

Small States' Challenges in International Relations: The Case of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: The challenges of small states are multifaceted in international relations. Generally, these challenges are linked to the internal and external constraints which are inherently there in small states. To mitigate the challenges a small state often compelled to explore multiple options to deal with powerful states. These options are used not to be intimidated by big and powerful states while working for national interest. This paper has made an attempt to explore those inherent challenges of small states in international relations through an objectified study of the conditions prevail in Bangladesh. Being a small state of South Asian region, Bangladesh often forced to explore multiple options to deal with an enormous neighbor like India. This paper has conceptualized the challenges and survival strategy of Bangladesh in South Asian region. This study is descriptive and analytical in nature. To explore the research problems case study method has been used to qualitatively analyze the case of Bangladesh. This paper argued that Bangladesh's proximity to China is its small state's compulsions to deal with a big neighbor like India. The observations of this paper will be helpful to further investigate the challenges of small states in international relations. It will also be helpful in framing foreign policy measures to mitigate the challenges of small states.

KEYWORDS: Small State, Challenges, International Relations, Bangladesh, Survival Strategy, South Asian Region

INTRODUCTION

While dealing with other states in the international sphere, a small state is always guided by 'constraint of inefficiency'. This 'constraint of inefficiency' has meticulous implications for its foreign policy behaviour, policy options and perception towards powerful and immediate neighbours. Frustration, out of comparative inferiority, moulds a small state to vociferously look forward for reliable options to enhance strength and to gain a comprehensive bargaining edge, while dealing with more powerful state or any 'international crisis'¹. Thus, a small state's attempt is to survive in the international system rather than to play a dominant role. The behaviour pattern of a small state revolves around its own real potentiality to survive. If the potentiality remains inadequate, it generates 'insecurity syndrome' and accordingly influences the state's behaviour pattern.

Bangladesh is a small South Asian state with limited military and economic potentiality. Its potential mismatch with India has generated small state fear psychosis of the dominance of a bigger neighbour. Bangladesh's inability to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in case of a warlike situation with India, has compelled her to nudge strategic relations with the extra-regional powers. Thus, its strategic relation with China can be analysed as a small state's desperate attempt to counter the fear of a big neighbour, in collaboration with an extra-regional power. As part of this strategic collaboration, Bangladesh has also gained economic and military benefits from China.

Defining Small State

Designation of a small state is a relative observation of size, capability, resources and global influence of a particular state in comparison to other states. Generally, if the geographical size of a state is comparatively smaller then it can be called a small state. Likewise, geographical size determines the resource of a country. The smaller size works as a barricade to the satisfactory availability of natural resources. This situation weakens the potentiality of the small state and compels her to rely on external dependency. On the other hand, dependency undermines the 'independent international role'² of a small state. These compulsions often turn a small state into a pawn or satellite state and subjugate it under the heavy influence of the big and powerful states. Thus,

¹ Any international crisis denotes a tense warlike situation where two or more than two states are involved. Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing have defined that "An international crisis is a sequence of interactions between the governments of two or more sovereign states in severe conflict, short of actual war, but involving the perception of a dangerously high probability of war" (Snyder and Diesing, 1977:6).

² Independence international role of a state denotes its action and reactions to a particular international development without being defencelessly influenced or fear to be subjugated by any other state, big or powerful.

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in security study a small state can be defined as a geographically tiny state with limited resources, weak potentiality and heavy external dependency along with a subjugated international role.

Some scholars have defined small state as small power, from the perspective of international politics. Robert L. Rothstein has defined a small power through psychological and material perspectives:

A Small Power is a state which recognises that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the Small Power's belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognised by the other states involved in international politics (Rothstein, 1968:29).

Relying on this definition most of the states will be designated as small power because most of them are, in one way or other, dependent on some other states. Only the super powers are out of the rubric of Rothstein's definition of small power. Needless to say that Bangladesh fits into Rothstein's definition of small state's incapability to defend its own security. Bangladesh has a higher degree of external dependency. Bangladesh has sizeable conventional armed forces, but they are ill-equipped to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity. So, Bangladesh is heavily dependent on arms donor and arms selling countries like China or the United States for its defence procurement and security enrichment.

