

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Realigning Alliances in South Asia: Exploring the Dynamics of Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations in a Post-Hasina Era

Syed Rizwan Haider Bukhari ^a Shujat Ali ^b Inam Ul Haq ^c

Abstract: This paper evaluates the evolution of Pakistan's diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh in this study, with special emphasis on the politics of Bangladesh after Hasina and the effect on bilateral ties between the two countries. It also examines how the internal dynamics in Bangladesh, contests between regional players, Pakistan's dependence on China, and India's rising influence modify this relationship. This contemplates post-1971 issues, explores how they influenced the political, economic, and cultural interaction, and also enquires whether the strategic motives of Pakistan behind re-engaging Bangladesh have anything to do with tense India-Pakistan relations. In doing so, it also probes into Bangladesh's adjustments to its foreign policy, balancing act with major powers, and strategic interests in forging closer relations with Pakistan. The study employs historical systemic analysis and International Relations theory in dealing with interconnected bilateralism, which nonetheless refers to persisting historical tensions. This underlines how it is in both nations' strategic and economic interests to cooperate as politics in the region and at the domestic level shifts. Also, the research enhances knowledge about South Asian state interactions and repercussions for regional stability and cooperation.

Keywords: Diplomatic Relationship, Regional Power Struggles, Strategic Interests, Bilateral Ties, South Asian Stability

Introduction

The nature of South Asia is conceptualized as complex geopolitics with historical enmity and shifting power relations in their region. This structure has formed the Pakistan and Bangladeshi relationship of colonial roots alongside the loss of 1971 and different political and economic journeys. Though the 1947 partition connected these nations on the terms of one state, the liberation movement of 1971 brought mistrust along with historical enmity in their relationship. Pakistan and Bangladesh's bilateral relations also show cyclic phases of warmth and coldness in the decades following the Liberation War based on both internal Pakistani politics and local changes in Bangladesh, regional and international power shifts, and geopolitical realignments. Despite this, this bilateral relationship holds great potential for cooperation as the countries share not only history but also the possible cooperation opportunities mentioned above, however, this relationship is filled with still unresolved historical issues as well as rivalry of states' national interests. Sheikh Hasina's leadership has been quite pivotal in defining the direction of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh in recent years. She has been heavily focused on remembering the 1971 Liberation War and at the same time, striving for justice from Pakistan for the sufferings during the Liberation War. As a result, it created tension in the Russia and West relations and the limited work achieved in attempts to enhance trust and cooperation. Nevertheless, the situation after Hasina politically constitutes a strategic turning point for shifting as well as remodeling the relations between the two countries, meaning opportunities in a way as well as problems.

The change of guard in Bangladesh can bring about fresh opportunities to the conflict review process and work out new ways for operating instead of hatred. Further, the large and diversified environment at the

^a PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

^b PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, Muslim Youth University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

^c PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

regional and international levels provides another dimension to this relationship. The economic and strategic importance of South Asia, particularly China as a strategic power in the South Asia region, the role that India plays in the regional dynamics, and the fast-rising importance of economic and security cooperation form part of the major factors that will shape the future relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. The problem that both nations are experiencing is how best to cope with it as they go about achieving their own strategic goals. Pakistan which is facing different economic constraints and regional isolationism has geo-strategically reasons to reset relations with Bangladesh in order to get a better position in South Asia. Different from Bangladesh's assertiveness, India also wins more supporters and sustains its rapid economic growth and regional role by reforming its foreign policy style in balancing relations with China and South Asia plus other great powers against the background of these domestic, regional, and global factors that this research aims at exploring the dynamics of this important bilateral relationship. To this end, this work is organized into the following chapters in order to establish a framework for analyzing Pakistan-Bangladesh relations in a post-Hasina context: This paper asks about the dynamics of the relationship between these two countries and the extent to which the change of leadership and shifting international politics might and inform the strategic studies of what could prompt these two countries to transform their utilitarian relationship. Finally, this research aims to advance the scholarship on endangerment of regional stability and cooperation of South Asian states, and change and dynamics of the alliance system in the newly emerging world order. (Riaz, [2024](#); Mukharji, [2024](#)).

Literature Review

This paper critically examines the political situation in Bangladesh before the departure of Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, by examining the social and political forces that resulted in her exit and India's role in having her in power. Primarily this is a representation of growing youth discontent with corruption and authoritarianism among Generation Z, viewing the ouster of Hasina as a people-driven revolution. It campaigns for India's undisputed support towards Hasina, which it alleges, bolstered anti-India feelings in Bangladesh, and requests for a balanced and sovereignty-recognizing affiliation. It also looks at the paradox of Bangladesh's economic growth at the same time that governance is declining, especially related to the comingling of business and politics and the key example of public transportation. The analysis reveals the increasingly privileged role of self-interest played by administrative elites who favor a pro-business government in favor of an economically efficient but less accountable, unfair, and less welfare-enhancing government (Kabir, [2024](#); Rahman, [2024](#); Bukhari, et al [2024](#)).

