afghan Rule," in The History of Bengal, ed. by J. N. Sarker, op. cit.

When India chose not to condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Bangladesh used its diplomatic offensive to undermine India's position and prestige among both the Islamic and non-aligned countries.

Fourth, since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was denounced by the West, China and the oil-rich conservative Arab countries--all of whom were major aid-donors to Bangladesh--the military regime in Dhaka found it in its interest to take a strong anti-Soviet stand; in fact, it was necessary in order to satisfy the West.

Fifth, the Islamic forces and groups in Bangladesh had always blamed communist Russia, along with India, for breaking up their "sacred land"--Pakistan--and viewed the Soviet Union as the number one enemy of Islam and Muslim peoples. Pro-Chinese groups also continued to build their support base on anti-Soviet and anti-Indian platforms, and used the Afghan and Kampuchea issues to this end. Since these groups enjoyed considerable popularity and support in domestic politics, the Government had no option other than to take strong stands on these issues, in order to consolidate its own domestic power and position, and to neutralize that of other potential claimants.

In fact, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused severe damage to its interests in the Islamic and non-aligned world. Since the late 1950s there had not been a single instance when UN verdicts had been so overwhelmingly against the USSR as in

the case of voting on the Afghan issue.¹¹⁷

Initially Moscow tried to limit the damage by inviting leaders of various Islamic countries, and Muslim clerics, to the Soviet Union, with a view to explaining its motives and objectives in Afghanistan. But these efforts ended in failure when Muslim clerics refused to attend a conference in Tashkent in 1980, in explicit protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹¹⁸

The Soviet press launched attacks against the West, as well as against the conservative Muslim states, for instigating anti-Sovietism in the Islamic world on the issues and events in Afghanistan. Moscow blamed "the imperialists in the West" for "using the Islamic card, as in the past" to "place Middle Eastern countries under the military and political control of Imperialism."¹¹⁹

The Soviet press also started to publish a series of articles on Islam, particularly on Moscow's role and efforts in defending Muslims and Islamic countries from "US imperia-

¹¹⁷. In the emergency UN General Assembly session on January 10, 1980, the member countries voted on a resolution calling for "the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan;" 104 countries voted in favour, 18 against and 18 abstained. For details, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ed. by Robert Fraser, (London: Longman), Vol. XXVI, 1980, p. 30237.

¹¹⁸. For details of Muslim reactions against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ed. by Robert Fraser, (London: Longman), Vol. XXVII, 1981, pp. 30881-82.

¹¹⁹. New Times, (Moscow), No. 5, 1980, p. 7.

lism." In one article, "SSSR i musulmanskie strany" [The USSR and the Muslim States], published in Narodi Azii i Afriki, [Peoples of Asia and Africa] in early 1980, the author presented a historical account of issues and events when the Soviet Union supported and helped Muslim peoples. It concluded that Moscow had always remained a close, natural friend of the Muslim countries, and that it was US imperialism which was using Islam against the peoples of Iran and Afghanistan.¹²⁰ Leonid Medvedko, in an article published in the Moscow weekly New Times, noted that Islam had played progressive roles in the concrete historical conditions of tribal systems, but later rulers had sought to exploit it for the narrow selfish interests of feudal, right-wing and reactionary forces, placing it at the service of imperialism.¹²¹ L.A. Polonskaya portrayed two faces of Islam--progressive and reactionary. According to her:

Religion can be used for retarding social progress and also for stimulating the growth of anti-imperialist and anti-exploiter sentiments of the masses. All depends on the social forces for whose interests religions are used. Progressive forces use religion as a revolutionary-democratic slogan, while conservative forces use it as an anti-

¹²⁰. Narodi Azii i Afriki, [Peoples of Asia and Africa], 1980, Vol.5, pp. 3-14. Similar arguments were also developed by M.T. Stepaniats in an article, "Musulmanskoe vozroj-deitsvo," [The Muslim Revivalism], published in Narodi Azii i Afriki, [Peoples of Asia and Africa], 1983, No. 3, PP. 120-29.

¹²¹. Leonid Medvedko, "Islam: Two Trends", New Times, No. 13, 1980, p. 23.

communist weapon.¹²²

The Soviet Union, surely, did not care for the strong critical positions taken by Bangladesh on both the Afghan and Kampuchean issues. The Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was so overwhelmingly denounced by Third World countries that there was hardly any option left for Moscow. Even those few Third World countries that did not criticise the act, refrained only in order to get more political, economic, military and strategic gains and benefits from Moscow.

Compared to other frontline states, Bangladesh initially appeared to have over-reacted to the Afghan issue. If Bangladesh's position towards the Afghan issue was guided by multiple factors and interests, both domestic and external, Dhaka's recognition of the Khmer Rouge (insurgent) government that had inflicted genocide on its people was, to say the least, premature and difficult to explain.

Other contentious issues affecting Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s were Bangladesh's boycott of the Moscow Olympics, in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; Dhaka's criticism of the Soviet role in Poland; and its condemnation of the shooting down of a Korean airliner by the Soviet airforce over Sakhalin island in 1983. Bangladesh described the incident as "a manifestation of

¹²². L.R.Polonskaya, "Religion in the Life of Developing Countries in Asia and Africa," in Soviet Perspectives of Contemporary Asia, ed. by Bhabani Sen Gupta (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers), 1984, p.85.

brinkmanship;", viewed it "a direct and serious threat to global peace and security," and called for "ways and means to avoid a recurrence of such unfortunate incidents."¹²³

VI

Conclusion

Although this is not a complete list, the issues and events discussed above were the main external factors or impediments affecting Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. The national interests of Bangladesh during the 1980s were defined in terms of its political, economic, military, strategic and ideological interests; India was considered the main source of threat. The outstanding issues with India were seen as vital and crucial for the country's security and territorial integrity. So, for obvious reasons, those countries or groups of countries that supported or showed sympathy for Bangladesh on such issues, became friends to or allies of Dhaka. The Soviet Union did not support or show sympathy for Bangladesh on those issues. China did; Beijing also officially condemned Indian attitudes on the water-sharing and border dispute questions.¹²⁴

The Soviet Union's relations with Bangladesh during the

¹²³. Speech of Bangladesh Foreign Minister at the 38th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, October 4, 1983, "Ten Years of Bangladesh in the United Nations," op. cit. p. 102.

¹²⁴. Beijing Review, No. 8, February 20, 1976, p. 22, and No. 9, February 27, 1976, p.21.

1980s were influenced by several factors: Soviet policy and attitudes towards the military regimes in Dhaka; Moscow's commitment to and total support of India; Bangladesh's overwhelming dependence on the West for political, ideological and economic aid and assistance; the growing popularity of Islamic forces in Bangladesh, and the military regime's priority of developing close, fraternal ties with conservative Arab and Islamic countries, and last, but not least, the coincidence of interests between Dhaka and Beijing on major regional and international issues.

However, it is too simplistic to conclude that Bangladesh and the Soviet Union had conflicting and contradictory views and interests on all major international issues and events. Besides Moscow's crucial help in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the two countries had identical views on the Middle East conflict, the Gulf war, and the issues of arms control, disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. Bangladesh, along with other LDCs, welcomed and supported Gorbachev's proposals for restructuring the international economic order in favour of the developing countries. However, negative factors and serious conflicts of interest overwhelmed the positive factors.

It is true that there was a lack of objective pre-conditions for any improvement of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s; nevertheless, subjective factors--mutual mistrust, benign neglect and indifferent attitudes on the part

of the leaders--made the situation worse and more complicated.

In the absence of a free press, media and democratic institutions/organizations, it was difficult to judge whether the policies adopted by military regimes in Dhaka towards the Soviet Union during the 1980s reflected its true national interests and optimal priorities. As observed, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union had conflicting and often contradictory views and perceptions on core issues of Bangladesh's national interests. Since the Government's policies towards the Soviet Union on the above-raised issues were supported by the population at large, including the political parties, the army, interest groups and other social forces, they may, perhaps, be presumed to have reflected the nation's interests.

The renewed Cold War and deteriorating East-West relations in the early 1980s had their own implications for Bangladesh-Soviet relations. In fact, in the early 1980s it was extremely difficult for a Third World country to remain outside of the sphere of influence of power rivalries between the two superpowers, it was even more difficult for Bangladesh because of its under-development and aid dependence.

Domestic political developments and interests also influenced and limited the scope and prospects for improvements in Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. The following chapter discusses how the domestic political issues and developments influenced and adversely affected Bangladesh-Soviet relations during this decade.

Chapter Six

BANGLADESH-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1980-90: DOMESTIC FACTORS.

Third World leaders always complained about Soviet interventions in the domestic affairs of their countries through the local communist parties. Marxist-Leninist theory views communist and workers' parties in the Third World as one of the three major modern revolutionary forces, but their importance in practice was minimal. In the first place few communist parties in Third World had popular support or were able to become mass political organizations.¹ In the second place, Soviet policy consistently subordinated the interests of the communist parties to the requirements of Soviet policy. (See Chapter Three). In many Third World countries, (China, India, Iraq) they were told by Moscow to collaborate with bourgeois nationalist parties, and were frequently sacrificed by Moscow for the sake of an alliance with nationalists. Bangladesh was not an exception to this pattern.²

National interests, national priorities, foreign policy

¹. Two other forces were; the world socialist system and the national liberation movements in the Third World. For details of Soviet Union and Third World revolutionary movements see, Golia Golan, op. cit. On the issues of problems and difficulties of communist parties and revolutionary movements in the Third World. see, Gordon White, Robin Murray and Christine White, op. cit.

². R. A. Ul'ianovskii extensively wrote about the problems of bourgeois nationalist forces in the Third World and their alliances with the communist parties. See R. A. Ul'ianovskii, Sovremennye problemi Azii i Afriki: politika i ekonomika, [Contemporary Problems of Asia and Africa: Politics and Economy], (Moscow: Nauka (science) Publishers), 1978.

goals and objectives usually originate from the domestic needs and demands of a society. Political parties, their priorities and ideological orientations, and the roles and positions of various interest/pressure groups also influence the formation and maintenance of national interests. In the case of Bangladesh, during the 1980s, in the absence of democratic practice and weakness of democratic institutions/ organizations, including political parties, other social forces, like the students' organizations, trade unions and professional groups played important roles in defining and maintaining national interests. The military, as the most organized and cohesive force, controlled political power in Bangladesh and played the dominant role in national life.

During the 1980s, Bangladesh underwent several violent political changes which brought changes in the notion and perception of the national interests. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the domestic political, economic and social evolution of Bangladesh in the 1980s; it has affected the perceptions on national interests, and their impact on Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union. In accordance with the stages of political changes, this chapter is divided into several parts: part I analyses Bangladesh-Soviet relations during 1980-81, when the BNP Government was in power; part II discusses the Soviet reaction to the military coup in Bangladesh in 1982, and subsequent developments; part III reviews Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the late 1980s.

Since one of the main Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives in the Third World was to use and manipulate local communist parties for the interests of Moscow; part IV focuses on the role of pro-Soviet communist parties played in Bangladeshi politics and in Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

I

Bangladesh-Soviet Relations, 1980-1981

As stated earlier, the military regime of Ziaur Rahman had no love or sympathy for communism or socialism.³ His regime's main priorities in 1980-81 were to promote political stability, to strengthen his personal power base in the army, while expanding the regime's constituencies to the rural areas through the reorganization and decentralization of local administrations--to resolve some of the country's pressing problems.

Coming from a middle class, traditional Muslim family from rural Bangladesh, and trained in Pakistan and Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, Ziaur Rahman was brought up in a religious tradition colored by Western liberal values. He had no interest in communism. One of his main priorities was to mobilize the masses for nation-building process on the basis of patriotic appeals to nationalism. His perception of

³. For the military regime's attitudes towards the pro-Moscow communist parties, see Craig Baxter and M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh Votes: 1977 and 1979," Asian Survey, Vol. XXI, No. 4, April 1981, pp. 485-500.

nationalism had an explicit connotation of anti-Indianism and anti-Sovietism as noted earlier. As Borhanuddin K. Jahangir, a leftist academic, observed,

The nationalism used by Ziaur Rahman was neither communistic nor social democratic; rather, its main purpose was to contain pro-Soviet socialism and pro-Indian secularism, to strengthen the right-wing and religious parties, and to satisfy the general public sentiments and emotions.⁴

He reformed and reorganised local governments and the civilian administration--two key instruments in domestic reorganization. He restored most of the former senior civil service personnel who were recruited by and served Pakistani governments, but who were dismissed by the AL government after independence.⁵

President Ziaur Rahman pursued an active foreign policy to serve the domestic interests. For example, as discussed earlier, strong stands on the Afghanistan and Kampuchea issues helped to secure support from right-wing conservative, pro-Beijing and Islamic forces and groups. On the other hand, growing anti-Soviet and anti-Indian sentiments among the population at large bolstered the Governments efforts to pursue strong anti-Soviet policies on those issues.

⁴. B.K. Jahangir, Problems of Nationalism in Bangladesh, (Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies), 1986, p. 75.

⁵. From 1949 to 1970, 191 CSP (Civil Service of Pakistan) officers were recruited from East Pakistan, and in 1976, 180 of them had been working for the Bangladesh Government. Gradation List of the Ex-Civil Service of Pakistan, corrected upto 15th June 1976, (Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Cabinet Secretariat, Establishment Division, Section, S-III).

The Islamic parties had geared up their anti-Soviet campaign by using the Afghan issue, and the alleged repression of Soviet Muslims.⁶ Both the Government and the right-wing political parties used nationalist slogans, with anti-Soviet and anti-Indian rhetoric. This very much responded to the public mood. A broad coalition of social forces supported the Government in its anti-Soviet campaign as did the population at large where anti-Soviet sentiment was growing in the early 1980s.⁷

Political turmoil and unrest that followed President Ziaur Rahman's assassination in May 1981 also affected Bangladesh-Soviet relations. Although not on the best of terms with President Zia's regime, Moscow was quick to blame China for the plotting of the coup. Pravda reported that the leader of the attempt, General Manzur, "was known in Bangladesh military circles for his strong pro-Chinese sentiments." The paper also disclosed that the conspiracy involved "an armed pro-Peking terrorist group operating in the CHT."⁸

The situation was further complicated in June 1981 when,

⁶. As mentioned in the last chapter, the conservative Islamic press and various government-sponsored religious institutions, like the Islamic Foundation, joined the fray and geared up the anti-Soviet campaigns.

⁷. The government controlled press and media became more anti-Soviet, and right-wing political parties organized rallies and demonstrations to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

⁸. USSR and the Third World, Volume Eleven, Numbers-Three and Four, 1981, p. 46.

with the nation was still mourning, the Soviet Union attempted to smuggle forbidden equipment into Bangladesh. The Soviet airline Aeroflot brought sophisticated electronics and radio transmitting equipment in boxes labelled 'building material,' and customs officials at Dhaka airport stopped truckloads of equipment that two Soviet diplomats were trying to take out without customs clearance. The incident led to so much public anger and frustration that the Foreign Minister had to make a statement in Parliament to clarify the situation.⁹ The Government tried to downplay the crisis by sending the diplomats involved home, and returning the equipment to the Soviet Union quietly.¹⁰ But right-wing and pro-Beijing elements of the Dhaka press used the issue to step up an anti-Soviet campaign. Pro-Moscow communist parties, on the other hand, accused the Government of trying to discredit the USSR. The Soviet motive behind the incident was unclear. According to informed sources, an unscheduled cargo flight of the Soviet airline, Aeroflot, loaded with machinery and equipment did land in the Dhaka airport, but there was no agreement on the type of machinery involved. High Government officials believed that the Soviets attempted to smuggle in sophisticated electronics

⁹. The right-wing Dhaka Bengali daily Ittefaq reported the news on June 23, 1981. Foreign Minister's statement in Parliament was reported in the Dhaka Radio news broadcast on June 23, 1981.

¹⁰. Peter Lyon, "The Soviet Union and South Asia in the 1980s," in Robert Cassen, op. cit., p. 41.

into Bangladesh for spying purposes.¹¹ Whatever the truth in this particular case, there is little doubt that the Soviet Union was interested in establishing a listening post and a support base in Bangladesh from the very beginning.

Taking advantage of friendly relations with the AL government in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union sought permission to build a huge embassy complex in Dhaka. The complex was built in the late 1970s. It was far larger than could be justified by Bangladesh's size, international position or strategic importance. In the early 1980s, there were 40 diplomatic and 100 non-diplomatic staff members working in the Soviet embassy in Dhaka as opposed to 4 Bangladeshi diplomats in Moscow. Some of them were fluent in the Bengali language and could easily get involved themselves in local politics; a matter of concern to the Government. The Government was anxious to reduce the number of Soviet personnel, but did not want to enter into direct confrontation with Moscow at the same time. The situation was delicate, however. As one Government leader put it:

Since Bangladesh can not afford to offend any big power, it is necessary to maintain reasonable relations with each. Relations with one may be emphasised over relations with the other at any point of time, but we can not afford to sustain such emphasis at the expense of our links with the other.¹²

¹¹. This view was shared by a high foreign ministry official from Bangladesh during a confidential interview in Ottawa on November 13, 1992.

¹². Iftekhar A. Chowdhury, op. cit., pp. 193-94.

As early as September 1979, President Ziaur Rahman asked the Soviet Union to reduce its diplomatic personnel in Dhaka, but no Soviet action resulted.¹³ By 1981, the relations were so strained that Bangladesh's Information Minister Habibullah Khan explicitly charged the Soviet Union "with having thrown diplomatic norms to the wind by opening a Soviet consulate at Chittagong without prior permission."¹⁴

It was not clear to what extent the Soviets were involved in Bangladesh and what extent the Dhaka military regime used the issue for its own purposes. But evidence indicates that the Soviet Union was in fact involved in some measure in the domestic politics of Bangladesh in the early 1980s.¹⁵ The question is why would they try to penetrate a country like Bangladesh with no revolutionary and ideological support base and little strategic importance. There are several possible explanations.

First, the Soviet Union supported Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971, and provided a material, financial and strategic support for the new state during its early years. There might have been expectation in the Kremlin therefore that the Soviet Union had earned the right to influence the country's domestic politics, specially because Soviet authorities apparently believed that while the leadership in Dhaka

¹³. Charles Peter O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 221.

¹⁴. Ibid. p. 201.

¹⁵. Ibid. p. 222.

was anti-Soviet, the people were not. For example, in 1983, when 14 Soviet diplomats were expelled from Bangladesh, Soviet correspondent Vladimir Baidakov wrote; the policy was initiated by a small clique within the ruling circles but who lacked "public's support."¹⁶ He was mistaken there, however. Except the pro-Moscow communist parties and the AL, all other parties, and the public at large supported the action. It, in fact, became a general pattern of Soviet behaviour in Third World countries.

Second, Moscow was worried about the growing influence of pro-Chinese elements in Bangladesh. A primary Soviet objective was to control and/or monitor their activities.

Third, as discussed in chapter three, Soviet policy suffered set-backs in the Third World in the late 1970s. East-West relations also deteriorated, and Moscow wanted to step up its diplomatic offensive in Third World countries, including Bangladesh.

Fourth, there was need for an intelligence network in South Asia in order to monitor Chinese and US activities in the region after the invasion of Afghanistan. Because of its geographical location, weak government and underdeveloped security and intelligence services Bangladesh seemed a logical choice for the purpose.

Fifth, over a period of time, the Soviet Union continued

¹⁶. New Times, No. 12, 1985, p. 25.

to maintain close, friendly relations with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government in India. In 1977, when Mrs. Gandhi's party lost the parliamentary election and the Janata Party [People's Party] came to power with the promise of more diversity in foreign policy, the Kremlin leadership became concerned about losing its traditional friendship with India. Some voices within the Soviet leadership may have suggested that India's friendship should not be taken for granted, and urged a search for viable alternatives. Moreover, even when friendly, India was not disposed to have its territory used for Soviet intelligence activities in the region.

Finally, the loss of Rangoon as a centre of intelligence and surveillance against China forced the Soviet Union to look for a convenient alternative, and Bangladesh seemed a best possible choice, for reasons enumerated above.

