

## India-Bangladesh Defence Cooperation: Coming of Age, At Last?

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**ABSTRACT** This brief analyses the efforts of India and Bangladesh to strengthen their defence cooperation, in the context of the series of agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two countries during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in April 2017. Some quarters in both countries are sceptical about the agreements, citing the ineffectual Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace—often referred to as a 'defence pact'—signed in 1972. The brief analyses the drivers of current efforts to push mutually beneficial defence cooperation.

### INTRODUCTION

Defence cooperation between India and Bangladesh has seen significant progress in the last few years. This push is illustrated in the exchange of visits between leaders of the two nations, as well as the conduct of training programmes, joint exercises, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

Prior to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in 2017, developments in the area of defence cooperation between the two countries took place in the absence of any formal mechanism; this cast doubt on their sustainability. Indeed, the overall bilateral relationship has been generally seen as unstable, subject as it is to the changing attitudes of Bangladesh's ruling party towards India. In the area of defence, the ties between India and Bangladesh go back to 1971, when the Indian army fought alongside Bangladeshi freedom

fighters in the Liberation War of that year. Over time, however, the defence relationship has faltered.

For a long time, Bangladesh was reluctant to address India's security concerns, primary of which was the presence of many insurgent groups in its northeastern region who enjoyed a safe haven in Bangladesh and carried out their activities across the border. India also believed that militant organisations having roots in, or links with Pakistan were using Bangladesh as a transit point. India had repeatedly urged Bangladesh to take action against such groups, only to be met with denials about their existence. When Prime Minister Hasina came to power in 2009, she expressed resolve to act against the groups active in Bangladesh that were inimical to India's interests. Bangladesh took measures that helped in the arrests of top insurgent leaders,

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including the Chairman of the United Liberation Front of Assam Arabinda Rajkhowa and Ranjan Daimary of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. Such measures proved to be a turning point for the bilateral relationship.

At present, India and Bangladesh share a warmer relationship, and they are cooperating on various economic, social, scientific and technological areas. In 2014, the two countries came to a resolution of their maritime boundary dispute, and the following year they resolved their conflict over land. Since the visit to India of Bangladeshi Army Chief Gen. Moeen Ahmed in 2008, the defence relationship has grown manifold.<sup>1</sup> There are now regular reciprocal visits by leaders of their armed forces; the presidents of both countries, who are the commanders of their armed forces, have also exchanged visits. Former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee visited Bangladesh in March 2013 while his Bangladeshi counterpart, Abdul Hamid came to India in December 2014. Ongoing talks between the top leadership of the armed forces have helped dispel earlier misconceptions harboured by both parties and are contributing to mutual understanding of each other's viewpoints.

The defence services of both countries are now also participating in joint exercises, medical assistance and training programmes. *Sampriti*, the joint exercise operation between the two armies to counter terrorism, has completed seven rounds. The seventh one took place at the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Vairengte, Mizoram, in November 2017.<sup>2</sup>

However, there is apprehension that the momentum achieved so far might slow down or even come to a halt in the event of a change of government in Bangladesh. Some policy analysts and defence experts, mostly in India, have advocated institutionalising defence cooperation.<sup>3</sup> They argue that given the growth in the area of defence cooperation, it has become an imperative to nurture a more structured engagement. This suggestion draws support from the experience with the Ganges Water Treaty, signed between India and Bangladesh in 1996 and still in effect despite initial reservations in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's close defence relationship with China is another reason for concern.<sup>4</sup> India

has been wary of the Sino-Bangladesh defence relationship, and the purchase by Bangladesh in 2013 of two submarines from China hastened the demand by security analysts to cement the bilateral ties.<sup>5</sup> There was talk of a comprehensive bilateral defence cooperation agreement being signed during PM Hasina's visit to India in April 2017. This was met with reservation—even scepticism—from Bangladesh, for reasons outlined below.

1. A defence agreement with India would upset China, a major partner in the areas of defence and development.<sup>6</sup> China is the only country with which Bangladesh has a formal defence cooperation agreement, though this has mostly gone unnoticed by the majority in Bangladesh. The defence pact with China was hardly debated in the same manner as even the possibility of an agreement with India.
2. The agreement would be an infringement on Bangladesh's sovereignty and would restrict its strategic autonomy.<sup>7</sup> The India–Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace, 1972 is often used as an example to support this argument.