The main text describes a classic case of state capture how economic elites in positions of power use their resources to control resources held by the state to capture the laws that are made (and newly enforced or applied) in their favor. In this process, democracy suffers erosion, public institutions are politicized and governance crises occur, including in the major sectors such as public transportation. The findings demonstrate how business power within the transportation industry has contributed to the downward cascading of service standards, escalating costs of motoring, and social injustices that have enveloped the looked-after classes more than others. These issues suggest that business and politics are converging in such a way as to create widespread governance failures in numerous other sectors, resulting in a governance deficit. The results show that the power of the state, particularization the political institutions of Bangladesh, are becoming increasingly susceptible to foreign special interests that undermine their capacity to function on behalf of the public. The study stresses the necessity of reforms to minimize the impact of business on the system operation, the renewal of self-governing bodies, transparency of decisions, and the absence of manipulatory regulatory tools to protect the conflict of interests. At the same time, the text emphasizes the long historical, cultural, social, and economic connections of India and Bangladesh. Ultimately, the relationship between the two countries has been plagued by challenges despite deep interdependencies such as their 4,094 km long border and its four points of convergence based on the Bay of Bengal. On the other

hand, the lines between India and Bangladesh have improved relatively after 2014 under Narendra Modi's India and Sheikh Hasina's Bangladesh. While they had occasional tensions, their relations during this period have been marked by increased cooperation but lasting governance and economic issues have punctuated the relations they enjoy today (Rafi, [2024](#); Hunter, [2024](#); Hussain et al., [2024](#); Hasan, [2024](#)).

The current work is therefore concerned with these aspects of the bilateral relationship between India and Bangladesh in the given period of study. The current leadership of both Prime Ministers Modi and Hasina can be seen as underlining renewed practical-oriented diplomacy and cooperation based on mutual economically and strategically relevant interests. The writer places more stress on the eventualities of the healthy tone of the relations, in terms of the bilateral/mutually beneficial deals, the common interests in sharing trade, connectivity, water resources, energy partnership, counter-terrorism, etc. Bilateral visits have over the years been instrumental in nurturing this kind of relationship. The bi-laterals that have taken place involve top delegations of the two countries have effectively discussed concerns, cleared the hitches and crafted new agreements. For example, the LBA signed in 2015, addressed the border issue that was a cause of conflict between the two nations and thereby led to the swapping of enclaves and gradually building confidence between the two nations. Analysis of the growth of exports and imports as well as the increase in trade volume, especially through new rail and roads, point to the benefits accrued from cooperation (Pathak, [2024](#)).

The text also discusses that although the relationship has become far more positive there are still problems. Some of these ties include problems related to water, especially over the Teesta River. Further, there are some sensitive issues such as the perception that bilateral trade poses risks to the disadvantaged party and issues to do with migration and border control. However, the emphasis of the article is on the great improvement identified in the development of a sound partnership. It is pertinent to argue that India and Bangladesh share an improved relationship being immediate neighbours because the two countries have enhanced cooperation in regional and international for a. Both have cooperated within such organizations as BIMSTEC, – Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It reaffirms this year's focus topics of security, development, and prosperity, as well as informing strategies that can effectively respond to global challenges like climate change and terrorism (Bukhari, et al., [2024](#)).

Through this text, the author underlines the leadership activities of Modi and Hasina who, unlike politically like-minded leaders, decided to concentrate on practical cooperation rather than ideological bans. As such, their policies of cooperation in areas of common concern as well as conflict-solving approaches are strategic and indicate healthy-oriented bilateral partnership. It has not only bolstered trade relations but also helped bring friendship to the ground level by increasing people-to-people contacts (Jianjun, [2024](#)).

However, due to historical, geographical, and socio-economic factors, migration in South Asia is a complex phenomenon, as the study suggests. High emigration occurs with 43 million leaving the region, compared with 14 million in immigration. India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are the major countries involved in this movement. India is the leading emigration country, with many going to the Gulf, North America, and Europe, and Bangladesh and Pakistan use emigration as a tool of economic development by remittances. People are being pulled within South Asia: there are shared borders, languages, and cultures. Most migrants go to India mostly from Nepal, and Bangladesh. The study also covers a study of migration policies which reveals that India emphasizes legalizing immigration for nationality and for economic needs, while Bangladesh has high labor migration and Pakistan is faced with the issue of Afghan refugee integration (Karim, [2024](#); Zreik, [2024](#); Singh, [2024](#)).

However, efforts in Migration Management in South Asia still continue to be a difficult and dynamic process. Integrated migration policies and well-thought-out regional structures must be developed to overcome all the issues of migration, including human trafficking, exploitation, and testing the disponibility

of resources. Regional cooperation among SA countries would help in increasing regional capability to steer the migration flows in the right direction for the benefit of economic and social transformation of the region. Through the text, the author raises the question of migration as one of the most significant factors in the state modernization process. It notes that the policies towards migration of people from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are gradually becoming more rationalized to address the positive wake of migration, on one hand, and the need to deal with both humanitarian and security concerns on the other. According to the territorial and legal features of migration in South Asia studied in the article, the main assumptions about the migration processes taking place in this region and their contribution to the formation of governance, development, and regional cooperation can be formulated (Eyina & Anyalebechi, [2024](#)).

The criticism of the traditional approach in International Relations is with regard to the placement of restriction on the sovereignty recognition to legal process occurring between the only sovereign states and excluding cases with complex contested entities. By pointing at how this pertains to the Functional Recognition of some entities in this context with regards to their voting rights, financial access, and Article 2, article 4, and Article 7 noninterference aspects, it helps us understand its function. The geopolitics and norms of recognition are explained in the discussion revealing that powerful states recognize states based on stability rather than legal criteria. It applies the 1971 East Pakistan crisis as a case study to explore how to balance self-determination and strategic concerns in recognition. The constructivist argument highlights that recognition is a policy interpretable through the norm and strategy of policymakers which is not predetermined (Baloch, [2024](#); Zahoor & Huma, [2024](#)).