Soviet plans failed largely because it miscalculated the temper and attitudes by Bangladeshi society and the capabilities of the government. Domestic difficulties and external challenges, notwithstanding, the Bangladesh Government was able to control the situation. Presidential elections were held in November 1981 in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, and the candidate of the ruling BNP, Justice Abdus Sattar, won the election, with 65.5 percent of votes.¹⁷ The Soviet Union supported the AL-led coalition of pro-Indian and pro-Soviet parties, and Soviet press reported the results

¹⁷. Craig Baxter, op. cit., p. 67.

without comments, noting that "the fragmentation of the opposition, including the left, democratic forces, created a highly favourable situation for the ruling Nationalist party," to retain power. But it was a matter of some satisfaction to Moscow that "the vote for the candidates of the left democratic opposition increased to nearly one-third of the total number of votes cast."¹⁸ The Soviets were satisfied with the fact that their support base in the Bangladesh increased.

The reaction of Bangladeshi communists was less restrained. The Party's General Secretary blamed the "anti-democratic, anti-national forces supported by the United States, China, Pakistan and reactionary Moslem regimes" for loss of the election, and warned that "only the unity of all the democratic, national patriotic parties of the country can halt the reactionary offensive."¹⁹

Despite political tensions, both countries maintained a working relationship in the fields of economic and cultural cooperation, the foundation of which was laid in the Joint Declaration signed in Moscow in 1972. The Declaration reaffirmed mutual intentions "to develop ties and contacts in the fields of science, art, literature, education, public health, the press, radio, sports, and other fields."²⁰

¹⁸. Vladimir Puchkov, "The Presidential Election," New Times, (Moscow), No. 48, 1981, p. 24.

¹⁹. Ibid, p. 25.

²⁰. Appendix A.

A five-year Protocol was signed in Dhaka between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union in April 1981, on education and training of Bangladeshi students in the USSR at graduate and undergraduate levels in the fields of engineering, medicine, agriculture, pedagogy and cultural specialties.²¹ Hundreds of Bangladeshi students were sent every year to various Soviet educational institutions under cultural cooperation agreements. By the mid 1970s, more than 1000 Bangladeshi students, chosen by the government each year, studied at graduate and undergraduate levels in the Soviet Union. Additional scholarships were also offered by the Soviet government to pro-Soviet political parties and various social and cultural organizations. The number of Soviet scholarships however declined after the 1975 political changes in Bangladesh. During the 1980s, Bangladeshi students sent to the USSR were limited to those training in the fields of medicine, engineering and natural sciences only. At the same time, Bangladesh Government became reluctant to enter new cultural exchanges with the USSR once the existing agreements expired.²²

There was in fact no improvement in Bangladesh-Soviet

²¹. The Bangladesh Observer, April, 23, 1981.

²². Under the general framework, protocols on trade and cultural exchange were signed every year. But when political relations were strained and suffered set-backs, Bangladesh was less enthusiastic, and deliberately delayed the process of signing new protocols. This point was made to the author during his informal discussions with Soviet diplomats in Dhaka and officials in Moscow.

relations during 1980-81, when the BNP Government was in power. It was not a priority either for President Ziaur Rahman or for his successor, Justice Abdus Sattar, who was preoccupied with domestic crises during his short tenure in office from November 1981- to March 1982.

II

The Military Coup in 1982, and Bangladesh-Soviet Relations

The elections of November 1981 did not stabilize the domestic political situation in the country, and the civilian Government was under constant pressure from the army to allow it to have a share of the power. Immediately after the election, General Ershad, the Army's Chief of Staff, demanded a provision in the constitution that would institutionalize a power-sharing arrangement for the army. The President refused, but a threat of a military coup in early 1982 forced him to set up a National Security Council with shared powers.²³ (The Council was composed of the President, Vice-President and Prime Minister representing the civilian side, and the three military service heads on the military side.) The Council's function was to assist the government to "explore ways and means of participation of the armed forces in the socio-economic development of the country consistent with their primary responsibility,"²⁴ (the latter, of course, was the

²³. Far Eastern Economic Review, February 12, 1982.

²⁴. Craig Baxter, op. cit., 1984, p. 68.

defence of the country.) But the power-sharing formula apparently did not satisfy the army, and in a coup of March 24, 1982, the army took power and imposed martial law.²⁵ The coup was bloodless and the new leader was General Ershad.

From the Soviet point of view, the new military regime actually seemed preferable, perhaps because General Ershad personally was less anti-Soviet and anti-Indian than either General Ziaur Rahman or Justice Sattar. As Chief of the Bangladesh army General Ershad cultivated good relations with Soviet and Indian diplomats in Dhaka, and attended regularly diplomatic parties hosted by Soviet and Indian Ambassadors in Dhaka.²⁶ The comments on the 1982 military coup in the Soviet press were actually quite numerous and generally favourable. Quoting from an Indian newspaper, a Soviet correspondent suggested that "General Ershad took power into his own hands in order to foil a Washington-inspired conspiracy."²⁷ The Ershad Government was recognised by Moscow immediately, and TASS reported that Leonid Brezhnev sent congratulations to General Ershad.²⁸ The Soviet decision to support the military

²⁵. Craig Baxter, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁶. According to informed sources, General Ershad regularly used to attend diplomatic parties hosted by Soviet and Indian ambassadors in Dhaka. This view was confirmed by some observers and officials during confidential interviews with the author in Dhaka in December 1990. Dr. Shaukat Hassan also shared the similar view. "Interview." op. cit.

²⁷. S. Idorov, New Times, (Moscow), No. 14, 1982, p. 9.

²⁸. Charles Peter O'Donnell, op. cit. p. 242.

regime might have been influenced also by the fact that the AL, the main pro-Moscow political party in Bangladesh, did not oppose the take-over.²⁹

The new Government's immediate priority was to improve the relations with India, an initiative that encouraged Moscow. General Ershad signed several agreements with India while on a visit there in October 1982, including an agreement to set up a Joint Economic Commission to promote trade and economic cooperation. Moscow welcomed the meeting, and hoped that "whatever the obstacles in the way of cooperation between Asian countries, they can be cleared away given good will and political farsightedness by both."³⁰

An improvement in Bangladesh-Soviet relations followed. A new agreement on cultural and academic exchanges was signed in Dhaka on April 26, 1983, and an Islamic delegation from Bangladesh visited USSR in August. But in a surprise decision on November 29, 1983, the Government asked the Soviet Ambassador to cut his diplomatic staff to half, close the Soviet cultural centre in Dhaka, and the Soviet Consulate General's office in Chittagong.³¹ By January 1984, 14 Soviet diplomats were expelled from Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi ambassador

²⁹. There were allegations that the Awami League incited the Martial Law in Bangladesh in 1982. For details, see S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

³⁰. New Times, (Moscow), No. 42, 1982, p. 11.

³¹. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ed. by Robert Fraser, (London: Longman), Vol. XXX, 1984, p. 32921.

to Moscow Rashid Ahmad was called back by the Government.³²

It was, and is, difficult to explain the action taken by the Government. There were, however, several hypotheses.

First, there were allegations that the staff of the Soviet embassy in Dhaka had had contact with the political groups which organized massive rallies, protests and demonstrations against the military rulers, and on November 28, 1983 stormed the secretariat of the military Government.³³

Second, right-wing generals and civilian bureaucrats put constant pressure on the Government to reduce the Soviet presence in Bangladesh, particularly after the airport incident of 1981.

Third, Bangladesh was cultivating friendly relations with China, and it was widely believed that an anti-Soviet posture would help to promote it. Pro-Chinese communist parties and right-wing religious parties may have influenced the Government's policies.

Fourth, Bangladesh had developed and maintained close relations with the West, and it was considered significant that the decision to expel Soviet diplomats was taken immediately

³². There was no immediate government explanation of the expulsion. But later, in early January 1984, General Ershad claimed in an interview that the Soviet diplomats were involved in "prejudicial activities," and sought to overthrow his government. Peter J. Bertocci, (1984), op. cit. p. 168.

³³. Political observers in Dhaka widely believed that the Soviets were, in fact, involved in the domestic affairs of Bangladesh. This view was also shared by many high-ranking government officials in Bangladesh. "Confidential Interviews in Dhaka and in Ottawa, op. cit.

after General Ershad returned from an official visit to the US. There was widespread speculation that the move was taken under US pressure.³⁴

Finally, Bangladesh was preparing to host the 13th OIC Foreign Ministers Conference in Dhaka, the first ever in the country, which was scheduled for December 1983. The anti-Soviet move might have been prompted by a desire to satisfy conservative Muslim states participating in the Conference.

The Soviet reaction was strong and immediate. Moscow castigated the action, and warned that "the sinister campaign against the Soviet Union in Bangladesh harms the atmosphere of cooperation between the two countries"; Soviet spokesman also blamed the West claiming that "the military authorities resorted to this unprecedented step in Soviet-Bangladesh relations following recent high level contacts between Bangladesh and the USA."³⁵ Soviet political analyst Vladimir Puchkov wrote;

It is not without the influence of the imperialist states that relations between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union became complicated. The USSR had given the Bangladesh people enormous disinterested assistance in the cause of its national liberation. The unfriendly acts in relation to the USSR undertaken by the Bangladesh authorities at the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984, which included the

³⁴. The Left-wing section of the Dhaka press, particularly the Bengali dailies Sangbad (news) and Banglar Bani (voice of Bengal), criticised the Government's decision and held the West, China and conservative Islamic regimes responsible for the act. December 1, 1983.

³⁵. Moscow Radio, Bengali Service, December 15, 1983 and January 24, 1984.

closing down of the Soviet Cultural Centre in Dhaka and an anti-Soviet campaign that was started in Bangladesh, led to the relations between the two countries reaching their lowest ebb history had ever witnessed.³⁶

Bangladesh-Soviet relations continued at low ebb in the early 1980s, despite early hope, and Ershad regime's policies were less friendly to the Soviet Union than the latter expected, largely because of its preoccupations with consolidating domestic power and maintaining close relations with the West, China and the Muslim countries. During the period of 1982-1983 Ershad visited China, Japan, several European countries and the US, but there was no exchange of visits between Dhaka and Moscow.

In Novemebr 1982, when President Brezhnev died, an official Bangladeshi delegation, headed by Rear Admiral M.A. Khan, the Chief of the Naval Staff and Deputy Martial Law Administrator, was sent to Moscow to attend the funeral. The Bangladesh delegation was received at the airport by Nikolai Zachenko, the Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Nationalities Chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Bangladesh delegation paid tribute to the late President Brezhnev by praising his "great contribution towards the cause of world peace, and mutual understanding and friendship amongst the nations of the world."³⁷ Although the Bangladeshi delegation

³⁶. V.P. Puchkov, Political Development of Bangladesh 1971-85, (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers), 1989, p. 189.

³⁷. The Bangladesh Observer, November 15, 1982.

expressed an official interest in improving relations with the Soviet Union, the Soviet response was cool according to all reports.³⁸ The visit was mainly a ceremonial one, and failed to bring any change in the relations between the two countries. In fact, in the mid-1980s, improving relations with the USSR was not seen as a priority by the military regime in Bangladesh. Political uncertainty, moulded by frequent leadership changes in the Kremlin further reinforced the Dhaka government's disinterest in improving Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

III

Bangladesh Soviet Relations during the age of "Perestroika"

During the second half of the 1980s, there were strong political demands in Dhaka pressuring the military government to restore democracy and to hold free elections. There were also external pressures, apparently, in the same direction from Western donor countries.³⁹

Meanwhile, political agitation for democratization and demilitarization of the regime and for a transfer of power to the constitutional government continued in the the latter 80s. Fifteen political parties, including pro-Moscow communist parties and groups, formed an alliance demanding a democratic change. Right-wing nationalist parties formed a seven-party

³⁸. Ibid

³⁹. S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit. p. 120.

alliance headed by the BNP under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, the widow of late President Ziaur Rahman; pro-Chinese communist parties and groups formed their own five-party alliance. But the alliances were unable to develop a unified strategy against the military regime, given their deep divisions and factions. Even the tiny pro-Moscow communist parties and groups were divided on the issue of whether or not to participate in the elections sponsored by the military regime.⁴⁰

The Government had its own plans for political liberalization. On January 1, 1986, the ban on political activities, imposed in March 1982, was lifted, parliamentary elections were announced for May 7, 1986. In the mean time, the Government sponsored its own political party, the Bangladesh Jatyō [national] Party (BJP), to contest the elections. Not surprisingly, the BJP, which was formed just four months prior to the elections, won the election. The seven-party alliance, led by the BNP, called it an "arranged game" and refused to participate; but the fifteen-party alliance, headed by the AL, took part in the election and was defeated. The BJP secured the victory, although there were widespread allegations of mass fraud and vote riggings. The Far Eastern Economic Review described the election as the "most disorderly" the country had ever held, while a British team of observers called it "a

⁴⁰. For details of domestic political developments, see Ibid. pp. 46-120.

tragedy for democracy."⁴¹

Encouraged by the results of the election, the Government decided to hold Presidential elections in October; as expected, General Ershad won a landslide victory. In November 1986 the Government lifted Martial Law, reinstated civilian rights, and allowed political parties and trade unions to function freely.⁴² (They were also able to function before, but their activities were strictly limited, and most of their leaders were arrested).

The Government was also determined to give a constitutional role to the army. In his speech to Parliament in January 1987, President Ershad emphasised the role of the army in "establishing a democratic set-up" in the country.⁴³ In addition, the Government planned to appoint army personnel to all local government institutions. However, the plan could not be implemented because of strong opposition from political parties, students' organizations, trade unions and professional groups.⁴⁴

⁴¹. S. Kamaluddin, "Violence and Foul Play, or "An Arranged Game?", Far Eastern Economic Review, May 22, 1986, pp. 46-47.

⁴². S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit., p. 67.

⁴³. Far Eastern Economic Review, (Asia Yearbook), 1988, p. 94.

⁴⁴. For details of General Ershad's proposed plans for army's role in the local administration, see M. Nurul Islam, Decentralization for Rural Development in Bangladesh: An Examination of the Upazila Administration, (Ottawa: Department of Political Science, Carleton University, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis), April 1991, pp. 229-30.

Following the elections, the opposition organized massive anti-government rallies and demonstrations throughout the country. In early July 1987 a 24-hour general strike was called by the trade unions opposing the privatization plans of the Government (see Chapter Seven). Later, a 54-hour general strike was called by political parties in an attempt to force the Government to resign. It was one of the most violent strikes in the history of the country. According to media reports 24 people were killed, 700 were injured and 300 were arrested.⁴⁵ The political situation remained calm for some time thereafter, but by the end of the year there was renewed violence. Despite sharp differences, opposition political parties were able to adopt a joint programme in October 1987 directed against the Government. Continuous violence and agitation caused the Government to declare a "state of emergency" again in December 1987; all fundamental civil rights were suspended, and strikes and lock-outs were banned for two months.⁴⁶ The Parliament was dissolved on December 6,

⁴⁵. Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXIII, 1987, p. 35572.

⁴⁶. Plans were drawn up to bring thousands of people from villages to Dhaka and to lay siege to all government offices and buildings. The program became known as the "Dhaka siege." Being afraid of the mass mobilization, and the deteriorating law and order situation, the Government adopted precautionary measures by banning all political activities, arresting political leaders and closing all universities and colleges. However, political agitation continued, and on November 27 the Government declared a state of emergency in response to the opposition's call for a three-day general strike, from November 29 to December 1. For details, see S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit. pp. 98-103.

1987, and strict censorship was imposed on the press and media.

Even under this "state of emergency", political turmoil in the country continued. The Government tried to open a dialogue with the political parties, in the hope of negotiating a power-sharing formula, but the parties refused to meet with the General. The Government, nonetheless, went ahead with its own plans for elections. Elections to local bodies (upazila, [sub-district]) were held in February, and parliamentary elections in March 1988. All major political parties, including the AL and the BCP, boycotted both rounds of elections. But a pro-government Combined Opposition Group was formed under the leadership of A.S.M. Abdur Rob to contest the elections.⁴⁷ The turn-out was very low; according to foreign observers only about 5% voters had turned up, while opposition leaders claimed that not even one per cent of eligible voters went to the polls.⁴⁸ The Government, however, claimed a 50 percent turn-out.

Despite their doubtful legitimacy, the parliamentary elections of March 1988, appeared to have strengthened the Government's position vis-a-vis the opposition. Opposition parties were internally too deeply divided to mount any

⁴⁷. For details of the formation of the Combined Opposition Group, see, Far Eastern Economic Review, January 28, 1988, p. 34.

⁴⁸. Salamat Ali Khan and S. Kamaluddin, "A Matter of Credibility," Far Eastern Economic Review, March 17, 1988, p. 33.

serious challenge to the Government--notwithstanding manifestations of popular demand for the creation of a united opposition against the regime. The Government continued its policy of "divide and rule," by encouraging and creating divisions within the political parties and bribing their leaders with cash and gifts; many leading members of the BNP and other parties joined the BJP.⁴⁹ By April 1988, carefully monitoring the political situation in the country, the Government decided to lift the emergency. But political unrest and turmoil persisted, leading ultimately to the downfall of the Government of General Ershad in December 1990.⁵⁰

As the preceeding discussion shows, the military Government was so overwhelmingly preoccupied with domestic political issues that its only priority was to stay in power. An improvement of relations with the Soviet Union had low priority because there was no perception that it would serve the regime's or country's immediate interests. Bangladesh-Soviet relations began slowly to improve, however, after 1985. Rear Admiral and Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator Sultan Ahmad visited Moscow in May 1985, to attend the funeral of Soviet President Chernenko. Meeting with V.I. Litvinenko, the Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Foreign and Economic Relations, the Bangladesh delegation expressed hope

⁴⁹. S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit. pp. 106-130.

⁵⁰. For details of the fall of the Ershad regime, see Craig Baxter, "Bangladesh: A Parliamentary Democracy, if They Can Keep It," Current History, March 1992, pp. 132-366.

that Bangladesh-Soviet relations would acquire "an added dimension" in the future, under Gorbachev.⁵¹ This time there was a response from the Soviet side. The reception of the Bangladesh delegation to Moscow in 1985 was more cordial than the visit in 1982. In April, the same year, the Bangladesh Government allowed the Soviet cultural centre in Dhaka to re-open, and in August a Soviet Foreign Ministry delegation arrived in Dhaka to hold talks with Bangladeshi officials.⁵²

Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yegor Ligachev visited Bangladesh in 1987, and a new three year agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation was signed.⁵³ Soviet Union continued to offer scholarships and fellowships to Bangladeshi students to study in Soviet educational institutions, and training programs for Bangladeshi specialists. The number of Bangladeshi students sent to the Soviet Union increased slightly, but it was still far less than in the early 1970s. The new climate of relations was summed up by the Soviet weekly New Times in early 1987: "USSR-Bangladesh relations, which have deteriorated in recent years, through no fault of the Soviet side, are now showing signs of improvement."⁵⁴

⁵¹. The Bangladesh Observer, March 16, 1985.

⁵². Peter J. Bertocci, "Bangladesh in 1985: Resolute Against the Storms," Asian Survey, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, February 1986, p. 232.

⁵³. Keesings Record of World Events, ed. by Rodger East, (London: Longman), Vol. XXXIII, 1987, p. 35574.

⁵⁴. V. Puchkov, "Bangladesh: Lull After the Storm," New Times, (Moscow), No. 1, 1987, p. 39.

Several new initiatives to improve relations with Moscow were taken by Bangladesh in the late 1980s, including an appointment of a senior cabinet member as ambassador to Moscow. But there were few results because of a serious lack of political will and urgency to improve relations on both sides. Bangladesh Government officials and bureaucrats remained convinced that there was little gain in the Soviet alliance, and continued to look to the West for assistance in economic survival. There were no high-level official exchanges in the 1980s, even though both countries agreed in 1972 to "hold regular political consultations between the two Governments at various levels, on all important matters involving the interests of both states."⁵⁵

For its part, the Soviet Union was undergoing a dramatic change and its foreign policy objectives and priorities in the Third World changed accordingly. As noted in Chapter Three, economic gain and benefit became dominant factor affecting Soviet foreign policy planning in the 1980s. From this new

⁵⁵. Appendix A. Since coming to power in 1982, General Ershad visited almost all major countries, including China, but no visit to Moscow was scheduled, although the Soviet Government extended an invitation for such a visit. Even no ministerial-level visit took place between the two countries after 1975, despite Moscow's repeated invitations for such visits. Two former Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, A.R.S. Doha and Professor Muhammad Shamsul Huq were asked by the author, during his interviews with them in Dhaka in January 1991, why they never visited Moscow. There was no satisfactory answer. The arguments/excuses they gave were not convincing. "Interviews," op. cit.

perspective, the NIC in Asia Pacific and the Far East, as well as China and Japan became more important as potential partners for Moscow, supplanting poor and under-developed countries like Bangladesh. The Soviet policy shift was explicitly articulated by Soviet leaders. The new emphasis was on the Asia-Pacific region, and on the improvement of East-West relations in order to get maximum support and benefits from the West for the success of "perestroika" (see Chapter Three).

