
THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND POLITICAL NARRATIVES IN SHAPING ANTI-INDIA SENTIMENT IN BANGLADESH: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**Ritik Tiwari**Political Science (Guest Faculty)
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Abstract - The intricate interaction among media, political narratives, and the evolution of anti-Indian attitude in Bangladesh is investigated in this work. By means of a critical analysis of historical background, modern media discourse, and political rhetoric, this paper investigates how these elements help to influence public opinion and foreign policy perspectives in Bangladesh toward India. The study also looks at how outside factors—especially those of the United States government—fit this dynamic. This paper attempts to give a thorough knowledge of the elements influencing anti-Indian sentiment in Bangladesh and their consequences for bilateral relations and regional stability by using a multifarious approach including content analysis of media reports, study of political speeches, and review of public opinion surveys.

Keywords: Bangladesh media, political narratives, and the development of anti-India sentiment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rooted in historical, cultural, and geopolitical considerations, Bangladesh and India have a complex relationship. Strong cultural links and a shared history of resistance against colonial control nonetheless these close relationships have defined the relationship between these two South Asian neighbors in terms of conflict and mistrust. With an especially eye toward how these stories are created, shared, and absorbed by the Bangladeshi public, this article aims to examine how political narratives and media shape anti-India attitude in Bangladesh.

Public impressions of foreign countries are greatly shaped by the media, which is a potent instrument for knowledge sharing and opinion building. With the rise of private news networks, online news websites, and social media platforms, Bangladesh's media scene has changed dramatically over recent years. This diversity of media sources has opened fresh paths for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge, particularly those concerning India.

Often entwined with media coverage, political narratives also greatly influence public opinion. Often drawing on pre-existing grievances or perceived challenges to national sovereignty, political leaders and parties in Bangladesh have historically mobilized and legitimized using the India factor.

The interaction of these media and political narratives will be investigated in

this research to produce and sustain anti-Indian attitude in Bangladesh. It will also look at how outside factors—especially the US government—fit this intricate dynamic.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Examining the historical background that has created these impressions helps one to grasp the present situation of Bangladesh-India relations and the causes of anti-Indian attitude.

2.1 Independence and Partition

Complicated relations between the two countries originated in India's 1947 division and the later founding of East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). The anguish of the separation and the uprooting of millions of people left a lasting impression on the shared memory of both nations.

- 2.2 1971: Liberation War
- Many Bangladeshis felt thanks for India's backing of their country's independence fight against Pakistan in 1971. Still, it also planted the roots for later worries about Indian influence and meddling in Bangladesh's domestic affairs.

2.3 Problems Following Independence

Several problems surfaced in the years after independence that helped anti-Indian attitude to develop:

- Water sharing conflicts across rivers like the Teesta and the Ganges.

- Boundaries and enclaves provide problems.
- Trade imbalances and perceived financial supremacy
- Charges of Indian backing for moves for separation from the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Table 1: Key Historical Events Shaping Bangladesh-India Relations

Year	Event	Impact on Relations
1947	Partition of India	Creation of East Pakistan (later Bangladesh)
1971	Bangladesh Liberation War	Indian support for Bangladesh's independence
1972	Signing of Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship	Concerns about Indian influence in Bangladesh
1975	Assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman	Shift in Bangladesh's foreign policy orientation
1996	Ganges Water Sharing Treaty	Partial resolution of water dispute, but concerns remain
2015	Land Boundary Agreement	Resolution of border demarcation issues

3. MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN BANGLADESH

Since Bangladesh's independence, the media environment of that nation has changed significantly. Analyzing the influence of the media sector on public opinion depends on an awareness of its dynamics and structure.

3.1 Print News Sources

Bangladesh boasts a thriving print media industry with daily newspapers and periodicals in Bengali and English. Public debate on national and international problems is much shaped by prominent newspapers as Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, and Ittefaq.

3.2 Television

Since private channels were first launched in the 1990s, the television industry has experienced explosive expansion. For many Bangladeshis, news outlets including ATN Bangla, Somoy TV, and Ekattor TV have grown to be crucial sources of information and viewpoint.