While categorizing and defining various states, Robert O. Keohane has examined their behaviour in accordance with the System Theory. In this way he has classified states into four types- system determining states, system influencing states, system affecting states and system ineffectual states (Keohane, 1969:295-296). According to Keohane the fourth kind of system-ineffectual states can be called small state or small power. In case of Bangladesh, it lacks the force to influence or affect the international system. However, it has the potentiality and intention to develop into a "system-affecting state". Most of its bilateral engagements aim at gaining maximum economic aid and assistance from the powerful states. So, in its bilateral relations with other states Bangladesh often stands at the receiving end. On many occasions, with the covert support of China, Bangladesh had raised some of its bilateral problems in the United Nations. Such steps were an outcome of Bangladesh's lack of self-belief in successfully dealing with the big states. These steps are also part of the small state's age-old strategy to create international pressure on comparatively powerful state and to defuse the fear of diplomatic domination in the negotiation table.

While examining the foreign policy behaviour of small states, Maurice East has outlined some interesting outcomes. According to him, 'small states are characterized by low levels of overall participation in world affairs, high level of participation in Intergovernmental organizations, high level of support for international legal norms, avoidance of the use of force as a policy of statecraft, non-practice of policy and behaviour which aims at alienating the more powerful states in the system, a narrow range of concerns in foreign policy activities, moral and normative positions on international issues' (East, 1973:557, Afroze, 2005:11-35). On the other hand, Singer and Small have argued that categorization of small and big states can be done by the numbers of diplomats these countries received (Small and Singer, 1969:257-282). However, in the present context the numbers of diplomatic envoys received by a country can't be a decisive yardstick of its potentiality and size.

There are significant conceptual differences between the small state and weak state. If geographical size is the sole denominator, then all small states are not weak state, but most of the weak states are smaller in size. Weakness denotes a comparatively higher economic dependency, lack of self-sufficiency in military deterrence and limited international role of the state. A weak state always looks beyond the territorial boundary to address its domestic requirements. However, a weak state may surpass its weakness in due course of time and can transform into a potentially stronger state. Thus, weakness is not a static designation in international politics. Likewise, small states are not conceptually synonymous to pawn states or satellite states. Pawn states or satellite states are those kinds of weak states, whose domestic and international activities are largely shaped, influenced or directed by one or more powerful state. The guided or influenced behaviour of a pawn state or a satellite state is an outcome of its heavily dependent on a particular or some specific powerful states. Some small states are also designated as a buffer state. A buffer state is that kind of a small state which strategically lies in between two powerful states. Hans. J. Morgenthau has defined buffer states as "weak states located close to powerful ones and serving their military security" (Morgenthau, 2001). Its independence role is very prominent to maintain 'balance of power'. Thus, all the small states are not synonymous to weak states, buffer states, satellite states or pawn states.

Geographically, Bangladesh is a small state but it is neither a weak state nor a pawn or satellite state. Bangladesh has more potential to be called a weak state. Though Bangladesh has limited conventional armed forces, it is in the process of modernisation and expansion. Economically Bangladesh is an agrarian country, with a strong labour-intensive garment sector. It has the potentiality to develop further and hence can't be completely designated as a weak economy. Similarly, Bangladesh can't be designated as pawn state or satellite state because it has never been completely influenced or directed by any powerful country in its domestic or international sphere. Bangladesh's "international role" is often guided by its national interest, which lies in its association with other countries. However, these associations have never overshadowed Bangladesh's sovereign right to decision making. In Bangladesh, different political regimes have shown a different inclination to develop bilateral relations with other countries.

Further, Bangladesh was never a buffer state and has less possibility to turn into one in the near future. The geographic location of Bangladesh is very significant for the regional security scenario of South Asia in general and security of India in particular. However,

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this geographic location of Bangladesh only tempts India and the 'region-oriented powers'³ to gain strategic accessibility rather than strategic possession. In this way, both China and India have competed with each other to get strategic accessibility to Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh shares a robust strategic relation with China, it does not have any direct land or sea boundary with China. On the contrary, it is India-locked and can't ignore its giant neighbour, at any circumstances. Thus, Bangladesh's size, potentially and location don't favour it to turn into a buffer state.