In the chapter, state recognition is viewed from a constructivist perspective that shows how norms, laws, and geopolitics tend to inform recognition policies. It shows that states claim they act in their own interest as well as in accordance with the norms! This gives way to a discussion on U.S. engagement in South Asia which has been of increasing strategic importance since the Cold War. The second part of the thesis analyzes the U.S. regional approach to security and diplomatic relations with countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Nepal. With a focus on American policies and the impact of these policies on U.S. interests, it examines ways in which the U.S. had to switch from a tradition of global power to a dynamic and area-specific approach to U.S. foreign policies (Bukhari et al., [2024](#); Khan et al., [2023](#)).

This turns to analyze the evolving India-U.S. strategic partnership in the face of a rising China in the region. It examines critical questions involving China's perceptions about and reaction to the burgeoning India-U.S. defense and security engagement, especially in the Indo-Pacific. It focuses on China's "String of Pearls" strategy, in which it seeks to secure military and commercial footholds across the Indian Ocean and thereby undermines India's regional hegemony. The chapter also discusses security threats, namely crime, terrorism, and piracy, for which India and the U.S. with strategic cooperation are engaged in arrest. One of the biggest goals is to ensure the stability of maritime routes in the Indian Ocean, essential for global trade and the transport of energy, which is why Indo U.S. has to work together for regional security (Datta, [2024](#)).

Methodology

This research adopts a systemic approach to studying the Pakistan-Bangladesh relations in the post-Hasina era. In this thesis, it will look into the historical, political, and geopolitical conditions that have affected the relationship between the countries, by using qualitative and analytical means. The impact of China and India on the foreign policies of both China and India is then assessed using a geopolitical framework, and the comparative analysis of the South Asian countries then helps to place in perspective the evolving alliances. The analysis is thematic and brings out the themes from the historical records, political discourses, and strategic studies. Expert interviews, case studies, and regional perspectives further strengthened the research, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the research. It is a neutral and objective methodology, therefore there is no bias in the assessment of political transformations and exterior influences. This study

integrates several points of view in order to assess how the future course of Pakistan-Bangladesh relations will unfold and what such a trajectory will entail for the stability of SAARC and South Asian geopolitics in general.

Discussion

Pakistan and Bangladesh relations have changed due to Sheikh Hasina's resignation in August 2024. Bangladesh under Hasina placed priority on ties with India, sidelining Pakistan for regional cooperation and we saw bumpy relations. However, there is a degree of new Bangladeshi leadership interested in improving diplomatic relations with Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan backed Bangladesh's stability and agreed to engage diplomatically through the promotion of Bangladeshi High Commissioner Muhammad Iqbal Hossain. It has also caused regional realignments in response to this leadership transition. Pakistan saw it as an opportunity to curb India's influence and was keen to develop economic and security cooperation with Bangladesh. Both nations may benefit from strengthening trade, investment, and security collaboration. As India's traditional role in shaping relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh remains of consequence for a state that views itself as one of Islam's protectors, the former's rapidly changing political landscape will continue to affect the dynamics of the region (Khan et al., [2024](#)).

Consciousness and its Consequences: The Legacy of the 1971 War

On the relation of Pakistan and Bangladesh, the 1971 Liberation War is the most defining event. Pakistan accomplished its defeat to India through India's diplomatic, military, and covert role in the Bengali fighters. Overall, India's direct military intervention was humanitarian motivated and because of its strategic interests contributed to tilting the regional balance of power in favour of India. Pakistan's regional dominance weakened thus due to India backing Bangladesh's independence. After the war was over, India was quick to recognize Bangladesh and fought all the time for its legitimacy internationally, and the two countries strengthened ties. For Pakistan, the war is a sensitive subject and it has refused to own up to the past. Though distant in time, the war's legacy has not escaped Bangladesh, which has learned to be suspicious about Pakistan's intentions, and so the two countries still remain poles apart (Gul et al., [2024](#)).

India's Involvement in Developing Relationship Physics between Pakistan and Bangladesh after 1971

India's geopolitical rivalry with Pakistan has influenced Bangladesh's foreign policy, despite India not directly shaping Pakistan-Bangladesh relations since 1971. New Delhi has strategically cultivated ties with Bangladesh to limit Pakistan's regional influence, particularly after Pakistan's international isolation following its 1998 nuclear tests. India seeks regional dominance, using its relationship with Bangladesh to counterbalance Pakistan and restrict military or intelligence cooperation between the two. Bangladesh, while economically and geographically linked to India, maintains a cautious foreign policy. It aligns with India on strategic matters but avoids antagonizing Pakistan. This is evident in its careful handling of military deals with India while maintaining diplomatic and economic ties with Pakistan. Pakistan perceives India's deepening ties with Bangladesh as a containment strategy, reinforcing its own alignment with China. Historical grievances from the 1971 war, including Pakistan's reluctance to acknowledge past atrocities and Bangladesh's continued pursuit of justice, further strain bilateral relations. (Javid & Ali, [2024](#)).