3.3 Social Networks and Online Media

The emergence of social media channels and internet news portals has transformed information flow in Bangladesh. Often with less editorial control than conventional media, platforms like Facebook and YouTube have grown to be major venues for distributing news and opinions.

Table 2: Media Landscape in Bangladesh

Media Type	Key Players	Reach and Influence
Print	Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Ittefaq	High among educated urban population
Television	ATN Bangla, Somoy TV, Ekattor TV	Widespread across urban and rural areas
Online News Portals	bdnews24.com, banglanews24.com	Growing influence, especially among youth
Social Media	Facebook, YouTube	Rapidly increasing, platform for diverse opinions

4. POLITICAL NARRATIVES AND ANTI-INDIA SENTIMENT

Public opinion on foreign policy concerns including relations with India is greatly shaped by political narratives. This part looks at how several political players in Bangladesh have helped to build and sustain anti-Indian attitude.

4.1 Notable Political Parties

Historically, the two main political parties in Bangladesh—the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL)—have handled relations with India in somewhat different ways.

Emphasizing historical links and collaboration, Awami League is usually considered as more pro-India.

Often taking a more dubious view of India, Bangladesh Nationalist Party emphasizes national interests and sovereignty.

4.2 Rhetoric and Mobilization Strategies

Political parties have mobilized support and attacked rivals using several rhetorical devices:

- Framing problems like water sharing and border conflicts as challenges to

national sovereignty, helps to highlight national interest.

- Emphasizing trade disparities and claimed economic exploitation by India, economic supremacy
- Cultural imperialism: Expressing worries on how Bangladeshi society is absorbing Indian culture.

Table 3: Political Parties and Their Stance on India

Political Party	General Stance on India	Key Narratives
Awami League	Generally pro-India	Historical ties, regional cooperation
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	Skeptical of India	Sovereignty, national interest
Jamaat-e-Islami	Anti-India	Islamic identity, cultural threat

5. MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF INDIA

The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of India in Bangladesh. This section analyzes how different media outlets represent India and Indian-related issues.

5.1 Media Reports

Examining news coverage exposes various trends in the way Bangladeshis present India:

- Extensive coverage of border killings and conflicts, frequently with expressive language,
- Economic concerns: Emphasize trade disparities and supposed unfair competition from Indian companies.
- Regular documentation of conflicts over river water sharing—especially the Teesta River issue—should help.
- Cultural influence: Mixed coverage, with some sites voicing worries on the predominance of Indian culture in media and entertainment.

4.3 Islamist Parties

Often presenting India as a Hindu-majority nation endangering Bangladesh's Islamic identity, Islamist groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami have also helped to shape anti-India feeling.

5.2 Editorial stand

Media outlets' editorial stances on India varies as well:

- Often adopting a fair approach, mainstream media such as The Daily Star acknowledge both good and bad features of the partnership.
- Some sites, especially those allied with opposition parties, often take a more critical view of India.

5.3 Social Media and Online Commentary

Online forums and social media channels have grown to be crucial venues for the spread of anti-India narratives: quick dissemination of dubious knowledge and conspiracies of interpretation.

Echo chambers supporting already held prejudices and impressions.

More awareness of extremist points of view that might not find expression in mainstream media.

Table 4: Media Representation of India-related Issues

Issue	Positive Framing	Negative Framing
Border Management	Cooperation in tackling smuggling	Border killings, human rights violations
Economic Relations	Investment opportunities	Trade imbalance, market domination
Water Sharing	Diplomatic efforts for resolution	Deprivation of water resources
Cultural Exchange	Shared cultural heritage	Cultural imperialism, threat to local culture

6. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES: THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

As a worldwide superpower with major interests in South Asia, the United States has played a complicated part in determining the dynamics between Bangladesh and India. This part looks at how U.S. policies and actions have affected anti-Indian feeling in Bangladesh.

