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Strengthening Bangladesh-Russia Relations for Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

At present, Bangladesh and Russia have a special relationship. It is proven that Russia is a tested and trusted friend of Bangladesh. From the very beginning of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state, Russia has always stood by its welfare and development. Establishing diplomatic ties since 1972, bilateral relations have not always been smooth due to a lack of political will, particularly during the martial law regime. There are many potential areas of cooperation that could prosper together if both friendly countries utilize them. This paper identifies several potential areas of mutual cooperation and argues that to attain sustainable development, Bangladesh-Russia relations need to be strengthened more and more. This study explores the potential areas through various channels for greater interest, friendship, and opening up a new era in bilateral issues. The study also looks into the challenges and opportunities for the Bangladesh-Russia economic partnership. It investigates issues related to trade barriers, infrastructure development, and energy cooperation. Additionally, this study examines the impact of political and diplomatic factors on the economic relationship between Bangladesh and Russia. The study is based on a combination of

primary and secondary sources, including surveys with key stakeholders, economic data analysis, and a review of relevant literature.

KEYWORDS: Bangladesh-Russia relations, foreign relations, economic relations, foreign policy, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

On 25 January 1972, Bangladesh and the Soviet Union established diplomatic ties. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, bilateral ties with Russia are still in existence. Russia has embassies in Dhaka and Chittagong, as well as a consulate general. Bangladesh, on the other hand, keeps a consulate in Moscow. The two nations currently have close military, economic, political, and cultural ties. On 25 January 2022, the two nations' relations celebrated 50 years. With the signing of the partnership agreement for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Project, a new era in the alliance between Dhaka and Moscow has begun. The connections go back to the time of the Liberation War. Russia helped Bangladesh win the War of Independence by blocking the US Navy from entering the Bay of Bengal, whilst China and Pakistan worked together militarily and economically and the US actively supported the West Pakistani junta politically. Following the independence of Bangladesh, the Russian Navy was particularly important in clearing the Chittagong Port of mines and restoring its commercial operations. In hindsight, relations might have improved and cooperation might have been deeper if Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, had not passed away on 15 August 1975. After the incident, the relationships started to degrade. Russia and Bangladesh now have a \$5 billion arms contract. Before 2020, it is anticipated that the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant will begin producing one megawatt of electricity.

The recognition of Bangladesh's sovereignty over the large Bay of Bengal region has opened the way for the country to utilize the enormous potential of its marine resources. Russia has been managing marine resources for a very long time. It may assist Bangladesh by lending its knowledge and experience. Rail connectivity across the nation has been stressed by the government, and this will support economic growth. Russia is adept at creating and running railroads and can provide this knowledge as well. Working together has already begun in the gas industry. There are a ton of opportunities in that location. The markets of Eastern Europe and Russia provide tremendous opportunities for Bangladesh. Exporters from Bangladesh have not yet entered this big market. For instance, Bangladesh's garment industry can earn several billion dollars by exporting its high-quality goods. Bangladesh may import products such as wheat, cotton, sugar, fertilizer, chemicals, and minerals from Russia and Eastern Europe. When she met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in 2013, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina traveled to Russia. Prime Minister Hasina met with Russian Prime Minister Putin in St. Petersburg in 2009. Bangladesh chose a neutral posture during the 2014 Crimea crisis, while the United States and other Western nations were vehemently condemning Russia. Since the eighteenth century, Bengal and Russia have shared the same culture. In addition to political and economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is crucial in today's society. Maintaining tight and cordial ties between two nations requires cultural exchange and communication. Similar to this, cultural exchange would only deepen the connection between Bangladesh and Russia. Russia and Bangladesh signed a cultural pact in 1972. In 2014, Bangladesh observed the Russian Culture Day in compliance with the agreement. The next year, Bangladesh's Culture Day was observed in Russia. There are already indications of ties becoming more cordial (The Asian Age, 2018). A memorandum of collaboration regarding the promotion of goods and services from the Russian space industry in the People's Republic of Bangladesh, including the production of the "Bangabandhu-2" Earth observation satellite system was signed on 2 February 2022, by JSC "Glavkosmos" and Bangladesh Satellite Company Ltd.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to examine Bangladesh's trends in foreign policy toward Russia. It aims to study Bangladesh's foreign policy developments with

Russia from an economic and political perspective. The study aims to identify the main causes of Bangladesh's foreign policy trends toward Russia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to clarify and support how the study might result in the discovery of answers to some of the study's open-ended questions. Therefore, for better understanding here I have studied the following books, journals and papers.

Ahmed et al. (2022) analyze to what extent Russia supported Bangladesh. Russia is a true friend of Bangladesh. On 25 January 1972, the two nations of Bangladesh and the Soviet Union established diplomatic ties. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Bangladesh and Russia have maintained bilateral ties. There is a Russian embassy in Dhaka and a general consulate in Chittagong. Moscow is home to an embassy for Bangladesh, and the two nations have cordial military, economic, and political ties. The politics, business, and culture of the Asian area are all growing as a result of this interaction. Russia and Bangladesh have had a long history of connections. Without the Soviet Union's assistance, Bangladesh's independence would not have been easy to get, and this is still acknowledged today.

Andrio (2015) discussed a description of Bangladesh's current foreign policy. It examines the main axes of Bangladesh's partnership with its major allies. The author examines how Bangladesh's foreign policy has evolved since gaining independence in 1971 up until the present. He focuses on how Bangladesh's foreign policy has changed in relation to its bilateral relations with Russia under various administrations, including those of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (also known as Sheikh Mujib), General Ziaur Rahman (also known as Zia), General H.M. Ershad (also known as Ershad), Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina, and the caretaker government. The goal of the author is to establish a connection between domestic changes in the nation between 1970 and 2000, namely the changing of administrations and regimes, and the reorientation of foreign policy goals, especially the country's relations with Russia. This paper demonstrates how Bangladesh's foreign policy priorities are dependent on the objectives of various political factions that have held power in the past.

