Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh: Aspirations for inclusive development and regional cooperation

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Abstract: This study underlines the gaps, possible prospects, and challenges of Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh for inclusive development and regional cooperation. Japan’s contribution has been favourably significant in considering the future dynamics of inclusive development and regional cooperation as an area of study. Since its independence in 1972, Japan has been Bangladesh’s number one bilateral development partner. The amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) exceeds all previous records and possibly ensures peace, stability, and development in Bangladesh. Japan contributed to the development policy formulation in Bangladesh. Moreover, this research attempts to identify Bangladesh’s development pathways to avoid drawbacks and ensure the development trends through regional cooperation. This study was developed based on regional integration policy theory to explain regional integration and development relations. Japan’s contribution as an area of study might transform the Japanese experience to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh, as there is an existing knowledge gap regarding the impact of Japan’s assistance on Bangladesh’s development and nation-building. The objective of this study is to fill...
the gap. The study follows a qualitative research methodology and uses interviews, document analysis, and archival research as data collection methods. From the findings, it can be seen that Japan’s assistance is tremendously helping Bangladesh’s development and nation-building process. Finally, this study speculates a new model for inclusive development of Bangladesh based on the Japanese experiences to strengthen regional cooperation.

**Subjects: Foreign Policy; Development Studies; Sustainable Development**

**Keywords: Japan’s contribution; Bangladesh-Japan relations; inclusive development; regional cooperation**

**1. Introduction**

Japan is the sole largest investor in Bangladesh after its independence in 1971. Soon after the liberation war ended and Bangladesh got its sovereignty, Japan gave its recognition on 10 February 1972. This day is remarkable for initiating the bilateral cooperative relations between Bangladesh and Japan. Both countries are celebrating the 50th anniversary of this amicable friendship this year. During these years of friendship, Bangladesh received significant assistance from Japan, which supported Bangladesh in nation-building. Recently, Japan has started an initiative with massive possibilities to support Bangladesh in infrastructure development, regional cooperation, and becoming an economic miracle. In this capacity, Japan contributes to operating as catalysts, facilitators, role players, and ambassadors in Bangladesh, who will be the change-maker in the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh. Japan’s contribution as an area of study will show the reflections of Japan, which might be proved crucial for Bangladesh in the development process (Moni, 2006). Japan has been investing in Bangladesh for about five decades; however, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is still incapable of utilising foreign investment because of various challenges related to governance. Japan's contribution can play a significant role in assisting the government through the developmental project strategy, investment, policymaking, and supporting the trade and business in the South Asian region (Youn, 2001). Japan is also providing scholarships to Bangladeshi students to go to Japan and learn about Japan in person and promote Japanese culture to Bangladesh.

Furthermore, Japan is contributing to functional possibilities by providing chances to the students to visit Japan to expand their knowledge horizon regarding Japanology to contribute to the development process of Bangladesh. Moreover, Japan will assist pioneer Bangladesh in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting Bangladesh as a considerable economic power in the South Asian and Indo-Pacific regions. One factor’s contribution can significantly impact further facilitating the initiatives taken by the Japanese side. This factor is the knowledge dissemination on Japan or the study of Japanese Studies (Harootunian, 2019). The study of Japanese Studies aims to create Japanologists, considering the comprehensive analysis of social sciences and humanities disciplines such as Japanese economics, politics, society, history, philosophy, international relations, science and technology, art and culture, language, and literature (Bownas, 2005). There are multiple studies on the economic benefits provided by Japan to Bangladesh. However, there is close to little work on the impact of these benefits on Bangladesh’s development and nation-building. This article aims to showcase that Japan’s contribution would support Bangladesh in becoming a new model nation for its impressive development through regional cooperation.