Challenges of Small State

The limitations and constraints that a small state is part of push it to encounter several challenges. A small state faces challenges basically from three fields- economic, political and security.

Economic Challenges

The economic challenges of a small state are coded by the Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat / World Bank Joint Task Force on Small State as follows (The World Bank, 2000).

- Remoteness and Isolation: Most of the small states suffer from remoteness and are often located far from the major markets.
- Income Volatility: Small states' "high level of exports and imports and low diversification in production and trade which leaves them exposed to fluctuations in world markets" (The World Bank, 2000:9).
- Openness: Events in the global market can do harm to the incompetence economy of a small state because it has a little control over the market force.
- Limited Diversification: Because of their small domestic market diversification of production and exports are limited.
- Susceptibility to Natural Disasters and Environmental Change: Most of the small states are ill-prepared against natural disasters like drought, flood, cyclones, volcanic eruption etc. Because of the limitations and monotony, the economy is easily determined by any changes in the international environment.
- Access to External Capital: According to the assumption of the private markets the small economies are riskier and more volatile. Such assumptions deprive the small states to access external capital.
- Poverty: The uneven income distribution and volatile national economy lead to chronic in small states. Poverty ratio is higher in small states rather than in big states.
- Limited Institutional Capacity: In small states the public sector faces diseconomies of small size in providing public services. The private sector lacks diversification and domestic competition.

These economic challenges impinge on a small state to carry forward its economic growth. These limitations also push a small state to be dependent on the aid and assistance of the developed states. Bangladesh's economy is agrarian, underdeveloped and natural disasters prone. It is always a challenge for the economy of Bangladesh to meet the demands of over populated mass. Large sections of people are still dependent on agriculture. Bangladesh's export basket is dominated by primary goods. Jute good are the main items in the export basket of Bangladesh. Similarly, Bangladesh's economy has been heavily determined by the aid and assistance received from other states.

Globalization is an opportunity as well as a challenge for the small states. Rapid integration with the world market has increased the interference of global economic actors. The availability of labour force and raw materials in small states has attracted large amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This has promoted large scale employment generation and has reduced dependency on agricultural sector. However, expanding integration with the global market has posed threat to the unskilled or semiskilled domestic markets of the small states. Interference of giant seeds companies have influenced the indigenous seed yielding and traditional pattern of agriculture. Introduction of genetically modified seeds has also generated many health concerns.

Most of the small states are limited exporters of consumer items. At the same time, their large-scale export from the developed countries has generated huge trade gap. As Ocampo has rightly argued:

..[S]mall developing states are not small enough for their economy to rely only on exports of few commodities or services, and their size is not large enough to reap the benefits of economies of scale or to successfully diversify into dynamic products. These small countries are therefore the most vulnerable to the challenges of globalization and run the risk of being caught in a developmental trap (Ocampo, 2002).

In the 1990s Bangladesh has integrated more with the world economy. During this period the "non-farm non-tradable activities such as services, construction and small-scale industries" have grown rapidly. This has helped Bangladesh to "accelerate non-tradable in two ways". From the demand side it has propelled the demand for non-tradable and from the supply side it has reduced the cost production (Osmani, 2005). Furthermore, greater openness of the national economy has increased the FDI flow to Bangladesh. The FDI flow to Bangladesh was 666 million US dollars in 2007. This amount further increased and crossed 1000 million US dollars in 2008. As per the data released by the Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the FDI flow to

³ Region oriented powers are those powers, whose relations with any particular country are guided by the overall interests of those powers in that specific region. In the perspective of South Asia, China is a region-oriented power. Most of China's bilateral relations with the countries of South Asia region are aimed at its overall strategic interests in the region.

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the country was 571 million US dollar in 2010 (Board of Investment Prime Minister's Office, 2012). Greater integration with the global economy has increased the migration remittances to Bangladesh. As per the data of the Migration and Remittance Factbook 2011, Bangladesh's total remittance receiving was 11.1 billion US dollars in 2010 (The World Bank, 2011:13). Migration remittance has contributed significantly to boost the underdeveloped economy of Bangladesh. Globalization has also generated some new challenges for Bangladesh. The unregulated flourishing of genetically modified crops has generated the fear of elimination of local species forever.