During Prime Minister Hasina's 2017 visit to India, the two countries signed a series of agreements and MoUs in areas of defence cooperation, including the following:

1. MoU on the framework for defence cooperation
2. MoU between India's Defence Services Staff College and Dhaka's Defence Services Command and Staff College for enhancing cooperation in the field of strategic operational studies
3. MoU between Dhaka's National Defence College and India's Defence College for enhancing cooperation in the field of strategic studies
4. MoU for extending a line of credit worth US\$500 million for the purchase of defence equipment
5. MoU between the coast guards of the two countries

The signing of these agreements indicated that the two countries aim to develop their

defence cooperation. This brief will identify and analyse the positive factors that prompted the two countries to take their defence cooperation forward, despite initial reservations among policy-makers in Bangladesh.

Before that, however, it is important to discuss the India–Bangladesh Friendship Treaty, traditionally viewed as a defence pact, and understand why it failed. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between India and Bangladesh on 19 March 1972. The then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her Bangladeshi counterpart, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were the signatories, and the signing took place during the former's visit to Bangladesh. The validity of the treaty was for 25 years, and it had 12 Articles and a Preamble. It was a comprehensive and wide-ranging document, covering economic, security and military issues, and included other areas such as art and literature (Details in Annexure I). Yet, the treaty was mostly considered a security and military pact, since the important provisions were in these areas: the two countries would not enter into any kind of military alliance against each other; they would refrain from aggression against one another; and they would restrict the use of their territories against the other. Additionally, the treaty indicated that the two countries would jointly deal with any third party that would threaten the security of either one.

The treaty was signed in the backdrop of a crisis in Bangladesh. Soon after liberation, Mujibur Rahman was faced with a difficult situation. While he had to rebuild the war-torn nation, at the same time, he had to deal with Bangladesh's political isolation. India was one of the few countries Bangladesh could turn to. Rahman felt that the Indian army should retreat after the war of liberation, leaving behind a fraction of it to help with national reconstruction. However, the presence of the Indian Army in Bangladesh caused countries such as China and the US to withhold financial assistance, as they considered India to be in the Soviet camp.<sup>8</sup> Within Bangladesh too, discontent against the Indian army was brewing. Rumours that the Indian army had run riot—looting household goods left behind by the Pakistanis and dismantling industrial equipment—began to spread, sowing fear amongst the Bangladeshi people. There was also widespread resentment

among Bangladeshi freedom fighters, who felt that the Indian Army had intervened at the last minute and taken away the credit due them. Mujibur Rahman was compelled to walk a tightrope, asking for the withdrawal of the Indian army while ensuring that India continued to help Bangladesh. The treaty was a bridge over troubled waters in more than one sense: it marked a formal closure of the activities of the Indian Army in Bangladesh and provided a legal umbrella for the Indian soldiers who remained in post-war Bangladesh.<sup>9</sup> The Bangladesh army, still in its infancy, was hardly capable of warding off external threat, compelling them to rely on India's friendship.

The treaty, instead of cementing the relationship, added to the apprehensions and resentment of the Bangladeshi people, fuelling suspicions about India's intentions in their country. The Bangladeshi defence forces also felt that the treaty undermined their importance.<sup>10</sup>

The assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975 was a game changer: it transformed the dynamics of the relationship, which in turn affected the implementation of the treaty. The military regimes that succeeded Mujibur Rahman pursued a foreign policy governed principally by a strategy of distancing itself from India. In the post-Mujib era, the treaty was almost suspended due to a lack of interest on the part of the military regimes governing Bangladesh. The treaty completed 25 years in 1997, when the Awami League was the ruling party. Despite its India-friendly image, Bangladesh showed reluctance in renewing the treaty. India did not pursue the matter either, and the treaty simply lapsed.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BANGLADESH ARMY

The opinion and attitudes of the defence forces—in this context, those of the Bangladesh Army—is considered a defining factor in the case of India–Bangladesh relations. After all, the India and Bangladesh armies jointly fought the Liberation War. Despite this positive beginning, however, the Bangladesh Army had always been sceptical about their country's relationship with India.

