

Geopolitical Importance of Bangladesh

Group – 04

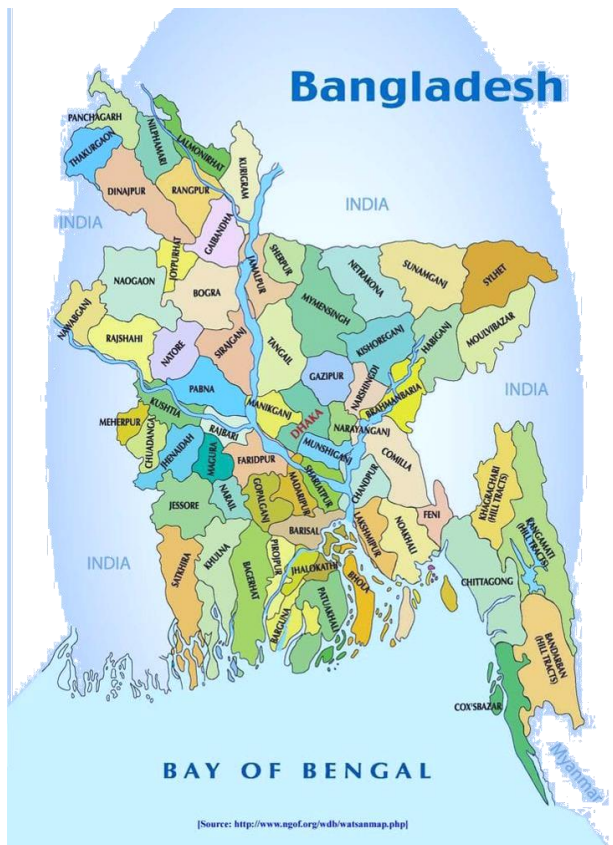
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Introduction

Nestled between India to the west, Myanmar to the southeast, and the Bay of Bengal to the south, Bangladesh occupies a unique position at the crossroads of South Asia, boasting a geopolitical significance that extends beyond its borders. This densely populated and culturally rich nation has evolved from its tumultuous history of vibrant culture, and strategic location, plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of the South Asian region also to become a key player in the complex geopolitical dynamics of the region. Economically, Bangladesh has experienced notable growth in recent decades, particularly in industries like textiles and garments. This economic prowess contributes to its strategic importance, as a stable and prospering Bangladesh can act as an economic anchor in the region, fostering stability and collaboration. The demographic dividend, characterized by a large and youthful population, further positions Bangladesh as a potential economic powerhouse in the coming years. In the realm of regional diplomacy, Bangladesh has actively engaged with its neighbors and the international community. Bilateral relationships with India, Myanmar, and China, among others, play a crucial role in shaping the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia. Additionally, Bangladesh's participation in regional forums and organizations enhances its influence and allows it to contribute to regional stability and development. This introduction aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions that contribute to Bangladesh's strategic importance, encompassing historical legacies, geographic positioning, economic prowess, and regional diplomatic endeavors. The strategic importance of a country is dependent on some variable and non-variable factors. With the changed South Asian geo-

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strategic scenario, Bangladesh's geopolitical importance increased due at least to three factors. They are the following,

Factors

First, Bangladesh began to be referred to as the third largest Muslim country in the world and as the second in the region.

Second factor is Bangladesh's location within the 'geo-strategic frontier' of India, South Asia's most powerful country.

Third is Bangladesh being in close proximity with China, Asia's largest power, considered a strategic rival of both the US and India.



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Geographical Location of Bangladesh

Bangladesh, officially the People's Republic of Bangladesh, is a sovereign state located in South Asia bordered on three sides by India and sharing a border with Burma. Bangladesh is located in South Asia on the northern edge of the Bay of Bengal. About 140 million people inhabit the country, which is 55,598 square miles. Bangladesh's location, population, economic potential and regional stability make it a significant player in South Asia and a potential hub for regional connectivity and trade. The country's geo-political importance is likely to continue to grow in the coming years, as it continues to develop its economy and promote regional integration and stability.