**2. Literature review and background**

**2.1. Japanese studies and the strengthening of Japan-Bangladesh relation**

In Bangladesh, Japan’s contribution is considerably distinct and considered a more policy-focused area study Japan. Regarding the Japanese approach to area studies, some researchers specialising
in South Asian and Southeast Asian studies in Bangladesh use the term area studies (jiyoku genkyu) to refer to a technique for researching emerging areas. Apart from being a general tendency globally, area studies in Bangladesh refer to studying in a country or region. Figure 1 shows that Japan’s contribution to education can be divided into three eras: guiding foreign nationals to Japan to understand the Japanese culture and language until the late 19th century, Japan’s contribution to education as an imperial instrument until 1945, and Japanese Studies education as a component of global interaction following 1945 (Bownas, 2005). Globally, many universities have started offering Japanese Studies alongside content-based courses in social sciences, although the courses in social sciences and learning the Japanese language often intermingled in the classroom. Japanese language skills are a typical requirement for researching Japan, Japanese development strategy, and Japan-linked disciplines. Japanese Studies courses are becoming increasingly popular in the Bangladeshi higher education system to learn about Japan and Japanese society (Alam et al., 2022). In 1994, Japan Study Center was established at the University of Dhaka to research and study Japan. In 2017, it evolved into a complete undergraduate discipline with comprehensive knowledge that focuses entirely on the whole of Japan. Every element of Japan, its politics, economy, society, culture, history, and foreign affairs have been researched and studied in the Japanese Studies undergraduate and postgraduate programs (Ogawa & Seaton, 2021). Presently, Japan’s contribution is considered the main critical issue in understanding the development pattern of Bangladesh through inclusive development.

Area studies have grown in prominence during the previous decade, renowned academia. The importance of area studies has expanded significantly within the social science context. Area studies epitomise inter-and multidisciplinary research by “propensity and teaching” specialists in a specific country or region. By emphasising a “multidisciplinary viewpoint,” area studies can provide a comprehensive grasp of another nation, its economy, culture, and other social dynamics typically lacking in other conventional social science fields. Many Japanologists regard area studies as connected to the evolution of international relations and politics and believe that Asian studies are a legitimate subfield of geopolitics. Experts generally divide the study area into distinct disciplines and then strive to integrate the research findings into an interdisciplinary point of view. For them, what is referred to as “area studies” is not the subject of inquiry but a methodology for studying a country or a geographic area (Basedau & Köllner, 2007). Again, some area studies experts in Bangladesh address the research of a country or a society in developing countries through the lens of “area studies.” However, one should not focus just on society but on a sovereign state and society as a whole and from an interdisciplinary point of view to understand the governance structure.

Japan is a miracle all over the globe for being the third-largest economy worldwide, with less than 30% arable land, without any significant resources and domestic production. This country is
prone to earthquakes and many other natural disasters, and two atomic bombs hit them due to World War II. Still, by the 1960s, Japan became the world’s second-largest economy after the USA. It is still an alarming query to the world: how Japan managed to turn them to this stage with those significant difficulties. On the other hand, Bangladesh has a large amount of cultivable land, natural resources, human capital, cheap labour rates, and an excellent geopolitical location; still, the economic situation of Bangladesh is not so promising by global standards. Contrary, Bangladesh is following the road map of Japan to achieve economic growth and complete the goal of becoming a developed country by 2041. However, the success of Japan is not a theory; it is the characteristics, cultures, and norms of the Japanese that Bangladesh should learn and practice accordingly to achieve the path of success and inclusive development.

Japan contributed to pre- and post-independent Bangladesh. Japan declared Bangladesh as a sovereign nation on 10 February 1972, and that day is regarded as the start of Japan’s bilateral cordial and cooperative ties with Bangladesh. Since then, Japan has been the most significant contributor to Bangladesh’s war-devastated infrastructural development. In South Asia, Japan’s investment in Bangladesh is second most extensive after India. Figure 2 shows the classifications of Japanese Studies in Bangladesh. This multidisciplinary subject teaches about Japan’s overall view, mainly its development, people, their way of reacting, culture, social settings, and political situations. This research is crucial for Bangladesh to understand the Japanese, which is also significant for conducting trade relations with Japan and maintaining a smooth bilateral relationship. The graduates of Japanese Studies from Bangladesh will be the representatives of Japan in Bangladesh, who can contribute to Bangladesh’s development using Japan’s experiences (Bownas, 2005).