On the subject of emerging regional security dynamics and relation to India, the following issues will be discussed. China's growing influence in South Asia has introduced new dynamics in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations. While Pakistan sees China as a strategic ally to counterbalance India, Bangladesh maintains ties with both China and India. The Belt and Road Initiative has further shaped regional politics, with both Pakistan and Bangladesh engaging with China differently. The United States has traditionally aligned with Pakistan, but in recent years, its strategic partnership with India has grown. This shift impacts regional power dynamics, influencing Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India's foreign policies. Bangladesh seeks balanced trade relations with both India and China while improving ties with the U.S. The evolving Pakistan-Bangladesh

relationship remains a geopolitical concern, shaped by historical tensions, domestic needs, and the role of external powers. While efforts have been made to enhance ties, obstacles persist. A detailed examination of historical, diplomatic, and political realities, alongside regional and global influences, is essential to assess future prospects. (Ayesha & Naseem, [2024](#); Islam, [2023](#)).

- **Historical Contributions and Outstanding Issues:** The unresolved tensions of the 1971 war continue to remain as the chief hindrance for better Pakistan Bangladesh relation. The conflict is regarded as a national tragedy by Pakistan while Bangladesh is still acknowledging and seeking justice for war crimes. The biggest hindrance is that Pakistan is not willing to formally apologize and yet Bangladesh is keen on conducting trials against those who committed genocide. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to reinforce economic and diplomatic ties. Trade is still restricted, but has a potential in the area of textiles and with regional economic integration. If both nations move beyond ideological barriers, an improvement in these relations could be reached by means of infrastructure, energy, and technology cooperation. There has been some diplomatic engagement, especially so because we have collaborated on global issues such as climate change and providing humanitarian aid. Attempts at cultural and educational exchanges have been made, but historical enmities have overshadowed people-to-people contact. Although it is possible to cooperate, diplomatic sensitivities remain strong, and foreign relations are rather ungrateful. (Mostofa et al., [2024](#).; Glukhov & Ivanova, [2024](#)).
- **Geopolitical Dynamics:** One of the major determinants for enhanced relations is the changing security structure of the region, especially India's and China's roles in South Asia. The legacy of the 1971 war and the present-day Indian hegemony in the South Asian region equally contribute a lot to the nature of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to the policy of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been supporting India most of the time and the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India have been massively improving in sectors like trade, security, and the development of infrastructure. India also has a special contribution towards Bangladesh's status at the regional as well as at international level. This kind of development should be seen as constraining for Pakistan since the growing India-Bangladesh relations make Islamabad uncomfortable with the Indian overtures in Dhaka. Future enhancement of relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh would have to take into consideration India's regional behavior as Bangladesh would not be able to draw away from its natural ally India, especially in light of shared history as well as business (Yang & Hsiao, [2024](#)).
- **China's Growing Role in the Region:** China's rising economic and strategic presence in South Asia as well as its investments in infrastructure in Bangladesh in connection with the BRI can be seen in a positive way as well as receptive as a potential threat. As for China it also alternately supports Pakistan and has strengthened its status greatly, especially in light of projects like CPEC but Bangladesh has kept their relations balanced with both the countries China as well as India. While Pakistan might view China assisting Bangladesh as a way of countering India it could also become a strain in relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh if increasingly Bangladesh is to depend on China to invest in its nation reducing Pakistan's clout in Dhaka. Regional Security Concerns: Pakistan and Bangladesh have similar security interests primarily covering regional terrorism, piracy, and the safety of the sea line of communication in the Indian Ocean region. These problems can be used as the basis for cooperation because both countries have a clear interest in the stability of the region. However, any combination in these spheres would have to overcome mutual mistrust and desire to start real cooperation rather than an ideological one (Yang & Hsiao, [2024](#)).

- **Domestic Political Factors:** In Bangladesh's Political Landscape, the internal political realities in Bangladesh are, therefore, the most influential determinants of the country's foreign policy, regarding Pakistan. The present Bangladesh ruling Awami League particularly led by Sheikh Hasina has always been uncompromising towards Pakistan mostly because of the reasons that arose out of the 1971 Dis); the Bangladesh ruling Awami League has particularly remained uncompromising regarding Pakistan mainly on the grounds of the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. This is also the case because of the political culture that exerts pressure on the leadership of the Bangladeshi company to adopt nationalist rhetoric. Nevertheless, anything that is liable to alter political leadership, especially the growth of power in the hands of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is likely to foster a change to a more friendly stance toward Pakistan. It may be possible that the prospect of a change in leadership can bring better potential for more practical diplomacy along with chances to establish better relations but it will definitely take more domestic political actions (Proroković & Stekić, [2024](#)).
- **Pakistan's Political Considerations:** The internal political factors in Pakistan also seem to have an effect on Pakistan's dealings with Bangladesh. Political volatility at home may influence the relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh, most evidently in terms of the civilian political leadership and the Pakistan military. The military exercise, typically more wary and sometimes even more interested in geopolitical realities, can shape how much room the civil Classical liberals generally enjoy civil liberties largely due to their endorsement. The idea of improving relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh may presuppose consequential and significant effects on regional relations and reference to South Asia and more distantly for political and military strategies of the leading countries. The current conditions in South Asia are a result of dependencies and conflicting factors that have taken place in the past. Any change in the nature of the relations and even their significant improvement would have an impact on the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh and create changes in the relations in the South Asian region as well as in the entire region of the Indo-Pacific space that is important for India and what concerns the interests of the international powers. This question should be answered with reference to possible causes for this rapprochements as well as likely impact on the international relations system (Ahmad et al., [2024](#)).

A possible conclusion of this survey lies in the implications of the power shift for India's influence in South Asian organizations.