The reasons for this is rooted in the Bangladesh

Army's historical connection with the Pakistani Army. The newly formed Bangladesh Army inducted about 28,000 officers repatriated from the Pakistan Army, and in doing so, also inherited the values of the country.<sup>11</sup> Initially, even the top army leadership comprised former officers of the Pakistan Army. Keeping in mind the training they received made them apprehensive about India.

The Bangladesh Army was created out of the Liberation War and was, in many ways, shaped by the role it played in the independence of the country, making it unique. As the nationalistic and indigenously trained officers came into leadership positions, the army has managed to craft an identity of its own.<sup>12</sup> They are more aware and confident about their capabilities. Several years of UN peacekeeping missions have also contributed to the evolution of the Bangladesh Army, and today it is ranked among the top 60 forces in the world.<sup>13</sup>

This shift in the thinking of the new generation of leadership in the army can be gauged from their attitude towards India. The evolution of bilateral relations began during the rule of the military-backed caretaker government (2007–08). Gen. Moeen U. Ahmed, the first indigenously trained chief of the army and incumbent at that time, was open to developing a good relationship with India. He visited India in 2007. Most of his successors too have been indigenously trained officers. Another example of a shift in the thinking of the army is the change in the war-gaming model, wherein India is no longer portrayed as the enemy.<sup>14</sup>

For security analysts in Bangladesh, the rise in defence cooperation with India is indicative of the Bangladesh Army's interest in improving defence ties with India. A section of Bangladeshi security analysts have observed that the importance of maintaining a good relationship with India is now widely understood. This is not to say that the years of mistrust and apprehension can be wished away completely, especially within the army. While India was sceptical about the signing of an MoU instead of an agreement, according to analysts, a comprehensive defence pact may not find easy acceptability but MoUs will create opportunities for expanding defence cooperation in the future.<sup>15</sup>

## DRIVERS OF COOPERATION

Since MoUs are protected by confidentiality clauses, very little information is available in the public domain, making it difficult for this brief to make a highly detailed analysis. A range of MoUs have been signed between the two countries—keeping past, present and future in mind—in a way that benefits both. Further, it can be gleaned from the MOU pertaining to a 'framework for future cooperation' that these negotiations are being done with a long-term vision (Annexure II contains a brief description, based on open-source information about the framework for future cooperation).

India and Bangladesh share more than 4,000 km of porous borders. They have shared history, culture and language, all adding to the relationship. Both countries understand that incidents in one country have ramifications across the border. Thus, the solution lies not in conflict but in cooperation. The issue of militancy is a case in point. Despite punitive actions taken by the Bangladeshi government, militancy continues to be an issue largely because of the cross-border network of radicalised groups that threaten the security of both countries and the entire region. The need to increase security and defence cooperation is driven by this convergence of interests.

## COUNTERING TERRORISM

Counter-terror cooperation is an important aspect of the defence relationship between India and Bangladesh, as both countries have been victims of terrorism and continue to face evolving security threats. India is subject to cross-border terrorism from groups based in Pakistan, and these groups use Bangladesh as a transit point into India. Meanwhile, Bangladesh suffers acts of terror committed by indigenous organisations with external linkages. The veterans of the Afghan Jihad established Harkatul Jihad Bangladesh in the 1990s. The terrorist organisations started to make their presence felt by 2000. Although Bangladesh pursues a policy of zero-tolerance towards terrorism and has undertaken strict counter-terrorism measures, including the execution of top leaders of Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in 2007,<sup>16</sup> terror groups have managed to survive in its territory because of the cross-border network, especially in India.



JMB's network in India was unearthed following a bomb blast at Burdwan in the bordering state of West Bengal in 2014.<sup>17</sup> This brought into focus the need for enhancing stronger cross-border cooperation. The spread of international terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda also demands joint action by the two countries to fight the menace of terrorism.

To address these threats effectively, there is need for greater synergy, coordination and cooperation between agencies, joint training and exercises, greater interaction and understanding among the armed forces of the two countries.

### **THE QUEST FOR A PEACEFUL BAY**

Peace and tranquillity in the Bay of Bengal is an important aspect of this cooperation and both countries have a crucial role to play. Bangladesh acquired a large territory in the Bay, following delimitation of the maritime boundary with India and Myanmar, and has a major stake in maintaining law and order in the region.