Globalization has played a major role to boost Bangladesh's economic relations with China. The increasing openness has allowed the Chinese companies to flourish in Bangladesh. Similarly in the 1990s Bangladesh-China bilateral trade has increased significantly. Along with the increase in its volume of trade with China, Bangladesh is also suffering from huge trade deficit. Bangladesh integration with the global market has also generated challenges to its garment sector. As Sami argues:

The phasing out of the Multi-Fiber Agreement in 2005 ended export quotas for countries like Bangladesh. In a quota-free global market and with China's entry into the WTO the Bangladesh's garments industry has been put in a situation of competition with China (Sami, 2012:26).

Political Challenges

In small states, political set up struggles to nurture the norms of real democracy. As the society is less diversified, uneducated and economically underdeveloped, it is politically less active. This situation of small state further led to the "legitimacy crisis" These states have a real challenge of sustaining democracy and attract mass participation in politics. In such types of political system, military directly or indirectly influenced the political decision-making process⁴. Many times, military toppled an elected civilian government with an illusion of speedy economic development. Thus, the political environment is volatile and less democratic.

Bangladesh has several political challenges. After the Liberation War when the national leaders assumed the responsibility of state building and nation building process, they had several issues to deal with. During his short tenure in power Mujibur Rahman carried out several political experiments. All those experiments failed to uplift the process, of democratic institutionalisation, and at worse paved the way for military intervention in politics. The military dictators of Bangladesh carried out several elections to legitimate their regimes. But these elections were lacking in democratic spirit and impartiality. In the 1990s when the two major political parties, the Awami League and BNP, alternatively shared power the issues and challenges were intact as before. Political instability, hartalotic politics, questioning the election process and political violence are still posing challenges before the successful functioning of democracy. Illiterate mass and growing fundamentalism are also challenges to the democracy in Bangladesh. Similarly in future the possibility of another military intervention in politics can't altogether be wiped out.

Security Challenges

If we will determine security as a conventional way of military security, then small state has a number of challenges to face. The small territory possesses a sizeable state militia limited in capability, military hardware and combat techniques. Many times, the state militia even failed to retaliate against an external aggression. Most of the combating hardware and technology are either purchased or received as an aid from the external sources. In the front of non-conventional security also a small state is more vulnerable than a big state. As the military is weak and law and order situations are feeble, many external elements become active in the territory to carry out terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking and as such. These situations further deteriorate the social and political situation of a small state.

In diplomatic sphere also a small state has less bargaining capability. Small states compulsions and limitations provide others the power of more persuasiveness in the negotiation table. In international forums its stands are less independent as it has been guided by the influential states. Many times, even genuine points raised by a small state in an international forum are not considered seriously due to lack of international support to back it. Thus, a small state makes a choice rather than initiate a choice.

As a small South Asian state Bangladesh has a number of security challenges. Most of them are internal challenges. Bangladesh is one of the poor agrarian states of South Asia. It is prone to regular natural calamities like flood, cyclone and drought. Along with these challenges, Bangladesh has to provide basic amenities to its densely populated mass. As a seashore country Bangladesh is vulnerable to global problems like climate change and global warming. Bangladesh is highly dependent on the river system for agricultural output, fishing and other economic activities. The increasing salinity of these rivers is posing demographic and economic challenges for it. Political instability, military intervention in politics and Islamic fundamentalism are some other lethal domestic challenges to the security of Bangladesh.

On the external front, Bangladesh fears India due to its potential mismatch with the latter. Bangladesh is India-locked and it has so many unresolved issues with this giant neighbour. Bangladesh's armed forces are not as enormous and sophisticated as that of India. Since 1975, and notably after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, both Bangladesh and India are struggling to strengthen their

⁴ Gavin Kennedy has argued that in between 1960-1972 about 200 coups that took place in Third World due to fragmented political legitimacy (Kennedy, 1974:25).

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bilateral relations. At the same time Bangladesh lacks the resources to enhance its military capability to counter the fear of Indian domination.