- **Historical Context and India's Central Role:** Geographically and politically India has been the long-dominant power in South Asia. India's collaboration with Bangladesh based on diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation was solidified on account of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. Nevertheless, Bangladesh's increasing rapprochement with China and the possibility of bridging Pakistan-Bangladesh relations could alter the regional dynamics and undermine India's regional footprint, which it has secured since the fall of ISI's East Pakistan operations. This would have the potential to destabilize India's place in its immediate neighborhood and could reshape South Asia's geopolitical landscape.
- **The Shift in Bangladesh's Strategic Alignment:** Closer Pakistan-Bangladesh relations could diminish India's regional influence, challenging its dominance in South Asia. While Bangladesh has maintained a balancing act, fostering ties with India, China, and Myanmar, improved relations with Pakistan might strain its traditionally strong partnership with India. A shift in Bangladesh's political leadership or policy from pro-India to neutral or pro-Pakistan could significantly alter regional dynamics, particularly on issues like the Rohingya crisis and border disputes. Enhanced Pakistan-Bangladesh cooperation in areas like counter-terrorism and maritime security could further pressure India, potentially leading to a more aggressive regional stance. India, already wary of Pakistan's influence in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, may respond by strengthening ties with other regional actors or increasing its engagement

with Bangladesh to counterbalance Pakistan's growing role. This reconciliation could compel India to reassess its security strategies and regional integration efforts, reshaping South Asia's geopolitical landscape (Kuszevska-Bohnert, [2024](#)).

Status and Changes in Regional Security Constructs: Overview and Impact on the South Asian Region

In South Asia, maritime security and strategic geography are important concerns, and Bangladesh's status as a Bay of Bengal nation has been important. The closer Pakistan-BD relations could pose a challenge to Indian naval dominance and maritime strategies including securing Sea Lines of Communication. India's enhanced cooperation in matters of counter-terrorism, anti-piracy, and maritime security with other nations might constrain its regional maneuverability. Further, the stronger ties could offset the impact of China's influence but Bangladesh's growing partnership with China through BRI projects creates a complex scenario. Improved Pakistan-Bangladesh relations could address shared nontraditional threats such as terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking and help stabilize the region. But such collaboration could raise Indian suspicions as far as it could be seen as support for extremism or difficulties for counter-terrorism efforts. Balancing the dynamics is critical to preventing the situation from escalating into a regional row (Ali, [2024](#); Chowdhury, [2024](#); Nawaz et al., [2024](#)).

Global Powers' Implications

Terrorism is not the only important issue in South Asia: the U.S. and Western countries are also concerned about nuclear weapons and China's rising influence in the region that they want to be stable. A Pakistan-Bangladesh rapprochement would establish U.S. interest in its role in supporting regional cooperation in trade, counter-terrorism, and security. But it could stress the U.S.-India strategic partnership, which underpins Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy to check China. Stronger Pakistan-Bangladesh relations, and the roadways to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in particular, could hamper the US ability to contain Chinese expansionism. And if having this reconciliation helps regional stability, the U.S. might be for it, he added. The question is how bilateral relations bilaterally weigh regional security against China's geopolitical ambitions. For China, it is favorable for Pakistan and Bangladesh to enjoy closer relations, as both are partners of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Beijing is trying to expand its strategic influence in South Asia without falling afoul of a complicated relationship with India. Russia, another key player, views the region through its historical alliances with India and Pakistan. From Moscow's point of view, better Pakistan-Bangladesh relations will be seen as a threat to India's influence and as a potential to bolster its own ties with both countries. This is in line with Russia's arms trade and counter-terrorism cooperation interests and the broader objective of regional stability in South Asia (Hossain, [2024](#); Goswami et al., [2024](#)).

Historical Context: The events of the 1971 War as well as other problems are rooted in experiences of partition and the post-partition period

One of Pakistan's sharpest historical flashlights in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations has been the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. While the war resulted in the independence of Bangladesh and left deep scars like massive casualties and enduring hostility, Pakistan fought it with brutal military suppression. East Pakistan (today Bangladesh) and West Pakistan were culturally and geographically separated before the war while politically and economically marginalized East Pakistan was. A war for independence ensued after the 1970 elections when the central Pakistani government rejected the Awami League's victory. India's support of Bangladesh complicated India's relations with Pakistan by establishing itself as a major player in Bangladeshi foreign policy. But the war's legacy of Pakistan failing to come to terms with the loss of its eastern wing and Bangladesh's continuing agony is still in play and affects each country's national identity and the effort for the two to reconcile.

Political Factors: People, Culture, Violence

Both Pakistan and Bangladesh continue to be deeply impacted by the political relationship of the 1971 war, as it gave rise to two divergent historical narratives. For Bangladesh, it was a struggle for freedom with

Pakistani military atrocities; for Pakistan, it was betrayal and Indian intervention. The historical divide that has prevented the reconciliation of the past has seen Bangladesh demand recognition and an apology for wartime crimes. While Pakistan has not gone far to ease tensions since the 1990s, India has blown this up. In the beginning, Bangladesh attempted to organize its foreign policy by strengthening relations with India to achieve independence as well as development. It slowly moved to the balancing of relations with India, Pakistan, China, and other world powers. However, since Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009, Bangladesh has taken a more moderate line on Pakistan, though the war still affects political rhetoric. The foreign policy of Bangladesh is largely shaped by national identity and secularism Islamic debates, while in Pakistan, political discourse is almost totally wrapped up in India, and Pakistan's location in the world. What these dynamics draw attention to is the lasting effect that 1971 has had on bilateral relations.