The Bangladesh Government was, on the other hand, overwhelmingly preoccupied with domestic political unrest, economic difficulties and coping with natural disasters, such as floods, droughts and cyclones. After 1989, the Soviet Government was increasingly preoccupied with maintaining its national integrity in the face of the collapse of communist systems in Eastern Europe, and centrifugal militant nationalisms at home.⁵⁶

Drastic domestic and foreign policy changes in the Soviet Union in the name of "Perestroika" and "New Thinking" had little impact on Bangladesh. Ruling elites there were curious about the changes, but remained largely indifferent and disinterested, because of a shared perception that these would be of little benefit to them. The reforms in the Soviet Union were viewed either as a failure of the system, or as an

⁵⁶. For details of Gorbachev's nationality policy, see Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Gorbachev's Nationality Policy, Paper presented at the American Association for Advancement of Slavic Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, November, 1988.

experiment doomed to fail. In any case there was no benefit for Bangladesh to engage in any serious relationship with the crumbling Soviet Union.

Unlike in the first half of the 1980s, there were no special issue that would affect Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the latter half of the 1980s. While both sides expressed positive hopes for improvement in bilateral relations, little was done to change anything. The emotional and psychological factors still continued to affect relations between the two countries. Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union were often too politicised, and used for propaganda purposes. Whenever particular issues came up, the societal response tended to be highly polarised and divided. For example, in April 1987, local scientists in Dhaka detected high levels of radio-active elements in skimmed milk powder imported from Poland. Bangladesh asked that the Polish Government take the milk back, but the Poles did not accept the findings and asked for permission to send their own scientists to investigate. But the Bangladesh Government refused to accept the Polish team, and a dead-lock ensued. Finally, scientists from the International Atomic Energy Agency were allowed to come to Bangladesh to test the milk; they found the radio-active level "well within acceptable limits."⁵⁷ However, the damage was done. The local right-wing papers and media, supported by political parties, started anti-communist, anti-Soviet

⁵⁷. Far Eastern Economic Review, May 21, 1987, p. 26.

publicity and propaganda campaigns surrounding the issue, while communist parties and leftist groups mobilised their supporters, and described the reports as "propaganda orchestrated by the lobbyists of the imperialists," designed to defame Poland and the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ When the situation worsened, Soviet and East European diplomats had to intervene to downplay the issue.⁵⁹

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union took initiatives to improve relations with right-wing, nationalist parties in Bangladesh, including the BNP. After the overthrow of the regime of General Ershad, in December 1990, the Soviet Ambassador in Dhaka met the leaders of all the main political parties, including the BNP and expressed the Soviet Union's readiness to support the democratic transition. By the end of 1990, it was clear that the Soviet Union was interested in a stable and democratic government in Bangladesh. In the parliamentary election in February 1991, the Soviet Union provided neither funds nor other support for the communist parties to win the election.⁶⁰

⁵⁸. Ibid

⁵⁹. Ibid.

⁶⁰. This information was received from some CPB members during the author's interviews with them in Dhaka, in January 1991. But it could not be confirmed either by the Soviet side or by the leaders of the BCP.

IV

Pro-Moscow Communist Parties and Bangladesh-Soviet Relations

As elsewhere in the Third World, in Bangladesh communist parties were weak and fragmented.⁶¹ In 1947 there were only 10,000 communists in East Pakistan and their numbers gradually decreased to only a few hundred in the early 1950s, when many communists joined the AL.⁶² Sino-Soviet ideological rivalries in the 1960s further fragmented and factionalised the weak and tiny communist parties in Bangladesh (See Charts II and III).

Pro-Moscow communist parties joined the war of independence in 1971, but were not given any role to play in the AL Government. By 1974, when the country gradually became ungovernable and radical pro-Chinese groups took control in rural areas, the AL Government invited the BCP and the NAP to cooperate in order to fight radical "anti-state" elements, and they joined. But when the AL Government was violently overthrown in 1975, and a right-wing military government came to power, both communist parties also suffered lost credibility. Their leaders were arrested and their activities were banned until 1978. Thus, BCP and the NAP neither led the struggle for independence nor were able to work for better relations with the USSR. Pro-Soviet communist parties were too tiny and

⁶¹. The weakness of communist parties in Bangladesh is evident from the seats they won in various elections. See Table 6.

⁶². For details of the Communist movement in East Pakistan, see, Marcus F. Franda, (1970), op. cit. pp. 588-606

factionalised to able exercise any political influence on Soviet behalf.

During the 1980s, the activities of communist parties and trade unions were regularly banned, while their leaders were arrested, harassed and jailed by the military regimes in Bangladesh. With the deterioration of Bangladesh-Soviet relations the communist leaders became the first victims of political repression. When the BCP held its Third Congress, February 24-27, 1980, for example, no Soviet representatives were allowed into the country. This Government action was strongly criticised by the Soviet press and media.⁶³

In April 1980, the leaders of the pro-Moscow communist parties, including the General Secretary of the BCP, Mohammad Farhad, were arrested. The Soviet Union condemned the act and demanded the release of all arrested leaders. Pravda commentator F. Nilov described the arrests as "un-justified," while the authorities in Dhaka claimed that they were "arrested on a variety of charges, including the charge of anti-state and subversive activity."⁶⁴ In July 1980 the communist leaders were released, but they were arrested and jailed again in early 1981, for allegedly threatening to stage an "Afghan

⁶³. USSR and the Third World, Volume Ten, Number One, 1980, p. 33.

⁶⁴. Ibid, Numbers: Four, Five and Six, p. 70.

style" revolution in Bangladesh.⁶⁵

As a principle of proletarian internationalism, the Soviet Union supported the BCP, the NAP and other pro-Moscow political parties and groups. But parties were unable to maintain linkages with the CPSU, because the Dhaka governments were not in favour of such relations. A high-level BCP delegation visited Moscow in 1982, to attend the funeral of President L.I. Brezhnev. In early 1986, another delegation, headed by Mesbauddin Ahmed, the General Secretary of the National Alliance of Labour, visited Moscow.⁶⁶ These visits helped to cement relations between the CPSU and pro-Soviet communist parties of Bangladesh.

Since the communist parties in Bangladesh were small and weak, their strategy was to join with and form alliances with other parties to contest elections. In the parliamentary election of 1986, the BCP and allied leftist groups won 14 seats (out of 300). It was the first time that the pro-Moscow communist parties had ever managed to secure representation in Parliament. The Soviet press trumpeted the victory of the communists and reported that they won seats because of

[The Party's] vigorous defence of working people's vital interests, its determined fight for the complete restoration of democratic norms in the country, the strengthening of its independence and

⁶⁵. Azizul Haque, "Bangladesh in 1980: Strain and Stresses Opposition in Doldrums," Asian Survey, Vol. XXI, No. 2, February 1981, p. 200.

⁶⁶. For details of the visit, see V.Galin, "Despite the Obstacles," New Times, No. 30, 1986, p. 23.

national sovereignty, and peace and equal cooperation among nations.⁶⁷

But, the fact remained that the BCP and other leftist groups were presumably elected because they were members of an alliance and there was doubt whether communist candidates could have been elected on their own.⁶⁸ Moreover, it must not be forgotten that other major political parties, including the BNP, did not participate in the election.

Despite strong criticisms of the election of 1986, both at home and abroad, the Soviet Union appeared to be satisfied with the results. The Soviet press described the pro-Soviet alliance as "capable of challenging the ruling party," and called it "a democratic alternative to the present regime."⁶⁹ At the same time, the Soviet press described the popular policy of the BNP as "reactionary", and criticised it for having "much in common with that of the fascist elements" of extreme right-wing parties.⁷⁰ There were even rumors in political circles in Dhaka that it was India and the Soviet Union that persuaded and/or prevailed on the alliance to participate in the election, even though it was held under

⁶⁷. V.Puchkov, "Bangladesh: From Military Rule to Parliament," New Times, (Moscow), No. 26, 1986, p. 13.

⁶⁸. Far Eastern Economic Review, April 3, 1986, p. 18.

⁶⁹. V.Puchkov, "Bangladesh: Lull After the Storm," New Times, (Moscow), No. 1, 1987, p. 39.

⁷⁰. Ibid

military rule.⁷¹ The Government, however, did not raise the issue of Soviet interference because this time it went in favour of the regime. In any case, there were no signs of improvement in Bangladesh-Soviet relations in 1986.

After 1987, the Soviet press and media began to report political events in Bangladesh cautiously, and without prejudice.⁷² They focused, primarily, on the role and activities of the communist parties, and on the government's repressions of the communists. The nature and extent of the coverage suggested that Moscow had some sympathy for the military regime, and was strongly critical of the nationalist parties, particularly the BNP. This inference was reinforced by the fact that when the military Government arrested leaders of all political parties, the leaders of the BCP were exempted (in previous crackdowns, the communists had been the first victims).

The Soviet Union was aware of the unpopularity and weakness of the communist parties and groups in Bangladesh, and did not make any serious attempt to back them in the elections of the late 1980s. In fact, by 1987, the Soviets may have concluded that a progressive anti-American, anti-Chinese nationalist alliance, whether military or democratic, would best serve Moscow's interests in Bangladesh. By the late

⁷¹. S. Abdul Hakim, op. cit. p. 82.

⁷². V.Puchkov, "Bangladesh: Tensions Run High," New Times, (Moscow), No. 50, 1987, pp. 14-15.

1980s, it was widely accepted, including by the regime in Dhaka, that the Soviet Union was no longer interested in the domestic politics of Bangladesh.⁷³

By this time, the BCP and the NAP were suffering from internal squabbles and disputes, particularly over strategy, tactics and how to respond to changes in the Soviet Union. According to the Far Eastern Economic Review, the General Secretary of the BCP, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, and some of his close associates, championed change, reforms and more democratization within the party, but other central committee members were not ready to support the move.⁷⁴ Another issue in the debate was whether to dispense with paid "full time" workers. There were also allegations of corruption and misuse of funds against the veteran NAP leader Muzaffar Ahmad.⁷⁵ But, as Chart II shows, despite internal divisions and differences, the BCP was able to hold together.

The military regimes in Bangladesh had always found cause to accuse Moscow of supporting communist parties and groups in trying to destabilize the country. By the late 1980s, however, it became clear that Soviet support for

⁷³. This view was broadly shared by political observers in Dhaka. This was confirmed by almost all political leaders, government officials and analysts whom the author interviewed in Dhaka in January-February, 1991.

⁷⁴. S. Kamaluddin, "Bangladesh: Left-wing parties divided internally over policy," Far Eastern Economic Review, September 21, 1989, p. 23.

⁷⁵. Ibid

communist parties in the Third World was drastically reduced, including Bangladesh, and effectively left them "to mind their own business," i.e. manage on their own. Pro-Moscow communist parties and groups in Bangladesh fell into serious ideological, political and financial crises with the withdrawal of Soviet support.⁷⁶

As in the case of other political parties in Bangladesh, communist parties there were divided not on ideological but mainly on personality issues. Most of the splits occurred as a result of personality conflicts, greed for power and leadership and individual interests and priorities.⁷⁷ The political parties of the left were too factionalised ever to unite, and thus posed no challenge to the regime. Nonetheless, it was the regime that was blamed for their disintegration. Foreign capital, the local bourgeoisie and Western aid agencies were all blamed and accused of working against leftist forces in Bangladesh.⁷⁸

Regardless of whether or not they had Soviet support communists could not build a mass political base in Bangladesh because of religious reasons; strong conservative religious and social traditions. Communist aspirations were stymied by many factors. Historically, communists were identified with

⁷⁶. Ibid

⁷⁷. Mahbubur Rahman, op. cit.

⁷⁸. Sirajul Islam Choudhury, Ashir Dashake Bangladesher Samaj, [Bangladeshi Society in the 1980s], (Dhaka: Dana Publishers), 1985, p. 53.

atheism and/or with Hindu believes, and, as a result, they found no popular acceptance in Muslim-dominated Bangladesh. The divisions and the continuous in-fighting among pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing communist parties and groups further weakened and undermined the communist movement in Bangladesh.

As in other Third World countries, the Soviet Union supported the BCP and the NAP, but, in so far as it benefitted Moscow's interests in maintaining and improving state-to-state relations. As in the case of pro-Moscow communist parties, they were controlled and dictated to by the USSR. (See Chapter Three). As a result, they were never able to develop their own local strategy and tactics. So, ultimately, when abandoned by Moscow those parties were plunged into disarray.

In late 1980s in Bangladesh, the already fragmented BCP and the NAP were divided mainly along two ideological fault lines: the old and senior members criticised Gorbachev's reforms and accused him of betraying communism, while the younger generation supported "perestroika" and advocated strategies and tactics better suited to domestic political, economic and religious changes and reforms. But without financial and political support from Moscow, it was extremely difficult for these parties to survive. Many of their members either retired or joined pro-Beijing communist parties or Islamic parties.⁷⁹ The BCP and the NAP were, as noted previously, neither able to work as vehicles for the improvement

⁷⁹. S. Kamaluddin, op. cit.

of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s, nor could they emerge as an independent political force in the country.

V

Conclusion

As seen from the above review, the key issue was lack of priority placed on good relations by each side, mostly for good reasons. Having said this, the issue of interference via the communist parties was the key one. Dhaka repeatedly alleged Soviet interference in the domestic affairs of Bangladesh. There were sufficient reasons to believe that the Soviets did try to influence the domestic politics of Bangladesh, albeit unsuccessfully, but at the same time the Government exacerbated the issue and over-reacted for political as well as ideological purposes. The Government, the right-wing, religious and pro-Beijing political parties always alleged that the Soviets were, indeed, meddling in Bangladesh's domestic politics; for their part, the Soviets as well as pro-Moscow political forces always denied such allegations.

The military regime of Ziaur Rahman was more anti-communist and anti-Soviet than the Ershad regime, and the policies adopted by his Government did nothing to improve Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the early 1980s.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a watershed in Bangladesh-Soviet relations. If, in earlier periods, anti-Sovietism was limited to military rulers and right-wing and

pro-Chinese political elements, in the post-Afghan era, the population at large was brought into the debate, and anti-Sovietism became widespread among broad segments of the population. Conversely, pro-Moscow communist parties and groups were unable to serve Soviet interests precisely because of their identification with atheism and unpopular Soviet policies. In fact, as of the 1980s not a single powerful social or political group existed in Bangladesh that could effectively exert influence for or advocate an improvement in Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

Despite the repression of local communists, the Soviet Union tried to maintain working relations with Bangladesh, but as a by-product of its Indian policies. But in absence of any genuine interest on the part of the military regime in Dhaka, it proved difficult. The growth of influence of pro-Chinese groups and a growing Chinese involvement in Bangladesh in the early 1980s was of concern to the USSR, but little could be done. Moscow's only hope was that political change in Dhaka might help to improve relations between the two states.

Thus, the Soviet Union welcomed the military take-over in 1982, hoping that the new regime would be less hostile towards its policies in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. But as seen in other chapters, their expectations were illusory, and based on misjudgement of Bangladesh's popular attitudes.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was overwhelmingly preoccupied with its own domestic political, economic and

ethnic problems and political issues and developments in Third World countries, including Bangladesh, were less important to Moscow. On the other hand, as the detailed discussion of this chapter shows, the domestic political situation in Bangladesh was far from stable, and the military Government was pre-occupied with its own survival. The Government also tried to use and manipulate the anti-Soviet attitudes and sentiments that were prevailing in the country for its own interests. In external relations, the Dhaka governments maintained and strengthened ties with those regimes that could help buttress its hold on power. Relations with Moscow was not a priority.

The Pakistani rulers during their 24 years' of power in Bangladesh tried to socialise Bangladeshi society in the spirit of anti-Soviet and anti-Indian political culture in order to build an "Islamic Republic," without any token gesture to socialism. As Table 5 shows, with the except of the AL and tiny pro-Moscow communist parties, no other political parties had any interest or priority in improving relations with the USSR. And the key factors in Bangladesh's indifference to the Soviet Union were: (a) perception that Soviet Union would or could do little to meet Bangladesh's interests; (b) religious factors.

Yet, despite the problems and difficulties of maintaining and developing working relations between the two countries at political levels, steady and stable economic ties did develop. The following chapter explores these.

Chapter Seven

BANGLADESH-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONS, 1980-90.

In 1971, when Bangladesh became independent, it inherited one of the most under-developed agrarian economies of the Third World.¹ As a least developed country with a poor resource base and low per-capita income (Table 1), economic development was a primary concern of the Dhaka regimes, because political stability and the regimes' survival were both dependent on the performance of the economy and the availability of external aid. Foreign policy was thus subservient to economic interests of the country; namely access to foreign aid for economic development purposes and expansion of trade.

This chapter focuses on economic interests of Bangladesh and how these influenced Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s. It is divided into three parts: part I reviews general economic interests of Bangladesh; part II analyses Bangladesh-Soviet economic relations, particularly in the fields of aid and investment; and part III deals with trade relations between the two states.

¹. For details of Bangladesh economy in the initial years, see A.R. Khan, The Economy of Bangladesh, (London: Mcmillan and St. Martin Press), 1972. Charanjit Chanana, Economy of Bangladesh, (New Delhi: Marketing and Economic Research Bureau), 1972. Bangladesh Economy: Problems and Prospects, ed. by V.K.R.V. Rao, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Limited), 1972.

I

General Economic Interests of Bangladesh

As a former part of Pakistan, Bangladesh inherited an aid-dependent economy. In the post-independence era that dependency increased significantly. Bangladesh continued the practice of economic planning, inherited from Pakistan, both long term and short term (five-year and annual). The plans usually reflected national economic goals and objectives.²

The main economic objectives were stipulated in the First Five Year Plan (FFYP) of Bangladesh, for 1973-78: to reconstruct the war-ravaged economy; to reduce poverty; and to achieve social justice.³ But even these modest goals of the Plan could not be achieved, because of "shortcoming in the implementation capacity--especially slow improvement in organization and management, and partly because of shortcomings in resources."⁴

The Government nationalised all major sectors of the economy. But despite the ideological predilection of left political parties and intellectuals, the plan failed to bring

². For details of economic strategy of development in Bangladesh, see Nurul Islam, Development Strategy of Bangladesh, (Oxford: Pergamon Ltd.), 1978, and E.A.G. Robinson and Keith Griffin, eds., The Economic Development of Bangladesh within a Socialist Framework, (Proceedings of a Conference held by the International Economic Association at Dhaka, London: Mcmillan Press), 1974.

³. The First Five-Year Plan, 1973-78, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1972.

⁴. Nurul Islam, (1978), op. cit., p. 4

radical changes in socio-cultural, administrative and educational sectors necessary for the construction of socialism in Bangladesh.⁵ The ruling AL Government had no real commitment to socialism or socialist ideals. Lack of labour discipline, social unrest and conflicts between various forces and factors of production seriously undermined the government's economic policies and objectives. A noted Bangladeshi economist characterised the situation as:

the conflict between self-and-social interests, between labour and capital, between management and bureaucracy, and between various socio-political pressure groups make the inherent contradictions more involved and complicated than they would be in a monolithic, autocratic or regimented society.⁶

Moreover, recurrent natural disasters and an unfavourable international economic climate limited the government's ability to achieve economic goals. The nationalised sector was in a chronic state of crisis, mainly because of mismanagement, corruption and lack of labour discipline. The oil crisis of 1973 and a recession in the Western countries further aggravated the situation, and left the economy in shambles. A

⁵. M. Alamgir "A Planning Model For East Pakistan, with Special Reference to Manpower and Education" an unpublished Ph. D dissertation at Harvard University 1971. Anisur Rahman emphasised the need for institutional and cultural changes from the below for the development of socialism in Bangladesh. Anisur Rahman, "Priorities and Methods of Socialist Development in Bangladesh," in E.A.G. Robinson and Keith Griffin, op. cit.