Strategic Maritime Access:

Situated along the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh enjoys a coastline that stretches approximately 580 kilometers; also situated in a deltaic region, formed by the confluence of several major rivers, including the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna opening up crucial trade routes and maritime connections. The Bay of Bengal, being one of the largest and busiest water bodies in the world, facilitates maritime trade, making Bangladesh a key player in global commerce.

Gateway to South and Southeast Asia:

Bangladesh serves as a geographic bridge connecting South Asia to Southeast Asia. Its proximity to India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar positions it as a pivotal transit point for regional trade and connectivity. The strategic location allows Bangladesh to play a crucial role in facilitating land-based transportation and transit routes, enhancing the economic interdependence of nations in the region.

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Monsoon Climate and Cultural diversity:

The geographical location of Bangladesh has influenced its climate and weather patterns. The country has a tropical monsoon climate, with a hot and humid summer season and a cooler winter season. The geographical location of Bangladesh has influenced its cultural and social identity. The country is home to a diverse range of ethnic and linguistic groups, many of which have their own unique customs and traditions.

Thriving Economy & Trade:

The country lies at the intersection of major international trade routes. This facilitates the transit of goods between South Asia and Southeast Asia, making it an important hub for regional trade. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, and while this has facilitated trade with its larger neighbor Bangladesh has a large and relatively low-cost labor force. This has attracted industries, particularly in the textile and garment sectors, making it a major player in the global apparel industry.

Remittances:

The large Bangladeshi diaspora contributes significantly to the country's economy through remittances. The strategic location of Bangladesh has facilitated the migration of its workforce to various countries, leading to substantial inflows of foreign exchange.

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Challenges:

Rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters are likely to cause significant economic damage. The World Bank estimates that climate change could reduce Bangladesh's GDP by 2% by 2050. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, it has also created a dependence on Indian trade routes. The country's lack of access to the sea has made it reliant on neighboring countries for access to international markets, which can be costly and time-consuming.

Historical Context

An outline of Bangladesh's historical background in relation to the War of Independence, the Partition of Bengal and Colonial Influence.

The Colonial Influence:

Although colonial influences have had a considerable impact on the current history of Bangladesh, the region has a lengthy history. In the Eighteenth century, with the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British East India Company came to dominate Bengal, which included modern-day Bangladesh. Bengal developed during colonialism into a vital administrative and economic hub for the British Empire. The British instituted a number of economic initiatives, like as the Permanent Settlement of 1793, which had a lasting effect on the agrarian system, and the area was well-known for its fertile land. Education, government and infrastructure all saw substantial improvements during British rule. The socioeconomic environment was shaped in part by the development of educational institutions and the introduction of the railroad system.

Partition of Bengal (1905):

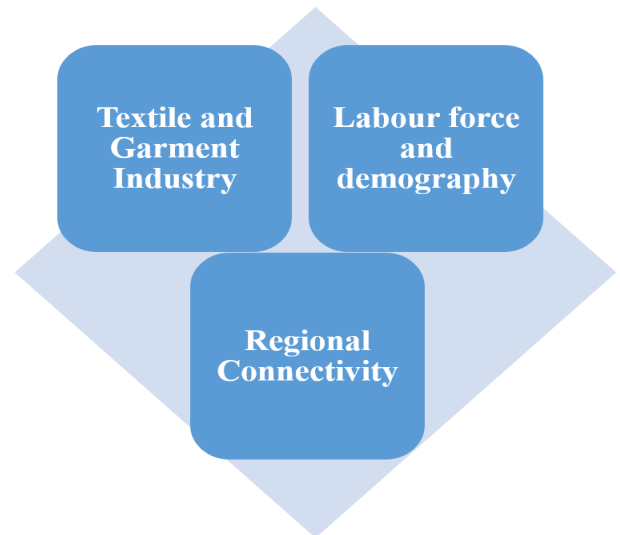
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Economic Importance

Textile and Garment Industry

Bangladesh's textile and garment industry is a vital economic driver, recognized for its skilled workforce, competitive production costs, and strategic location. From historical roots in the mid-20th century, the sector has evolved into a global export hub, contributing significantly to the nation's economy while facing challenges and embracing sustainability measures.