Economic Factors: Trade, Connectivity, of Regional Integration

Historically, there have been limited economic relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh for reasons of political tensions and security concerns. However, cooperation was initially hampered by initial trade restrictions, and strained diplomatic ties following Bangladesh's independence, but there has been gradual progress in recent years. But trade in textiles, foodstuffs, and manufactured goods remains small and is increasing. Expanded trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan can help to augment Bangladesh's strong textile exports, and greater and better transport infrastructure can strengthen regional integration. For this, there have been a few obstacles, however, like political rivalries, especially between Pakistan and India, which have used forums such as SAARC. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) provides the opportunity for fostering deeper economic cooperation through large-scale infrastructure ventures in the form of Gwadar. Although these prospects exist, political tensions and the influence of India over CPEC make this process difficult to undertake and demonstrate that the economic potential and geopolitical realities are difficult to balance.

Geopolitical Considerations: Global Factors and Security Factors

The Pakistan-Bangladesh relations have changed quite a bit since the 1970s due to unfolding political and geopolitical settings in South Asia. Though India is Bangladesh's nearest ally, Pakistan indeed heavily relies on its foreign policy based on how closely it has been connected to China and the U.S. China's dominant role in Pakistan's foreign policy has become more significant through the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). With rising Sino-Indian tensions, Bangladesh's search for investments and development projects has pushed it into a delicate balancing act with China. At the same time, Pakistan-Bangladesh ties have been impacted by the changes in global power structures—U.S. unilateralism and changes in regional alliances. The multipolar world order has introduced new challenges and opportunities for both nations, but the extent to which cooperation with Western powers has remained to differ. The reconciliation of Pakistan and Bangladesh holds great potential to change South Asia's geopolitical landscape by altering the balance of regional power politics while altering India's role. Such a shift would have major implications for global powers like the U.S. and China and would merit closer analysis of their respective political, economic, and security factors in relation to regional and global power transition.

Future Directions

Effects on the Dynamics of Two Regions and Pakistan Bangladesh Relationship

A potential détente between Pakistan and Bangladesh could significantly reshape South Asia's regional dynamics, overcoming decades of historical enmity rooted in the 1971 liberation war. Such a thaw would require addressing issues of historical memory, postwar justice, and identity, but it could yield strategic benefits. Improved relations could transform regional politics, enhance economic partnerships, and strengthen trade and security cooperation. Shared interests in counterterrorism, maritime security, and regional stability could foster collaboration. Additionally, closer ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh might

pave the way for greater regional integration, which has long been hindered by Pakistan-India conflicts, potentially creating a more stable and cooperative South Asia.

On the Power Status of India in South Asia

As states with normalized diplomatic relations, Pakistan and Bangladesh could threaten India's long-standing dominance in the region while being a pillar of its foreign policy. Bangladesh's closest ally has been India, India's support during Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war and subsequent history has allowed a close relationship to flourish. But a closer Pakistan – Bangladesh alliance would unsettle the regional balance to the discomfort of India. Additionally, Bangladesh's location in the Bay of Bengal, its enhanced relations with China, and its inability to win the trust of India will drag it away from India's influence in regional groups such as SAARC and make it weaker for Indian Ocean geopolitics. Such a shift could compel India to bend into a defensive stance and inhibit its potential to determine regional alliances, security, and economic dynamics; it can also even jeopardize its established position as South Asia's dominant power.

Implications for Europe's Global Dominance

Forces for a Pakistani-Bangladeshi thaw would not merely influence S-Asia but alter power structures across the globe, especially between the US and China.

China's Role

China's rising power has already brought about important effects or repercussions to the strategic positioning of South Asia. Both countries used to be great friends and recently they took to yet another level by signing an agreement that allows China to establish an economic corridor and develop a port city in Pakistan known as Gwadar. Bangladesh is not included in the CPEC but has been participating more and more in the BRI of China where the Chinese investment in infrastructural and development projects has begun. If the two countries were to cordialize, one felt that the strategic relations between China and Pakistan, and Bangladesh's desire to maintain links with China could be strengthened. For China, friendly relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh make the region more stable for China to implement BRI projects to enhance the regional connectivity that it fosters. It may also permit China to build up its financial and military power throughout South Asia, which would pose a rival to India's slowly shifting aspirations towards the U.S. and Western coalitions.

United States Perspective

If Pakistan and Bangladesh normalize their relations, it will play a pivotal role in changing the contours of US foreign policy in South Asia since the US has a very strategic partnership with India. Nevertheless, the U.S. ties with Pakistan have been frayed, and the relationship with Bangladesh has been up and down. A deeper, more united Pakistan-Bangladesh alliance would compel the U.S. to adjust relationships in the region as U.S. dependency on India as an obvious counterweight to Chinese expansion in the Indo-Pacific region intensifies. The shift could also impact U.S. counterterrorism and Afghanistan stabilizing efforts in which Pakistan has been instrumental. Bangladesh should have become a little bit more powerful next to Pakistan maybe, but we are going to see despite Bangladesh's closer ties with Pakistan, Pakistan, the U.S. is likely to still give more importance to India because the U.S. is trying to compensate China's assertiveness in the region. The unremitting dynamic behind this changing geostrategic landscape in South Asia is the reason.