The Bay region has not recorded any major incidents of piracy (as in Somalia), except some cases of petty dacoity. However, the region is prone to organised crimes such as human trafficking, and arms and narcotics smuggling. Cooperation and coordination between the navies and coast guards of the region will help tackle such challenges. In this respect, the agreement on cooperation between the coast guards of the two countries is a step forward.

Another significant outcome of such cooperation will be the safety and security of maritime trade. The Bay is a major trading route for the littoral countries, especially for Bangladesh, as it provides exclusive access to the sea and majority of its trade takes place via the maritime route. Search and rescue operations will also stand to benefit from such cooperation, since the Bay is prone to natural calamities: fishing boats often go missing in the high seas or drift away due to technical faults in their vessels.

The MOUs will also strengthen the two countries' cooperation in the area of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). Frequent cyclones in the Bay are a constant challenge, demanding improved HADR skills. Interactions between the countries offer an opportunity to learn from each other's

experience, in addition to ensuring smooth and effective coordination in times of need.

### **GROWTH AND PROSPERITY**

Both India and Bangladesh are working to ensure their growth and prosperity. They are today amongst the fastest growing economies in the world. India is ranked among the top 10 economies globally, while Bangladesh is placed in the league of emerging economies, ranked after the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Bangladesh has maintained an impressive growth rate of above six percent for over a decade. The two countries are striving to improve their economies, and a peaceful and friendly relationship with neighbours is crucial in attaining this goal. Defence diplomacy and commerce is a major aspect of this relationship.

India's US\$500-million credit to Bangladesh for purchasing defence equipment, especially for communication and Coast Guard patrol boats, has come into focus. While the strategic objectives are obvious, there are other considerations as well. Bangladeshi companies can enter the supply chain network of the original equipment manufacturer. For India, Bangladesh can be a major market for its defence products. Due to the 'Make in India' initiative, many multinational companies are setting up their assembly and manufacturing units in India and may well become a major supplier of arms. For Bangladesh, it will be convenient to procure arms from a close neighbouring country. This also places the country in a better negotiating position, allowing it to negotiate on issues such as technology transfer. Eventually, this could help Bangladesh graduate from being a buyer to a producer of high-end technology products.

### **THE CHINA FACTOR**

Any discussion on India–Bangladesh defence cooperation is incomplete without considering the China factor. China is Bangladesh's strategic partner and its biggest supplier of arms.<sup>18</sup> While Indian security analysts have long kept an eye on this relationship, the recent purchase by Bangladesh of two submarines from China, has provoked concern over the possible ramifications for India's security.

Bangladeshi security observers say that the purchase of submarines is more political than

strategic. They are of the opinion that political parties in that country lean towards the armed forces for stability. The present Awami League government is no different. The government adopted an Armed Forces Vision 2020, especially to maintain good rapport with the armed forces. Bangladesh is also purchasing a large number of armaments. It is working on transforming its navy into a three-dimensional force. Therefore, submarines are considered a necessity. Defence analysts, however, have a different opinion as they believe that Bangladesh hardly faces any threat from other countries. They say that the technology used in this submarine is obsolete and that it is being commissioned to boost the morale of the armed forces as most of the early generation of officers of the Bangladesh Navy were submariners.<sup>19</sup>


India is a consideration for Bangladesh's China policy; there are several analysts in Bangladesh who favour China as a counter-balance to India. However, many others believe that there should be a balanced relationship with both. Analysts in Bangladesh observe that India is the only country that surrounds Bangladesh on three sides, and there are several asymmetries that exist vis-a-vis India in terms of the economy, geography, military power and influence in the global arena. For the moment, it appears that Bangladesh wants to maintain friendly relationships with both China and India.