2.2. Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh
Since the independence of Bangladesh, Japan has been the most dynamic and cooperative development partner and contributor to Bangladesh. Since 1972, the diplomatic journey has been continuing smoothly. Bangladesh is still a “soft state,” but it has become more resilient with time. Statistical data show that Bangladesh has dealt with the natural disasters afflicting this deltaic country with a funnel-
shaped coastal area in the Bay of Bengal in the south (Chowdhury, 2008). Numerous Japanese firms and organisations currently operate in Bangladesh, necessitating many people to act as a “bridge” between the two nations. Japanese Studies programs in Bangladesh will generate several well-versed chances in various fields for development. Also, as Japan's population has been drastically declining in recent years, the country is in critical need of a skilled workforce. Bangladeshi graduates with an adequate grasp of Japanese Studies and the necessary skills might be sent to Japan, gaining from professional human resources (Chowdhury, 2008; Coulmas, 2007).

Additionally, it would benefit Bangladesh's economy by lowering the number of jobless and educated people. Japan is also a significant soft power in today's world. Studying it to appreciate Japan's ideology, global influence entirely, and other characteristics is critical. Additionally, Japan is one of the few countries that has witnessed rapid economic expansion and industrialisation. Bangladesh may learn from Japan's experience and policies in addressing the SDGs through Japan's contribution, which can be seen in Figure 3.

Along with its geographic characteristics, Bangladesh should be able to overcome many issues to elevate the solid partnership with Japan for regional cooperation. Japan has been investing billions of dollars in Bangladesh to strengthen its bilateral relations because Japan has seen several possibilities in the land of Bangladesh with high population growth as human resources, low labour cost, natural resources, and productive lands. Besides, Japanese companies are facing difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic, including a lack of information and adequate support, which may discourage the investing dynamics of Japan. Japanese investors are prevented from opening a business in Bangladesh due to a culture of procedural delays at government offices and frequent policy changes. In 2020, Approximately 322 Japanese companies were operating in Bangladesh, with investments of 386 million USD. Only 82 Japanese companies used in the country just a decade ago. The number has increased in the last ten years; however, due to the lack of good governance and bureaucratic dilemma, Japanese companies are becoming discouraged from investing, contributing, and working in Bangladesh, which might be the core development concern for Bangladesh's development (The Daily Star, 2022).

The above-stated literature review and background showcase the importance of Japanese Studies and Japan's contribution to Bangladesh. However, there is little to no study on the impact of Japanese Studies and Japan's contribution toward Bangladesh's development and nation-building. Hence, there is a gap, which this study taps to fill in.

3. Theoretical framework and propositions
Japan's potential contribution to succeeding in the South Asian regional cooperation is a crucial issue considering the global challenges. This research is focused on Japan as a historical case study of economic development and then as the prototype of a quickly rising post-war follower economy for regional cooperation and inclusive development. These interests inevitably resulted in examining government monetary policy as Japan developed into what economists and policymakers call a “big
“economic” in the early 1970s. As a series of trade and other economic frictions developed and persisted, research interest shifted increasingly to the nature, causes, and implications of Japan’s global and bilateral balances. Japan’s rapidly growing global creditor position and its companies’ foreign direct investment for socio-economic development. Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh can be explained exclusively based on the regional cooperation theory to strengthen the regional development goals of Bangladesh, as these two nations from different regions have been maintaining a cooperative relationship for five decades. Japan supported Bangladesh after its independence and supported to stand up after the disaster of the liberation war for nation-building with infrastructural development assistance.

Japanese investment in Bangladesh for economic development, human resource development, and improving human lifestyle can be argued as regional cooperation. A wide variety of mainstream regional cooperation and integration theories will be discussed in explaining the cooperative relations between Japan and Bangladesh. This research can be considered the first way to describe the regional cooperation theory in the context of Bangladesh in succeeding regional cooperation. The level of analysis categorises hypotheses based on whether they believe that the significant factors of regional development are found either inside or outside the geographic area. Both sorts are considered in many theories, and no systematic distinction is made. Regionalism’s emergence, outcome, and impacts can be influenced by the rationalist or social constructivist logic of social interaction. In contrast to many rationalist perspectives, which exclusively emphasise formal institutions’ importance, social constructivist approaches aim to influence widely held ideas, social norms, and behavioural practices, as seen in Figure Figure 4.

The logic of regional cooperation can be determined based on exogenous and endogenous variables, which is essential to estimate through rationalist and constructivist considerations. Regional integration is inevitable for comprehensive development to avert future global economic crises. Furthermore, according to state-centred theories, states play a central role in establishing regional institutions. Rather than relying solely on states to define preferences or exert pressure and influence them, create regional institutes. Approaches based on society highlight the importance of transnational civil society actors and markets actively participating in creating new regional institutions, whether or not states are directly involved (Börzel, 2016). As a result, this research argued the regional cooperation theory applied to understand the future development dynamics in the region and the importance of Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh.