Mahmud (2017) explains Russia and Bangladesh have a long-standing friendship. It has a lengthy past. The Soviet Union (USSR) stood for Bangladesh during the 1971 revolution. In international diplomacy, the Soviet Union has reached out to help Bangladesh achieve its freedom. The Soviet Union ruined Pakistan's attempt to put an end to the liberation war by twice using its veto power in the UN Security Council to support Bangladesh's independence struggle. In the years following its freedom, the Soviet Union offered Bangladesh its assistance as well. The father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, visited the Soviet Union in 1972 as part of a government tour, beginning a journey through history.

Monitors (2010) discussed the main reason Bangladesh signed the recent deal with Russia for cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology was to secure its energy supply in the face of its expanding demands. With the nuclear accord with Russia, Bangladesh's foreign policy has clearly changed. According to the 21 May deal, Russia would construct Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant. It demands the exchange of materials, technology, tools, and services in order to carry out collaborative initiatives for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The deal states that Russia will design and build the nuclear power and research reactor as well as supply nuclear fuel and remove used fuel. In order to operate and maintain the nuclear facility, Russia would also train technical and scientific Bangladeshi personnel.

Bangladesh Post (2020) discussed that relations deteriorated following the 1975 massacre that resulted in the death of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's founding father. After Bangabandhu's visit to Russia in 1972, Prime Minister Hasina's trip to Moscow in 2013 was the first by a leader of state. Nowadays, both parties have agreements for collaboration in a variety of fields, including energy, trade, and defense.

The aforementioned scholars merely examine it from a political standpoint, and some of them have even provided an economic explanation. As I examine these published materials, I see that the investigations only covered some of the topics. Nonetheless, I attempted to concentrate on how domestic factors are crucially influencing Bangladesh's foreign policy toward Russia in my study. Furthermore, I know no one has worked till now on the topic. Therefore, it is urgent to research Bangladesh-Russia foreign relations in the context of economics of late twentieth century to twenty-first century.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. It has been conducted in empirical and descriptive manners. Both qualitative and quantitative data are presented in this study. The current study is purely descriptive. To gather the pertinent data for the study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for the goals and objectives. Both primary and secondary sources have been used to get the necessary data and information. In this research, I used the primary data. For the primary source of data, a structured questionnaire has been followed. All quantitative data was collected in the mode of face-to-face interviews, including surveys with key stakeholders and observations. The questionnaire was easy for the respondent. In this research, I also used secondary data. The relevant data and information have been collected from various books, online databases, journals, academic articles, newspapers, statistical yearbooks, governmental documents, published or unpublished research reports, and other document analyses to know about Bangladesh-Russia relations from late twentieth century to twenty-first century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bangladesh-Russia Trade and Economic Relations: Present Trends

The trade and economic relations between Bangladesh and Russia have been developing gradually over the years. According to the data from the Russian Federal Customs Service, the bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Russia in 2021 reached USD 1.25 billion, which is a significant increase compared to the previous years.

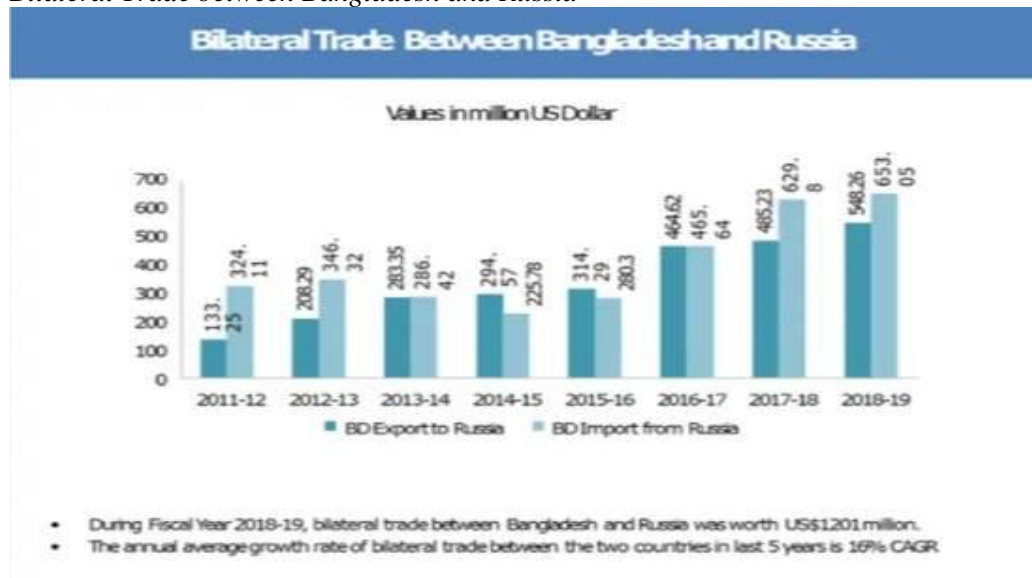
Russia and Bangladesh are both seeing strong increases in trade and commerce. Yet there is much more to be had on both sides. The recently finished Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technological Cooperation between Bangladesh and Russia is anticipated to overcome any remaining obstacles to increased bilateral commerce.

