

Bangladesh's Foreign Relations and Major Powers: What Makes the Country a Hub of Power Competition

Md Abul Hasan¹, Ahmed Sabbir² and Md Al Imran³

¹PhD student at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Doctoral School of International Relations and Regional Studies, Department of International Relations

²Graduated from the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), Department of Management, Russia

³Graduated from the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN), Department of International Relations, Russia

Abstract

The principle of non-alignment has been a cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy since its inception, holding significant relevance within both regional and global political contexts. But over time, local and external factors have caused the nation to stray from its founding ideals. This article aims to explore Bangladesh's foreign relations choices, examining their historical context and response to major power dynamics in the region. This article seeks to unravel how Bangladesh has been a mecca of hegemonic power. By reviewing literature on geopolitics, Bangladesh's foreign relations, and hegemonic powers, as well as in-depth expert interviews and scrutiny of media reports, articles, and dialogue, this study delves into the key powers' dilemmas towards Bangladesh amidst its domestic upheaval. Three key explanatory variables emerge: first, its strategic geographic location and geopolitical significance—the interests of major powers; second, its economic potential and security dynamics; and finally, its domestic “winners take all” and “zero sum” politics and the involvement of external powers. This study emphasises that Bangladesh's autonomy is fundamentally dependent on the goodwill of its political elites and highlights that failures in managing hedging relationships with each key power could lead to falling into the trap of geopolitics—financial crises and security risks.

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