The 'Global war on terrorism' has several repercussions for small states. After the September 11 incident the US launched a 'global war on terrorism' to eliminate the fundamentalist and terrorist outfits. Due to the presence of the al-Qaida network the North-Eastern part of Pakistan and Afghanistan have become the cynosures of American war against terrorism. The transnational flow of man, materials and capital was being obstructed as several retaliatory measures were taken by the US to curb global terrorism. Those retaliatory measures have reignited the "clash of civilization"⁵ debate at the global level. Furthermore, due to the higher degree of external dependency small states have suffered economic and social instability at the domestic level. In a unipolar world, the global war against terrorism has inflicted a "one direction flow into the region and the state" (Khan, 2003). Globalization has aggravated this process even more as the present world is more interconnected than ever before.

The global war on terror has serious implications for Bangladesh. The post September 11 global recession adversely affected Bangladesh's economy. As the exporting of readymade garments to the US drastically reduced, many readymade garments factories in Bangladesh were forced to shut down productions. Thousands of women working in the garment factories became jobless overnight. Many of them were pushed into prostitution for their survival (Ward, 2004:63-85). Furthermore, the foreign remittances to Bangladesh were significantly reduced. Global economic destabilization curtailed the FDI flow to Bangladesh. It is believed in the intellectual circle of Bangladesh that the propaganda campaigned by some western media 'has posed challenge to the secular and democratic image of Bangladesh (Khan, 2003).

In an integrated and interdependent world, a small state cannot escape transnational challenges like terrorism, economic recession or global warming. Likewise, a small state does not have adequate potentiality to retaliate these challenges alone. A small state like Bangladesh has to pursue a bilateral, regional or international approach to curtail the fear of transnational problems. At the same time small states need to adopt strong domestic and foreign policy to extract benefit from new trends like globalization.

Survival Strategy of Small State

In international sphere many ways and means have been developed for the state to deal with other states and actors. Two acclaimed and unparalleled group of thinking- Realism and Liberal Idealism have projected various kinds of measures for the war-free coexistence of states. The Liberal Idealists "collective security" arrangements can be instrumental in providing security for a small state. But the theory itself has been proved flawed after the outbreak of the Second World War. The institutional arrangements of the liberals to flourish peace, development and democracy are highly dominated and influenced by the contemporary dominating powers of the world system. So, the small states most of the time stand at the receiving end in such institutional arrangements.

The realists have projected "balance of power" model and "self-help" strategy to evade the possibility of war. The strategy of self-help is not genuinely 'self' for a small state. A Small state has limitations over its resources as it depends on external-resources, even for its survival. On the other hand, the balance of power exacerbated the Cold War politics and the crisis of arms race. The small states play the least role and pay a heavy price in the balance of power model. In this model the loose-gain calculation of the leading rival actors of the two power blocks uses the small states for their strategic gain over the other.

Further, alliance making or to be a part of an existing alliance is an age-old strategy of states irrespective of big or small denominator. Morgenthau has defined 'alliance' as a "necessary function of the balance of power operating within a multiple-state system"⁶. Thus, it is not necessarily an exclusive policy of small states. Even big and militarily stronger state can have alliances with other states for comparative edge. But as a part of an alliance a small state aims at protecting its survival interest rather than aiming to improve their relative power positions.

Some other states adopt the policy of neutralisation to survive in the competitive international system. Neutralisation as a wartime policy, highly related to the Hague Convention of 1907. According to the convention, a neutral state will abstain from taking part in active war and also abstain from assisting any of the parties. On the other hand, the war parties will respect the territories of a neutral state and restrain themselves from "using such territories for the movement of troops and munitions of war" (Misra, 1981:199). However, a group of European neutral states like Austria, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden carried out the policy of neutrality even during peacetime. Thus, this situation helped a small state to not take part in either warring side. It is always hard for a small state to bear war related devastations. So, this policy helps a small state to be part of any kind of war related loss and come under the scanner of anguish of any participating state.

⁵ A highly debatable concept propounded by Samuel P. Huntington on the future course of world conflict. He predicted that in future the major eight civilization-Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin America and African-will clash (Huntington, 1993:22-49). American war on global terrorism, since last one decade, has been viewed as a deliberate war of the Western civilization against the Islamic world.