4. Methodology

This research was followed by the qualitative method through semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs). Qualitative research is a method of analysis that elicits data through open-ended and interpersonal contact. In this research, twenty-five respondents were selected purposively to address the research objectives. This approach is concerned with “what” individuals believe and “why” they believe to comprehend the data analysis, coding, and theme development. Further, this research enables respondents to explore deeper into participants’ replies and ask more curious questions. A benefit of this method is that it provides an excellent chance to elicit precise information about what people think and why they believe it. This research employed an in-
depth interview to acquire exact information about development trends in Bangladesh. Two main sources of data—primary and secondary—were used to compile these research findings. Three distinct stakeholder groups have been identified for IDIs: academics affiliated with the Japanese Studies or Asian Studies programs, Japan-related corporate sectors, most notably the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), 2018, and the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI), and intellectuals from higher education institutions. The IDIs were administered using a semi-structured questionnaire with a more open-ended question.

Regarding ethics, respondents from IDIs were instructed on the research objective, and agreement was obtained for audio recording and reference materials. The sample selection was made purposefully, and the participants were mainly academicians or Japanese citizens living in Bangladesh. The samples were selected due to their extensive knowledge regarding the Japan-Bangladesh relationship.

Additionally, to better understand current knowledge about Japan's Contribution, secondary data were gathered from various sources, including literature, journals, and internet sites, to complement the primary in-depth interview findings through triangulation. The purpose is to analyse Japan's contribution to South Asian regional cooperation. The area under consideration is mostly Bangladesh and a few South Asian and Southeast Asian neighbours (Ahmed et al., 2019). Japan's contribution can be viewed through their education and research arena to understand the comprehensive development in Bangladesh.

5. Findings
These research findings are analysed through theme development based on data coding employing the in-depth interview of the respondents. One of the main goals of Japan's contribution is to broaden the knowledge and understanding of Japanese Studies and apply that information to the host nation's development. However, it is vital to examine the possible advantages of Japan's contribution to Bangladesh to comprehend the development trend for regional cooperation. The summary of the findings is illustrated in Figure 5.

5.1. Japan as Bangladesh’s key development partner
After the establishment of Japan-Bangladesh diplomatic relations on 10 February 1972, Japan has been supporting Bangladesh endlessly. The consequence of the war destroyed Bangladesh; from that situation, Japan kept straightening Bangladesh’s backbone. Japan has continuously supported Bangladesh through grants, loans, and technical assistance. Japan has been investing in Bangladesh for both infrastructural development and economic development. One respondent mentioned, “These ODAs have a lot to contribute to the overall socio-economic development of Bangladesh, which needs to be studied. Japanologists can play a role in determining the extent to which aid can be more effective in specific sectors. By 2022, Bangladesh is getting the second-
highest ODA from Japan after India in South Asia. Many countries invest in Bangladesh; however, Japan is considered the most significant development partner, as mentioned by the respondent.

5.2. Japan as the change maker for Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the budget for the fiscal year was announced in June 2021. Bangladesh’s government always gets assistance from Japan to support the budget. As a developing country, Bangladesh’s current financial condition cannot run the budget without external support from Japan. International assistance, particularly Japanese aid, is critical to Bangladesh’s economic development to understand real-life experiences. There is a need for more research on this framework in the Japanese Studies Discipline. Japan provides Bangladesh with financial support and sharing experience to gain economic growth and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Bangladesh’s government brilliantly utilised Japanese assistance to graduate from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and become a developing country by 2041 through inclusive development. Japan’s contribution will act as the change-maker for the development of Bangladesh.

5.3. Japan is working to ensure peace and stability

Japan is one of the top contributors to the United Nations Peace Keeping Operation (UNPKO). Japan has played a significant role in maintaining global peace and stability. Japan is also supporting Bangladesh to preserve peace and tranquility because Japan is investing in Bangladesh, and they have a considerable probability of gaining from Bangladesh by trade and business. However, suppose peace and stability are hindered in Bangladesh. In that case, its development will be stopped, Japanese trade and business will be massively interrupted, and they might confront a substantial loss. Japan has assisted Bangladesh in establishing the Peace Building Centre in Dhaka. Further, one respondent mentioned that “peace is inevitable for stable economic growth and prosperity.”