Recently, the Bangladesh establishment was irked by China's ambivalence on the issue of the Rohingya<sup>20</sup> refugees. In March 2016, China and Russia,<sup>21</sup> Bangladesh's two major arms suppliers blocked a statement in the United Nation's Security Council on violence concerning the Rohingyas in Myanmar's Rakhine state.<sup>22</sup> Almost 90 percent of Bangladesh's arms are sourced from China, and the fear that it can be held hostage is real in light of the warm relationship shared by Myanmar and China. The relationship between Myanmar and Bangladesh has, on the other

hand, soured substantially over the issue of the exodus of thousands of Rohingyas, who took refuge in Bangladesh from neighbouring Rakhine following an outbreak of violence in August 2017. Reducing dependence on China for the supply of arms is obviously the desirable thing to do, and there is a thinking in Bangladesh to diversify its defence partnership to maintain its strategic autonomy.<sup>23</sup> India, with whom Bangladesh has both cultural and linguistic affinity, can be a natural ally.

## CONCLUSION

The current agreement between India and Bangladesh in defence cooperation marks a coming-of-age in their bilateral ties. It is clear that both countries want to address each other's concerns and work towards common solutions. To maintain the momentum, it is crucial that the two countries implement all the MoUs and agreements that have been signed. Some additional measures can be implemented as well, such as the signing of the Teesta Agreement, pending since 2011 after India withdrew at the last moment, following the West Bengal Chief Minister's objection to the draft agreement. This withdrawal adversely affected the relationship between the two countries.

India must take advantage of its cultural ties with Bangladesh and work on inviting more officers and personnel for training. While currently, there are several exchanges of personnel, some more steps can be undertaken to strengthen engagement, such as increasing the amount of the stipend or granting special allowances for Bangladeshi officers attending courses in India to incentivise their visits. Elevating the yearly consultation to the level of chiefs of army, navy and air force should be made a policy. Finally, industry-to-industry deliberations should be fostered to facilitate commercial relations in defence. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Annexure

### I. Synopsis of India and Bangladesh Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1972

1. Article 1 of the treaty mentions that the signatories will respect each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other.
2. Article 2 establishes the equality of all people and condemns racism and colonialism.
3. Article 3 reaffirms the commitment of the two countries to non-alignment.
4. Article 4 states that the two countries will consult each other on major international problems affecting the interest of both states by meeting and exchanging views at all levels.
5. Article 5 calls for cooperation in economic, scientific and technical fields and cooperation in the areas of trade, transport and communication between the two countries.
6. Article 6 states that the two countries will make joint studies and take joint action in flood control, river-basin development, and hydroelectric development and irrigation.
7. Article 7 promotes relations in the field of art, literature, education, culture, sports and health.
8. Article 8, declared that the two countries will not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party. It further states that each country shall refrain from any aggression against the other and shall not allow the use of its territory for committing any act that may cause military damage to/constitute a threat to the security of the other.
9. Article 9 mandates the countries to refrain from giving any assistance to a third party taking part in armed conflict against the other party. If neither party is attacked or threatened with attack, the high-contracting parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultation to take appropriate and effective measure to eliminate the threat.
10. Article 10 prohibits the two countries from undertaking any commitment—covert or otherwise—with another country that may be incompatible with the present treaty.
11. Article 11 ensures that the treaty is subject to renewal only by mutual agreement of both parties involved.
12. Article 12 states that any dispute that may arise regarding any article of the treaty will be settled bilaterally by peaceful means.

### II. Overview of the Framework for Defence Cooperation (compiled from media reports)

1. The aim of the framework is to enhance the defence cooperation between the two countries.
2. The framework broadly covers areas such as joint training and exchanges, cooperation in the defence industry, cooperation in defence research, high-level cooperation, information secrecy, amendments and dispute resolution.
3. Under 'joint training and exercises', the two countries provide training and exchange of military experts; military courses and information; mutual cooperation on maintenance of military equipment; and treatment for military personnel/their families.
4. The countries to hold staff-level discussions between armies, navies and air forces and resolve bilateral military issues through discussion. The countries must also conduct annual talks that bring together the military organisations of both.
5. The two parties must engage in cross-border visits of naval ships and aircraft, based on mutual understanding, and conduct joint patrols and coordinated exercise at the international sea boundary.
6. The two countries aim to strengthen their defence cooperation through joint ventures, cooperation in space technology, technical assistance, exchanges of experience and development of sea infrastructure.
7. As per the framework, the Principal Staff Officers must attend the talks between the defence secretaries of the two countries to monitor the cooperation and manage defence agreements.
8. The two countries are expected to resolve disputes through discussion.

