

# India–Bangladesh Relations Since 2014: A Golden Phase Of Bilateral Cooperation

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## **Abstract**

Since 2014, relations between India and Bangladesh have witnessed significant improvement, often described as a “golden phase” in bilateral cooperation. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina, the two countries have strengthened political trust and expanded cooperation across multiple sectors. Important developments such as the implementation of the India–Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement helped resolve long-standing border issues and improved mutual confidence. During this period, both countries increased collaboration in trade, connectivity, energy sharing, and security cooperation. India’s Neighbourhood First policy and Bangladesh’s pragmatic foreign policy approach further encouraged closer engagement. Cultural ties, geographical proximity, and shared historical experiences also continue to shape this partnership. This article examines the key developments in India–Bangladesh relations since 2014 and argues that strong political leadership, strategic cooperation, and mutual interests have played an important role in transforming bilateral relations into one of the most stable and constructive partnerships in South Asia.

**Keywords-** Golden adhyay, India- Bangladesh relationship, neighbourhood diplomacy, South Asia, Bilateral cooperation.

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## **I. Political Trust And Diplomatic Engagement**

Political trust and sustained diplomatic engagement have played a crucial role in strengthening India–Bangladesh relations since 2014. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina, bilateral relations experienced renewed momentum through regular high-level visits, institutional dialogue, and cooperation across several policy areas. Scholars note that this period witnessed a gradual consolidation of political trust, which enabled both countries to address long-standing issues and expand collaboration in trade, connectivity, and security. Bangladesh has also emerged as a key partner within India’s Neighbourhood First policy, reflecting New Delhi’s intention to prioritize stable and cooperative relations with its immediate neighbours. At the same time, Bangladesh’s pragmatic foreign policy approach under Sheikh Hasina encouraged deeper engagement with India while maintaining regional balance. As a result, diplomatic relations between the two countries during this period have been characterized by frequent bilateral consultations, policy coordination, and mutual efforts to enhance regional stability in South Asia (Pant, 2017; Riaz & Rahman, 2016). These developments created the political foundation for several landmark agreements and initiatives that followed in subsequent years.

## **II. The Land Boundary Agreement (2015): A Turning Point In Bilateral Relations**

A major milestone in the recent trajectory of India–Bangladesh relations was the implementation of the India–Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement. Although the agreement was originally signed in 1974, it was finally ratified and implemented in 2015, marking a historic breakthrough in resolving one of the most complex border issues between the two countries. The agreement facilitated the exchange of 162 enclaves located along the India–Bangladesh border and provided thousands of residents living in these enclaves with the opportunity to choose their citizenship and access basic administrative services. Scholars often highlight that the successful implementation of this agreement demonstrated a high degree of political will and mutual trust between the governments of Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina. Beyond resolving a long-standing territorial dispute, the agreement also improved border management and strengthened diplomatic confidence between the two neighbours. Many analysts therefore view the Land Boundary Agreement as a landmark example of peaceful dispute resolution in South Asia and an important step toward deepening bilateral cooperation between India and Bangladesh (Datta, 2019; Ganguly & Mullen, 2016).

### **III. Economic Cooperation And Trade Expansion**

Economic cooperation has become an important pillar of the evolving partnership between India and Bangladesh over the past decade. Since 2014, both countries have made consistent efforts to expand bilateral trade and deepen economic engagement. Bangladesh has gradually emerged as India's largest trading partner in South Asia, reflecting the growing interdependence between the two economies. Trade between the two countries includes a wide range of goods such as textiles, agricultural products, machinery, and petroleum products. In addition to expanding trade, India has extended several Lines of Credit to Bangladesh to support infrastructure and development projects, particularly in railways, roads, and energy connectivity. These initiatives have contributed to improving regional connectivity and facilitating cross-border economic activity. Scholars note that the steady growth of economic ties has strengthened the broader bilateral relationship by creating shared economic interests and promoting greater regional integration in South Asia (Riaz & Rahman, 2016; World Bank, 2020).

### **IV. Connectivity And Regional Integration**

Improving connectivity has been another important dimension of the growing partnership between India and Bangladesh in recent years. Both countries have recognized that stronger transport and infrastructure links can significantly enhance trade, economic cooperation, and regional integration. Since 2014, several initiatives have been undertaken to restore and expand road, rail, and inland water connectivity between the two neighbours. Railway links that existed before 1965, such as cross-border routes connecting eastern India and Bangladesh, have gradually been revived to facilitate passenger movement and cargo transport. In addition, India and Bangladesh have worked together to improve connectivity with India's northeastern states by allowing access to Bangladeshi ports and transit routes. These developments are particularly important because they reduce transportation costs and strengthen economic linkages within the eastern subregion of South Asia. Scholars observe that enhanced connectivity between India and Bangladesh not only strengthens bilateral relations but also contributes to broader regional cooperation and economic integration (Datta, 2019; World Bank, 2022).

