

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

India and Bangladesh are, historically, geographically and culturally integrated in such a manner that they cannot escape from bilateral interactions. Before attaining her independence in 1971, the modern state of Bangladesh was part of a non – contiguous Pakistan. It must be noted that Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) comprised a major part of the movement to establish the independent state of Pakistan in 1947. Consequently, many of the grievances that resulted in original partition in 1947 remained a part of the collective historical memoirs of the modern day Bangladesh. However, India's role in creating an independent Bangladesh in 1971 meant that, at least for a few years, India enjoyed a privileged relationship with the new state. India's assistance to refugees from East Pakistan, as well as its relief and reconstruction aid, went a long way towards setting its strong foundation. India was also first state to grant recognition to Bangladesh. In 1972 the two states signed a Treaty of Friendship and Peace for a term of 25 years, declaring that both sides would respect their mutual independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity while refraining from interfering in each other's internal matters.

After independence of Bangladesh, Indian policy towards Bangladesh was very friendly. Bangladesh got recognition from many countries at international level just because of India's support. The foreign policy of a country seeks to promote and protect its core national interest, even though priorities may vary from government to governments. It has been argued that India's preference for a bilateral framework in its neighborhood policy is seen as a means to dominate the weaker country (Dixit, 2001).

The role of India in the creation of Bangladesh shaped its foreign policy in the initial years. In 1972, India and Bangladesh had signed the 1972 Treaty of

Peace and Friendship. However, this treaty could not achieve its full potential because of tumultuous internal political developments. After Sheikh-Mujib-Ur Rahman's assassination, the relationship between India and Bangladesh suffered a setback. In the subsequent years, there has been a marked difference in the approaches of the two leading political parties towards India and Pakistan and colored by their respective vision of Bangladeshi nation-state (IDSA 2011).

Though India played a great role in emergence of Independent Bangladesh, and was one of the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate state *bonhomie* in relation between the two countries was short-lived. . Bangladesh-India border relation is multi-dimensional and shaped by dynamics and pattern of internal politics of two countries. Even the initial *bonhomie* in relations was not able to conceal the contentious issue of water sharing from 54 rivers which are common to both the countries. Another contentious issue is border problem, which is not only confined to the issue of demarcation, but it also involves other issues such as cross-border smuggling, terrorist activities, border fencing, human trafficking and illegal immigration.

The land boundary issues has remained central to India and Bangladesh relations as it was intrinsically not only linked directly or indirectly to many other issues but also due to the fact that trust deficit was most visible here. The border area between the two countries is covered with many Indian territory enclaves within Bangladesh, and many Bangladeshi territory (enclave) within India due to some pre-colonial treaties between the Maharajah of Cooch Behar and the Nawab of Rangpur, and continued to be maintained till the time of partition between India and what was then known as East Pakistan in 1947

Illegal migration is one of the bones of the contention between the two countries. Since the 1971 war of independence that created the state of Bangladesh, millions of Bangladeshi immigrants (the vast majority of them illegal) have poured into India. While the Indian government had tried to deport some of these immigrants, the sheer number of them, as well as the porous border

between the two countries, has made such an enterprise impossible. It is difficult to assess how many illegal immigrants are currently residing in India. Consider that in 1971, during the civil war in neighbouring East Pakistan (the former name of Bangladesh), at least 10-million Bangladeshis poured into West Bengal in India.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

India and Bangladesh have fluctuating relations both of conflict and cooperation even though India played major role in the liberation of Bangladesh. Both states have mutual significance for myriad interests. As the largest democracy and regional super power, India can contribute too much to the strengthening of Indo- Bangladesh relations. India has great ability to create an environment of goodwill and friendship between the two countries. The rise of Bangladesh as a nation state is a development of great significance for the whole subcontinent. It is essential for each country to develop international friendship with other country. India and Bangladesh are both trying pursuing this policy. Both the states are neither close nor free from disputes and confrontations. It has been observed that Bangladesh has often indulged in anti- India activities. This stagnation in relations is held because of variety of reasons; border problems, as well as a general feeling on both sides that several important issues are not being given the importance they deserve. In bilateral relations between two states, the most important issues for India are security-related issues, such as arms trafficking, movement of people, transit, and the tripartite gas pipeline, whereas the most important issues for Bangladeshi are sharing of the waters of the joint rivers and the river linking project, trade, and a variety of border-related concerns, including smuggling (Sobhan,2012).

In the context of India Bangladesh relations, the long standing boundary dispute which is one of the major issue of conflict between two countries, has its root in the unique history of the region. The India-East Pakistan land boundary was demarcated by the Radcliffe Award of 1947, which is said to be responsible

for the present day dispute due to some provisions in the award. *These contradictions emanate from* certain peculiar situations called enclaves on the both sides of the border. *Historically*, the border area between the two countries is covered with many Indian Territory (enclaves) within Bangladesh, and many Bangladeshi territories (enclave) lie within India due to some pre-colonial treaties between the Maharajah of Cooch Behar and the Nawab of Rangpur. The condition of the residents of these enclaves, as they are isolated from mainland by a strip of foreign land, is very miserable since they are not provided with basic services such as healthcare or electricity by their own government or by the surrounding state, as such. The residents can't easily visit their own country without crossing the international border surrounding the territory (Times of India 19th Dec 2013).

A Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) was signed on May 16, 1974, between India and Bangladesh aimed at finding a solution to this complex nature of border demarcation, providing for exchange of enclaves and the surrender of adverse possessions between the two. As per the terms of agreement, India retained Berubari Union No. 12 enclave while Bangladesh got control over Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves after India agreed to provide access to it by giving 178 meter × 85 meters corridor, called the Teen Bigha Corridor. This agreement though was quickly ratified by Bangladesh in 1974 (MEA Executive Summary on LBA).