(Source: "Bangladesh-India military cooperation deal explained", *Bdmilitary.com*, 16 March 2017)

### III. Equipment Profile of the Bangladesh Army

ARMoured FIGHTING VEHICLES- MBT 276: 174 Type-59; 58 Type-69/Type-69G; 44 Type-90-II (MBT-2000)
LT TK 8 Type-62
RECCE 8+ BOV M11
APC 476
APC (T) 134 MT-LB
APC (W) 342: 325 BTR-80; 17 Cobra
ENGINEERING & MAINTENANCE VEHICLES
AEV MT-LB
ARV 3+: T-54/T-55; Type-84; 3 Type-654
VLB MTU
ANTI-TANK/ANTI-INFRASTRUCTURE
MSL • MANPATS 9K115-2 Metis M1 (AT-13 Saxhorn-2)
RCL 106mm 238 M40A1
ARTILLERY 853+
SP 155mm 12 NORA B-52
TOWED 363+: 105mm 170 Model 56 pack howitzer;
122mm 131: 57 Type-54/54-1 (M-30); 20 Type-83; 54
Type-96 (D-30), 130mm 62 Type-59-1 (M-46)
MRL 122mm 6 (PRC)
MOR 472: 81mm 11 M29A1; 82mm 366 Type-53/type87/M-31
(M-1937); 120mm 95 AM-50/UBM 52
RADAR • LAND 2 SLC-2 (arty)
AMPHIBIOUS • LANDING CRAFT 3: 1 LCT; 2 LCVP
AIRCRAFT • TPT • Light 7: 1 C295; 5 Cessna 152; 1 PA31T
31TCheyenne
HELICOPTERS
MRH 2 AS365N3 Dauphin
TPT 6: Medium 3 Mi-171Sh Light 3 Bell 206L-4 Long Ranger
AIR DEFENCE
SAM
Short-range FM-90
Point-defence QW-2; HN-5A (being replaced by QW2)
GUNS • TOWED 166: 37mm 132 Type-65/74; 57mm 34
Type-59 (S-60)

Source: *Military Balance 2018*, International Institute of Strategic Studies in <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military%20balance/issues/the-military-balance-2018-545f>.

### IV. Major Developments after the Signing of MOUs

1. In August 2017, Rear Admiral M. Shaheen Iqbal, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Personnel) Bangladesh Navy—accompanied by a five-member delegation—visited Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam.
2. In August 2017, Bangladesh Navy Chief Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed visited India and had meetings with Defence Minister Arun Jaitley and Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lamba.
3. In November 2017, Chief of Indian Navy Admiral Sunil Lamba visited Bangladesh and participated



in the International Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX), under the aegis of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). Additionally, Indian Naval Ship—Ranvir, Sahyadri, Gharial and Sukanya—along with one Maritime Patrol Aircraft P-8I participated in the exercise.

4. In November 2017, India and Bangladesh held the field training exercise ‘SAMPRITI 2017’ at the Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairengte in Mizoram to strengthen interoperability and cooperation between the armies of the two countries.
5. In December 2017, Bangladesh Army Chief General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiqul Huq visited India. During his visit, he met his Indian counterpart General Bipin Rawat and held extensive discussion on ways to further deepen the cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries.
6. In May 2018, India and Bangladesh signed a framework agreement for the utilisation of the US\$500 million line of credit extended by New Delhi during Sheikh Hasina’s visit in April 2017 for purchasing of military hardware.

## V. Suppliers of Arms to Bangladesh and Value of Defence Trade

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Canada									2	2
China		13	81	151	480	204	456	257	204	1844
Czech Republic							8			8
France				7	12		8		8	35
Germany					7				0	7
Italy			6	4	12		12			34
Russia			28	20	50		73	149	93	413
Serbia					10		10	9		29
Spain									12	12
Turkey					3					3
Ukraine			2	2	6	2	17	24	0	55
United Kingdom	23								23	
United States					56		54			110
<b>Total</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2575</b>

Note: Figures are in millions dollars.

Source: SIPRI Military Balance.