The two nations' bilateral commerce has grown significantly during the past few years. During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, Bangladesh exported goods to Russia valued \$548.26 million USD. It was \$485.23 million in the most recent fiscal year. In contrast, Bangladesh bought goods from Russia worth US\$653.05 million in the 2018–2019 fiscal years, up from US\$629.8 million in the prior fiscal year. Russia is Bangladesh's largest market for its exports of clothing, jute, frozen foods, tea, leather, home textiles, and ceramics. Nonetheless, the Russian market offers enormous potential for the export of

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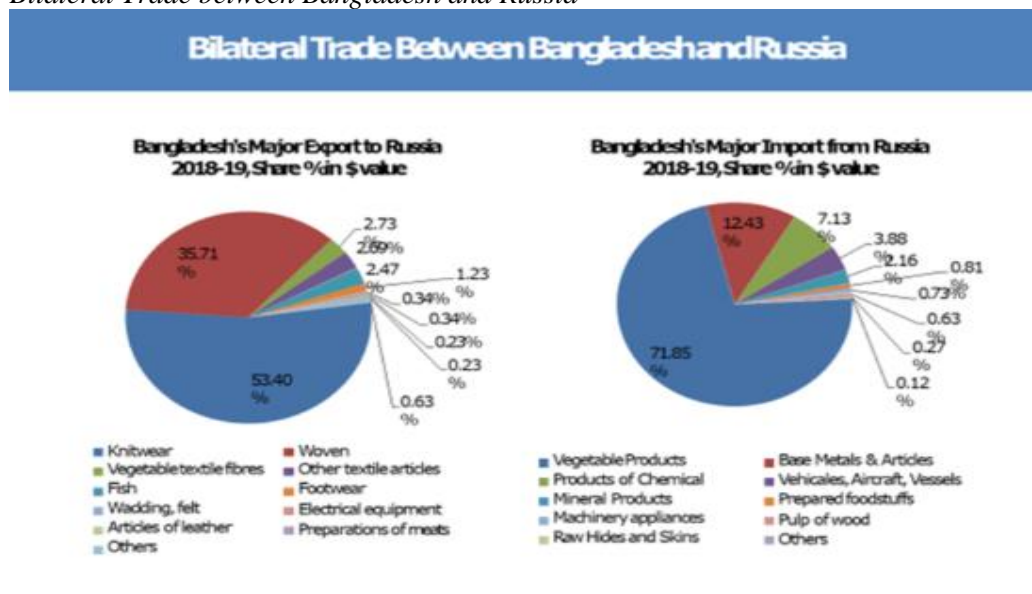
seafood, potatoes, and pharmaceuticals. Cereals, minerals, chemical goods, plastic products, metal, machinery, and mechanical equipment are among the items that the nation imports from Russia. Capital equipment, fresh and dried fruits, and raw sugar are all exportable from Russia (Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Moscow, Russian Federation, 2023).

Figure 1
Bilateral Trade between Bangladesh and Russia



Note: Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Moscow, Russian Federation, (2023).

Figure 2
Bilateral Trade between Bangladesh and Russia

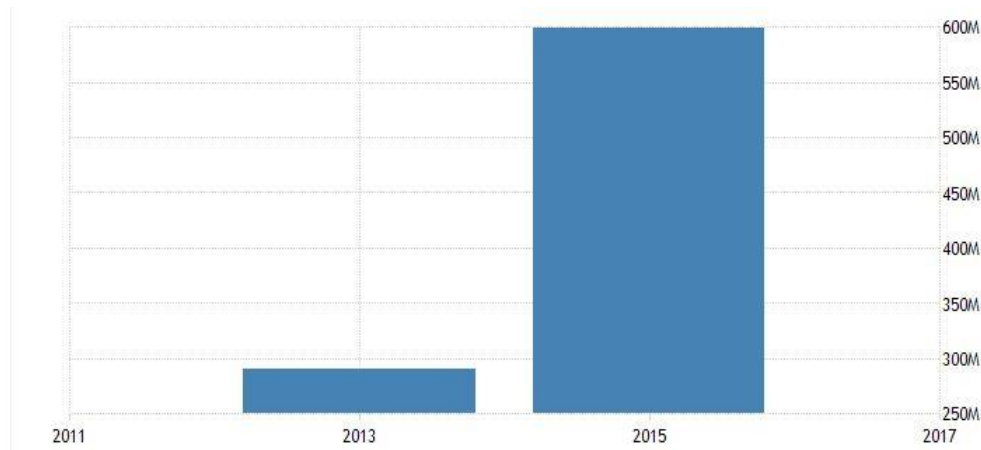


Note: Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Moscow, Russian Federation, (2023).

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In 2015, Bangladesh imported \$598.49 million worth of goods from Russia, according to the United Nations' COMTRADE database on world commerce. The data, historical chart, and statistics for Bangladesh imports from Russia were last updated in February 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024a).

Figure 3
Bangladesh Imports from Russia



Note: Trading economics, (2024a).

Table 1
Top 10 products Bangladesh Imports from Russia

Category	Value	Year
Printed books, newspapers, pictures	\$255.16M	2015
Cereals	\$155.38M	2015
Fertilizers	\$76.36M	2015
Arms and ammunition, parts and accessories	\$60.64M	2015
Aircraft, spacecraft	\$15.83M	2015
Iron and steel	\$11.23M	2015
Salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cement	\$6.32M	2015
Raw hides and skins (other than furskins) and leather	\$4.59M	2015
Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	\$2.73M	2015
Oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits	\$2.12M	2015

Note: Trading economics, (2024a).