⁶ According to Morgenthau "Nations A and B competing with each other have three choices...[T]hey can increase their own power, they can add to their own power the power of other nations, or they can withhold the power of other nations from the adversary...[W]hen they choose the second and third alternatives, they pursue a policy of alliance" (Morgenthau,2001:201)

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For small states survival is more important than the loose-gain calculation of world politics. Thus, the small states have gone beyond any paradigm in search of survival strategy. Bangladesh's survival strategy can be noticed from the very day of the liberation movement. The leadership of East Pakistan became a part of the cold war driven Indo-Soviet axis to materialise the dream of an independent state. However, as the challenge of rebuilding a war devastated nation aroused, Mujib did not hesitate to go for policy adjustment in the domestic and external sphere. As a small state Bangladesh's compulsion to become dependent on external aid and assistance brought requisite altercations in Mujib's much-hyped and idealist vision of a democratic, socialist, nationalist and secular Bangladesh. Over the years Bangladesh's military and democratic regimes have followed the policy of survival strategy in various ways. During Mujib period Bangladesh adopted survival strategy to get aid and assistance from the donor countries without annoying its liberation war allies India and the USSR. However, after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, the military regimes adopted various strategies to survive from India's domination.

Involvement in Transnational Forum

Maurice A. East has pointed out "high level of activity in Intergovernmental organization" as the traditional foreign policy behaviour pattern of the small states (East, 1973:557). For engagement with the international and regional Intergovernmental organizations a small state avails security in various ways. Thus, Bangladesh adopted this strategy to survive and expand its friendship circles in international and regional levels.

- **Nonalignment Movement**

It is a survival policy often adopted by the post-colonial states. The principal intention is to sustain their long-cherished freedom from any subjugation of the power blocks. Thus, it is an independent policy based on the principle of peaceful coexistence. In the early and later part of the 1960s this policy was enormously popular among the newly independent underdeveloped and developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, this policy failed to give military security to small states.

Thus, Vital has pointed out the assessment of small power capability by exposing them to take crucial decisions independently, relying on its own resources. Bangladesh became a member of non-alignment movement (NAM) in 1973. Mujib's agenda was to get recognition from the member countries and extract maximum aid and assistance. As India was the vanguard of non-alignment movement newly independent Bangladesh followed India's path to the ideological commitment towards an anti-imperialist and anti-colonial world. Like India, Mujib also carried out a radical nonalignment foreign policy (Hossain, 1985:69-76).

However, during the military regimes the objective behind NAM membership was changed in Bangladesh. Realist pragmatism prevailed over idealistic commitment. Both Zia and Ershad followed a moderate and pro-American non-aligned foreign policy (Tajuddin, 2001:103). At this point of time Bangladesh started using non-aligned venue as a platform to raise its contentious bilateral issues with India. In Colombo Summit Bangladesh raised the Ganges water dispute with India (Hassan, 1981:87-88). In the post-cold war period Bangladesh has shown enough faith on the relevance of the non-alignment movement. Bangladesh has not only participated in various NAM Summits; it has emphasized to focus more on economic issues rather than political issues.

- **Bangladesh's Initiation for SAARC**

Small states like Bangladesh's problems and concerns are peripheral rather than global. The geographical reality of the South Asian Subcontinent is India-centric. All the South Asian states share their boundary with India and through India with them. This reality gives India enormous advantage over the security of the region. The geographical size of India along with the military and economic capabilities has often generated fear and also hope of development among the small states of the region. Bangladesh's intension to form a regional organization like SAARC was thus to engage India in a collective way. As after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman Bangladesh was not sharing a good bilateral relation with India, the comparative inferiority complex and the compulsion to deal with India motivated General Zia to think about a regional platform. On Zia's part it was an attempt for "creating a forum in which the waywardness of one member can be corrected by the combined pressure of the others" (Ali, 1980:32). Thus, it was incorporated in the SAARC Charter that the members pay respect for "the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of all disputes" (SAARC:1). This declaration in the SAARC Charter was to assure the independent role of small South Asian states in comparison to India. Similarly, at the initial stage India was also apprehensive about the formation of a regional organisation like SAARC (Dixit, 1996:383).