## Endnotes

1. Haroon Habib, “Bangladesh Army chief’s India visit to boost ties,” *The Hindu*, 25 February 2008.
2. “India-Bangladesh joint military exercise ‘Sampriti 2017’ concludes in Mizoram; officials say bilateral ties strengthened,” *Firstpost*, 17 November 2017.
3. Views expressed by experts during a closed-door discussion in Delhi on the India and Bangladesh relations in 2013.
4. Views expressed by an Indian security analyst during an interview with the author.
5. Vivek Raghuvanshi, “Purchase of Chinese Subs by Bangladesh ‘An Act of Provocation’ Toward India,” *Defence News*, 23 November 2016.
6. A Bangladeshi security analyst, retired Major General A.L.M. Fazlur Rahman, in an interview with Voice of America said, “As an old trusted friend, China supplies 90 percent of Bangladesh’s military hardware needs and is set to invest massively in our country. If Bangladesh signs this agreement with India, we may lose this friend and become weak ... Bangladesh should not do anything which makes it

lose a friend like China ...". See "Many in Bangladesh Oppose Proposed Defense Pact with India," *VOA News*, 27 March 2017.

7. "Defence pact detrimental for Bangladesh," *Bdmilitary.Com*, 28 March 2017.
  8. Choudhury M. Shamim, "The Bangladesh-India Friendship Treaty: Acritical analysis," in *Political Culture in Bangladesh: Perspective and Analysis: Selections from the Journal of Bangladesh Studies*, ed. Syed Saad Andeleeb (Bangladesh: The University Press Limited Dhaka, 2007).
  9. Ibid.
  10. Ibid.
  11. Ahmed Emajuddin, *Military Rule and the Myth of Democracy* (Bangladesh: University Press Dhaka, 1988), 51.
  12. Views of an Indian analyst expressed during an interview with the author.
  13. "Global Prowess Index: Bangladesh military ranked 57," *The Daily Star*, 27 March 2018.
  14. "India not 'Enemy' in Bangladesh War games," *The New Indian Express*, 9 February 2014.
  15. Views of a Bangladeshi security analyst expressed during an interview. The analyst wishes to remain anonymous.
  16. Haroon Habib, "Six Islamist leaders hanged in Bangladesh," *The Hindu*, 31 March 2007.
  17. "Accused in Burdwan blast case were planning terror attack in Bangladesh: NIA," *Firstpost*, 24 October 2014.
  18. China is the largest provider of Bangladesh military hardware. The two countries signed a defence co-operation agreement in December 2002 and the agreement has remained under wraps. Close defence relationship helped China cultivate a constituency within the Bangladesh armed forces, furthering its relationship with Bangladesh. The two countries formed a strategic partnership during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Bangladesh in October 2016.
  19. Views expressed by an analyst on Bangladesh Defence Forces during an interview with the author. The analyst wishes to remain anonymous.
  20. The Rohingyas form an ethnic community living in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. The community has linguistic similarities with some regions of Bangladesh. Myanmar does not recognise them as its citizens and considers them to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Rohingyas often face persecution in Myanmar and a large section of them are currently in Bangladesh as stateless refugees.
  21. In 2013, Bangladesh signed a defence purchase agreement with Russia worth US\$1 billion. The agreement is the biggest defence deal in the history of Bangladesh. Source: *Bdnews24.com*, 22 January 2013.
  22. "China, Russia block U.N. council concern about Myanmar violence," *Reuters*, 18 March 2017.
  23. "China is exhibiting impeccable hypocrisy regarding the Rohingya genocide. On the one hand, China has been endorsing the Myanmar army holocaust by saying that it is safe-guarding peace and stability in this region. On the other hand, it is sending humanitarian aid to the affected Rohingya who are also the victims of Chinese support for the ruthless establishment of Myanmar. China is also the biggest weapons exporter to Myanmar. Apparently, China has taken sides with Myanmar by dodging Bangladesh in this region's geo-political chessboard when Bangladesh is in dire need of Chinese support to dismantle Myanmar's 'mass migration' plot ... We must seek mutual respect when dealing with the Chinese Therefore, Bangladesh must have, in addition to China, diverse partners ..."
- See Rajeev Ahmed, "So, which of the favours of China would Bangladesh deny?" *Dhaka Tribune*, 27 October 2017.



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