Effects on the Security Architecture of the South Asian Region

South Asia's security landscape will change in a major way if Pakistan-Bangladesh relations change. Ties between the two countries could be brought closer to foster such cooperation on counterterrorism, maritime security, and border control. However, amid such rapprochement, India may be worried, and it may spark off a regional arms race and fan out tensions. Aware of Pakistan's military capability, India may consider the increase in the Pakistan-Bangladesh partnership as an irritant, prompting India to spend more on defense

and security posturing. This alignment could facilitate a regional collaboration against common threats, but also the aggravation of rivalry between two nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, to the extent that it is seen as challenging India's own security framework. Such a dynamic is emblematic of South Asia's evolving geostrategic landscape that is transforming.

Pakistan-Bangladesh reconciliation will have multifold effects on the South Asian region and on the global system. It can fundamentally alter the dynamics of regional security, curtail India's hegemonic role in South Asia, and give a hint to countries around India that they too can form their alliances and counterweight India. This would most probably enhance the rivalry between India and Pakistan in security and strategic partnership aspects. China would have much to gain from the aforementioned rapprochement while on the other hand, America would have to change its policies according to the emerging global environment. Possible forging of relations between the two countries may bring about a change of the security structure in the South Asian region as well as change the image of regional politics but, the two countries; Pakistan and Bangladesh would have to leave aside the bitterness of past and the obstacles in the politics. Although if such an entente is at all possible it does not seem imminent, seeing the strategic value of such a move is immense and the longer-term implications are game-changing for the geopolitics of the Middle East and beyond. The Myanmar question that Pakistan faced in the past and still sometimes in its foreign policy needs careful tread nurturing positive relations with Bangladesh, as the political structures and dynamics of their bilateral relationship require careful analysis for reform. The leaders of the two countries and their governments have a number of policy options available for their conduct of foreign policy and engaging with one another positively. Below are practical and feasible policy recommendations for improving Pakistan-Bangladesh relations, along with detailed explanations of how these policies can be implemented.

Promote Bilateral Dialogue and Confidence-Building Measures

High-Level Diplomatic Engagements, Arrange regular summits and meetings between the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Bangladesh. These engagements should focus on discussing mutual concerns, such as security, trade, and regional stability, and addressing historical issues. **Track II Diplomacy:** In parallel to formal diplomatic channels, engage in Track II diplomacy through unofficial dialogues involving academics, journalists, and former diplomats from both countries. This can help build trust at the people-to-people level and facilitate communication on sensitive issues without the pressure of official statecraft. **Annual Review Mechanism:** Establish an annual review mechanism to assess progress on various issues of bilateral concern. This could include reviewing the state of economic cooperation, security arrangements, and conflict resolution efforts.

Address Historical Grievances and Foster Reconciliation

To address historical grievances, particularly from the 1971 war, Pakistan and Bangladesh should establish a joint commission to facilitate truth-telling, reconciliation, and a shared understanding of past events. Pakistan could consider a symbolic gesture, such as a public statement of regret, to acknowledge the pain experienced by Bangladeshis during the war. Additionally, cultural and educational exchange programs should be initiated to promote mutual understanding, empathy, and stronger people-to-people ties, fostering a foundation for improved relations.

Enhance Economic Cooperation and Trade Relations

Pakistan and Bangladesh should trade with each other at lower tariffs, smooth customs, and promote joint ventures in areas like textiles, agriculture, and coal. The joint projects on facilities, such as railways, highways and energy pipelines, could improve connectivity and bring mutual benefit. It will become possible to establish economic cooperation forums, viz. regular business summits, and trade exhibitions, where governments, business leaders, and investors could discuss opportunities and strategies for long-term economic partnership.

Cooperate on Security and Regional Stability

Pakistan and Bangladesh should make efforts to set up cooperative security mechanisms to tackle common threats like terrorism, transnational crime, and natural disasters and in the meantime adhere to each other's sovereignty. Intelligence sharing and coordination in joint counterterrorism task forces in the fight against regional terrorist networks could be enhanced. Joint naval exercises and information sharing fastens maritime security cooperation which helps secure their maritime borders as well as combat piracy. Furthermore, having both nations vulnerable to floods and cyclones, disaster response coordination would strengthen and show the practical benefits of cooperation.

Encourage People-to-People Connectivity

Pakistan and Bangladesh should facilitate people-to-people exchanges by removing visa curbs on tourists, students, and professionals so as to further delineate ties. Academic and cultural joint initiatives, such as a mutual research program, an exchange of students, and joint cultural festivals, can bring shared history or interests to the front. Moreover, journalists from both countries can cooperate with the media so as to eradicate stereotypes offer an unbiased outlook appropriate to domestic and foreign policies, and promote goodwill and tolerance.

Engage with Regional and Global Powers to Support Thawing Relations

Despite the challenges, Pakistan and Bangladesh should take advantage of regional platforms such as SAARC for discussion and mutual cooperation. In the event of stalled bilateral talks, the intervention of global powers like the US and China in a mediation role can offer diplomatic support and encourage incentives to help move forward with reconciliation. Both nations should coordinate their synergies on the basis of international norms and should cooperate with the international organizations in the region, including the United Nations, to ensure regional cooperation and peace-building objectives thereby acknowledging that enhanced bilateral relations are contributing to global peace and stability.