5.4. Human capital development as a top priority

Bangladesh has a massive population despite the small land area. It might be challenging for Bangladesh if people stay unemployed or unskilled to support economic development; Japan is primarily focusing on the human capital development of Bangladesh. It is a high priority to Japan because the massive population in the productive land can provide them with tremendous trade and business. According to reports, the Japanese government has allocated USD 4.21 million to Bangladesh for the project “The Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS)” implemented in 2021. Furthermore, Japan invested USD 23 million for another project entitled “The Governance
and Management Research and Training Facility Improvement Project.” Again, experts mainly emphasise industry-academia collaboration to meet the market demand and the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Besides, Japan’s contribution could bridge industry-academia relations for decent employment and prolong human resources for inclusive development in the region.

5.5. Bangladesh as regional business hub
Japan is currently focusing on the South Asian region for its future market possibilities. It should be mentioned that Bangladesh now has more than 21 Japanese firms functioning within export processing zones (EPZs) and 40 outside EPZs, with YKK being the most prominent Japanese investor working at the Dhaka EPZ. South Asia will be a good market for Japan for export and import, including raw materials. Bangladesh, located near the Bay of Bengal, is advantageous as Japan can connect with other South Asian countries through Bangladesh by sea route. Japan also supports Bangladesh in developing its seaports to become a regional business hub among the Asian Countries. Japan’s contribution offers several opportunities to play significant roles in the future evolution of Japan’s business with Bangladesh and South Asia. Japan is investing in Bangladesh to develop Matarbari, Cox’s Bazar, as the country’s first deep seaport. Japan is also supporting the BIG-B, making Bangladesh one of the most valuable nations in this region in the economy, industry, and business.

5.6. Cooperation through promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)
Japan intends to engage constructively with Bangladesh to advance its concepts such as the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and an open market economy. It stressed that the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) would help Bangladesh’s sustainable progress. Japan is fostering practical collaboration with Bangladesh to further FOIP’s regional peace, stability, and development goal. The BIG-B project supported by Japan is to assist Bangladesh in creating its own identity in the Indo-Pacific region as an economic power. The FOIP will give massive advantages to Bangladesh for future economic development. Knowledge of Japan’s contribution will assist in critically assessing Bangladesh and its regional geopolitics to enhance peace, security, and stability.

5.7. Expand people to people exchange
To build a bridge between Japan and Bangladesh, Japan provides various kinds of scholarships and exchange opportunities for Bangladeshi. Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) offers many scholarships for meritorious Bangladeshi students. The exchange program between these two countries is also available, where students exchange universities for a particular time or limited semesters. Japan took this initiative to exchange both countries’ cultures while gathering knowledge about each other and creating social change and development agents. More than 100 Japanese universities have signed up for the exchange program with Bangladeshi universities. There is no other way to grasp Japanese Studies through these exchange programs better learn. Bangladesh and Japan’s governments should promote the exchange program, emphasising the social exchange for development.

5.8. Japan’s contribution to the inclusive development of Bangladesh
Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh is crucial for improving bilateral connections and reaping the advantages of a comprehensive collaboration as the leading development partner. Japan assists Bangladesh in various ways, including economic growth, human capital development, technical advancement, and disaster risk management. From the very beginning of diplomatic correspondence, Japan has promised to accelerate the path of achieving the SDGs of Bangladesh. Japan proposed collaborating with Bangladesh to develop the southern Chattogram area, focusing on the Matarbari projects, which are being constructed. Japan’s The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (Big-B) initiative plan can connect the entire region to strengthen ties (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 2014). Some consider Japan a solid and constant development Partner of Bangladesh, especially in achieving SDGs (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2019). For a long time, Japan has been contributing to Bangladesh with diverse technological assistance, which has proved to be highly beneficial to the country’s overall development. Japanologists might contribute a lot to Bangladesh’s technological development by replicating Japan’s technological advancement. If all its successful policies are
Table 1. Contemporary projects of Japan in Bangladesh for development

| Projects Name                                                      | Budget (In Million USD) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chattogram—Cox’s Bazar Highway Improvement Project (E/S)           | 16.6                    |
| Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit Development Project (IV)                 | 630.3                   |
| Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit Development Project (Line 5 Northern Route) (I) | 486.1                   |
| Food Value Chain Improvement Project                              | 97.9                    |
| Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport Expansion Project (II)      | 697.9                   |
| Jamuna Railway Bridge Construction Project (II)                   | 776.2                   |
| Matarbari Port Development Project                                | 206.7                   |
| Mirsarai Economic Zone                                             | 59.2                    |
| Urban Development and City Governance Project                     | 246.2                   |