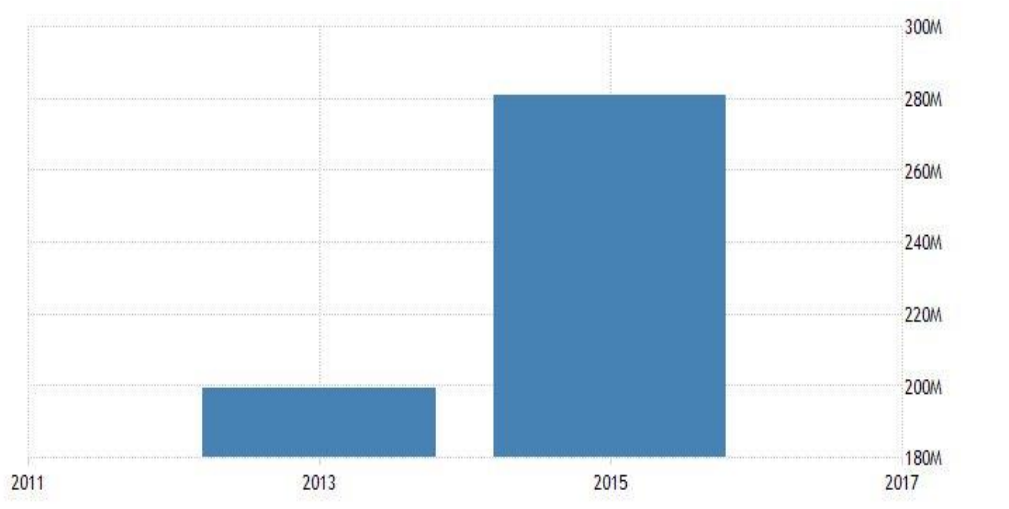
In Table 1, Bangladesh has imported various products from Russia in 2015. The table displayed the product values and the years. In this table, printed books, newspapers, and pictures had the highest value in the year 2015. The total amount was \$255.16M. On the other hand, the lowest products were oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits, whose values were \$2.12M. Among other products were cereals, fertilizers, arms and ammunition, parts and accessories, aircraft, spacecraft, iron and steel, salt, sulphur, earth, stone, plaster, lime and cement, raw hides and skins (other than furskins)

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and leather, edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers, etc. (Trading Economics, 2024a).

In 2015, Bangladesh exported to Russia for US\$280.61 million, according to the UN's COMTRADE database on world commerce. The data, historical chart, and statistics on Bangladesh exports to Russia were last updated in February 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024b).

Figure 4
Bangladesh Exports to Russia



Note: Trading economics, (2024b).

Table 2
Top 10 products Bangladesh Exports to Russia

Category	Value	Year
Articles of apparel, knit or crocheted	\$124.22M	2015
Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted	\$92.11M	2015
Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing	\$20.80M	2015
Vegetable textile fibers not specified elsewhere, paper yarn, woven fabric	\$14.92M	2015
Aircraft, spacecraft	\$7.18M	2015
Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates	\$6.30M	2015
Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	\$5.41M	2015
Footwear, gaiters and the like	\$4.03M	2015
Tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes	\$2.55M	2015
Wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage	\$1.12M	2015

Note: Trading economics, (2024b).

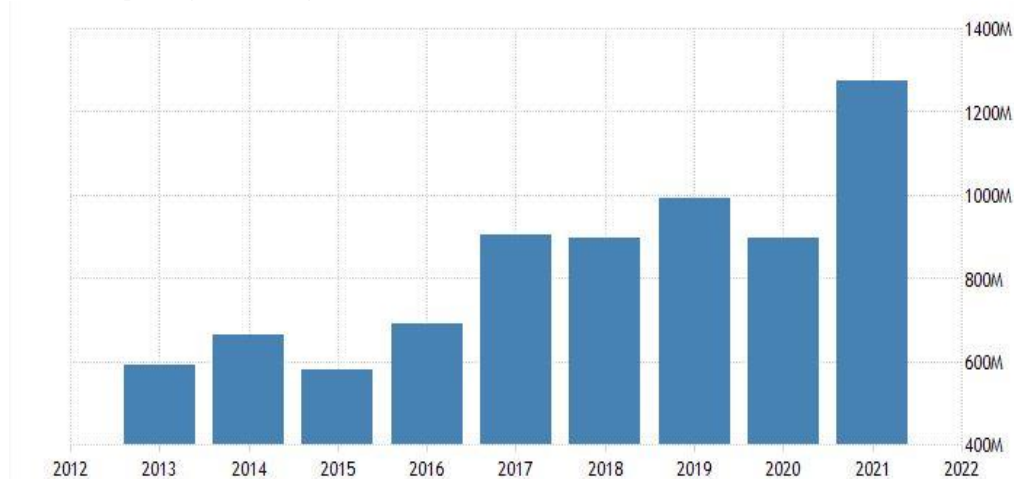
In Table 2, Bangladesh has exported various products to Russia in 2015. The table displayed the product values and the years. In this table, articles of apparel, knit or crocheted had the highest value in the year 2015. The total amount was \$124.22M. On

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the other hand, the lowest products were wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage, whose values were \$1.12M. Among other products were articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted, other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing, vegetable textile fibers not specified elsewhere, paper yarn, woven fabric, aircraft, spacecraft, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates, edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers, footwear, gaiters and the like, tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes, etc. (Trading Economics, 2024b).

Russia imported US\$1.27 billion worth of goods from Bangladesh in 2021, according to the United Nations' COMTRADE database on world commerce. The data, historical chart, and statistics on Russia's imports from Bangladesh were last updated on February 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024c).

Figure 5
Russia Imports from Bangladesh



Note: Trading economics, (2024c).