Strengthen Regional Connectivity Through Multilateral Cooperation

Although Pakistan should work with Bangladesh to build multilateral initiatives and increase regional connectivity through trade routes, infrastructure, and the Bay of Bengal, this is really a story between Bangladesh and India. There are a few ways to address maritime security, environmental concerns, and trade opportunities, ringing a shared strategic interest, and that is by establishing a formal Bay of Bengal Initiative. Regional cooperation, development, and security can further be promoted through collaboration in regional organizations such as BIMSTEC and IORA. The agreement between Pakistan and Bangladesh to work closely in military training and missions represents a substantial development, which possibly marks a change in the defense and geopolitical environment of South Asia. This deals with a diplomatic breakthrough for Pakistan in relations with Bangladesh and broadening its regional engagements. It is a way to keep both hands free for Bangladesh to stay neutral and keep its relations with powers in the region balanced. This may help solidify cooperation in anti-terrorism, maritime security, and border control. But this rapprochement could stir fears in India, which might prompt a regional arms race and lead to adding oil to an already heated fire. Further, India might view tighter Pakistan-Bangladesh relations as a threat to its security which may feed into existing security dilemmas. The alliance could strengthen attempts to face regional threats, but at the same time, it could increase tensions between nuclear-powered India and Pakistan, with broader repercussions for regional peace and security.

Shifting Geostrategic Landscape

The Pakistan-Bangladesh rapprochement can transform the geopolitical landscape of the whole of South Asia changing India's regional power equation and pushing India — Pakistan rivalry. A shift of such a nature would be to the advantage of China and would force the U.S. to adapt its policies. If this reconciliation took

place, it could completely change the way the region secures itself, but it would require both nations to reconcile the way they approach the historical grievances and political complexities they have. Upsetting, the long-term effects for regional and global geopolitics would be huge but short-term uncertain. An approach is required to nurture good relations in light of historical, political, and economic factors. Policymakers should be oriented toward promoting communication, mutual comprehension, and cooperative efforts. Enhancing economic collaboration, promoting cultural exchanges and confidence-building measures are practical ways through which to achieve this. Such efforts could lead to a more stable and constructive relationship beneficial to both of these countries and the rest of the South Asian region.

Positive Factors Owing to Pakistan's Perspective

The text looks at geopolitics and economics that are shifting in South Asia specifically in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Under Sheikh Hasina's government, tensions have escalated between India and Bangladesh, as Hindu minorities in Bangladesh are targeted over violence and Indian interference allegations. Relations became more tense when Muhammad Yunus became head of the interim government due to his anti-India stance and following such incidents as the arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das. Disputes over violence targeting Bangladeshi diplomats and more drone activity have made border security all the more stringent. Once the mainstay of relations between India and Bangladesh, bilateral trade has declined because of export restrictions and rising commodity prices, compelling Bangladesh to also look for alternatives such as Pakistan. Bangladesh's foreign policy is moving towards Pakistan as it ships its first cargo in decades and talks to diversify trade. This was a move intended to decrease dependence on India and assert sovereignty, but it may worsen relations with India as a result. Bangladesh's balancing act is testimony to its balancing act between its regional power dynamics and its reluctance to get entangled in India-Pakistan conflicts. This strategy is only successful if sovereignty is upheld, regional partnerships are cultivated, and the economic and diplomatic standoffs in a fast-changing South Asia are maintained.

Findings

However, the study adds that post-1971 war the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh have always been tense but are not unrepairable and could be altered in a post-Hasina era. Pakistan has kept only a limited engagement with its arch-rival's regime in Dhaka which, led by Sheikh Hasina, is also closely shadowed by India and has sought to war crime trial other leaders of the previous regime. But a change in leadership in Bangladesh, especially, provides the opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties, given the ease of bilateral relations and cooperation. Both nations have complementary economies, sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture are highly complementary, but trade is not well developed. Joint ventures for greater economic collaboration in infrastructure, energy cooperation, etc. could help unlock great benefits. The wealth of diplomatic and cultural resources could be tapped into, politically, to create a new positive agenda of trust building and addressing historical grievances. Strategic imperatives, such as the looming Chinese rise, and Indian assertive diplomacy, also open a large window of opportunity for Pakistan and Bangladesh to recalibrate their policies and enhance mutual benefits. Bilateral working groups should be set up, opportunities for investment encouraged, and regional initiatives such as Belt and Road used. There is a place for future-oriented diplomacy and both of these countries should insure against the dangers of populist rhetoric about past wars. Third-party mediation on the part of the Gulf states or China or its neutrality towards India could help to even the balance of regional tensions. Historical animosities continue to linger however, slow political, economic, and cultural cooperation improvements could help the Pakistan and Bangladesh relationship stabilize as well as become more constructive in terms of quality, which would ultimately lead to improvements in the South Asian region as a whole. There is no doubt that the Hasina era offered a perfect moment for it to be watered down, and made stronger.

Conclusion

Pakistan–Bangladesh relations are at an evolving stage of relations in the post-Hasina era and opportunities and challenges exist for crafting redefined bilateral relations in South Asia. While 1971 continues to loom large in their relations, changing regional and global dynamics and shifting leaderships in Bangladesh allow for a repolishing of relations at the highest level. As two sides that have complementary economies, economic cooperation, long neglected, could result in the creation of trust and benefits mutually. China and India can both diversify their strategic alignments and strengthen security in the region as India's assertiveness rises and China launches the Belt and Road Initiative. There are a number of important symbolic and diplomatic steps toward reparations through addressing historical grievances that need to be taken first to rebuild trust and a stable partnership. Looking ahead, both countries can learn from the animosities of the past by concentrating on economic collaboration, cultural understanding, and poking away at reconciliation. Improving Pakistan and Bangladeshi matters of interest, rather than of conflict, can contribute towards a more stable and cooperative South Asian geopolitical landscape.

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