⁶. Muzaffar Ahmad, "Planning for Industrialization in Bangladesh," in E.A.G. Robinson and Keith Griffin, Ibid, p. 206

decline in domestic food production due to successive floods made the situation even worse. By the end of 1973, it was clear that Bangladesh could not survive without massive international aid and assistance.⁷

By the end of the 1970s, the socialist rhetoric in Bangladesh's economic discourse disappeared. In 1978, the country adopted a Two-Year development plan whose main goals were: to attain greater self-reliance through mobilization of domestic resources; to move towards self-sufficiency in foodgrains; to reduce population growth; to improve provision of basic needs such as food, clothing and drinking water; and to arrest further deterioration in the employment situation.⁸

In fact, after the political change of 1975, the economic interests of Bangladesh were clear: to move gradually towards a free market economy by de-nationalizing industries; to promote incentives for private investors; to encourage foreign investment; to improve relations with the West in order to receive more aid and investment; and, to expand and promote trade. Economic and political changes compelled the military regime to reform and re-define foreign policy goals and orien-

⁷. For details of foreign aid for development in Bangladesh, see Just Faaland and J.R. Parkinson, Bangladesh: The Test Case of Development, (London: C. Hearst and Company), 1976, Akhlaqur Rahman, Foreign Aid and Self-Reliant Growth: The Case of Bangladesh, (Dhaka: Dona Publishers), 1984, and Rehman Sobhan, op. cit.

⁸. The Two Year Plan 1980-80, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1978.

tations, leading emphasis on good relations with the wealthy Western and oil-rich Arab countries. This shift and reorientation was acknowledged by a high Bangladeshi official:

The smallness of our size and the largeness of our population have been key determinants. The need for extensive support for our national development efforts has prompted us to develop close relations with, if I may say, more endowed countries. These countries also provide the opportunities for markets for our exportable products.⁹

As the military regime redefined and modified the domestic economic policies and priorities, and adjusted external policies accordingly, Soviet Union became marginalised further in the national interest of Bangladesh.

General economic priorities of Bangladesh during the 1980s differed little from those in the late 1970s. The Second Five Year Plan (SFYP), for 1980-85, adopted in 1980, defined national economic goals and objectives as follows:¹⁰

- i. To ensure an equitable growth in order to bring about a noticeable improvement in the standard of living of people by ensuring adequate supplies of basic needs;
- ii. To reach self-sufficiency in food in the shortest possible time;

⁹. Address by Foreign Minister Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud, at the First Annual Conference of Bangladesh Society of International Studies (BSIS), and National Seminar on "The Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges," Dhaka, January 31, 1989, Bangladesh Documents, (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh), January-March 1989, p. 139.

¹⁰. The Second Five Year Plan 1980-85, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1980.

- iii. To expand opportunities for gainful employment so that people have access to income and resources for their basic needs and to the benefit of growth;
- iv. To eliminate illiteracy and achieve universal primary education as steps for comprehensive human resource development;
- v. To reduce the rate of population growth;
- vi. To promote participation of people in development activities, through devolution of administration and development of local institutions; and
- vii. To attain a higher degree of self-reliance through domestic resource mobilization efforts and improvement of balance of payment position.

As observed, the SFYP was an ambitious one, and identified the broad economic goals and interests of the country. Rather than the goal to "achieve social justice," which was an objective in the FFYP, the SFYP emphasised the need for "improvement in the standard of living of people by ensuring adequate supplies of basic needs."¹¹ In external economic relations the priorities were: to encourage and promote foreign private investment and joint ventures in Bangladesh; to promote and diversify trade; and to ensure adequate inflows of foreign aid.¹²

¹¹. Syed Ahmed, Implementation of Second Five Year Plan and an Outline of Third Plan of Bangladesh, Dhaka: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1986, p. 3.

¹². Bangladesh: A Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s; An Assessment of Development Potentials, Bottlenecks and Assistance Requirements, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, External Resource Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), January 1981.

In domestic economic policy, one of the major priorities of both Zia and Ershad Governments was to expand and expedite the de-nationalisation and privatization programs initiated in the mid-1970s. To encourage private investment, the Zia Government offered liberal fiscal and monetary incentives, in the form of investment allowances, preferential custom duty and easy and long-term loans. The Government also reformed, and finally abolished, investment ceilings in the private sector.¹³ In-mid 1982 the Ershad Government announced a New Industrial Policy for the country. According to this policy all branches of industry except six (production of armaments and military equipment, atomic energy, air transport, telecommunications, electrical power and timber exploitation), were to be opened to private investment. To promote and protect local industries, imports of some industrial goods, such as electric bulbs, electric ceiling fans, dry cell battery, locks and padlocks, were banned. A special investment group was set up in the President's office, to encourage and assist foreign investors. Necessary legal, administrative and other reforms were enacted to facilitate healthy growth of the private sector. By the end of 1983, almost half of the jute and textile mills that were nationa-

¹³. According to industrial policy in 1973 the investment ceiling in private industry was limited to 2.5 million taka; later it was raised to 100 million, and, finally, in the early 1980s it was withdrawn. The Third Five Year Plan 1985-90, (Dhaka: Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance and Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), May 1985, pp. 19 and 103.

lised in 1972 were returned to their former owners.¹⁴

Privatization programs also continued in the banking, insurance and publication sectors. In early 1984 six major commercial banks operated in the private sectors; by 1990 their numbers had increased to ten. There were also seven foreign banks operating in Bangladesh in 1990.¹⁵ The most influential English daily, the Bangladesh Observer, was returned to its former owners. During 1982-83, in addition to the multinationals already operating in the country, the Government permitted 19 more transnational enterprises to begin operations in Bangladesh, in the textile, leather and tobacco industries.¹⁶ By the end of 1986, 45% of Bangladeshi industries were in private hands. The share of disbursement of foreign aid into the private sector also increased, from \$0.1 million in 19972-73, to \$69.3 million in 1984-85.¹⁷

As a result of all these changes, Bangladesh developed one of the most liberal industrial policies in the Third World in the 1980s. To quote Hugh Evans: "Bangladesh has a more

¹⁴. The Bangladesh Times, March 24, 1985.

¹⁵. Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1990. (Dhaka: Statistical Bureau of Bangladesh, Statistical Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh), 1990, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶. The New Nation, (Dhaka), December 23, 1983.

¹⁷. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. pp. 141-42.

liberal industrial policy than either Pakistan or India."¹⁸ However, the privatization program had its own problems and limitations, and failed to bring the expected results--mainly because of corruption, misappropriation of funds, lack of managerial skills, entrepreneurship and labour discipline.¹⁹

Another important economic interest was to expand and increase export earnings. The Government adopted a number of initiatives to encourage and promote exports, including:

'rationalization' of the value of the taka [local monetary unit]; promotional measures for individual export categories;.....development and expansion of supporting infrastructure; export market expansion through continuous market surveys; participation in trade fairs abroad and the organization of trade missions.²⁰

The Government also created an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Chittagong, in order to encourage investment and expand exports. Steps were taken to stimulate foreign investment, and legal provisions were enacted to protect such investors. Industrial policy was further liberalised and no permission was required when investment was made with own resources. President Ershad, in his address to the Confederation of British Industries in London on February 15, 1989,

¹⁸. Hugh Evans, "Bangladesh: South Asia's Unknown Quantity," Asian Affairs, (Journal of the Royal Society of Asian Affairs), Vol. XIX, Part 3, 1988, p. 311.

¹⁹. For privatization policy and various problems related to it, see A.M. Quamrul Alam, "Privatization Policy and the Problem of Industrial Development in Bangladesh," South Asia: (Journal of South Asian Studies), Vol. XII, No. 2, 1989, pp. 49-68.

²⁰. Ibid

said,

We have an Export Processing Zone at Chittagong and soon will set up another at Dhaka. Industries in these Zones enjoy special fiscal incentives and infrastructural facilities. A 100% foreign investment is allowed in the Export Processing Zones.²¹

A number of trade liberalization policies were also adopted, including: significant tariff reductions and rationalization of the tariff system; progressive removal of items from the list of restricted imports (from 186 items in 1985, to 113 in 1991); simplification of procedures and the enlarging of the number of freely importable items.²²

The pattern of merchandise exports changed dramatically. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the decade, raw jute and jute products accounted for more than three-quarters of total exports. By 1989/90 their share had declined sharply, and the ready-made garment industry became the main export earner (45% of total exports).²³ As Bangladesh faced more challenges in its traditional export markets from fellow Third World countries, one of the main priorities of the Government was to diversify trade and explore new markets. As result of these initiatives, exports increased significantly and the

²¹. Address by Hon'ble President at the dinner hosted in his honour by the members of the Confederation of British Industries, London, 15 February 1989, Bangladesh Documents, January-March, 1989, (Dhaka: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), p. 40.

²². Ibid

²³. The Least Developed Countries, 1991 Report, (Geneva, New York: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations), 1992, p. 90.

directions changed; exports to the industrialised countries doubled in the 1980s, while the share of developing countries was drastically reduced.²⁴

Compared to exports, imports remained more diversified and less concentrated. Despite a significant increase in exports, in 1990 export earnings could finance only 45% of import bills, and the country had to spend 50-60% of export earnings just to buy oil and petroleum products. Moreover, due to bad crops and recurrent natural disasters, Bangladesh had to import more and more foodgrains and consumer goods and less capital goods. In 1980, food and consumer items had constituted 38% of total imports, intermediate goods 42%, and capital goods only 20%. By 1990 the situation had hardly improved.²⁵

But, as a result of the sharp decline in GDP growth in the early 1980s, export shortfalls, massive deterioration in the terms of trade and declining flows of concessional assistance, the situation worsened.²⁶ The high level of specializa-

²⁴ Bangladesh's exports to industrial countries increased from \$268 million in 1981 to \$523 million in 1986, while exports to developing countries decreased from \$466 million to \$305 for the same period. "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1987," op. cit., p. 95.

²⁵ "The Least Developed Countries, 1991 Report," op. cit. p. 38.

²⁶ Appendix-C shows, in 1982/83 the GDP declined to \$11,274 million compared to \$12,836 million in 1980/81. Trade declined from \$3,414 million to 3,089 million during the same period. In 1980/81 Bangladesh received \$1145.6 million aid, and \$593.7 million, that is, 52% came as grant, while in 1988/89 the share of grant in total aid reduced to about 40%.

tion in a limited number of primary and semi-finished products industries made external trade dependent on and vulnerable to changes in market demands of importing countries. In 1980, for example, six export products--raw jute, jute goods, tea, leather, frozen marine foods and papers and newsprints--accounted for about 95% of total export earnings, while raw jute and jute goods alone accounted for 78% of that amount.²⁷

The main problems hampering expansion and promotion of trade were: growing competition from fellow Third World countries; economic recession and protectionist policies by Western countries; and Bangladesh's own inability to provide supplies in necessary quantities and qualities at the proper time, due to uncertain weather, inadequate infrastructural support, shortage of transport and communications, lack of labour discipline and political instability.

Despite all the above-raised issues and problems, Bangladesh's overall exports and imports during the 1980s increased significantly. Exports rose from \$821 million in 1980-81 to \$1,281 million in 1988-1989, that is, by about 56%. During the same period, imports increased from \$2,593 million to \$3,375 million respectively, or by about 30% (see Appendix C). Exports thus grew faster than imports.

The data are computed from "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, pp. 11, 12 and 13.

²⁷. "Bangladesh: A Substantial New Programme of Action," op. cit. p. 31.

Table 8. Major Sources of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh, 1971-89
(in million US dollars)

Donors	Food	Commodity	Project	Total	% of Total
Total aid	4248.7	6746.1	7923.0	18917.8	
1. IDA	-	1477.768	1567.930	3045.698	16.0%
2. Japan	315.291	1372.580	801.170	2489.041	13.2%
3. USA	1277.518	553.715	618.785	2450.018	13.0%
4. UN System	752.102	138.545	396.143	1286.790	6.8%
5. Canada	694.987	303.010	269.317	1267.344	6.7%
6. ADB	-	176.766	1059.662	1239.428	6.6%
7. FRG	91.973	417.457	292.095	801.525	4.2%
8. UK	58.511	351.859	298.242	708.612	3.7%
9. Saudi Arabia	110.750	287.500	238.901	637.151	3.4%
10. Holand	14.772	399.554	205.597	619.923	3.3%
11. EEC	402.709	132.818	46.709	582.236	3.0%
12. USSR	49.920	48.990	283.751	382.661	2.0%
13. Sweden	31.173	196.336	153.583	381.092	2.0%
14. India	113.325	79.082	122.005	364.412	2.0%
15. France	32.073	30.111	249.015	311.199	1.6%
	3945.104	6019.091	6602.935	16567.130	86.0%

Source; This Table is computed from Tables 2.00 and 5.00, "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. pp. 6 and 24.

Despite improvements the results were inadequate and the country remained heavily dependent on foreign aid for its developmental needs and activities. Foreign aid was highly

concentrated with the major share provided by industrialised countries and multinational agencies.²⁸

As Table 8 shows, during 1971-89, Bangladesh received about \$16.6 billion dollar (about \$4 billion as food aid; \$6 billion as commodity aid; and \$6.6 billion as project aid) from 15 different sources; of this sum \$10.5 billion, or about 63%, came from just six sources, and more than 60% was in the form of food and commodity aid.

The Soviet Union provided \$382.661 million in aid to Bangladesh during the period of 1971-89. It was only about 2% of the total aid (about \$19 billion) received during the same period. But the Soviet share of aid was higher than that from such important Western countries as France. The most important characteristic of the Soviet aid was that about 75% of it was in the form of project aid. The Soviet Union ranked 12th as a donor country to Bangladesh, and the amount was not significant when compared with the aid provided by other developed countries.

Bangladesh suffered from recurrent natural calamities and disasters in the 1980s, and, as a result, the share of food and commodity aid increased, and that of project aid decreased--mainly because of the Government's inability to provide the local share of such aid and frequent misuse and

²⁸. International/multinational agencies included: The Asian Development Bank, the EEC, the Ford Foundation, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, OPEC, UNICEF and the UN system, see, "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. p. 22.

mismanagement of funds.²⁹

Bangladesh was overwhelmingly dependent on foreign aid not only for its developmental needs, but also for its very survival. As the sources of foreign aid shrunk, and its availability became more competitive (particularly after the collapse of communist system in Eastern Europe), Bangladesh, with its heavy dependence on aid, became even more vulnerable and dependent on major donor countries and agencies. In response, it had to strive even harder to formulate and readjust domestic and external policies to satisfy the donors.

During the early 1980s, the Soviet Union was highly critical of Bangladesh's economic policies, including the privatization program. Moscow held international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, responsible for "giving all possible help to the capitalist tendencies in the development of Bangladesh," and accused them of converting Bangladesh "into an object of the neo-colonialist aspirations of the West."³⁰ But as the USSR began to liberalize its own economy and to seek Western help and assistance itself, however, in the late 1980s, there were fewer or no conflicts of economic interests between the two countries; rather, Moscow expressed interests in participating in joint ventures and private investments in Bangladesh.

²⁹. A.M. Quamrul Alam, op. cit. pp. 49-68.

³⁰. V.I. Puchkov, op. cit. p. 182.

II

Soviet Aid to, and Investment in Bangladesh

The overall economic relationship between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union developed within the broad framework of the Joint Declaration signed in Moscow in March, 1972. The Soviet Union agreed to cooperate in the construction of a thermal power station, radio broadcasting stations, and an electrical equipment plant, and in geological prospecting for oil and gas.³¹ It also agreed to provide assistance to Bangladesh for the reconstruction of railway transport, the merchant marine, and to develop the sea fisheries.³² The Soviets gave Bangladesh some aircraft for domestic use, and a squadron of MIG fighter planes for the Air Force. Moscow also offered limited help for irrigation, flood control and oil exploration. A major Soviet contribution was to clean mines from Chittagong and Cox's Bazar shipping lanes. Yet even this crucial Soviet help was not immune from criticism.³³

The Soviet Union provided Bangladesh a credit of 38 million roubles in 1972, to finance the on-going projects of the General Electric Manufacturing (GEM) Plant in Chittagong, the 110 MW Thermal Power Station in Ghorasal, the Oil and Gas

³¹. See, Appendix A

³². Ibid

³³. Many in Bangladesh complained that the Soviets were taking too long to clean the ports. One Bangladeshi naval officer described it as "the longest salvage operation for a small harbour." Lawrence Lifschultz, op. cit. p. 110

Prospecting Project and the Installation of Radio Transmitters for Radio Bangladesh. Moscow also provided Bangladesh with the following items in the form of a grant:³⁴

1. 10 Fishing trawlers.
2. 3 Freight ships (coasters).
3. 4 Helicopters.
4. 30,000 tons of rice.
5. 5,000 tons of vegetable oil.
6. A cold storage plant.
7. The setting up of 3 specialised training institutes in Dhaka, Ghorasal and Chittagong.
8. Soviet experts' service as per mutual agreement.

As the Soviet Union itself had to import large quantities of food and commodities from abroad, Moscow usually did not provide such aid to Third World countries. However, during the economic crisis of 1973-74, Bangladesh received 200,000 tons of wheat on loan from the Soviet Union; this quantity of food was repaid by Dhaka during 1981-82. In 1972-73 Bangladesh also received \$29.7 million commodities aid in the form of grants.³⁵

Bangladesh needed food and commodity aid on an emergency basis for feeding the population, massive rehabilitation programs, and the resettlements of refugees from India. The AL Government repeatedly appealed to the USSR for more food and commodity aid on the ground that it would help to reduce its

³⁴. Briefing Paper on Bangladesh-USSR Economic Co-operation, (Dhaka: External Resources Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh), December 1990, p. 1. (Henceforth will be referred as "the Briefing Paper.")

³⁵. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit., p. 64.

dependency on the developed capitalist countries. But the Soviet response was far from encouraging. The Soviet food and commodity aid was very moderate compared to the needs of Bangladesh. Although Moscow committed a significant amount of project aid during the period of 1971-75 (\$107.9 million, about 10% of total project aid), the actual disbursement was only \$15.3 million (see Table 9).

Table 9. Soviet Aid to Bangladesh, 1980-1989
(in million US dollars)

<u>Years</u>	<u>Commitment</u>			<u>Disbursement</u>		
	<u>Food</u>	<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Food</u>	<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Project</u>
1980-81	-	-	71.56	-	-	3.015
1981-82	-	-	73.0	-	-	2.322
1982-83	-	-	2.6	-	-	8.981
1983-84	-	-	-	-	-	50.947
1984-85	-	-	75.75	-	-	16.935
1985-86	-	-	-	-	-	22.359
1986-87	-	-	-	-	-	47.300
1987-88	-	-	-	-	-	13.188
1988-89	-	-	-	-	-	54.097
Sub-total			222.71			219.18
Total Soviet aid			436.320			382.661

Source: "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit. Table 5.40, p. 64.

Despite occasional political and diplomatic tension and conflicts and lack of mutual understanding, modest economic

relations did develop between the two countries in the 1980s, and the Soviet Union continued to provide aid to Bangladesh.

As Table 9 shows, during the 1980s, the Soviet Union no longer provided food or commodity aid to Bangladesh. The share of Soviet project aid in total projects to Bangladesh was also low. From December 1971 to June 30, 1989, Bangladesh received a total of \$7,923 million in project aid, of which the Soviet contribution was \$382.661 million or about 5%.³⁶ The disbursement process of the Soviet project aid was slow and time consuming, though the committed/received ratio was much more satisfactory than that of other donors. For example, during the period of 1971-89, the total commitment by all donors of project aid to Bangladesh was \$12,839.3 million, with actual disbursement of only \$7,923 million, or 62%. But, as Table 9 shows, in the case of the Soviet Union the disbursement reached almost 88%.³⁷ During the second half of the 1980s the Soviet Union did not commit any new aid, limiting itself to the disbursement of sums committed earlier.

Nevertheless, despite tensions and difficulties in bilateral political relations, Soviet aid to Bangladesh in the 1980s (\$219.18 million) did not decrease when compared to the 1970s (\$163.841 million). Soviet aid was used in a variety of

³⁶. Ibid. pp. 6 and 64.

³⁷. For Japan the ratio was 76%, for the US 80%, and for the UK 56%. These figures are computed from Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990, Tables 5.9, 5.15 and 5.16, pp. 33, 39 and 40.

projects and enterprises in Bangladesh, but the major share was used in the power sector. The most important Soviet-assisted power project was the Ghorasal thermal power station near Dhaka. This project is being completed in phases, and when fully completed, will supply more than one-third of the country's electricity needs.³⁸

Table 10. Soviet Assistance for Ghorasal Thermal Power Project

Unit No.	Capacity	Year of Contract	Scheduled for commissioning
1. Unit No. I	55 MW	1966	1974 commissioned
2. Unit No. II	55 MW	1966	1976 commissioned
3. Unit No. III	210 MW	1981	1987 commissioned
4. Unit No. IV	210 MW	1981	1989 commissioned
5. Unit No. V	210 MW	1985	1991 commissioned
6. Unit No. VI	210 MW	1987	1992 Not commissioned

Source : Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

³⁸. This figure was given by an official of the Bangladesh Power Development Board during a confidential interview with the author in Dhaka on January 12, 1991.