- Bangladesh is a major player in the global Textile and garment industry.
- Bangladesh is the second – largest clothing exporter in the world behind only by China (The Asia Foundation)
- In 2015 FY, 83% of \$3.5 billion GDP come from RMG sector (World Finance)
- Europe receives 61% of the exports every year that are created by Bangladesh's RMG (World Finance)
- In 2016 FY, RMG sector achieved almost \$400 Million (Textile Today)
- In 2017 FY, the RMG exports increased by 14.75% (Textile Today)



FDI trends in Bangladesh's textile industry (in \$million)



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Labor force and Demographics:

Bangladesh stands out as a prime destination for industries seeking efficient production, capitalizing on its substantial and affordable labor force. With a youthful population surpassing 160 million, the demographic dividend amplifies the nation's economic prowess, not only driving current industrial activity but also securing Bangladesh for enduring growth. This convergence of a sizable, cost-effective labor pool and a demographic dividend positions Bangladesh as a strategic center for industries aiming to streamline production costs and tap into a dynamic workforce. This synergy contributes significantly to the nation's economic robustness and global appeal for investments.



Regional Connectivity:

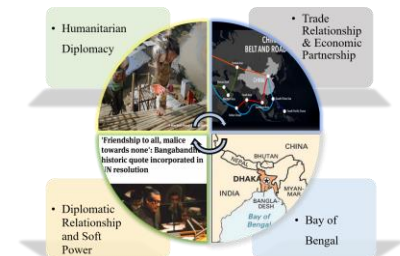
Bangladesh, a vital participant in regional cooperation through forums like BIMSTEC and SAARC, is actively engaged in projects such as BFTAFA, fostering connectivity and trade with neighboring nations. This initiative reflects the country's commitment to regional collaboration, aiming to boost economic ties, facilitate smoother trade, and strengthen diplomatic relations. By actively participating in such endeavors, Bangladesh underscores its role as a linchpin in promoting regional integration and sustainable development within the South Asian and Bay of Bengal regions.



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International Role

Bangladesh strategically engages in humanitarian diplomacy, actively participating in global peacekeeping efforts. Its trade relationships and economic partnerships, coupled with diplomatic ties and soft power initiatives, contribute to regional stability and global influence. The nation's proximity to the Bay of Bengal enhances its maritime significance, fostering economic connectivity and solidifying Bangladesh's role in shaping the geopolitical dynamics of the Bay region.



Humanitarian Diplomacy:

Bangladesh's hosting of Rohingya refugees underscores its unwavering commitment to humanitarian causes, drawing international attention. This poignant role not only reflects the nation's compassion but also places it at the forefront of addressing a significant global crisis. The implications resonate both regionally and globally, emphasizing Bangladesh's role as a responsible international actor. This humanitarian effort not only provides relief to those in need but also shapes the nation's diplomatic standing, garnering recognition for its pivotal role in addressing pressing global challenges.



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Trade Relationship & Economic Partnership:

Bangladesh's active participation in global economic forums, trade agreements and partnerships strengthens its economic ties and influence geopolitical narratives. Bangladesh recently joined China One Belt One Road project to enhance its trade relationship. Bangladesh has already inaugurated the BSEZ project with Japan at Araihaazar in Narayanganj.



Diplomatic Relationship and Soft Power:

Guided by Bangabandhu's ethos, "Friendship to all, malice towards none," Bangladesh prioritizes diplomatic engagement, cultivating global goodwill and augmenting soft power. This approach strengthens the nation's international influence, projecting Bangladesh as a peace-oriented and collaborative force on the global stage, contributing to its diplomatic effectiveness and stature.

'Friendship to all, malice towards none': Bangabandhu's historic quote incorporated in UN resolution



Bay of Bengal:

From the Colonial time, Bay of Bengal is a hub of connectivity between the Western and Eastern Hemisphere, as well as the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. About half of the World's Container traffic passes through this region.