Source: Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh, (n.d.).

appropriately implemented, trade and business with Japan and among the regions will flourish. Bangladesh will hugely benefit from receiving technical assistance from Japan to achieve inclusive development, as seen in Table 1.

Japan has been Asia’s largest ODA (Official Development Assistance) provider since 1978. Moreover, Asia receives about two-thirds of Japan’s $10 billion yearly ODA commitment, making it the world’s largest ODA donor. Japan is the largest and steady foreign aid partner with ongoing projects, costing USD 1.7 billion in Matarbari Coal and Port projects, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) routes, and preventing non-communicable diseases.

These massive projects will add new dynamics to the journey of achieving SDGs. Regarding aid disbursement, Japan has surpassed the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank as Bangladesh’s most important lender this fiscal year. According to officials of the Economic Relations Division (ERD), in 2020–21, the top bilateral donor to the nation provided USD 714.44 million in assistance, over twice the amount supplied by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank collectively. The World Bank released USD 414 million during the same period, while the Asian Development Bank released USD 300 million (Kabir, 2021). Japan’s development partner, the JICA, provided Bangladesh with USD 1.69 billion in FY2020. Bangladesh received USD 14.25 billion in aid from Japan from FY2010 to FY2020. Japan contributes to Bangladesh’s aspirations to build a “just, democratic, and affluent” society that is less reliant on foreign aid.

The JICA is sponsoring several critical and high-priority projects in Bangladesh, including the third terminal at the capital’s Shahjalal International Airport, the Dhaka Metrorail system, and a rail bridge over the massive Jamuna River. Moreover, Japan is contributing to constructing and developing many Economic Zones in Bangladesh, with different titles such as Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). These economic zones might have contributed to Bangladesh’s economic progress to achieve the SDGs through socio-economic development in the coming years. Meanwhile, JICA has agreed to sign the world’s largest-ever package of Official Development Assistance (ODA), USD 3.2 billion, to fund seven projects run by the Bangladesh government, with a 30-year maturity, it charges a 0.65% interest rate. Bangladesh has also been granted a ten-year grace period on loans already taken out. The distribution pattern in terms of the amount is balanced, serving the purpose of each form. Japanologists are well endowed to act as a facilitator in maximising the impact of ODA, and Japanologists from Bangladesh, with their keen knowledge about the subject matter of Japanese values, norms, customs, and culture, can be instrumental in advocating further expansion of ODA from the Japanese government.
5.9. Japanese contribution to comprehensive regional cooperation

Globally, Japan is treated as an economic miracle and wonder in enhancing cooperative relations with the most meaningful and possible countries. Japanese foreign policy is a lesson for Bangladesh to establish itself as an economic miracle in South Asia and the rest of the world. With a high population of about 160 million, Bangladesh has abundant, low-cost, high-quality labour. Additionally, it has significant market potential, attracting many other countries to invest in Bangladesh. Figure Figure 6 shows that from 57 in 2005 to 322 in 2020, the number of Japanese-affiliated enterprises has dramatically expanded, representing the high Japanese investment interest in Bangladesh for regional cooperation.

Additionally, the “Japan-Bangladesh Comprehensive Partnership” represents a significant step toward establishing bilateral solid partnerships and collaboration on regional and international issues. Bangladesh is trying to establish cooperative relations with other South Asian nations to achieve economic gain and prosperity. In this context, Japanese Studies in Bangladesh contributed to Japan's knowledge and experiences in constructing a cooperative regional integrated environment through inclusive development. Further, Japan’s contribution has shown exceptional potential for developing a workforce suitable for national and international employers in applying the Japanese strategy. Japan’s contribution to education prepares students for various professional paths, including research, business careers, civil service positions such as diplomatic and interpreter positions, and many more (Ahmad, 2016).

Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh supports understanding and finding the issues behind the regional trade and cooperation difficulties in the South Asian context. It will also keep increasing the cooperation of Bangladesh with other countries and establishing a robust bilateral relationship (Jain, 1997). For every country, the investment atmosphere is vital in attracting investors. In Bangladesh, the financial studies of foreign investors have speculated various challenges. Lack of good governance, inadequate skilled human resources for managing sector, and high tax rate hinder Japanese investment pathway, which the company often complain about their difficulties in business operations. Japan’s contribution may play a significant role in transferring technology, creating a Japanese working ambience, providing banking facilities, and enhancing organisational human resources to mitigate some of these obstacles. A Japanologist with appropriate knowledge can address the existing issues and predict future feasibilities. As the investment atmosphere is remarkable, Japan’s contribution can form a lucrative ambience for Bangladesh in the South Asian region (Chua, 2017). Japan’s contribution to South and Southeast Asia has considerable potential for research and re-explore. The future appears optimistic if South and Southeast Asia stay vigilant and conscious of our respective strengths and flaws through cooperation.

6. Discussion

Japanese contribution has entered a new phase of fast expansion in Bangladesh to translate the footprints of inclusive development and regional cooperation (Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh, n.d.). Additionally, there is an increasing demand for understanding the Japanese development experience at educational levels below university. There is an enormous growth in Japanese contribution, such as publishing Japanese-related materials, and increased research interests indicate the importance of area studies (Ambaras, 2018; Alam, 2022).). External financing, notably from Japan, developed an enormously powerful Japan position within the rising Asia Pacific superpower status. Various governmental policies and awoke and engaged research community all contributed to the regional cooperation expansion and, in some instances, assisted in institution-building. A cursory investigation of the degree of inclusion and exclusion in research approaches and subjects among nations in the South Asian and Southeast Asian regions is always in discourse. Uncovers an extraordinary accumulation of interests in economic progress, cooperation, governance, and governmental policies, focusing on security and peace concerns, where the socio-cultural and intellectual facets are frequently overlooked.

As a developing country, Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh is limited by a lack of well-equipped databases and well-organised developmental research, which poses a challenge in translating
strategic development plans. Bangladesh requires a reconsideration of the importance of libraries and digital infrastructures in knowledge acquisition from Japan's contribution. In the post-Cold War era, Japanese assistance in this area has undergone a hidden predicament, defined by a burgeoning discipline devoid of intellectual and global significance for regional integration and development. To maximise the resources available for resolving this dilemma, an upper-level intellectual, academic, and cultural regulation forum in Bangladesh with a broader viewpoint is required to enhance the relationship to a new height. Additionally, the country provides a favourable environment for expanding the multimedia business, with a legal framework and next-generation telecommunications infrastructure.

There must be well-designed and methodical assessments and conferences on the state of the areas, their possible frameworks, and the intellectual communities’ contributions. There is a need for new paths in terms of a more neutral prominence on Japan’s contribution and multidisciplinary connections to the national and regional levels. The profitable investments and economic transformation facilitated by the corporate companies and Japan’s contribution have been plunged into another crisis by market mechanisms, particularly on professional matters: adverse effects on recruitment, retention of motivated and qualified personnel, and professionalisation progress. An inter-institutional and inter-country cooperation collaboration is essential and inevitable to address these difficulties in the development of Bangladesh. Japanese contribution that was anticipated during the next era enhancing to build modern forms of infrastructure and facilities, academic, social exchange, and physical collaborative exploratory study beyond Japan and current South Asian neighbours to include new regional integration. Advancement of experts interacting and forming professional associations is required, as is an interchange between the area and relevant to Japan’s contributions over the years.

Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh creates sustainable job opportunities through cooperation in supporting Bangladesh’s economy to achieve the SDGs. However, including China, many other foreign countries are focusing on Bangladesh, making a competitive environment for Japan and generating challenges for Japan’s contribution. Figure Figure 7 shows that China was the top foreign investor in Bangladesh in FY 2019, with a net inflow of USD 1159.42 million. The Netherlands emerged in second place with a net inflow of USD 802.84 million, following the United Kingdom, Singapore, the United States, Hong Kong, Norway, and India (Anwar, 2019). Trade and business, transport, and communication; textile and leather goods; pharmaceuticals; chemical; agricultural and fisheries; computer software; and IT operations are other key industries in which foreign investors have invested in this country (JETRO, 2018). Power, natural gas exploration and development, transportation, food processing, textiles, IT, leather, electronics, ceramics, light engineering, and other significant areas with competitive benefits for Japanese participation in Bangladesh.