Table 3
Top 10 products Russia Imports from Bangladesh

Category	Value	Year
Articles of apparel, knit or crocheted	\$679.71M	2021
Articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted	\$482.87M	2021
Footwear, gaiters and the like	\$28.05M	2021
Vegetable textile fibers not specified elsewhere, paper yarn, woven fabric	\$19.43M	2021
Other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing	\$17.83M	2021
Fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates	\$15.94M	2021
Tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes	\$11.64M	2021
Wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage	\$5.69M	2021
Articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel good	\$3.83M	2021
Headgear	\$2.43M	2021

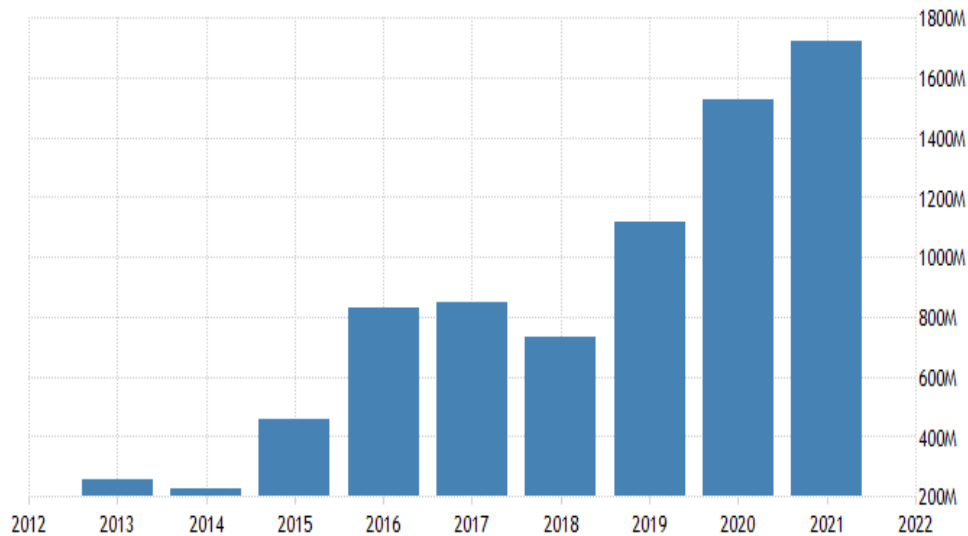
Note: Trading economics (2024c)

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In Table 3, Russia has imported various products from Bangladesh in 2021. The table displayed the product values and the years. In this table, articles of apparel, knit or crocheted had the highest value in the year 2021. The total amount was \$679.71M. On the other hand, the lowest products were headgear, whose values were \$2.43M. Among other products were articles of apparel, not knit or crocheted, footwear, gaiters and the like, vegetable textile fibers not specified elsewhere, paper yarn, woven fabric, other made textile articles, sets, worn clothing, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatics invertebrates, tobacco and manufactures tobacco substitutes, wadding, felt, nonwovens, yarns, twine, cordage, articles of leather, animal gut, harness, travel good, etc. (Trading Economics, 2024c).

According to the UN's COMTRADE database on global commerce, Russia exported US\$1.72 billion to Bangladesh in 2021. The data, historical chart, and statistics on Russia's exports to Bangladesh were last updated on February 2024 (Trading Economics, 2024d).

Figure 6
Russia exports to Bangladesh



Note: Trading economics, (2024d).

Table 4
Top 10 products Russia Exports to Bangladesh

Category	Value	Year
Machinery, nuclear reactors, boilers	\$614.86M	2021
Electrical, electronic equipment	\$329.42M	2021
Cereals	\$190.29M	2021
Articles of iron or steel	\$150.96M	2021
Iron and steel	\$116.40M	2021
Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers	\$72.42M	2021
Fertilizers	\$44.14M	2021

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Optical, photo, technical, medical apparatus	\$38.98M	2021
Oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits	\$28.61M	2021
Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products	\$27.89M	2021

Note: Trading economics (2024d)

In Table 4, Russia has exported various products to Bangladesh in 2021. The table displayed the product values and the years. In this table, machinery, nuclear reactors, and boilers had the highest value in the year 2021. The total amount was \$614.86M. On the other hand, the lowest products were mineral fuels, oils, distillation products, whose values were \$27.89M. Among other products were electrical, electronic equipment, cereals, articles of iron or steel, iron and steel, edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers, fertilizers, optical, photo, technical, medical apparatus, oil seed, oleagic fruits, grain, seed, fruits, etc. (Trading Economics, 2024d).

As the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the Vulnerable 20 Group (V20), Bangladesh has adapted a number of decisions to be able to produce 40% of its energy from renewable sources by 2041, according to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who spoke at the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference, also known as COP26, on 1 November 2021. The development of 10 coal-fired power stations in Bangladesh, which would have required foreign investment of \$12 billion, has been shelved. The cost of dealing with the environment has increased seven-fold in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is aiming to improve its energy generation capabilities as it maps out its course for economic and social growth. Bangladesh has chosen to collaborate with Russia on energy issues, particularly in the production of natural gas and nuclear energy, in addition to forging relationships with nations in the area (Bhattacharjee, 2021).

Despite the positive trend in bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Russia, there is still significant untapped potential for trade expansion between the two countries. Both countries have identified the potential for developing their trade volume, and have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a joint economic commission to explore the potential for expanding trade and investment between the two countries. The commission aims to increase bilateral trade volume to \$2 billion by 2023 (Trade Map - International Trade Centre, 2023).

In conclusion, in recent decades, the amount of trade between Bangladesh and Russia has risen significantly. Bangladesh and Russia's trading relations were originally intermittent, and Russia was mainly an exporter, selling extremely large quantities to Bangladesh rather than importing. As Russia is the biggest trading partner, trade ties between the countries play a very significant role in economic growth, employment creation and growing entrepreneurial activities in Bangladesh. But the growing trade deficit mainly, more imports than the export of Bangladesh from Russia are making the nation the main consumer of Russia. Bangladesh can follow the Indian strategy of growing trend of importing raw and secondary products (40%) e.g. parts of the car to assembly instead car itself, parts of toys or other devices instead of the finished products to produce (convertible) finished products to minimize the trade deficits and growth of entrepreneurship, employment and socio-economic development.