As Table 10 shows, as early as 1966, the Soviet Union was involved in the Ghorasal power project. The agreement for the construction of the 6th Unit of the Power Station was signed in October 1987, during the visit to Moscow of a Bangladeshi delegation headed by the then Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. The third phase of the project was completed in January 1987, increasing the energy output of the country by 20 percent.³⁹ By 1991, 5 units of the Ghorashal Power Plant were in operation; the 6th unit was scheduled to be completed in 1992, but the work was delayed. The Soviet Government blamed the Bangladesh authorities for "unnecessarily delaying" the project, and requested that the necessary measures be taken to expediate the process.⁴⁰

As evident from the above Table, the first two units took comparatively longer time to complete, mainly because of war of the independence in 1971 and the violent political changes of 1975. For other three units, it took an average of 7 years to complete each project which was normal time for foreign-aided projects in Bangladesh.⁴¹

As Table 11 shows, the Soviet Union provided 3 major

³⁹. V. Puchkov, op. cit. p. 39.

⁴⁰. V. Skovitin, "Soviet Union o Bangladesher moddhe banijjik o orthonoitik shahojogita," [Trade and Economic Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Bangladesh], (Dhaka: "Release" received from the Soviet Embassy in Bangladesh), September 2, 1990, p. 2.

⁴¹. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit., (Introduction), p. 3.

soft-term loans to Bangladesh to develop the power sector. Each of the three power agreements was signed between the PDB and Techno-Prom Export (TPE) of the Soviet Union. According to the agreements the TPE would provide technical assistance and deputy supervisory specialists.⁴²

Loans provided under these agreements were highly favourable, because the interest rate was low, down-payments were low, and provisions for grace periods provided Bangladesh with unusual flexibility to repay them. Soviet aid in general was advantageous, because of easy terms and conditions, and because more than 90% was repayable in Bangladeshi goods.

Table 11. Terms and Conditions of the Soviet Aid for Ghorashal Power Project

<u>Dates of Agreement</u>	<u>Amount (mln.US\$)</u>	<u>Rate of interests</u>	<u>Down payment</u>	<u>Grace period (years)</u>	<u>Repayment period (years)</u>
Power project Feb. 18, 1981	72.2	3%	5%	3.5	10
Power project Nov. 28, 1981	74.0	3.5%	5%	3.5	10
Power project April 1, 1985	75.75	3.5%	..	4	10

Source: "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1986," op. cit., Table: 2-12, P.136.

Another major Soviet-funded project in Bangladesh was the GEM Plant in Chittagong. The Soviet Union provided 12.9

⁴². The Bangladesh Observer, September 17, 1981.

million roubles in 1972 and more than 5 million roubles in 1978 to complete the project. According to Soviet sources, it was the largest electrical engineering plant in South Asia. The Bangladesh government also had high expectations about the project. While inaugurating the plant, in 1978, President Ziaur Rahman said it "will play a vital role in the realization of the program of electrification of Bangladesh."⁴³ Although production started in 1978, however, the plant never achieved its full production capacity. In the early 1980s, it produced at only about 20% of its capacity. The management in Bangladesh blamed faulty Soviet machinery and delays in the delivery of spare parts for inefficiency and under-production. Soviet authorities reported, to the contrary, that "the plant was equipped according to the last word in technology," but operated below capacity because of market constraints and "internal financial difficulties."⁴⁴

With the improvement of political understandings between Dhaka and Moscow in the late 1980s, Bangladesh sought more Soviet help and assistance, particularly in the energy, oil and gas sectors. The Government asked the Soviet Union to examine the problems of the Soviet-assisted plants, which were inefficient and producing below full-capacity, and requested help and assistance in modernizing these plants so as to make

⁴³. The Bangladesh Observer, (Dhaka), September 27, 1978.

⁴⁴. Vladimir Baidakov, "Bangladesh: Struggling to Shed Her Painful Legacy," New Times, (Moscow), No. 5, 1982, p. 18.

them more efficient and financially viable. Although the Soviet Union agreed to consider some of the proposals, as of 1990 no concrete steps had been taken. Bangladesh also requested that the Soviet Union extend cooperation in geological prospecting for oil and gas in Bangladesh. The Soviet side expressed interest, but wanted to examine and evaluate data submitted by the Bangladesh Oil and Gas Marketing Company (BOGMC) before participating in any particular project.⁴⁵ In February 1989 three Soviet experts from M/S Zarubezhgeologia visited Bangladesh. During their two-week stay in Dhaka they held detailed discussions with Bangladeshi experts and officials. The BOGMC proposed that the Soviet Union provide full technical and financial assistance on a grant basis for the drilling of one or two exploratory wells. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources also asked the BOGMC to submit two concrete project proposals for Soviet technical and financial assistance: (i) for the drilling of wells for oil and gas at Shahbazpur, Mubarakpur and Shoilakupa in the Bogra district; and (ii) for a package programme for exploration of hard rock and limestone.⁴⁶ Both proposals remained at the deliberation stage in 1990.

Another prospective project for Soviet assistance was the Jaipurhat Limestone and Cement complex. Bangladesh requested that the Soviet government provide help to develop limestone

⁴⁵. "The Briefing Paper," op. cit. p. 4.

⁴⁶. Ibid. p. 5.

and cement factories in Bangladesh. After careful study of the Bangladeshi proposal the Soviet side expressed interest in the cement project, but not in the limestone venture. The Bangladesh government, in turn, informed the Soviet side that it would not be possible to implement cement projects without also exploring limestone potential, and asked Moscow to reconsider both projects as recipients of Soviet help. The Soviet side agreed to reconsider the request, and proposed a visit to the project site by Soviet experts, to study the economic and technical feasibility of the project; but the entire cost of this exploratory visit would have to be born by the Bangladesh Government. Dhaka agreed to the proposal, and invited Soviet experts to visit Bangladesh, but, again as of 1990, this had also not yet taken place.

The Soviet Union also expressed interest in the construction of roads and highways in Bangladesh. In the mid-1980s Moscow proposed that it provide assistance for the construction of the Rupsa Railway-cum-Road bridge in Khulna, but the project was not given priority by the Bangladesh Government. However, the Government did decide to evaluate the project at the end of the FYP. In July 1990 Parliament debated the issue and a decision was taken to construct the bridge, but no further progress was made.⁴⁷

In August 1989, the Soviet Union offered technical and economic assistance to set up a cement factory in Chattak. In

⁴⁷. V. Skovitin, op. cit. p. 3.

early 1990, after careful study, the Bangladesh government approved the project, and invited Soviet authorities to send a team of experts, at their own cost, to Bangladesh, to discuss the details of the implementation of the project; there was no immediate response from the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

During the 1980s a number of agreements were signed between Bangladesh and the USSR to expand and promote economic relations and cultural cooperation between the two countries. In January 1987 Second Deputy Economic Minister A.P. Baduvsky visited Bangladesh to open the third unit of the Soviet-assisted Ghorasal power plant.⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, in June 1987, during the visit of a Soviet delegation to Dhaka, a three-year cultural agreement was signed.

Dr. Vitali S. Smirnov, a very dynamic and highly visible Soviet Ambassador to Bangladesh, used all possible forums and opportunities to explain the historic importance of Bangladesh-Soviet relations, and asked Bangladeshi industrialists and businessmen to actively explore new fields and avenues for further cooperation between the two countries. He visited many parts of Bangladesh, frequently met industrialists and business people, explained economic reforms in the Soviet Union under "Perestroika" and "New Thinking," and constantly promoted the idea of economic cooperation between the two

⁴⁸. "The Briefing Paper," op. cit.

⁴⁹. Far Eastern Economic Review, (Asia Yearbook 1988), p. 97.

countries.

The Soviet Union also expressed interest in joint ventures in various agricultural projects and processing industries in Bangladesh. In 1990s, a number of projects, including the development of fisheries in the Bay of Bengal, production of water pumps, telephone sets, plastic, and food processing industries, were under serious consideration.⁵⁰

Bangladesh also asked Moscow to set up industries, particularly in textiles and leather, on a buy-back basis. The Soviet side was interested in such projects.⁵¹ By the late 1980s, there appeared to be considerable potential for co-operation between Bangladesh and the USSR in fields of trade and investments, but progress was slow, due to primarily political unwillingness and bureaucratic red tape.⁵²

⁵⁰. V. Skovitin, op. cit. p. 3. Soviet Ambassador Vitali Smirnov also mentioned ready-made garments, food processing, leather, coal, gas and oil and electric industries as potential sectors for joint ventures in Bangladesh. "Interview," op. cit.

⁵¹. V. Skovitin, op. cit. p. 3.

⁵². It was a common complaint made by the Soviet authorities. Soviet Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dr. Vitali Smirnov, during an interview with the author in Dhaka on January 24, 1991, pointed out that for years Soviet machinery was exposed to the open sky; the Bangladesh authorities did not take care of their proper maintenance. One senior official of Bangladesh, during a confidential interview with the author, acknowledged that the causes for delaying Soviet-assisted projects lay mainly in the actions of the Bangladesh Government. But he denied any political motives behind it; rather, he blamed the poor infrastructure and the inability of the Government to provide on time local resources for the implementation of these projects. "Interview," with Soviet ambassador, op. cit., and Confidential interview with a senior official in the External Resources Division, Dhaka; Government

As economic cooperation with the Soviet Union grew slowly, but steadily, the Bangladesh Government considered it opportune and necessary to set up a Joint Economic Commission with the USSR (Bangladesh had established such commissions with others with whom it had close economic ties). Bangladesh thus proposed, in 1990, the setting up of a Joint Economic Commission with the USSR, with a view to reviewing the problems and progress of completed and on-going projects, and exploring new areas of cooperation between the two countries. However, there was no encouraging response on the part of the Soviet Union.

As elsewhere in the Third World, most Soviet-assisted projects in Bangladesh proved to be inefficient and non-competitive, mainly because of their slow production and low quality of goods. The parties often blamed each other for the problems that arose. The user agencies in Bangladesh accused the Soviet Union of slowness in disbursing aid, and delay in delivering machinery and spare parts, and claimed that, as a result, Soviet-aided projects became more expensive and took longer periods to complete. As noted earlier, those accusations were not substantiated by facts.

Political and ideological factors played key motivating roles in economic relations: when political relations between the two countries suffered set-backs, Soviet economic aid was criticised and Soviet-assisted projects deliberately slowed

of Bangladesh, February 6, 1991.

down to undermine Soviet help to Bangladesh.⁵³ Many of the criticisms about Soviet-aided projects in Bangladesh were politically or otherwise motivated.

The Soviet Union usually provided aid only in the public sector, which was the most inefficient sector in the economy, and often suffered serious set-backs due to corruption and mismanagement; and this happened not only in the case of Soviet aid. In general, the Government failed to properly utilise foreign project aid, mainly because of poor infrastructure, economic mismanagement and negligence on the part of the officials involved. It was not only the Soviet Union that complained about the misuse and mismanagement of aid; Western donor countries and agencies also reduced aid commitments because of Dhaka's "economic mismanagement," over-spending on the military and poor and inefficient economic planning.⁵⁴ According to the Government's explanation:

delays in project identification, preparation and approval coupled with donor conditionalities, tied nature of aid and lack of adequate local currency support contributed to the slow down of disbursement of project aid.⁵⁵

There were long debates and criticisms about the merits and demerits of Soviet aid to Bangladesh. Although most

⁵³. This point was made by A.R.S. Doha, former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, during an interview with the author in Dhaka on January 29, 1991.

⁵⁴. Far Eastern Economic Review, May 3, 1990, p.56

⁵⁵. "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," op. cit., p. 3.

Bangladeshi leaders and officials were critical about the Soviet aid, there were some officials who believed that Bangladesh would have benefited more economically if it had maintained good political relations with Moscow.⁵⁶

Table 12. Repayment of Foreign Loans by Bangladesh (June 30, 1989).
(in million)

Donors	Currency	Total Disbursed	Repayed	% of Payment
1. Japan	YEN	387153.775	15595.443	4
2. USA	US\$	862.906	72.973	8
3. Belgium	B.F.	1724.975	83.750	5
4. France	F.F.	1100.226	269.896	25
5. China	YUAN	183.769	1.300	0.7
6. USSR	Roubles	116.750	99.612	85
7. I.D.A	US\$	1356.081	38.584	3
	SDR	1497.683	0.105	0.007
8. A.D.B.	US\$	689.856	29.081	4
	SDR	403.976	0.000	0

Source: "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990," Tables; 6.1, 6.3 and 6.4, pp. 74-107.

Like many other Third World countries, Bangladesh also suffered seriously from burden of debt repayment. However, Dhaka's record of repaying Soviet loans was better and more

⁵⁶. This point was strongly advocated by Rehman Sobhan, op. cit. A similar view was also expressed by a high official in the External Resources Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, during a confidential interview with the author in Dhaka, "Interview", op. cit.

satisfactory than its record of repayment of loans from other sources. Table 12 shows, as of June 1989, Bangladesh had repaid only 3 to 4 per cent of the aid received from Japan, Belgium, IDA and ADB, and only 8 percent of the US aid, while in the case of Soviet aid, 85 percent was repaid during the same period. The Bangladesh PDB failed to repay the whole amount for the 3rd and 4th units of the Ghorasal Power Station, due to economic difficulties (about \$16 million was due in July/August 1990). However, the amount was scheduled to be repaid by the end of 1990.⁵⁷ It was easier for Bangladesh to repay Soviet loans because of low interests rates, soft terms and provisions allowing payment in Bangladeshi goods.

The Soviet Union provided assistance for a number of projects; however, Bangladesh was not a priority in Soviet project aid to Third World countries during the 1980s. The Soviet Union mainly provided aid and assistance to two types of Third World countries: socialist or socialist-oriented countries, and those countries which were strategically important to Moscow. The LDCs, including Bangladesh, had no priority in Soviet foreign economic relations. With political changes and economic reforms in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, economic interests also gradually became even more dominant factors in bilateral relations with Third World countries.

Soviet-assisted projects in the Third World were highly

⁵⁷. "The Briefing Paper," op. cit. p. 3.

concentrated. As Table 13 shows, out of the total 4512 agreed-upon Soviet-assisted projects in the Third World, almost half were in Asia. Almost two-thirds of the Asian projects were in five socialist states: North Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan

Table 13. Number of Enterprises and Other Projects Built, Under Construction or to be Built Abroad with Soviet Assistance. (As on January 1, 1982)

Countries	<u>Total</u>		<u>Industrial Enterprises</u>	
	<u>Agree-ments</u>	<u>Commi-ssioned</u>	<u>Agree-ments</u>	<u>Commi-ssioned</u>
Total	4512	2707	2437	1600
Asia	2157	1337	1020	722
Asian Socialist	1467	979	694	519
Asian Developing	609	408	326	203
Afghanistan	167	78	46	19
Iran	121	81	87	59
Iraq	99	73	49	38
India	92	56	65	38
Syria	64	35	24	16
PDRY	33	15	11	5
Bangladesh	15	11	4	4

Source: I.A. Kulev, "Economic and Technical Cooperation of the USSR with Asian Countries: Results and Prospects," in Soviet Perspectives of Contemporary Asia, ed. by Bhabani Sen Gupta, op. cit. Table 3, p. 103.

Laos and China. Only 609 projects were in Asian non-communist countries; among them, 543, or about 90%, were in just 5 countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, India and Syria. As of

1982, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union had signed agreements for Soviet assistance to 15 enterprises and projects; 11 were commissioned (Table 13).

After the disintegration of the USSR the Soviet-assisted projects in Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the Third World suffered serious set-backs. Russia continues to fund only those projects which were viable and economically profitable to Moscow. Investment in private sector and joint ventures in some earlier identified sectors, like textile, leather and food processing and the production of cables were continued.

III

Bangladesh-Soviet Trade

Trade was an important area of economic cooperation between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union. As in the case of other economic relations, trade was also guided by the general framework laid down in the Joint Declaration signed in 1972 (Appendix A). Barter protocols were signed every year to regulate the terms and conditions of trade; by 1990, 19 such Protocols had been signed.

Despite optimism expressed by Bangladesh and the USSR in 1972 concerning prospects for "all-around cooperation" between them, bilateral trade and other economic relations did not develop accordingly.⁵⁸ According to a Protocol signed in 1973, trade between the two countries was supposed to increase 34%

⁵⁸. Appendix A

by 1974, but it fell short, mainly because of an absence of earlier traditions of trade relations and lack of political will. During the period of 1980-90, Bangladesh's total trade turn-over was about \$42 billion, and the Soviet share was only \$940.3 million i.e. 2.2%. Total turn-over of Bangladesh

Table 14. Bangladesh's Trade with the USSR, 1980-90
(in million US dollars)

<u>Years</u>	<u>Exports</u>	<u>Imports</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Change in(%)</u>
1980	37.3	47.2	84.5	-
1981	33.4	40.0	73.4	-13%
1982	38.8	35.3	74.1	01%
1983	42.1	57.2	99.3	34%
1984	25.0	44.1	69.1	-30%
1985	31.7	38.9	70.6	02%
1986	26.4	86.3	112.7	61%
1987	40.9	49.5	90.4	-20%
1988	36.5	45.4	81.9	-09%
1989	41.6	69.0	110.6	35%
1990	48.0	25.7	73.7	-33%
Total	401.7	538.6	940.3	

Source: This Table is computed from data, "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks 1987 and 1991," op. cit., pp. 96.

increased from \$3357.5 million in 1980 to \$5321.4 million in 1990 i.e. by about 60%, while the volume of trade with the

USSR decreased from \$84.5 million in 1980 to \$73.7 million in 1990. Imports also decreased, from \$47.2 million in 1980 to \$25.7 million in 1990. Bangladesh complained about poor quality of Soviet goods and delays in delivery of tools and machinery. The Soviet side appeared uninterested in promoting economic linkages with Bangladesh--even though, in the Joint Declaration, attention was paid to "expand trade relations between the two countries on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, and most-favoured-nation treatment."⁵⁹

As Table 14 shows, the volume of Bangladesh-Soviet trade in the 1980s was not high. The total turn-over in 1990, compared to 1980, had not increased; in fact, it decreased by about 38%. Nonetheless, Bangladesh's exports to the USSR increased, to \$48 million in 1990, from \$37.3 in 1980, while imports decreased from \$47.2 million to \$25.7 million for the same period. Bilateral trade between the two countries was also not stable and consistent. For example, in 1983, the volume of trade increased by 34% when compared to 1982, yet the next year it fell by 30%. Similarly, in 1989 it increased by about 35%, but in 1990 it again decreased, by 33%.

In fact, the overall volume of Soviet exports to developing countries, European socialist countries and China in 1990 (\$17,887 million) had not increased significantly when compared to 1980 (\$17,079 million). This can be attributed to

⁵⁹. Ibid

political instability, ethnic unrest and economic problems.⁶⁰

Bangladesh had huge trade deficits with almost all trading partners, and the Soviet Union was no exception.⁶¹ But the volume of the trade deficit with the Soviet Union was much lower than that with many other countries. For example, during the period of 1980-90 total Bangladeshi exports were \$11 billion, while imports accounted for \$31 billion. In other words, the exports could finance only about 36% of imports. In the case of trade with the Soviet Union, however, exports financed about 75% of imports (Table 14). In 1982 Bangladesh even had a positive trade balance with the Soviet Union. Almost all the trade was conducted under barter agreements, signed every year, and Bangladesh encouraged the Soviet Union to import both traditional and non-traditional goods and items.⁶²

Bangladesh-Soviet trade was criticised from different quarters. Supporters would often argue that the Soviet Union was interested in purchasing non-traditional goods which,

⁶⁰. "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks, 1987, 1991," op. cit. pp. 397 and 395 respectively.

⁶¹. According to trade statistics, during the 1980s Bangladesh had trade deficits with all the major groups of countries. Dhaka had favourable trade balance only with Pakistan. "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1990," op. cit. pp. 95-96.