Though the agreement got implemented in its entirety without ratification by India, yet the three issues pertaining to un-demarcated land boundary of approximately 6.1 km in three sectors — Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River-Belonia (Tripura) and Lathitila-Dumabari (Assam); exchange of enclaves; and adverse possessions remained in a state of limbo brining both the countries and its leaders to a point of never ending conflict, mistrust and unlimited tension, which has vitiated the good neighbourly relations and converting the region into a theater of power play by other vested interests. Later in 1992, for enhancement of mutual trust and promotion of good neighbourly relations, India courageously

announced its decision to permanently lease out the Teen Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh, despite local opposition. Thereafter several other measures by way of CBM, inter alia, were initiated to sort out the issues (MEA Executive Summary on LBA).

In 1997, both the countries agreed to finalize the list of enclaves. Again in 2001, the Two Joint Boundary Working Groups, were set up to work out the details of enclaves. After a joint census in May 2007, India went forward to sign the Additional Protocol for the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh. On the occasion, both the countries also expressed their desire to swap 162 enclaves, and providing these residents a choice of their nationality. Under the said Agreement, India agreed to receive 51 out of the 71 Bangladeshi enclaves (from 51 to 54 of the 74 chitts) which are inside India proper (7,110.2 acres), while Bangladesh was to get from 95 to 101 of the 103 Indian enclaves (111 out of 119 chitts) which are inside Bangladesh proper (17,160.63 acres). India was to acquire 2777.038 acres of adverse possession areas and transfer 2267.682 acres adverse possession areas to Bangladesh. And Bangladesh would retain the 4617 acres of its Dahagram-Angarpota exclave, involving about 14,215 people who were residing in Bangladeshi enclaves in India whereas 37,269 people residing in Indian enclaves in Bangladesh. The enclaves' populations, over 50,000 people, were to have a say in the matter, and each person, would be free to choose his nationality remained on paper (MEA Executive Summary on LBA). In the year 2013, on 18 December 2013, the Constitution (119th Amendment) Bill, 2013 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Parliament of India, on 18 December 2013, which was approved by the Standing Committee on External Affairs, in November 2014. After amendments in the constitution the Land Boundary Agreement has been ratified in 2015 by India and process for implementation of LBA has started.

Bangladesh's importance for India's security and prosperity cannot be overestimated. The challenge before the two countries is how to make bilateral relations irrevocably friendly. Both sides are conscious that visible progress will

be necessary to end deep rooted cynicism that exists in bilateral relations between two. The cynicism may have been reduced but it has not entirely gone away. Both the states have mistrust and have grievances against each other for their respective national interests and the most importantly both are concerned for the security. India's dominating behavior and Bangladesh's indulging in anti-India activities has put both the states in face to face skirmishes.

A settled boundary is an essential prerequisite for long lasting peace and effective cross-border cooperation. It reduces friction, helps neighbours consolidate mutually beneficial exchanges & promotes confidence in building better relations. It can also be a stepping stone for further building up of a strong partnership in other areas. LBA will ensure that the India-Bangladesh boundary is permanently settled with no more differences in interpretations, regardless of the government in power.

Non ratification of LBA by India has been one of the major stumbling blocks in India Bangladesh bilateral. In fact it will not be wrong to say that Bangladesh looked at India with suspicion as it had ratified the agreement in 1974 itself. Most studies on bilateral between India Bangladesh have focused on water, trade and other related disputes. Very few studies are available to relate how keeping LBA pending for more than 41 years had impacted bilateral in general and security of India's borders in particular. It would be interesting to visualize how the relations between both countries would evolve after the implementation of LBA.

It is therefore important to understand India-Bangladesh relations from a historical perspective. The study will also assess the bilateral with the help of issues pertaining to conflict & cooperation where national interests are involved. This study attempts to relate the impact and implication of LBA both in terms of security of India's borders and other related issues.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to explain the bilateral between India and Bangladesh and impact of LBA on India Bangladesh relations. In the light of the broad objectives, the following objectives have been set up for the study as under:

- To study history of India-Bangladesh relations in the light of LBA,
- To study various issues between India and Bangladesh, and
- To study the impact of LBA on bilateral relations with special reference to security of India.

The study titled "India Bangladesh bilateral: impact of land boundary agreement", explores Indo-Bangladesh relations particularly in the light of Land Boundary Agreement. During the course of this study, some research questions related to this topic have been explored as these questions seemed to be relevant. These questions are:

- a) What are the major issues that have shaped bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh?
- b) How will the Land Boundary Agreement impact relations between both countries?
- c) What will be the implications of Land Boundary Agreement for India's security?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study would follow the exploratory research methodology. Secondary sources will be used for the exploration of the issues. The secondary sources would comprise of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, authentic internet sources, annual reports, handbooks etc. on the subject.

The methodology employed in this work is mainly descriptive-analytical. Attempts have been made to answer the research questions by analyzing available literature, books and journal articles as a secondary source. Besides, statements of leaders, official documents and ministry reports have also been used as primary sources. The relevant websites, newspaper clippings and speeches of leaders have also been significant sources to embolden our insights.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The limitations of the study are as under:

- Study is exclusively based on secondary literature,
- Analysis is based on selected documents,
- Study does not take the active expressions of major stakeholders, and
- The study is constrained to be completed in limited time frame.

## **References**

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