Bangladesh-Russia Trade and Economic Relations: Major Problems

Bangladesh and Russia have maintained diplomatic relations since Bangladesh's independence in 1971. However, the relationship between the two countries has been limited and has not developed as much as expected. The bilateral relations between

Bangladesh and Russia have been mostly cordial but have also faced some challenges. There are several issues that have contributed to this limited relationship, including:

One of the major problems in Bangladesh-Russia relations is the lack of trade and investment. Despite the potential for cooperation in various fields, the volume of trade between the two countries remains low. According to the Embassy of Bangladesh in Moscow, bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Russia was only around \$672 million in 2019, which is significantly lower than the potential (The Embassy of Bangladesh in Moscow, 2023).

Energy cooperation is an important area of cooperation between Bangladesh and Russia, but it has not been fully utilized. Bangladesh has been seeking Russian assistance in developing its energy sector, particularly in exploring and extracting natural gas. However, progress has been slow due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of investments.

Bangladesh and Russia have cooperated in military and defense sectors, but there have been some issues. For example, Bangladesh has been seeking Russian assistance in modernizing its military equipment, but progress has been slow due to the lack of financial resources.

There have been some political issues between Bangladesh and Russia, which have strained their relationship. For example, Russia has been critical of Bangladesh's human rights record, particularly in relation to its treatment of opposition leaders and activists. On the other hand, Bangladesh has been critical of Russia's support for Myanmar, which has been accused of committing genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority (Paul, 2019).

Despite having good political relations, economic ties between Bangladesh and Russia are limited. The trade volume between the two countries is relatively low, and Russia's investment in Bangladesh is also minimal. One of the major reasons for this is the lack of direct air connectivity between the two countries, which makes trade and investment difficult. Bangladesh has also expressed interest in importing Russian oil and gas, but no significant progress has been made in this regard (Diplomatist Magazine, 2021).

Bangladesh's purchase of Russian military hardware, including fighter jets and helicopters, has also been a source of tension between the two countries. In 2019, Russia canceled a \$1 billion deal to supply helicopters to Bangladesh due to delays in payments. Moreover, there have been concerns raised by some western countries about the potential use of Russian military equipment by Bangladesh in human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2021).

There is a lack of people-to-people contact between Bangladesh and Russia, which hampers the development of cultural and educational ties between the two countries. The number of Russian tourists visiting Bangladesh is also relatively low. Moreover, there are few Bangladeshi students studying in Russia, which limits the exchange of knowledge and ideas between the two countries.

The cold war-era legacy continues to affect Bangladesh-Russia relations. During the cold war, Bangladesh was aligned with the Soviet Union, while Russia was a successor state to the Soviet Union. This historical baggage sometimes influences the perspectives of policymakers in the countries, creating mistrust and suspicion (Al Jazeera, 2019).

The economic impact of war is so bad on this integrated interdependent economy is costlier than the war itself. We have been experiencing this since the onset of the Russia-Ukraine war. With the responses of many countries, the situation emerged with uncertainties and challenges from many fronts. Being an import-dependent country

Bangladesh's economy was mostly affected negatively which also hampered the recovery from pandemic stress (The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, 2022).

In conclusion, overall, the relationship between Bangladesh and Russia has not developed as much as expected, and there are several issues that need to be addressed. The two countries need to work on improving trade and investment relations and fully utilize the potential for cooperation in various fields.

Diplomacy and Economy in Bangladesh-Russia Relations

Bangladesh and Russia have a long-standing history of diplomatic relations that dates back to 1971 when the former gained independence from Pakistan. Since then, the two countries have maintained cordial relations, but there is still room for improvement. In recent years, both countries have initiated efforts to strengthen their socio-economic and diplomatic ties. Russia has become one of Bangladesh's most important development partners as it works to become a developed country by 2041 and a middle-income country by 2021. In this response, I will highlight some of the priority areas of Bangladesh-Russia initiatives to improve their relations.

As soon as the country gained independence, Hasina's father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman laid the groundwork for relations between Bangladesh and the Soviet Union (the USSR at the time). In the early 1970s, friendly and advantageous relations were established between the two countries. One of the first few countries to recognize Bangladesh at the UN and establish diplomatic ties with it was the Soviet Union, which did so on 25 January 1972. Before, the Soviet Union offered the Bangladeshi liberation fighters its entire assistance in their battle against Pakistan. Also, Russia helped the newly formed nation of Bangladesh rebuild and expand its war-devastated economy. Despite a promising start, the violent political upheaval of August 1975 marked a significant decline in Soviet-Bangladesh ties. In place of Sheikh Mujib's socialist policies, the military regimes of Ziaur Rahman and HM Ershad drew Bangladesh closer to the United States, Pakistan, China, and the Arab world. All of these nations either had antagonistic relations with the Soviet Union or kept their distance from the red superpower. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, ties between Russia and Bangladesh were low-key and mostly restricted to cultural exchanges and sporadic development assistance to Dhaka (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

Nonetheless, the Awami League (AL) administration chose to revive Bangladesh's long-standing and cordial relations with Russia after retaking office in January 2009 with a strong mandate. The Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Hasina during her visit to St. Petersburg in November 2010 for the Tiger Summit. To elevate the bilateral relations, the two leaders decided to take "further actions." The relationship between the governments of the two countries has significantly risen since that time. On 23 November 2012, Dipu Moni, the former foreign minister of Bangladesh, traveled to Moscow to discuss ways to deepen bilateral ties in sectors including trade and economic cooperation, nuclear and conventional energy, and defense (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

From 14 to 16 January 2013, Hasina paid a three-day visit to Moscow in an effort to further improve ties between Bangladesh and Russia. Her visit was a significant turning point in the growth of the two countries' relations. After a 40-year hiatus, the Bangladeshi prime minister made his first formal visit. Both parties reaffirmed during this visit their commitment to long-term, mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation, trade diversification, increased investment, and the creation of cooperative

high-tech businesses. Ten agreements increasing cooperation between the two nations were signed, including ones in the areas of defense, nuclear energy, and oil and gas exploration (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