6.1 Strategic Needs

The United States approaches Bangladesh-India ties based on various strategic objectives in the area that affect its stance:

- Security cooperation and counterterrorism
- Market access and economic ties
- Juggling China's ever increasing sway in South Asia

6.2 Diplomatic Interaction

U.S. diplomatic activities in Bangladesh have sometimes sought to:

- Promote institutions and democratic procedures.
- Advocate regional harmony and cooperation.
- Talk about human rights issues.
- Sometimes these initiatives coincide with relations between Bangladesh and India, therefore shaping public impressions.

6.3 Military and Economic Help

U.S. military and financial support to Bangladesh has ramifications for the nation's relationship with India:

- Programs for development assistance and economic cooperation

- Military instruction and equipment sales
- The type and degree of this support can influence Bangladesh's public impressions of outside partners as well as its foreign policy orientation.

6.4 Public Diplomacy in Media

Media campaigns in Bangladesh and U.S. public diplomacy attempts could subtly affect opinions of India:

- Programs of educational and cultural interchange
- Support of civic society organizations and independent media
- Information distribution via media outlets supported by the United States government

Table 5: US Involvement in Bangladesh and Possible Effects on India Relations

Area of Involvement	U.S. Actions	Potential Impact on Bangladesh-India Relations
Diplomatic	High-level visits, statements on regional issues	May influence Bangladesh's foreign policy stance
Economic	Trade agreements, development assistance	Could affect economic dependence on India
Military	Training programs, equipment sales	May alter regional security dynamics
Public Diplomacy	Exchange programs, media initiatives	Potential to shape public perceptions of foreign relations

7. PUBLIC OPINION AND ANTI-INDIA SENTIMENT

Appreciating the degree and character of anti-Indian sentiment in Bangladesh depends on knowing popular opinion. This part looks at public opinions about India based on surveys and other markers.

7.1: Survey Information

Examining the public opinion polls reveals complicated and perhaps contradicting attitudes:

- Thanks for India's part in the 1971 Liberation War.
- worries about trade imbalances, water sharing, and border problems
- Different opinions on cultural contacts and influences

7.2 Generation Variances

Regarding India, there seem to be generational variations in opinions:

- Inspired by memories of 1971, older generations sometimes have more favorable opinions.
- Younger generations shaped by modern events and media narratives could be more critical.

7.3 Urban-Rural Difference

Variations in perspective among urban and rural populations:

- Urban dwellers could come across more Indian goods and culture.
- Problems like border conflicts and water disputes could have larger impact on rural communities.

Table 6: Elements Affecting Public Viewpoint of India

Factor	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Historical Memory	1971 Liberation War support	Partition, border disputes
Economic Relations	Job opportunities, access to goods	Trade imbalance, economic competition
Cultural Ties	Shared language and cultural heritage	Perceived cultural dominance
Geopolitical Issues	Regional cooperation	Water sharing disputes, perceived interference

8. CASE STUDIES

This section offers two case studies of major events or situations in Bangladesh-India relations to show the intricate interaction of media, political narratives, and popular opinion in forming anti-India attitude.

8.1 Case Study 1: Share of Teesta River Water Conflict

One major cause of conflict between Bangladesh and India has been their long-standing argument over Teesta River sharing. This case study looks at how public attitude has been shaped by the way the problem has been presented in Bangladeshi media and political speech.

Main points:

- Media coverage of the problem including terminology used and argument framing in terms
- Political declarations and hyperbole from many sides
- Public responses and demonstrations pertaining to the water sharing concern

- examination of how this problem has fueled more general anti-Indian attitude

8.2 Case Study 2: Crisis in 2019 Onions

India's prohibition on onion exports in 2019 caused a serious scarcity and price increase in Bangladesh that set public indignation and diplomatic conflicts. This case study investigates how public impressions of India were shaped by media and political narratives' portrayal of this event.