⁶². Generally, jute, jute-goods, tea, leather, newsprints, carpets are considered to be traditional items. Non-traditional items include, ready-made garments, frozen foods, detergents, cosmetics, toiletries, tooth-paste, telephone and electric cables, ceramics and electronics.

otherwise, were difficult to sell elsewhere, because of low quality and worldwide protectionism. Critics, however, argued that under the barter system Bangladesh was forced to export both traditional and non-traditional items to the Soviet Union which it could have exported to the West for much-needed foreign currency.⁶³

As Table 14 shows, despite lack of political will and understanding, Bangladesh-Soviet trade in the early 1980s was quite sizable, even though it was minor when compared to that of Soviet trade with some other Third World states. In 1980 the Soviet Union supplied Bangladesh with more than 20% of the oil products and raw cottons that it imported, and about 10% of steel billets. About 10% of the raw jute, 8% of jute cloths and bags, 15% of goat skins and 10% of the tea from the total volume of Bangladesh's export went to the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

In the midst of severe political mistrust, Soviet Deputy Foreign Trade Minister, I.T. Grishin, visited Bangladesh in February 1981, to sign the 10th Barter Protocol between the two countries. According to the new protocol the two sides not only agreed to increase the volume of trade, but the Soviet

63. This criticism was mainly came from those sections of businesses and industries where anti-Sovietism and anti-communism were stronger. The information was gathered during the authors informal discussions with some business people and exporters-importers in Dhaka in December 1990 and January 1991.

64. V. Savalev, "Soviet Economy: Cooperation and Trade with Developing Countries," in The Bangladesh Observer, November 6, 1981.

side agreed to import non-traditional goods, like cables, cosmetics, cutlery, packet tea, soap, detergents, and so on, from Bangladesh. The Soviet Union also agreed to accept goods worth 4.4 million pounds sterling during the following year, in repayment of Soviet credits.⁶⁵

Bangladesh imported mainly machinery equipment, agricultural tractors, trailers, bulldozers, spare parts, rolled steel, tire tubes, diesel engines, cotton, books, periodicals and cinematographic films from the Soviet Union. Its exports to the Soviet Union consisted primarily of raw jute, jute goods, carpets, leather, cloths, tea, tobacco and readymade garments (Appendix B provides lists of Bangladeshi imports from and exports to the Soviet Union during the years 1980, 1985 and 1990 respectively).

Although, as mentioned earlier, the volume of trade did not increase during the 1980s, the pattern changed. Compared to 1980, in 1985 Bangladesh imported more items from the Soviet Union; such new items as cement, zinc and films were added to the import lists. Similarly, Bangladesh's export items to the Soviet Union also increased (from 6 in 1980 to 12 in 1985); non-traditional goods such as tobacco, cigarettes, ready-made garments, handicrafts, books, periodicals, electric wires, cosmetics, soup, tooth-paste and so on were added to

⁶⁵. The Bangladesh Observer, (Dhaka), February 21, 1981.

the export list.⁶⁶

In 1990 there were further changes in the pattern of Bangladesh-Soviet trade; some new items, like detergent powder, telephone cables, paints, electronics and ceramics were added to Bangladesh's export list. Initiatives were also taken to promote and encourage trade through private sectors. In the barter protocols signed earlier, there was no role for the private sector. But, in the 17th barter protocol signed in 1988, 2.4 million pounds sterling was allocated to the private sector, and the amount increased to 3 million pounds sterling in the 19th protocol signed in 1990. To diversify trade between the two countries the Barter Protocol of 1990 also allocated 3.0 million pounds sterling for trade in miscellaneous goods to be mutually agreed upon by the parties.⁶⁷

Beginning in 1988, Bangladesh took some initiatives to expand its market share in the USSR. An extensive market research program for Bangladeshi goods entering the Soviet Union was undertaken, and the Bangladesh embassy in Moscow was given the task of advertising Bangladeshi goods and products in the Soviet Union. Bangladesh was, as noted, not only interested in increasing the volume of trade with the Soviet Union, but also in diversifying it, and in exporting more non-traditional goods. The following proposals were considered in

⁶⁶. For details, see Bangladesh-Soviet Barter Protocol, 1985, Appendix B.

⁶⁷. Details are provided in Bangladesh-Soviet Barter Protocol, 1990, Appendix B.

early 1990 to promote Bangladesh-Soviet trade.⁶⁸

First, to explore the market in the Soviet Union for exports of Bangladeshi ready-made garments. It was also proposed to export more ready-made garments to the Soviet Union that were made from cloths imported from the USSR.

Second, to persuade the Soviet Union to import finished leather goods from Bangladesh, instead of just raw and semi-finished leather goods.

Third, to export non-traditional items such as paint, creams, cosmetics, tooth-paste, electric wires and other goods to the Soviet Union.

Fourth, to set up industries with Soviet help on a buy-back basis. The USSR had established such industries in India, Turkey and some other countries, whose products were wholly or partially exported to the Soviet Union. Bangladesh was also interested in possible buy-back projects, particularly in the garments, fisheries, and leather processing industries.⁶⁹

When Bangladesh lost some Western markets for the export of traditional goods, trade with the USSR became more important to Dhaka. Despite the Government's efforts to increase exports of non-traditional items to the USSR, however, Moscow remained primarily a major importer of traditional goods. For example, in 1988 the USSR ranked third, after Pakistan and Singapore, in terms of importing raw jute and jute goods from

⁶⁸. "The Briefing Paper," op. cit., pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹. Ibid

Bangladesh. Still, the Soviet Union was not a major trading partner to Bangladesh.⁷⁰

Table 15. Major Trading Partners for Bangladesh, 1980-90
(in million US dollars)

<u>Countries</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>
World Total (IFS)	3357.5	3489.7	3232.5	2889.3	3756.6	3770.6
1. Japan	410.1	315.6	351.3	220.9	322.6	382.1
2. USA	408.4	236.0	287.3	375.7	395.6	437.3
3. U. K.	363.6	148.2	118.2	147.9	180.7	138.0
4. Singapore	246.6	130.1	138.6	177.2	295.1	237.8
5. UAE	138.3	196.5	130.9	180.0	134.5	138.1
6. China	107.7	132.3	133.9	77.0	118.8	95.4
7. Germany	92.7	128.6	100.7	110.4	97.9	108.2
8. Netherlands	79.8	89.0	92.5	71.8	111.2	104.6
9. Canada	77.3	64.7	100.4	105.5	134.1	109.3
10. India	63.6	84.2	63.6	44.8	84.4	94.5
	1,988.1 (59%)	1,525.2 (44%)	1,517.4 (47%)	1,511.2 (52%)	1,874.9 (50%)	1,845.3 (49%)
USSR	84.5	73.4	74.1	99.3	69.1	70.6
% of total	2.5	2.1	2.3	3.4	1.8	1.9

(continues in the next page)

⁷⁰. In 1980 Bangladesh's total trade turnover was \$3.4 billion, and only \$84.5 million or about 2.5% was with the Soviet Union, and in 1990 this reduced to 1.4%. "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks, 1987 and 1991," *op. cit.*, pp. 95 and 96 respectively.

<u>Countries</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>
World Total	3373.5	3746.8	4337.2	4952.6	5321.4
(IFS)					
1. USA	421.6	512.0	517.3	655.7	696.1
2. Japan	390.2	443.4	551.3	512.8	546.9
3. Singapore	204.5	201.5	186.0	280.8	454.4
4. U. K.	139.4	143.1	196.5	168.9	237.5
5. Germany	136.4	124.1	97.7	161.0	230.5
6. India	64.9	85.4	98.7	131.4	192.0
7. Netherlands	73.0	82.0	124.4	132.2	180.3
8. China	98.9	107.8	118.7	168.9	149.2
9. Canada	103.1	156.0	120.5	88.1	146.5
10. UAE	124.2	137.7	147.4	158.5	107.7
	1739.3	2114.6	2163.3	2473.2	2945.0
	(52%)	(56%)	(50%)	(50%)	(55%)
USSR	112.7	90.4	81.9	110.6	73.7
% of total	3.4	2.4	1.9	2.2	1.4

Source: This Table is tabulated from "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks, 1978 and 1991," op. cit. pp. 96 and 95-96 respectively.

As Table 15 shows, there were significant changes in Bangladesh's trading partners in 1990 compared to 1980. For example, India moved up to 6th place in 1990 from 10th place in 1980, while the UAE moved down to 10th place in 1990 from 5th place in 1980. The share of trade turn-over with the Soviet Union was low. On average, 2.3% of Bangladesh's total trade turn-over during the 1980s was with the Soviet Union, while more than 50% of it was with only 10 countries (Table 15). Total trade with the Soviet Union during the 1980s

(\$940.3 million) was even lower than that with India (a little over \$1 billion). Bangladesh's trade with China (\$1,308.7 million), with whom relations were established only in 1976, was about 40% higher than that with the USSR. Dhaka's trade with the tiny island state of Singapore (\$2,552.6 million) was almost 3 times higher than that with the USSR.

As with foreign aid, Bangladesh's external trade was also highly concentrated. As Table 15 shows, in 1980, 36% of its trade was with only 4 countries (the USA, Japan, Singapore and the UAE); and 59% was with 10 countries; in 1990 the ratio did not change much (34% and 55% respectively). More than 50% of Bangladesh's trade in the 1980s was with only 10 countries (Table 15).

Another important characteristic of Bangladesh's trade in the 1980s was that its volume of exports to industrialised countries increased significantly (from 57.5% of total trade in 1980 to 71.3 % in 1990); while exports to the developing countries and centrally planned economies decreased (from 36% to 24% and from 6.4% to 4.2% respectively). There was a significant change in imports from these groups of countries.⁷¹

From the Soviet perspective, Bangladesh was not a major trading partner in the Third World either. As Table 16 shows, Bangladesh's share in Soviet trade during the 1980s was even

⁷¹. In 1980 imports from these groups of countries constituted 48%, 36.2% and 2.9% of the total; while in 1990 their shares were 42.9%, 42.1% and 1.7% respectively. These figures are calculated from Ibid.

less than 1% of total Soviet trade with the developing countries. There were significant changes in the Soviet trading partners in the developing countries in the 1980s: India remained in the number one Soviet trading partner in the developing world; Syria moved up to 2nd place in 1990 from 10th in 1980; Argentina moved down from 2nd in 1980 to 6th for

Table 16. Major Soviet Trade Partners Among Non-Communist Third World States, 1980-90 (in million US dollars).

<u>Years</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>
World total	83,206	86,861	82,327	80,768	79,629	79,051
Developing countries	10,140	12,472	10,541	10,687	10,307	10,214
1. India	2,672	2,960	2,703	2,703	2,974	2,974
2. Argentina	1,789	3,290	1,775	1,828	1,339	1,372
3. Afghanistan	784	786	746	746	821	821
4. Brazil	440	704	754	911	596	563
5. Turkey	350	362	233	314	436	409
6. Malaysia	344	307	290	247	251	217
7. Singapore	281	221	315	240	431	277
8. Morocco	274	297	248	226	190	219
9. Egypt	211	354	309	434	379	451
10. Syria	170	191	325	337	360	322
Total	7,315 (72%)	9,472 (76%)	7,698 (75%)	7,986 (75%)	7,777 (75%)	7,623 (75%)
Bangladesh	84.5	73.4	74.1	99.3	69.1	70.6
% of Developing countries	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.7

(continues in next page)

<u>Years</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>
World total	95,612	101,459	112,089	117,955	114,543
Developing countries	7,753	8,951	9,816	12,615	14,430
1. India	2,350	2,619	3,075	3,570	4,083
2. Syria	684	498	605	1,265	2,323
3. Afghanistan	717	859	1,073	1,181	1,358
4. Turkey	475	481	701	741	879
5. Egypt	419	485	530	623	716
6. Argentina	338	787	962	933	560
7. Singapore	176	243	227	331	454
8. Brazil	340	496	286	373	402
9. Malaysia	153	187	180	345	223
10. Morocco	168	162	122	189	222
Total	5,820 (75%)	6,817 (76%)	7,761 (79%)	9,551 (76%)	11,200 (78%)
Bangladesh	112.7	90.4	81.9	110.6	73.7
% of Developing countries	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.5

Source: This Table is computed from "Direction of Trade Statistics, Yearbooks, 1980-91," op. cit.

the same period (Table 16). The overall volume of Soviet trade with Third World countries increased from \$10,140 million in 1980 to \$14,430 million in 1990, or 42%. The major increase was with the Asian countries.⁷² However, the major increase of

⁷². Soviet exports to Asia increased from \$1,869 million in 1980 to \$4,757 million in 1990, or more than 250%. Soviet imports from Asia for the same period rose from \$3,454 million to \$6,262 million or 180%. These figures are calculated from Table 15.

trade was with India, China and the NICs of Asia. As the previous tables show, Soviet trade with Third World countries in general was also highly concentrated. In 1980, about 50% of trade was with only three countries (India, Argentina and Afghanistan), and 72% of trade was with only 10 countries; in 1990 their shares were 42% and 78% respectively.

The overall trade of the two countries under study significantly increased in the 1980s. The pattern and priorities also changed and modified. But as far as bilateral trade was concerned, it hardly improved. In fact, the scope and potential for improvement of economic relations between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union during the 1980s was limited; and with the absence of serious political will or urgency on the part of the leaders, it, in fact, became more difficult and complicated.

IV

Conclusion

The share of Soviet aid/trade in Bangladesh's overall aid/trade was so insignificant that this itself provided a crucial insight into the failure of their relationships. The political elites and bureaucracy in Bangladesh, trained and educated in Western countries, were naturally interested in improving relations with the West. As part of Pakistan, Bangladesh did not inherit any tradition of close relationships with the Soviet Union. In the absence of any earlier

experience, the user agencies in Bangladesh were reluctant to utilize Soviet aid, for fear that such links would be perpetuated through the need for spare parts and technical services.⁷³ The elites and bureaucrats were also not interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union. For example, immediately after independence the Soviet Union provided some planes and spare parts to restore the civilian airline and arranged training facilities for pilots and crews, but the pilots, who were familiar with Dutch planes, were not interested in retraining, and finally the Government had to change policy and purchase Dutch planes.⁷⁴

In the absence of an overall government commitment to improve relations with the Soviet Union to properly utilize Soviet aid, it was difficult, if not impossible, for other agencies or individuals to promote economic linkages with the socialist countries. Leftist intellectuals blamed the government and the bureaucratic and trading bourgeoisie, with close linkages with the West, for sabotaging Bangladesh-Soviet relations, and discrediting Soviet aid.⁷⁵

The main economic priority of the country was to become

⁷³. The issues and problems of developing economic relations with the socialist countries, particularly with the Soviet Union are well analysed by Rehman Sobhan (1982), op. cit.

⁷⁴. Nurul Islam, "Interest Groups and aid Conditionality," Aid and Influence: The Case of Bangladesh, ed. by Just Faaland, op. cit., p. 58,

⁷⁵. Rehman Sobhan, op. cit., pp. 125-139.

self-sufficient in food, and to fulfil the basic needs of the population. Some of the major economic problems Bangladesh faced during the 1980s were: decline in food production as a result of recurrent natural calamities; slow growth in GDP and Government revenue; high rate of population growth (from 89.56 million in 1980-81 to 109.13 in 1989-90); and a sharp increase in debt service payment (from \$85.10 million in 1980-81 to \$293.70 in 1989-90)--see, Appendix C.

On the other hand, as the Soviet Union liberalised its economy under "Perestroika" and "New Thinking", it sought Western aid, investment and technology, and, in many respects, became a competitor to Third World countries, including Bangladesh. Bangladesh needed help mainly to modernise agriculture, build its infrastructure and cope with the devastating floods and other natural disasters. The Soviet Union was neither able nor willing to provide help to Bangladesh in these sectors.

The Soviet aid to Bangladesh was minimal, but significant. Moscow provided assistance for such crucial sectors of the national economy of Bangladesh as power, oil and gas, and manufacturing. However, as in other Third World countries, the Soviet-assisted projects in Bangladesh became inefficient and unprofitable--for above-discussed subjective and objective reasons. There was no interest or enthusiasm either on the part of the Government or the private sector in Bangladesh to expand economic relations with the USSR. Occasionally, both

sides recognised the need and potential for further economic cooperation, and agreed to explore new fields and avenues without political or ideological prejudice. However, in the absence of mutual trust and minimal political understanding--lost in the long past history of political and ideological struggles--it was difficult, if not impossible, for the parties to engage in any meaningful economic and cultural cooperation.

In fact, during the 1980s, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union had fundamentally different economic interests, goals and priorities, and pursued different strategies and tactics that these dictated. Bangladesh was first and foremost interested in further cementing economic ties with fellow Muslim countries, China and the West. As a pioneer on the formation of SAARC, Dhaka was also actively involved in promoting and expanding economic cooperation among the South Asian nations.

In the post-Cold War era, the Soviet Union became primarily interested in developing and promoting economic linkages and ties with the industrialised countries, and the newly emerged Third World industrialised nations. Through the late 1980s there was neither compulsion or imperative on either Moscow or Dhaka to improve or expand bilateral relations.

There were areas of economic cooperation where both the parties could be benefitted. But, due to political and

ideological considerations, there was no priority for the development of economic relations either from the Bangladesh side or from the Soviet side.

Since the Soviet Union's economic involvement in Bangladesh was limited, and trade between them was insignificant, the disintegration of the USSR did not have any serious impact on Bangladesh; rather it has created new opportunities and potential, in many ways, for development of Bangladesh's relations with the successor states. The next Chapter explores some of this potential.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter attempts to answer the questions raised in the introductory chapter, and seeks to analyse the applicability and limitations of the concept of "national interest," particularly with reference to Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union during the 1980s. The findings of the study are summarised here, and the problems of generalization are also discussed. As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter also, finally, explores the problems and prospects of Bangladesh's relations with Soviet successor states.

I

Conceptual Limitations

The concept of "national interest" is not adequately defined and analysed in the literature and has serious definitional, as well as empirical limitations.

The study confirms that the historical-structural approach provides the better theoretical framework for defining national interests because of its flexibility and variance in time and place. Nations may have interests common in the sense that they are defined by the needs of society, economic benefit or ideology, but this process of formation is different, and at the point of implementation nations face differing experiences and use different tools and instruments

to achieve them. Generalizations are possible at the definitional level, but become more difficult at the operational level. For example, both Bangladesh and the USSR may have defined their national interests in terms of political, economic and ideological goals and interests, but at the level of implementation their priorities and means for achieving them differed widely. For the Soviet Union ideological and global security interests were dominant, and the country had the necessary means and capabilities to achieve them. In the case of Bangladesh, on the other hand, national interests were defined defensively in terms of survival, politically, economically and ecologically. But even so the country lacked adequate means and capabilities to achieve these minimal goals and objectives.

The case study shows that national interests are the products of history which are defined and redefined by the dynamics of interaction between political and social forces, both in the domestic and international arena. In the case of the Soviet Union perceptions of interests were defined by the leaders of the CPSU within an ideological prism even after ideology had lost its importance in inter-state relations.

In the case of Bangladesh, the historical past, foreign invasions, colonization, Pakistanization, secularization and deep-rooted religious and cultural values played important roles in forming and reforming the core issues and values of the society. Multiple social forces, including political

parties, interest groups, the army, trade unions and strong and powerful students' movements also played important roles in moulding, defining and redefining national interests. Fragmented political culture, militant nationalism and irreconcilable conflicts and interests among various social and political forces made it difficult and complicated to reach a consensus on such core issues as nationalism, national identity and the nature of political and economic systems. Nonetheless, in the historical process, a common, broad consensus on certain issues and areas emerged, and it was manifested more clearly in external relations than in domestic politics. Powerful elites, a strong bureaucracy, powerful and politically active student organizations, trade unions and other professional groups created a situation where no single constellation could dominate or take control over, and subjectively define national interests of the country.

The study supports the notion of national interest as a flexible and dynamic concept. It is neither an "objective category which is universally valid" nor a mere "image of the decision-makers". With the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR and dramatic changes in international relations, the notion and perceptions of national interests also changed. During the Cold War era anti-Sovietism and anti-communism served the interests of "the free world", while leftist radical regimes and revolutionary movements served Soviet interests. In the post-Cold War and post-Soviet era,

priorities have changed; new issues and challenges have emerged, and the criteria for defining national interests have changed, and policies modified accordingly. As the study shows, the perception of Soviet national interests evolved over time, with changes in the ideological perceptions of different leaders, and domestic politics.