### **V. Energy Cooperation And Strategic Partnership**

Energy cooperation has emerged as another significant area of collaboration between India and Bangladesh in recent years. As Bangladesh's energy demand has increased with rapid economic growth, India has become an important partner in supporting its energy needs through cross-border electricity trade and fuel supply projects. One notable development is the establishment of the Bangladesh–India Friendship Pipeline, which enables the transportation of diesel from India to Bangladesh and strengthens energy connectivity between the two countries. In addition, India exports electricity to Bangladesh through cross-border power transmission lines, contributing to Bangladesh's energy security. Such initiatives reflect the growing strategic dimension of bilateral cooperation, where economic and infrastructural partnerships also support broader regional stability. Scholars observe that energy collaboration between the two neighbours has helped build long-term mutual dependence and trust, reinforcing the broader partnership that has developed between India and Bangladesh over the past decade (Riaz & Rahman, 2016; Ministry of External Affairs, 2023).

### **VI. Security Cooperation And Border Management**

Security cooperation has gradually become an important dimension of India–Bangladesh relations in recent years. Both countries share a long and complex border, which has historically been associated with challenges such as illegal migration, cross-border crime, and insurgent activities. Over the past decade, however, India and Bangladesh have made significant efforts to strengthen coordination in border management and security cooperation. Bangladesh's cooperation in addressing insurgent groups operating from its territory has been particularly important for India's northeastern region. Joint initiatives between border security forces and increased intelligence sharing have helped improve stability along the border. Scholars often note that Bangladesh's proactive role in addressing security concerns has contributed to building greater trust between the two countries and has strengthened the overall strategic partnership between them (Riaz & Rahman, 2016; Pant, 2019).

### **VII. Cultural Diplomacy And People-To-People Connections**

Beyond political and economic cooperation, cultural and social connections continue to play a vital role in shaping India–Bangladesh relations. The two countries share deep historical, linguistic, and cultural ties that date back centuries. Cultural exchanges, academic collaborations, tourism, and educational partnerships have helped strengthen people-to-people interaction between the two societies. Initiatives such as cultural festivals, student exchange programs, and cooperation in the fields of literature, cinema, and music have further reinforced these connections. Scholars argue that such cultural diplomacy contributes to building long-term goodwill and mutual understanding between the two nations. These interactions not only strengthen diplomatic relations but

also highlight the shared heritage that continues to connect the people of India and Bangladesh (Riaz & Rahman, 2016).

### **VIII. Challenges And Emerging Concerns In Bilateral Relations**

Despite the significant progress made in recent years, certain challenges continue to influence India–Bangladesh relations. Issues such as border management, water-sharing disputes, and concerns related to migration occasionally create tensions between the two neighbours. One of the most frequently discussed issues is the sharing of transboundary river waters, particularly the Teesta River, which remains an unresolved matter between the two countries. Additionally, political changes and regional geopolitical dynamics may also affect the future trajectory of bilateral relations. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree that the strong foundation of political trust and institutional cooperation developed over the past decade provides both countries with the ability to address these challenges through dialogue and negotiation (Datta, 2019; Mohan, 2015).

### **IX. Conclusion**

The evolution of India–Bangladesh relations since 2014 demonstrates a significant transformation in the nature of bilateral engagement between the two neighbouring countries. Over the past decade, the relationship has been characterized by growing political trust, sustained diplomatic engagement, and expanding cooperation across multiple sectors. The implementation of the India–Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement marked a historic step toward resolving long-standing territorial disputes and symbolized a new phase of mutual confidence. Alongside this development, economic cooperation, trade expansion, and improved connectivity initiatives have strengthened regional integration and facilitated closer interaction between the two economies. Cooperation in the fields of energy, security, and infrastructure has further deepened strategic engagement, while cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions continue to reinforce the historical and social bonds shared by the two countries.

At the same time, certain challenges such as water-sharing disputes and border management issues remain areas that require continued dialogue and cooperation. Nevertheless, the progress achieved in recent years suggests that both countries possess the political will and institutional mechanisms necessary to address such concerns constructively. Overall, the trajectory of India–Bangladesh relations during this period reflects a growing convergence of interests and a shared commitment to regional stability and development in South Asia. The strengthening of this partnership not only benefits the two countries but also contributes to broader efforts toward cooperation and economic integration within the region.

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