- **The United Nations**

Transnational organisations are vital for the small states to serve their national interest through collective initiatives. Small states lack the potentiality to influence or mould the international system. Thus, for its survival a small state needs the help of other states. The UN is the most comprehensive international organisation and offers egalitarian memberships of the General Assembly to the independent states. Small states use this platform for global recognition, aid and assistance, dispute settlement and international peace. Small states also use the UN platform to raise their bilateral issues with other states to mould sympathy of the international community in their favour.

For Bangladesh the UN membership was gateway to get aid and assistance from other independent states. Formally Bangladesh applied for the UN membership on 8 August 1972. As it was expected China vetoed the application in the Security Council (Jain,

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1984:212). China was more sceptical about the presence of Indo-Soviet axis in Bangladesh reconstruction. However, India and Pakistan signed the repartition agreement on 28 August, 1973 and Pakistan finally recognized Bangladesh on 22 February, 1974. As Pakistan-Bangladesh relations turned into normalcy, the Security Council again considered the membership application in May-June 1974 without any Chinese constrain. Finally on 17 September, 1974 Bangladesh became 136th 'full-fledged member' of the UN.

Bangladesh's association with the UN generated many foreign policy implications towards India. Bangladesh used the UN platform to raise the Farakka issue which further worsened India-Bangladesh relations. In the post-1975 period the military regimes of Bangladesh had received the support of China in the UN. Bangladesh also reciprocated China's assistance by rendering unconditional support to the One China Policy and on the question of China's poor human rights record. On the positive way Bangladesh has received relief and aid assistance from the UN on many occasions. Bangladesh has also actively participated in the UN Peace Keeping Operations.

Strategic Relations with the Extra-regional Powers

Region in security study carries a specific meaning and strikes a conceptual difference from the term continent or subcontinent. Security region denotes a group of geographically proximate states who are placed in a 'security complex'. Regionally this security complex has been defined by Barry Buzan as 'a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another' (Buzan, 1998:12). Thus, if a small state is unevenly placed in a regional security complex with insecurity syndrome and has bilateral hostility towards a big neighbour, that state looks beyond the region for self-protection. On the other hand, an extra-regional power would use the small state to grip its strategic hold upon that region in general and against a comparatively stronger state of that region, with which that extra-regional power does not share trustworthy bilateral relations.

So far as a small state's strategic relation with an extra-regional power is concerned, the relation is highly determined by the nature and density of bilateral hostility that the latter share with the dominating power of the region. Comparatively the small state plays small roles in such kinds of a relationship. Also, there is always scope for the alteration of the nature of the relationship in case of any improvement nudged between the extra-regional power and the dominating power of the region. However, a relation with extra-regional power presents small state more options to deal with states of its immediate vicinity.

A small-state's relation with an extra-regional power always generates security concern in the region, particularly for the dominant power of the region. Regional power imbalance and fear of the domination of a much stronger neighbour have provoked the small states of South Asia to develop strategic relations with extra-regional powers. Bangladesh's liberation war involved all the prominent cold war actors in the South Asian region. From the liberation war periods to the military coups, a Bangladesh strategic relation was limited to India and the USSR. The assassination of Mujibur Rahman opened the gate for the anti-Indian powers to grip their strategic hold over the region. At this point of time Bangladesh's strategic relations with China touched its zenith. Guided by the objective to counter India, China started giving military aid and assistance to Bangladesh. During the military regimes Bangladesh also developed productive relations with the US. However, its relation to the US was remaining constrained to the aid donor-receiver relations.

CONCLUSION

In the 'anarchic international system' small states face numerous challenges. However, the most significant challenge is to survive with territorial integrity and sovereignty. In such a scenario the only factor works in favour of a small state is its strategic significance for the 'system influencing' and 'system determining' states. Due to its limited resources a small state remains highly dependent on other states and advocates 'universal moral principles'. On the other hand, a small state pays maximum attention to its neighbourhood. Thus, a small state is more active in its periphery rather than in international system.

The longstanding political instability and growing military intervention in the political affairs of the country has solidified the small state perception of Bangladesh which is detrimental to India-Bangladesh relations. This perception has guided Bangladesh to collaborate with anti-Indian extra-regional power. Increasing dependency on other countries for the security and economic development of a country exposes its weakness and limitations. Further it is not a longstanding option to carry out developmental activities. The expectation of strategic engagement generated situations in Bangladesh where it had compromised its independent foreign policy.

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