Russia has provided Bangladesh with a \$1 billion loan to purchase weapons and defense equipment, marking the largest arms sale since 1971. The deal includes armored vehicles, infantry weapons, air defense systems, and Mi-17 helicopters. Bangladesh plans to purchase 80 to 100 BTR-80 amphibious armored personnel carriers and missile defense systems from Russia. The country is also negotiating to buy six Mil Mi-171 Sh combat-transport helicopters and one Mi-171E medium-lift transport aircraft. Russia has also promised to train its military personnel as part of the defense alliance. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party-Jamaat-e-Islami coalition government's foreign policy aims prevented military connections between Russia and Bangladesh from developing during Khaleda Zia's tenure. The presidents of Russia and Bangladesh aim to establish a long-lasting defense alliance based on respect, confidence, and interest (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

The conventional energy industry has also seen increased collaboration between Russia and Bangladesh. According to President Putin, Russia is eager to assist Bangladesh in using its oil and gas reserves. State-owned Petro Bangla of Bangladesh has an agreement for the drilling of 10 gas wells with Gazprom EP International of Russia. With the help of this joint venture, Bangladesh's gas output would increase to 56 million cubic meters per day. According to reports, the world's largest oil company, Gazprom, has already finished making ready to begin drilling at two gas sites. The gas agreement between Russia and Bangladesh is worth an estimated \$ 193 million. In light of the projected Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, Russia is attempting to get access to the South Asian oil and gas market. As a result, its energy agreement with Bangladesh takes significance. According to observers, Russia is making an attempt to participate in the TAPI, which calls for the flow of gas from Turkmenistan in Central Asia to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan. Russia thinks that by helping Bangladesh explore its gas reserves, it will give Bangladesh more negotiating leverage when it comes to supplying India, the largest market in South Asia, with gas that is urgently required (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

For Bangladesh, power generation remains a crucial sector, and the country's leadership has long depended on Russian technological know-how to fulfill the country's rising electrical demand. Since the start of Bangladesh's power production, Russia has been a key player. Around 20% of the nation's total electricity output is provided by the thermal power plants developed at Ghorasal and Sddhirganj with Russian financial and technical assistance. The largest thermal power plant in Bangladesh is the Ghorasal unit. The modernization of this facility is now being done by Russian specialists. A few Russian businesses have expressed interest in Bangladesh's power industry, including Inter Rao Ves and RusHydro (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

With growing interest in Technology, energy, and pharmaceuticals, Russia is also investing in other sectors of the Bangladeshi economy. Moreover, infrastructural investment is still being made, and Russia is considering renovating the Ishwardi airport. In all spheres, including the economic, social, and cultural, it is possible to anticipate a growth in Bangladeshi-Russian collaboration (Hasan, 2021).

Scholarships are being offered to Bangladeshi students by the Russian government. Numerous students from the nation are pursuing higher education in Russia and are developing their skills in a variety of fields, including bioengineering, IT, and nuclear science (Hasan, 2021).

In conclusion, if these initiatives are successful, they would help to diversify the economic ties between the two countries. The benefits of such diversification would include increased job creation, technology transfer, access to new markets, etc.

Bangladesh-Russia Relations: Common Interests

Bangladesh and Russia have enjoyed a long-standing relationship since the former Soviet Union recognized Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971. Since then, the two countries have maintained diplomatic relations, and there has been a steady growth of bilateral trade and cooperation in various fields. We will explore the common interests that have contributed to the strengthening of Bangladesh-Russia foreign relations.

Defense cooperation has been a crucial area of cooperation between Bangladesh and Russia. Bangladesh has been purchasing military equipment from Russia for many years, and Russia has been a reliable supplier of military hardware to Bangladesh. The Russian-made MiG-29 fighter jets, T-72 tanks, and other weapons systems have been a significant part of Bangladesh's defense arsenal. In 2013, Bangladesh and Russia signed a defense cooperation agreement, which has further strengthened their defense ties. The cooperation also includes military training and joint exercises.

Bangladesh and Russia have been working together to enhance their energy cooperation. Russia has expressed interest in investing in Bangladesh's energy sector, including oil and gas exploration, power generation, and renewable energy. In 2018, Bangladesh signed a deal with Russia's Gazprom to set up a joint venture for the exploration and production of oil and gas in Bangladesh. In addition, Russia has been supplying oil to Bangladesh, which has helped the country meet its energy needs.

Bangladesh and Russia have been exploring opportunities to enhance their economic cooperation. Although the volume of bilateral trade is relatively low, there is potential for growth in various sectors. Bangladesh exports garments, pharmaceuticals, and leather products to Russia, while Russia exports machinery, chemicals, and fertilizers to Bangladesh. The two countries have been discussing the possibility of establishing a free trade agreement, which could further boost their economic ties.

Bangladesh and Russia have been exploring opportunities for cooperation in the information technology sector. In 2018, Bangladesh's information minister led a delegation to Russia to explore the possibility of cooperation in the areas of e-governance, cyber security, and artificial intelligence. The two countries have also been exploring opportunities for collaboration in the field of space technology.

Bangladesh and Russia have been cooperating in the field of education. The two countries have been working to increase the number of Bangladeshi students studying in Russian universities. In addition, Russia has been providing scholarships to Bangladeshi students to study in Russian universities. The two countries have also been exploring opportunities for cooperation in the field of science and technology (The Embassy of Bangladesh in Moscow, 2023).

Bangladesh and Russia have been exploring opportunities for cooperation in the pharmaceuticals sector. Bangladesh is known for its generic pharmaceuticals, while Russia is known for its advanced pharmaceutical research. The two countries have been exploring opportunities for collaboration in the areas of research and development, as well as production and marketing of pharmaceuticals.