![Figure 7. Foreign direct investment in Bangladesh.](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2138150)

Source: The Report of FDI Inflow in Bangladesh (2020).
Additionally, the agro-processing, light engineering, and digital financial services industries have attracted more foreign direct investment (Basedau & Köllner, 2007). Bangladesh’s geopolitical location, natural resources, and low-cost labour attract foreign countries to invest and develop bilateral and multilateral relations with Bangladesh. This circumstance is emerging very competitive and challenging for Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh.

The lack of worthy governance is another challenge to Bangladesh’s Japanese contribution. Bangladesh is undoubtedly affected by the issues of corruption, and the government is trying its best to eliminate it from society. This corruption dilemma is affecting the investment of Japanese companies in Bangladesh. Japanese people are ideologically influential and never compromise due to ethical considerations. So, the progress of many Japanese companies has been forcefully hindered due to traditional business processes and corruption (Abdin, 2015). Besides the lack of knowledge about Japan’s contribution to Bangladesh or area studies, students or their parents are not very interested in Japanese Studies, thinking that it might only focus on language and literature, and they might not get good opportunities here. Many do not understand what area studies mean and the benefits of studying (Harootunian & Sakai, 1999). Area studies are multidisciplinary and academic areas that focus on specific geographical, national/federal, or cultural regions.

Acceptance of simplistic Nihonjin-ron ideologies in humanities is considerably more significant to parents and students. Due to the young nature of the Japanese Studies discipline, the interaction with social sciences disciplines has not evolved enormously, considering this discipline is a language-focused subject. However, Japan’s contribution focus on the country’s economic growth, partnerships, and business management (Mehler, 2018). The relevance and purpose of Japanese contribution as a discipline of knowledge and as an educational platform for revitalising regional academic communities concerned with human and international issues should be examined and developed concerning other area studies. One option would be to conduct in-depth research on Japan’s contribution, and the importance of Japan’s contribution might subsidise the inclusive development of Bangladesh and future growth.

7. Limitations
This study cannot pinpoint the contribution of other factors that may further boost the Japan-Bangladesh relationship and the benefits Bangladesh receives from Japan. Hence, more research will be required.

8. Conclusion
Japan is a miracle for the world, one of the top economic powers, without significant natural resources, arable lands, and other natural resources. Globally, Japanese investments are getting attention to study and find out the core issues behind Japan’s marvellous success after the World War II explosion, to implement in their own countries to achieve economic development. This research finds that the trends of Japanese studies contribute to are essential factors for Bangladesh’s inclusive development. Furthermore, the Japanese engagement in Bangladesh shows that Japanese contributions create opportunities for succeeding in regional cooperation and challenges relating to Japanese Investments. Japanese contributions have proven to be very influential worldwide as a study discipline. Many countries and prominent universities have adopted the domain and have been researching and studying Japan for many decades. Japan has a sizable effect on Bangladesh’s growth due to its ever-friendy attitude and extraordinary industrial capacity. In the theoretical framework, it is evident that the increasing popularity of appreciating Japan’s contribution is essential for future regional cooperation among the South Asian Countries. As a result of adopting, Japanese contributions have shifted the dynamics of Bangladesh’s development through critical thinking about Japan’s development strategy. The trends in broader Japan-Bangladesh relations have significantly affected the successful implementation of Japanese contribution to Bangladesh. It is believed that Japan’s contribution might support Bangladesh to come out from various backlogs and challenges that the government is currently facing. This interchange of knowledge and thoughts between Japan and Bangladesh can deepen the two nations’ present socio-cultural, economic, and political ties. Japan’s contributions to Bangladesh have been reassessed positively considering Japan’s ties with Bangladesh and has a very fortunate opportunity to strengthen bilateral
relations and regional cooperation. By applying the Japanese developmental model, Bangladesh might become a significant economic power in the South Asian region.

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