In the case of Bangladesh the perceptions of national interest in the 1980s were different from those of the early 1970s. For example, the leftist-oriented government in Bangladesh in the early 1970s thought that close, friendly relations with the Soviet Union and India would best serve the national interests of the country. But, the right-wing governments of Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad saw Soviet Union and India as a serious threat Bangladesh's national interest.

The study also confirms that there are no common criteria for defining national interests. Nation-states define their national interests by using different criteria. The Third World countries which have many common characteristics may not have similar types of interests however. Strong and powerful countries, such as India, aspire to regional supremacy, while the LDCs, like Bangladesh, are mainly concerned with economic survival. The type of regime is also important in defining national interests. In those states that are governed by autocratic dictators or military regimes, national interests are defined primarily in terms of regime interests, while democratic governments are compelled to try to define national

interest in broader terms. However, when the core issues of national interests, such as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state are at stake, regimes' policies and actions generally reflect the interests of the populace.

In reality, there may be contradictions between core values and core interests. Nations often adopt foreign policy strategy and tactics which contradict their core values or traditions. For example, although Marxism-Leninism and the principle of proletarian internationalism were supposed to be the core value principles of Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World, Moscow's policy there frequently pursued USSR's raison d'état, rather than class interests. Similarly, democracy, freedom and liberty are considered to be the core values of the American society, but US foreign policy actions and behaviour often contradict these values. In the case of Bangladesh, the military governments in Dhaka pursued an active anti-Soviet policy, accused Moscow of oppressing its Muslim population, and did not think it worthwhile to undertake initiatives to improve relations with the USSR, but did vigorously pursue friendly relations with China--another communist-atheist country which did not even recognise Bangladesh until 1975, and where Muslims were also oppressed.

Nations cannot define and pursue national interests in absolute terms; rather, they have to take into account the interests of others, and the limitation of their own capabilities. For weaker and underdeveloped nations options

and choices are very limited. For example, solidarity with Muslim countries, including support for the Palestinian people, was one of the core (value) element of Bangladesh foreign policy, but because of its overwhelming political and economic dependence on the West, Bangladesh was not always able to pursue policies reflecting those interests. Likewise, close relations with the West and with conservative Muslim states limited Dhaka's options to improve relations with the USSR had it wanted to do so. In relations with the West democracy was not ideologically palatable to the Dhaka Government, but the need for political support and economic assistance was the main consideration. Close relations with the Arab and other Muslim countries served ideological, political and economic interests. Ideology was not important in developing and maintaining close relations with China, but ideology did become important in the case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Here the Soviet Union did violate Bangladesh's core values of non-alignment, non-interference and Islamic solidarity.

Despite problems of theoretical clarity, analytical weakness and empirical difficulties, the concept of "national interest" has not lost its importance or validity as a conceptual framework. The collapse of Soviet communism, and consequent dramatic changes in international relations, gave new meaning and dimension to the concept of "national interest." A more objective or 'natural' context has been

created for its realization. The term "national interest" remains important as a concept of foreign policy. The emerging trend of the collapse of multinational states and emergence of nation-states supports the logic and validity of the argument.

II

Summary of Findings, and Problems of Generalization

In social science research, it is not always possible to obtain concrete or definitive results from a study. Even so, a trend analysis is always possible on the basis of available data and information. The following general conclusions can be drawn from the case study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s.

1. Despite much research and volumes of work done by Soviet authors on the issues and problems of the Third World, Soviet leaders and policy planners either failed or did not try to understand the dialectics of Third World societies. A simple hypothesis that communist/radical revolutions, supported by Moscow, could solve all Third World problems, denied the importance of indigenous political cultures, religions, traditions and historical specificities, and led again and again to measurable failures of Soviet policies--often with serious, negative consequences and ramifications. This was so, also, in the case of Bangladesh.

2. The Third World was the key arena for superpower rivalries in the Cold War period. The deterioration of East-

West relations in the early 1980s impacted on Soviet-Third World relations, and Bangladesh was no exception. Bangladesh, in pursuit of its interests and under the influence of the West and China, adopted strong anti-Soviet policies on major regional and international issues, which inevitably had negative ramifications for Dhaka's relations with Moscow.

3. As noted in Chapter Three, Soviet policy towards Bangladesh was guided by general Soviet foreign policy goals and objectives in the Third World. As elsewhere in the Third World, Soviet policy towards Bangladesh was affected and severely limited by such factors as Sino-Soviet rivalry, Indo-Soviet relations, Bangladesh-India conflicts and domestic developments in Bangladesh. From the Soviet point of view, Bangladesh was at best of tertiary importance seen first through a global prism (relations with the US and China), second through a regional prism (Soviet support to India as a regional hegemon) and only third, in term of Bangladesh itself.

4. For Bangladesh, Soviet aid and support was necessary and crucial in 1971-72 for the creation and consolidation of statehood, but as national interests and priorities were redefined after the political change of 1975, discord and bilateral disputes with India became the primary prism for Bangladesh foreign policy; for economic and political reasons relations with the West and conservative, oil-rich Arab countries became important; principles of Islamic solidarity

and non-alignment were pursued for political, economic and ideological gains. As priorities changed, the Soviet Union became marginalised in the perception and definition of Bangladeshi national interests.

5. As the study shows, there was no objective precondition supporting improved Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s. Bangladeshi society, with its strong conservative, religious traditions, was not ready to accept communism as an ideology in socio-economic, political and cultural life. From the ideological point of view, major political parties, except the AL, and powerful social and professional groups were anti-Soviet and anti-communist. Thus, anti-Sovietism had deep roots in Bangladeshi society and enjoyed a broad constituency.

6. Subjective factors, particularly the leaders' ideological prejudice, lack of interest in and unwillingness to improve relations with Moscow, affected Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s. Bangladeshi leaders, elites and policy-planners, with their ideological bias and Western education, occasionally misunderstood and misinterpreted the Soviet Union and its policies. Even in the late 1980s, when Soviet society underwent radical changes and reforms under the banners of "glasnost", "perestroika" and "new thinking", Bangladeshi leaders and policy makers remained mired in Cold War mind-sets, and failed to grasp the implications of these momentous events, either for the USSR, or, for that matter,

for international politics in general. Government leaders, elites and bureaucrats had also no sympathy for communism or the Soviet Union.

7. As a strategy, Soviet authorities did not directly criticise Third World regimes for pursuing anti-Soviet policies and postures; rather, they blamed the West, particularly the United States, for using them for its own strategic interests and purposes. By so doing, the Soviets may have wished to keep open the option of improving relations with them in the future. However, such hopes were rarely realized. In most cases, the Soviet Union failed to improve relations with Third world nationalist regimes; its failures vis-a-vis Bangladesh were symptomatic.

8. Pro-Moscow regimes in the Third World were not popular, and the Soviet model of political, economic and social development was not acceptable to most Third World nations. This was true also in the case of Bangladesh. By 1975 the pro-Moscow regime of the AL became so unpopular, in part because of its close ties with India and the Soviet Union, that when the regime was overthrown by a military coup, the act was warmly welcomed and supported by the masses. Moscow accepted the fait accompli, and tried to maintain state-to-state relations with the new regime, but failed, because of domestic constraints and external limitations.

9. As elsewhere in the Third World, the Soviet Union supported and manipulated pro-Moscow communist parties and

groups in Bangladesh. But they were weak, disorganised and without popular support, and failed to work either as agents of Soviet influence in Bangladesh or as vehicles for the promotion and improvement of relations with the USSR. Occasionally they were a liability to Moscow, rather than an asset, particularly when they were suffering from political and ideological crises, as they usually were, and when their leaders made irresponsible statements and comments which were used by the regime and other parties to serve political purposes adverse to Moscow.

10. The Soviet Union supported the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, and was, certainly, interested in influencing the political, economic and social life of the new state in its post-independence phase. The continuous government allegations of Soviet involvements in the domestic affairs of Bangladesh, and Moscow's failure to prove otherwise, did not help Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s. From the information available, it appears that the Soviet Union was, to some extent, involved in the domestic politics of Bangladesh; but it did not pose the serious threat to national security claimed by the government leaders and anti-Soviet forces and elements. Rather, the issue was exacerbated and manipulated by Bangladeshi regimes for their own purposes.

11. Like other countries, Bangladesh also aspired to and tried to exploit ideological rivalries between Moscow and

Beijing, and it was successful to a certain extent. Bangladesh sought a "China card" that might effectively be used both against the Soviet Union and India. Bangladesh and China had identical views on many regional and international issues; these may be said to have coalesced into a platform built on an anti-Soviet foundation. But as Sino-Soviet relations improved in the late 1980s, Bangladesh lost its leverage.

12. As mentioned repeatedly, the most serious impediment to the improvement of Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union during the 1980s was the India factor. It was widely believed in Dhaka that India posed a serious threat to Bangladesh's political, economic, physical, territorial and environmental security. The Soviet Union's unwavering support for India, and its failure to take account of Bangladeshi concerns, as distinct from India's, constituted the most serious impediment to an improvement of Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s.

13. Bangladesh's close, friendly relations with Islamic countries were not, in essence, directed against any country or power bloc; they were primarily dictated by domestic demands and needs, and served broad economic, political and ideological interests. But as the government manipulated and used the issue for its interests also, it encouraged fundamentalist forces to organise and propagate anti-Soviet policies and actions.

14. Economic factors and considerations were principal

concerns underlying Bangladesh's foreign policy in the 1980s. As an under-developed Third World country, Bangladesh needed massive foreign aid, investment and technology for its economic development and social emancipation, and the Soviet Union, itself suffering from political turmoil, ethnic unrest and economic crisis, was not in a position to meet those pressing needs.

15. As "perestroika" progressed in the Soviet Union, economic interests were given priority over strategic, military and ideological considerations in Soviet foreign policy postures and behavior towards the Third World. As an LDC, Bangladesh was of neither politico-economic nor military-strategic importance to the Soviet Union. Consequently, Bangladesh was of no priority to Soviet foreign policy planners and decision-makers.

16. Despite occasional tensions and conflicts in bilateral relations in the early 1980s, the Soviet Union appeared interested in maintaining normal economic and cultural relations with Bangladesh. But the military regime in Dhaka always viewed Moscow with doubts and suspicion, and, in the absence of mutual interests and minimum political understanding, it was difficult to develop economic linkages. Political motives and considerations often overshadowed and undermined economic gains and benefits.

17. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union revised its foreign economic policies: Moscow became interested in

participating in joint ventures and investments in the private sector in Bangladesh. However, in the absence of earlier traditions and consequent lack of interest in Bangladesh, Soviet proposals failed to generate much enthusiasm or interest among Bangladeshi entrepreneurs.

18. Because of Moscow's support for the independence movement in 1971, Bangladesh did not deliberately instigate anti-Soviet policy; rather, its attitudes towards Moscow were characterised by indifference and deliberate neglect. From the information available, it appears that the military regimes in Dhaka did not want to directly confront the Soviet Union, but preferred to keep Bangladesh-Soviet relations as limited as possible. After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's visit to the Soviet Union in 1972, no Bangladeshi high officials (presidents, prime minister and ministers) visited the Soviet Union, nor did any top-ranking Soviet official ever come to Bangladesh.¹

19. The military had its own corporate and professional interests, and its main goal was to stay in power. But there was constant pressure from political parties and other social groups to democratize society, and hold free and fair elections. In pursuit of its own interests, the military regime maintained and developed close relations with those countries and governments that offered the political, economic and financial support necessary for it to stay in power. The

¹. Dilara Choudhury, "Major Powers' Involvement in South Asia," BISS Journal, Vol. 7, No. 3, July 1987, p. 324.

Soviet Union did not fit into that category.

20. It is, of course, true that the primary goals and objectives of the military regimes of both Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad were to consolidate and remain in power. However, on broad foreign policy issues, particularly on relations with the Soviet Union and India, they manipulated public sentiment and built supporting constituencies; their policies consequently appeared to reflect national interests. In most cases decisions were not made in the abstract, but in response to and as functions of objective considerations and dynamics.

21. In general, Bangladesh-Soviet relations during the 1980s were influenced and affected by such important factors as Sino-Soviet rivalries, Sino-Indian conflicts, Bangladesh-India conflicts, Indo-Soviet friendship and Sino-Bangladesh friendship. Although in the later 1980s there was remarkable progress in the improvement of Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations, this was not noticeably reflected in Bangladesh-Soviet relations.

The fundamental question, whether the policies adopted by the military regimes towards the USSR in the 1980s reflected Bangladesh's national interests is difficult to answer objectively. However, from the information available and after an in-depth analysis of the issue, this study concludes that policies defined and pursued by Bangladesh governments in the 1980s vis-a-vis the Soviet Union not only served the interests

of the regimes per se, but had popular support and thus presumably served the country's national interests. Several factors substantiate the conclusion: first, from the ideological orientations of major political parties in Bangladesh (Table 5), it appeared that they, with the exception of the AL, did not have reasons to oppose the Governments' policies and actions towards the USSR--these reflected a broad consensus of the population (though there were some notable exceptions); second, Bangladesh is the most homogeneous society in South Asia, and (unlike most Third World nations), its governments did not have to represent or serve the interests of any particular tribe, ethno-religious or linguistic group. The army thus had, perforce, to try to serve the interests of the public at large. The issues that affected Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union during the 1980s were mainly rooted in the objective needs and demands of the society.

But this is not to say that the military did not project its own particular interests and priorities in choosing foreign policy options.² The study does not assume that the military in Bangladesh was the sole custodian of its national interests, and always acted in the interests of the whole nation. As a professional army, the Bangladesh military had

². For details discussion on the role of foreign policy in nation-building, see Golam Mostafa and Mizanur Rahman, "Foreign Policy and Nation-Building in Bangladesh," in Nation-Building in Bangladesh, op. cit. pp. 230-50.

its own corporate and professional interests, bias and priority. Questions were raised whether regimes that did not have domestic political legitimacy could serve the interests of the nation in the external arena. But in relations with the Soviet Union, the regimes' interests and the interests of the nation as a whole did appear to coincide.

Although general Soviet foreign policy behaviour and attitudes were manifest in Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s, not all the conclusions and findings of the case study can be generalised. Events occur in concrete historical circumstances with the participation of individual actors and specific forces and dynamics. Every event has its uniqueness and historical specificities, which are difficult to generalise across time and space. Nonetheless, there are some common criteria and denominators in every social issue and event, and these sometimes allow for deductions of general theories of societal evolution and change.

Some of the findings of this case study of Bangladesh-Soviet relations in the 1980s, particularly as concerns general Soviet attitudes and behavior towards Bangladesh, Soviet support to the communist parties, their blaming the West for the anti-Soviet policies of Bangladeshi regimes, the lack of interest and enthusiasm among Third World leaders and elites about and towards the Soviet Union, can be generalised.

As the same time, when compared to the experience of other Third World countries, Bangladesh-Soviet relations were

unique for several reasons.

First, Bangladesh was one of the few or maybe the only country to wring its independence from another Third World country through a secessionist movement. Initial Soviet policy was caught in a dilemma as to how to react to this novel situation, at a time when the USSR was emerging as a major external power in the region, and carefully trying to nourish and cultivate friendly relations with the states of the Indian subcontinent.

Second, the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 was perhaps the first case of its type, where all the major powers (the USA, the USSR and China) were involved, and where Moscow faced the maximum risk of possibly finding itself in direct confrontation with both China and the USA, for uncertain gain.

Third, starting from the early 1960s, Sino-Soviet rivalry was a common phenomenon in the Third World, but in other places it was rarely as severe and tense as in Bangladesh. In fact, in the early 1970s Bangladesh became a test case for Sino-Soviet rivalry, and this was reflected in both the domestic and foreign policies of Bangladesh.

Fourth, it appears that in the post-1971 period a conflict of interest appeared to have emerged between the Soviet Union and India regarding South Asia. Consequently, in dealing with Bangladesh, or, for that matter, other South Asian nations, the Soviet Union had to take into consideration the interests of India, the emerging power in South Asia.

Finally, Bangladesh is a Third World country that nurtures memories of historic glory, and possesses strong traditional and religious values. As a nation, subjective aspects of nationalism were always strong among the Bengalis. Its political history and geo-physical location contributed to the formation of a radical, violent and active political culture. No outside powers (Mughal, British and Pakistani rulers) achieved full control over Bengal. In this situation, and in lieu of strong commitment on the part of local leadership, it was difficult, perhaps impossible, for the Soviet Union to exert influence in Bangladesh.

III

Problems and Prospects

Although it is not within the purview of the study, this final section tries to explore the future prospects and problems of Bangladesh's relations with Soviet successor states.

As observed in Chapters Six and Seven, there were some positive developments and trends in the evolution of Bangladesh-Soviet relations in late 1990 and early 1991: the military regime of Ershad was overthrown by popular movements, and a democratically elected Government came to power in March 1991; Soviet authorities abandoned their communist rhetoric, embraced the new regime, and took initiatives to improve relations with the then nationalist Government headed

by BNP leader Khaleda Zia.

The change in leadership in India in 1991 helped to improve Bangladesh-Indian relations. The relations with China, on the other hand, suffered set-backs over the inflow into Bangladesh of 300,000 Burmese refugees, and China's failure to criticise the military Government in Myanmar--because of Beijing's political and military interests in Rangoon.

The Government of Khaleda Zia took several initiatives to improve relations with the USSR. Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Syed Mustafizur Rahman, visited the USSR, including the Central Asian Republics, in the summer of 1991. It was the first Ministerial-level visit between the two countries since the political change in 1975. The Soviet Union expressed interests in buying more jute and jute goods from Bangladesh.

The sudden disintegration of the USSR and the formation of independent successor states obviously affected Bangladesh-Soviet relations. Taking over, de facto, from the Soviet Union, Russia appeared interested in reviewing outstanding problems in the on-going Soviet-sponsored and assisted projects in Bangladesh, and in undertaking a number of new projects. But as Russia itself suffered from political and economic instability, there were serious doubts about the implementation of these projects.

Bangladesh welcomed the emancipation of Central Asian Muslim states, and expressed interests in establishing good, friendly relations with them. It was one of the first Muslim

countries to undertake initiatives to invite the new Muslim states into the OIC. Bangladesh has not yet established diplomatic relations with them (thesis submission date: December 17, 1992), but, will undoubtedly proceed to do so. Already, initiatives have been taken to develop cultural, economic and religious ties. Bangladesh is also working with Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to develop closer economic cooperation among the Muslim states of South, Central and West Asia.

There are several, positive factors that auger well for the improvement of Bangladesh's relations with Central Asia:

First, Central Asia is an ancient centre of Islamic culture and civilization, and homeland to many Muslim conquerers of India. It enjoys a positive image and response in Bangladeshi memory and culture.

Second, with the Islamic world virtually divided into two camps; a radical camp headed by Iran and a conservative camp headed by Saudi Arabia, the new Muslim states may find it easier and more comfortable to develop relations with more neutral, yet large, modernised non-Arab Muslim states, like Turkey, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Third, since there is no more Soviet Union and Central Asian Muslim states have emerged as independent entities (though still tied to Moscow as members of the CIS), there appeared to remain no serious emotional, cultural or psychological barriers to the development of Bangladesh's relations with them.

Considering the issues and concerns of Bangladesh's national interests, however, there appear few incentives for Bangladesh to improving relations with the successor Muslim states. As an underdeveloped country with heavy dependence on foreign aid, and a chronic victim of natural disasters, Bangladesh needs constant economic help and assistance for its survival. With the present state of affairs the successor Muslim states are not in a position to provide the kind of help that Bangladesh needs. Yet, in the economic field there is scope for cooperation between Bangladesh and the successor states, particularly in the areas of joint ventures and expansion of trade. Better political understanding and common ideological (non-alignment) and religious (Islamic solidarity) bonds may help to create a congenial atmosphere for the improvement of relations.

There remain a number of practical issues and problems:

First, (so far) Russia and other Soviet successor states have made it clear that they are interested in continuing close, friendly relations with India. This means that they will probably continue to support India's quest for a hegemonic role in South Asia, which may be counter to the interests of smaller South Asian countries like Bangladesh. Already Russia has indicated support for the inclusion of India as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Moscow also seems to be interested in continuing its military, strategic relations with New Delhi.

Second, the divisions and rivalries in the Muslim world may seriously restrict any serious initiatives Bangladesh may want to undertake towards Soviet successor Muslim states. With its close relations with Iran and dependence on Saudi Arabia for aid and help, Bangladesh may not be in a position to play an active role in Central Asia.

Third, as long as the CIS is considered an umbrella for the successor states of the old Soviet Union, Bangladesh's relations with the member states may still be constrained by previously discussed considerations. Dhaka's relations with Russia and other Slav states will depend on their policies and attitudes towards the Muslim states, and on developments within the CIS itself.