Essential features:

- Crisis media coverage included public responses and editorial positions
- Political reactions and rhetoric of Bangladeshi leaders
- Public mood and social media debate
- Examination of how this economic problem fuelled more general anti-Indian myths

Table 7: Comparative Study Analysis

Aspect	Teesta Water Dispute	2019 Onion Crisis
Duration	Long-standing issue	Short-term crisis
Primary Domain	Environmental, Geopolitical	Economic
Media Framing	Sovereignty, resource rights	Economic dependence, vulnerability
Political Rhetoric	National interest, bilateral relations	Food security, economic policy
Public Reaction	Sustained concern, occasional protests	Immediate outrage, price concerns
Impact on Sentiment	Gradual build-up of resentment	Sharp, but potentially short-lived impact

9. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results of earlier sections are compiled in this part to offer a thorough investigation of how political narratives and media help to shape anti-Indian attitude in Bangladesh.

9.1 Interplay of Political Narratives and Media

Analysis of how media coverage either magnifies or reduces political discourse

Examining how social media could spread and support anti-Indian narratives

Talk on how political affiliations and media ownership affect coverage of problems connected to India.

9.2 Modern Problems and Historical Memory

- Examining how historical events still influence present impressions
- Analysis of how modern problems are presented inside historical accounts
- Nine.3 Economic Aspects
- Talk about how economic problems—including trade imbalances and supposed competition—help to fuel anti-Indian attitude.
- Examination of how media shapes public perspective of economic relations with India

9.4 Cultural Motion

- Analyzing the several opinions of Indian cultural impact in Bangladesh

- Examination of how political debate and media present worries about cultural dominance

9.5 Outside influences

- Talk on how American engagement in the area influences public opinions and Bangladesh-India ties indirectly.
- Examination of the possibility for outside players to aggravate or lessen anti-Indian attitude

9.6 Consequences for Dual Relations

- Analysis of how anti-Indian attitude influences bilateral diplomatic ties and collaboration
- Review of the difficulties negative public opinion presents for legislators on both sides

Table 8: Elements Affecting Anti-Indian Attitude in Bangladesh

Factor	Media Role	Political Narrative	Public Impact
Historical Issues	Reinforcement of historical grievances	Use of historical references in rhetoric	Shaping of collective memory
Economic Relations	Highlighting of trade imbalances	Emphasis on economic sovereignty	Concerns about economic vulnerability
Border Disputes	Extensive coverage of incidents	Framing as national security issue	Heightened sense of threat
Cultural Influence	Debates on cultural identity	Politicization of cultural issues	Ambivalence towards Indian culture
Water Sharing	Focus on resource scarcity	Sovereignty and rights rhetoric	Perception of India as unfair neighbor

10. CONCLUSION

The complicated interactions of media, political narratives, and outside factors in forming anti-India attitude in Bangladesh have been investigated in this research. The study shows that although geopolitical reality and historical background shape this attitude, modern media discourse and political rhetoric are rather important in supporting and occasionally aggravating these impressions.

Important results include:

- Bangladesh's media scene offers several outlets for the sharing of India-related stories thanks to its varied mix of old and modern media outlets.
- Using the "India factor" as a tool for mobilization and legitimizing, political parties and leaders sometimes help to sustain anti-Indian sentiment by their actions.
- Negative opinion of India stems mostly from economic problems, including trade imbalances and apparent market dominance.
- The two countries' cultural ties show a complicated dynamic whereby shared history is sometimes subordinated to worries about cultural supremacy.
- External factors, especially the United States' role, add still another level of

complexity to the Bangladesh-India relationship and public opinion.

- Often elevating negative narratives and conspiracy theories, social media and online platforms have become potent weapons for changing public opinion.
- The continuation of anti-Indian attitude in Bangladesh poses difficulties for regional stability and bilateral relations. Dealing with this problem will call for coordinated efforts among legislators, journalists, and civil society in both nations to advance more complex and nuanced narratives.

Next studies might concentrate on:

- Creating plans to support more fair coverage of India-related concerns in Bangladesh
- Investigating possibilities for cultural and educational interactions to help the two countries develop closer understanding
- Investigating how regional cooperation projects could help to reduce unfavorable impressions
- Examining how social media shapes public opinion development in the framework of world affairs

In essence, even if structural and historical elements fuel anti-Indian attitude in Bangladesh, it is impossible to overestimate the influence of media and

political narratives in forming these opinions. Improving bilateral relations and encouraging regional stability in South Asia depend on a more sophisticated knowledge of these processes.

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