In conclusion, if Bangladesh and Russia will maintain diplomatic relations, there will be a steady growth of bilateral trade and cooperation in various fields.

Recommendations

The Bangladesh-Russia relations can be improved through various means. Here are some recommendations that can be implemented to enhance the relations between the two countries:

- Bangladesh and Russia can strengthen their relations by increasing high-level diplomatic exchanges. Regular visits by the heads of state or government, foreign ministers, and other high-ranking officials can help to promote understanding and cooperation between the two countries.
- Bangladesh and Russia can explore new areas of economic cooperation and expand trade and investment ties. The two countries can work towards reducing trade barriers, promoting bilateral investment, and identifying new sectors for cooperation such as energy, agriculture, and tourism.
- Bangladesh and Russia can foster greater understanding and friendship between their peoples through cultural exchanges, educational programs, and tourism. This can include language training, scholarships, and cultural events that showcase the diversity of both countries.
- Bangladesh and Russia can collaborate on issues of mutual interest, such as regional security and counterterrorism. Both countries can also work together to address common challenges such as climate change, poverty reduction, and public health.
- Bangladesh and Russia can explore the possibility of expanding educational ties by increasing student exchange programs and establishing joint research projects. This can provide an opportunity for young people to learn about each other's culture, and also help to develop new areas of research collaboration.
- Bangladesh and Russia can work together to address regional and global issues of mutual interest, such as climate change, counterterrorism, and cyber security. They can collaborate through multilateral forums, such as the United Nations, to address common concerns.

In conclusion, these recommendations can help to improve the Bangladesh-Russia relations. Both nations should focus on strengthening their diplomatic ties, enhancing trade and economic cooperation, promoting cultural exchange programs, expanding educational ties, collaborating on regional and global issues, and sports diplomacy to deepen their mutual understanding and promote cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The relevance of economic interactions is becoming more visible in the modern world in order to strengthen bilateral relationships. If we carefully examine the bilateral relationships between China, India, and Russia, we see that Bangladesh's connection with Russia is far less extensive than theirs. In the age of globalization and self-reliance, several nations continue to preserve their relationships with one another while keeping in mind their shared goal of overcoming the barriers to communication across regions and preserving positive relationships. As a result, commerce, investment, and cross-cultural interactions are increasing. These actions are conducted to confirm development and security.

For a long time, Bangladesh has been seeking to communicate with Russia regarding economics, diplomacy, and foreign policy. The intergovernmental agreements have been reached on trade, economic and technical cooperation, free aid for reestablishing navigation in Bangladeshi seaports, on-air services, agreements on the USSR's trade representation in Bangladesh, as well as on collaboration in the arts and sciences. Bangladesh received substantial economic aid from the USSR between 1971

and 1975. The Ghorashal TPP, which is still among the biggest in the nation, was built in specifically with the assistance of Soviet scientists. The Russian Federation was acknowledged by Bangladesh as the USSR's successor state on December 29, 1991. The inauguration of the Awami League administration in Dhaka in 2009, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who continued her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's policy of collaboration with Russia, gave the bilateral relationship a fresh push. The growth of Bangladesh's energy industry is being greatly assisted by the Rosatom State Company. The development of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Pabna, which is sponsored by the state credit provided by Russia, is the largest joint project that it is now undertaking. The Unit 1 reactor pressure vessel of the facility was installed in October of last year. Two units with a combined capacity of 2,400 megawatts will generally be placed into service. If Bangladesh decides to begin building the second NPP, the current experience of cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy may serve as a foundation for future cooperation. The volume of bilateral commerce is consistently increasing.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic's detrimental effects, it nevertheless reached USD 2.4 billion in 2020. There is optimism that this target can be surpassed based on statistical data for the first half of 2021. The foundation of our exports are supply of wheat (400,000 tonnes in 2021) and fertilizers (180,000 tonnes), as well as metals, machinery, and equipment. Bangladesh buys mostly textiles, knitwear, and seafood. In Bangladesh's parliament, there is a friendship group focused on connections with the Federal Parliament of the Russian Federation. Our commercial connections were improved with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technological Cooperation in 2017. The Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Air Force both use military equipment that was built in Russia. The Yak-130 combat training aircraft, the Mi-17 and Mi-171 helicopters, the BTR-80 armored personnel carriers, the MiG-29 fighter aircraft, as well as other specialized equipment, have all been purchased by our partners. More than 6,000 Bangladeshis have earned degrees from Russian and Soviet colleges. They currently hold high positions in governmental organizations, for-profit businesses, and cultural organizations and are employed in practically every sector of their nation's economic and social life. Due in large part to the continued preparation of skilled workers for the operation of the Rooppur NPP, our bilateral collaboration in education is still relevant today. Russia offered 70 scholarships to Bangladeshi students in 2021 as part of its government quota. The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, usually referred to as RUDN University, is a dependable associate of international academic institutions.

A memorandum of agreement was signed in March 2021 between RUDN University and the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) with the intention of fostering collaboration in the humanities as well as the scientific and social sciences. The Tyumen State University and the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University are in the final stages of discussions to collaborate on teaching Russian as a foreign language using cutting-edge pedagogical techniques. It is important to note that more and more Bangladeshis are exhibiting an interest in studying Russian. For instance, the Russian House in Dhaka hosts about 200 students each year for its Russian language classes. We cooperate under the aegis of the Group of Strategic Vision "Russia-Islamic world" since Bangladesh and Russia hold similar views on interfaith dialogue and combatting religious extremism. In South Asia, the People's Republic of Bangladesh is a significant ally of Russia. Our relationships are solid, and they have a lot of promise. Everything is in position for it to be fully tapped.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose. However, I declare that the manuscript has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

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