Finally, there are serious impediments and objective barriers determining Dhaka's development of close relations with the Muslim states of Central Asia. Even if an economic union is formed as advocated by some, to include Pakistan, Iran and the former Soviet Muslim Republics, Bangladesh may not benefit--for several reasons: communications between Bangladesh and Central Asian states are very poor; it will be difficult to build road or other communication linkages because of difficult physical terrain (rivers, deserts and mountains); and, even if a highway is built linking Bangladesh to Central Asia, it will have to go through India, and Bangladesh will remain dependent on and vulnerable to New Delhi.

With increasing instability and unpredictability in international relations in the post-Cold War period, it is difficult to anticipate the prospects for Bangladesh's relations with Soviet successor Muslim states. They will depend on a host of factors and developments: Russia's policies towards these new states; political and military developments in Central Asian states themselves; regional developments, particularly in South and Central Asia; and, developments in international politics in general.

Appendix A

Pravda, March 5, 1972

JOINT DECLARATION BY USSR AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

At the invitation of the Soviet Government, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Abdus Samad Azad, paid an official friendly visit to the Soviet Union from March 1 to 5, 1972.

During their stay in the USSR, the Prime Minister and his party, in addition to Moscow, visited Leningrad and Tashkent. The distinguished guests from Bangladesh had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the life of the Soviet people and the achievements of the Soviet Union in the fields of its economy, science and culture.

The Head of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and his party were everywhere accorded a warm welcome which testified to the feelings of sincere friendship and high esteem of Soviet people toward the people of Bangladesh and its leaders.

Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman was received by General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU L. I. Brezhnev. He was also received by President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR N. V. Podgorny. Cordial and friendly discussions took place in the course of these meetings. Talks were held between the Chairman of Council of Ministers of the USSR A. N. Kosygin, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in which the following also took part :

For the Soviet side- Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU B.N. Panomaryov; Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N.K. Baibakov and V.N. Novikov; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A.A. Gromyko; Minister of Defence of the USSR Marshal A.A. Grechko; Chairman of the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers for Foreign Economic Relations S.A. Skachkov; First Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade M.R. Kuzmin; Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR N.P. Firyubin; Ambassador of the USSR in the People's Republic of Bangladesh V.F. Popov; Head of Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A.A. Fomin.

For the side of the People's Republic of Bangladesh- Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Abdus Samad; Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission Dr. Nurul Islam; Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs S.A. Karim; Secretary of the Finance Ministry Matiul Islam; General Director of a Depart-

ment of the Foreign Ministry S.A.M.S. Kibria; Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in the USSR Shamsur Rahman.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A.A. Gromyko had meetings and discussions with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh M. Abdus Samad. In the course of these discussions, which proceeded in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual understandings, consideration was given to questions of bilateral relations and to topical international problems.

On behalf of the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and his own behalf, Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman expressed gratitude to the Soviet People and the leaders of the Soviet Union for the active and consistent support given to the people of Bangladesh in their just struggle for the freedom and independence of their fatherland, as well as for the assistance which is being rendered by the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister informed the Soviet side of the program worked out by the Government of Bangladesh for economic recovery, the organization of the work of the state machinery, consolidation of public order, and the improvement of the living standards of the people, as well as of the future development of the country. He emphasised the determination of his Government to carry out broad socio-economic reforms in close cooperation with all the people.

The Soviet leaders, on their part, informed the Prime Minister of Bangladesh of progress in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the 24th Congress of the CPSU, of the achievements of the Soviet people in their work to fulfill the Ninth Five-Year Plan for the development of the national economy, and of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union aimed at strengthening international peace and the security of nations.

It was noted with satisfaction that the first steps taken in the development of cooperation between the Soviet Union and Bangladesh-- signing of a trade agreement, the establishment of sea and air communications between the two countries, and the initiation of contacts between trade union, youth, and other public organizations--testify to the existence of vast opportunities for all-around cooperation and the consolidation of friendship between the peoples of the two countries.

The Soviet leaders and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh expressed their firm conviction that the further development of friendly relations and fruitful cooperation between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Bangladesh in the political, economic, scientific, technical and other fields, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect for

sovereignty and independence, territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and renunciation of the use of force or the threat of force, meets the interests of the peoples of the two countries as well as the interests of the common struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism.

Much attention was paid during the talks to questions of expanding trade between the two countries on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, and most-favoured-nation treatment. A mutual desire was reaffirmed to develop ties and contacts in the fields of science, art, literature, education public health, the press, radio, sports, and in other fields.

With a view to gaining deeper mutual acquaintance with the life, culture and achievements of the peoples of the two states, the Soviet Union and Bangladesh will promote cooperation and direct links between governmental bodies, and public organizations, including trade union, youth, and women's organizations, as well as enterprises and cultural and scientific institutions.

Having noted with satisfaction that the friendly cooperation between the Soviet Union and Bangladesh is successfully developing and strengthening, the two sides agreed that experts of the two countries will meet in the near future to work out specific proposals for the further development of cooperation in the economic, cultural and other fields of activities.

Having examined the question of cooperation in the construction of a thermal power station, radio broadcasting stations, an electrical equipment plant, and geological prospecting for oil and gas, the two sides have reached and signed an agreement.

The Soviet Union will render assistance to Bangladesh in the reconstruction of a merchant marine and in the development of sea fisheries. It will assist Bangladesh in the reconstruction of railway transport. Assistance will also be rendered in the training of national cadres for branches of the industry and agriculture of Bangladesh, and consultative services will be similarly provided on questions of the reconstruction of industry.

The Soviet Union will provide helicopters to Bangladesh for the improvement of air communications with the interior areas of the country.

The two sides have agreed to expand trade between the two countries. In particular, the Soviet Union expressed its readiness to purchase not only goods traditionally exported by

Bangladesh, but other goods as well.

The Soviet Union regards with respect the policy of non-alignment and friendship among nations pursued by the People's Republic of Bangladesh, which is an important contribution to maintaining peace and reducing international tensions.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh highly appreciates the peaceful policy of the Soviet Union aimed at strengthening friendship and cooperation with all nations and all-around support for national liberation movements.

With a view to actively promoting international security and the development of friendly relations between states, irrespective of their social systems, and in the interests of developing bilateral cooperation in all fields, the Soviet Union and Bangladesh agreed to hold regular political consultations between the two Governments at various levels, on all important matters involving the interests of both states. Such consultations will be carried out through meeting of leading statesmen and by sending official delegations and special representatives of the Governments, through normal diplomatic channels, and in other forms.

In view of the mutual desire to further develop and strengthen friendship and cooperation between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Bangladesh, it was agreed to study, with account being taken of the exchange of views which took place, additional measures that might be taken to consolidate in an appropriate manner the relations existing between the two states.

During the talks, great attention was given to the situation existing on the Indian subcontinent.

As a result of exchange of views, the Soviet leaders and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh noted with satisfaction that the emergence of the new independent state--the People's Republic of Bangladesh--was an outcome of the triumphant national liberation struggle of the people of Bangladesh. That struggle revealed with utmost clarity not only the attitudes of different states to the just cause of the people of Bangladesh, but also the true friends and the enemies of the People's Republic of Bangladesh as a new independent state.

The Soviet Union and Bangladesh call upon all peace-loving countries to display the necessary vigilance in order resolutely to rebuff any attempts at interference from outside and preclude new complications in relations between the countries of the subcontinent. They believe that the governments of all countries which cherish peace on the subcontinent will direct their efforts toward an early normalization of

the situation in that region. The recognition of the sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh by an increasing number of state is convincing evidence of a growing understanding of the situation actually obtaining in that area.

The unanimous opinion was expressed that an early political settlement, taking into account the legitimate interests of the peoples of the subcontinent, would considerably facilitate the advancement of the countries of the area along the path of economic and social progress.

The Soviet Union and Bangladesh state that a true political settlement on the subcontinent can only be achieved through negotiations between the states directly concerned, without outside interference and having regard for the actual situation, on the basis of legitimate rights and interests of its peoples. They are convinced that the achievement of a genuine political settlement will contribute to the normalization of the situation on the subcontinent and will be an important contribution to ensuring international peace and security.

During the exchange of views on other topical international issues, the two sides confirmed that willingness to continue their all-out support for the peoples fighting against imperialist aggression, for their national liberation.

The Soviet leader and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh expressed their deep concern over the situation in Southeast Asia. They expressed themselves in favour of ensuring peace and security for the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, including the realization of their legitimate right to determine their own destiny in conformity with their national interests and free of any outside interference.

The Soviet Union and Bangladesh declared their profound conviction that the seven-point proposals of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam constituted a realistic and constructive basis for a peaceful political settlement of the Vietnam problem.

They expressed their serious concern over the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab territories in the Middle East, which creates a situation of tension and poses a threat to peace. The need was stressed for all states concerned to exert efforts in order to achieve a stable and just peace in that region on the basis of full implementation of the UN Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967, and with the assistance of Ambassador Jarring's mission.

Guided by a desire to contribute to the improvement of the international situation, the Government of the People's

Republic of Bangladesh highly appreciates the efforts of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries aimed at convening an all-European conference on security and cooperation in Europe as an important step toward the relaxation of tensions not only on the European continent but also throughout the world.

In the course of discussions it was noted that the cessation of the arms race and the attainment of general and complete disarmament, covering both nuclear and conventional armaments, under strict international control, are of primary importance for the preservation and strengthening of peace and security. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh supports the decision, adopted by the UN General Assembly on the initiative of the Soviet Union, to convene a World Disarmament Conference. Such a conference may be helpful in working out practicable and generally acceptable ways of solving urgent disarmament problems.

In supporting the generally recognised rules of international law governing sea space, the Soviet Union and Bangladesh pronounced themselves in favour of the need to establish the extent of territorial waters in conformity with the practice of the overwhelming majority of states, as well as to settle relevant problems, and they express their readiness to cooperate further with each other in achieving these aims.

Guided by the principle of equality of all peoples, irrespective of race and religion, both sides come out for a prompt and complete elimination of the vestiges of colonialism and for the unconditional implementation of the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. They resolutely condemn racism and apartheid in all forms and manifestations.

The Soviet leaders noted with satisfaction the statement by the Prime Minister to the effect that Bangladesh completely agrees with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and assumes all the obligations which the UN Charter imposes on states. In view of this, they declared that the Soviet Union would support the request of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to be admitted to UN membership.

During his stay in Moscow, Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman and his party took part in a meeting of representatives of the people of the capital and faculty members and students of the Lomonosov State University of Moscow held on the occasion of the establishment of the society of Friendship between the Peoples of the Soviet Union and of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Soviet leaders and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh declare their full support for the activities of the friendship societies established in both countries.

Both sides attach great importance to the development of personal contacts at all levels between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and declare their mutual intention to expand exchanges of visits by statesmen and representatives of public, scientific, cultural and other organizations of the two countries.

The visit of the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Soviet Union, and the talks and discussions with the Soviet leaders held during the visit, will undoubtedly contribute to the further development of relations of friendship and all-around cooperation between the two countries and to the strengthening of peace and international security.

Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman invited L.I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, N.V. Podgorny, President of Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, A.N. Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and A.A. Gromyko, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the USSR, to pay official friendly visits to the People's Republic of Bangladesh at a time convenient to them. The invitations were accepted with gratitude.

For the Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics

A. N. Kosygin
Moscow, March 3, 1972

For the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Appendix B

List of Items that Bangladesh Imported from the USSR in 1980

Sl. No. Items

1. Machines, equipments & transport materials
2. Metal cutting machines & compressors
3. Equipments for mills of electrical products and equipments
4. Power tools and equipments
5. Equipments for geological survey
6. Machines and equipments for road constructions
7. Tractors
8. Machines and equipments for agriculture
9. Spare parts for radio stations
10. Oil and oil-products
11. Iron
12. Rolls of black metals
13. Cotton
14. Books and periodicals.

Source: Bangladesh-USSR Barter Protocol No. 9, dated March 23, 1980, Dhaka; Bangladesh Bank, Exchange Control Department), F.E. Circular No. 32. Annexure A.

List of Items that Bangladesh Exported to the USSR in 1980

<u>Sl. No.</u>	<u>Items</u>
1.	Machines, equipments & transport materials
2.	Jute
3.	Semi-finished leather
4.	Jute bags
5.	Cloth
6.	Tea

Source: Vneshchnaia trgovlya SSSR, statisticheskii sbornik,
[Foreign Trade, Statistical Collection], Moscow, No. 12, 1980,
p. 200.

List of Items that Bangladesh Imported from the USSR in 1985

<u>Sl.No.</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Importing Agencies</u>	<u>Quantity/Value Pound sterling</u>
1.	Machinery, equipment and spare parts including tractors, trailers, and spare parts thereof, workshop machinery equipment, tools and machine tools, tyres and tubes and other machinery and equipment.	CCI&F	£ 1,350,000
2.	Tractor, trailers and spare parts thereof; tyres tubes	BSFIC	£ 450,000
3.	Equipment, spare parts and materials for Ghorasal Power Station	PDB	£ 300,000
4.	Valves and spare parts	Radio Bangladesh	£ 350,000
5.	Spare parts for GEM plant	BS & FC	£ 50,000
6.	Steel rolls	BS & FC	40 pieces
7.	Pig iron	BS & FC	5,000 tons
8.	M.S billets	CCI&E	10,000 tons
9.	Cotton	BTMC CCI&E	6,000 tons 4,000 tons
10.	High speed diesel oil	BPC	40,000 tons
11.	Cement	TCB	20,000 tons
12.	Zinc ingot	BC&FC	500 tons
13.	Sheet and plate glass (above 4mm thick)	CCI&E	£ 400,000
14.	Books and periodicals, Ministry of Education		£ 100,000
15.	Cinematographic films, Ministry of Information		£ 50,000
16.	Miscellaneous items to be agreed upon		£ 2,500,000

Source: Bangladesh-USSR Barter Protocol No. 14, dated April 28, 1985, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bank, Exchange Control Department), F.E. Circular No. 45. Annexure A

List of Items that Bangladesh Exported to the USSR in 1985

<u>Sl.No.</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Quantity/Value</u> <u>Pound sterling</u>
1.	Jute cloth	18,000,000 metres
2.	Jute bags	10,000,000 pieces
3.	Jute carpets	£ 500,000
4.	Raw jute	10,000 tons
5.	Goat skins	1,000,000 pieces
6.	Crust and finished leather	£ 100,000
7.	Loose tea	1,800 tons
8.	Tobacco cigarettes and tobacco manufactures	£ 1,000,000
9.	Readymade garments	£ 1,000,000
10.	Handicrafts	£ 50,000
11.	Books and periodicals	£ 25,000
12.	Miscellaneous items, including jute yarn and twine, wires and cables, super enamelled copper wires, coir fibre, soap, tooth pastes, cosmetics, sanitary wires, stainless steel cutlery, locks and pad locks, razor blades, jam, jelly, juices, packet tea, hosiery product and specialised textiles.	£ 1,000,000

Source: Ibid. Annexure B

List of Items that Bangladesh Imported from the USSR in 1990

<u>Sl.No.</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Importing Agencies</u>	<u>Quantity/ Value Pound sterling</u>
1.	Machinery, equipment and spare parts, including Dump Truck, Tractor, Trailers, Bulldozer, Motor Grader, etc. R & H		£ 2.0 million
2.	Trailers	BSFIC	£ 0.50 million
3.	Machinery equipment, accessories, tractors, trailers and spares	CCI&E	£ 0.50 million
4.	Tires and tubes	BSFIC	£ 0.11 million
5.	Raw cotton	BTMC	5,000 M/tons
6.	High speed diesel	BPC	30,000 M/tons
7.	Jet fuel (to be replaced, if possible by H.S.D)	BPC	15,000 M/tons
8.	Steel rolls	BSBC	£ 0.10 million
9.	Books, periodicals, cinematographic films	CCI&E	£ 0.17 million
10.	Commodities under exchange operation between TCB/Private Sector and the Ministry of Trade of USSR and other Soviet organizations.	TCB/CCI&E	£ 3.0 million
11.	Miscellaneous items to be agreed upon.	-	£ 3.0 million
12.	Pig iron	TCB	For memory

Source: Bangladesh- USSR Barter Protocol No. 19, dated March 27, 1990, (Dhaka: Exchange Control Department, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office), F. E. Circular NO. 37, Annexure B

List of Items that Bangladesh Exported to the USSR in 1990

<u>Sl. No.</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Quantity / Value</u> <u>Pound sterling</u>
1.	Raw jute	10,000 M/tons
2.	Jute cloth	16,000,000 meters
3.	Jute bags	15,000,000 pieces
4.	Jute yarn	1,000 M/tons
5.	Crust, semi-finished & finished leather	650,000 pieces
6.	Loose tea	1,600 M/tons
7.	Books and periodicals	£ 25,000
8.	Commodities under exchange operations between the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh/private sector and the Ministry of Trade of the USSR and other Soviet trade organizations.	£ 3,000,000
9.	Miscellaneous items (tobacco, readymade garments, detergent powder, cosmetics and toiletries, toothpaste, telephone and electric cables, soap, paints, towels, electronics, ceramics, etc.)	£ 3,000,0000

Source: Ibid, Annexure A

Appendix C

Bangladesh: Basic Economic Indicators 1980-89
(in million US dollars)

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Population (in million)	89.56	91.92	94.32	96.75	99.20
G.D.P (current)	12836.0	11870.0	11274.0	12557.0	16299.0
Per Capita GDP (US\$)	143.32	129.13	119.53	129.79	135.78
Government Revenue	1454.1	1277.0	1116.0	1118.1	1359.3
Export	821.0	725.0	782.0	822.0	971.0
Import	2593.0	2610.0	2307.0	2353.0	2647.0
Development budget (Revenue)	1449.82	1357.63	1252.95	1374.13	1351.50
Aid Commitment	1559.24	1922.85	1622.53	1694.99	1972.54
Aid Disburs.	1146.45	1239.63	1177.38	1268.40	1269.45
Debt Service (MLT)	85.10	91.50	136.10	128.30	170.00
Private Transfer	381.00	385.00	598.00	552.00	398.00
Remitt- ance	(379.00)	(412.00)	(617.00)	(596.00)	(439.00)

(continues in next page)

	1985-86	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Population (in million)	101.70	102.50	105.30	109.13
G.D.P (current)	15591.3	17548.6	18855.0	18908.0
Per Capita GDP (US\$)	140.61	139.15	179.06	173.26
Govt. Revenue	1381.10	1528.40	1682.70	1806.10
Export	909.00	1000.00	1186.00	1281.00
Import (C&F)	2364.00	2620.00	2986.00	3375.00
Development budget (Rev.)	1369.75	1473.03	1488.20	1436.04
Aid Commitment	1661.45	1603.26	1529.78	1865.80
Aid Disbursement	1305.93	1595.16	1640.38	1668.48
Debt Service (MLT)	183.70	232.80	289.00	293.70
Prv. Transfer (Remittance)	525.00 (555.00)	731.00 (696.00)	788.00 (737.00)	836.00 (771.00)

Source: "Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, 1990,"
op. cit., Table 13, pp. 143-44.

Appendix D

List of selective individuals interviewed

Enam Ahmed Choudhury, Secretary, External Resources Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

A.R.S. Shams-ud-Doha, ex-Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Dr. Abdul Gafur, Research Director, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, (BIDS), Dhaka.

Brigadier (Retired) M. Abdul Hafiz, former Director-General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, BIISS, Dhaka.

Muhammad Shamsul Huq, ex-Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Dr. Shaukat Hassan, former Research Fellow, Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, Ottawa.

Professor Syed Anwar Hossain, Department of History, Dhaka University, Dhaka.

Dr. Iftekaruzzaman, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS, Dhaka.

Professor Talukder Maniruzzaman, Department of Political Science, Dhaka University, Dhaka.

Mohammad Mohsin, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada, Ottawa.

Barrister K.M. Morshed, ex-Foreign Secretary and Chairman, Board of Governors of the BIISS, Dhaka.

Dr. Vitali Smirnov, Ambassador of the USSR to Bangladesh, Dhaka.

Mohammad Zamir, Director General, Soviet and East European Desk, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of Bangladesh of Bangladesh.

* For confidentiality, names of all individuals interviewed are not listed here. The positions, mentioned in the list, were held by the individuals at the time of interview. Almost all interviews were conducted in Dhaka during November 1990 to March 1991.

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