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The emergence of Bangla Desh.

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**FIVE COLLEGE
DEPOSITORY**

EMERGENCE OF BANGLA DESH

A THESIS PRESENTED

by

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THE EMERGENCE OF BANGLA DESH

A Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

In December 1971 the State of Pakistan, established in 1947 as a result of the division of the Indian sub-continent, broke up. A secessionist movement aided by an Indian military invasion separated East Pakistan from West Pakistan.

What happened to Pakistan is indeed a matter of great interest to students of politics, and doubtless many studies of its various aspects will in time be undertaken. The secessionist movement in East Pakistan might eventually have succeeded, but it would have taken many more years. It is also possible that in due time a political settlement might have been made.

However, the immediate cause of Pakistan's dismemberment was the Indian invasion and victory. This invasion did not come without warning. India had become involved in the Pakistani civil war almost from the very beginning. The success of Indian intervention throws significant light on the role of force in India's foreign policy, the inefficacy of Pakistan's alliances, and most important the ineffectiveness of Pakistan's political order which was known for its non-responsiveness to the aspirations of the masses in

Pakistan. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to study, the break up of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangla Desh.

CHAPTER I
EAST PAKISTAN'S GROWING DISAFFECTION

Before going into the details of the East Pakistan crisis and its struggle for independence, it is essential to look at the historical developments which show that the conflict was not altogether new, that its roots were buried deep in the basic cultural, geographical, traditional and linguistic differences between the two wings of Pakistan. And to make matters still worse they were separated by a thousand miles of hostile territory, the only binding factor being that of religion. The Pakistani claim that the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent were a nation was one, "that the Indian nationalist could never concede and the Western observer could scarcely understand. Yet it is the only essential point behind the movement that led to Pakistan."¹

Pakistan was born as a full fledged nation in name but lacked what is perhaps the most essential attribute of any modern state, a strong industrial base. Almost all of the sub-continent's great resources of coal, iron, bauxite and other minerals were on the Indian side. The strongest economic

¹ Kieth B. Callard, Pakistan: A Political Study (London, 1968), p. 11

concentrations were in the great ports: Bombay, Calcutta and Madras which were all in India; only Karachi, a comparatively minor and more recently developed port was in Pakistan. Pakistan had only a few secondary industries like textiles, glass, leather and its resources were very inadequate. East Pakistan was also badly affected by the Partition. When Bengal was one unit, jute was a mainstay of the economy. More than three quarters of the world's raw jute was grown in East Bengal which became East Pakistan, but there was no jute mill: all of the jute mills were in a 60-mile strip along the Hoogly River north of Calcutta. Apart from jute East Pakistan had no other cash crop except tea. All the rice it grows it needs for its own people. East Pakistan had even less industry than West Pakistan.

Thus Pakistan was born in very unfavourable circumstances. "India inherited a working federal capital with the majority of the cabinet and other public servants willing to continue at their posts. Pakistan had to create a new capital and a new government,"²

Pakistan did not possess a history of national unity with a common language or uniform culture; nor was it a geographical or an economic unit. Consequently the achievement of a national consensus on a constitution remained one

² Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 14

of its most difficult problems. A constitution acceptable to different geographical, cultural and linguistic groups in the country remained an elusive goal. The Basic Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly presented a report in 1950 which alarmed the East Pakistani's. The Report proposed that East Pakistan on the one hand, and the provinces of West Pakistan on the other, would have equal representation in the National Legislature. The East Pakistani's had two reasons for alarm. "Firstly they inferred that the composition of the new legislature would transform Bengal's numerical majority into a minority of seats. Secondly the Report contained the flat announcement that Urdu was to be the national language."³

Here one sees the first signs of resentment on the part of East Pakistan. The principle of parity was in contravention of the principle of representation according to population. The issue of language assumed an explosive character; in fact the demand for Bengali became the focal point of an emerging national identity in East Pakistan. The language movement was steadily built up to such a point that on February 20, 1952 when a prohibitory order under Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code, was clamped on Dacca to prevent demonstrations, it was defied which resulted in police

³ Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 92

firing followed by a violent civil commotion. The day of the police firing came to be immortalized as 'Shahid Day' and has been observed to express 'Bengali Nationalism' ever since. The result was that the central government had to yield on the language issue, and Bengali won equality with Urdu.

Even as early as 1948 a feeling of disillusionment was prevalent in East Pakistan. A Bengali member said in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan: "A feeling is growing among the East Pakistani's that Eastern Pakistan is being neglected and treated merely as a Colony of West Pakistan."⁴

The depth of East Pakistan's anger was, however, not fully analysed by the central government in the early days. Later on, it was turned into questioning as to who had won Pakistan. "We have seen in Bengal, in particular during the election of 1946, when others, non-Bengali muslims in other provinces were not voting for Pakistan, 99 per cent of the muslim population of Bengal did vote for the purpose of achieving Pakistan."⁵

There was obvious frustration when the rulers of Pakistan started to treat East Pakistan and its interests as

⁴ Constituent Assembly of Pakistan Debates, II, No.1 Feb. 24, 1948, p. 6. Quoted in Khalid B. Sayeed. The Political System of Pakistan (London, 1967), p.64

⁵ Mahbudul Huq, National Assembly of Pakistan Debates,

subordinate. This state of mind can be understood in the context of the changed power base after Partition. The majority of the participants in the governing of Pakistan fell into two principal categories: the selected and the elected, or in other words the bureaucrats and the politicians.⁶

So far as the bureaucracy was concerned, be it military or civil, East Pakistan immediately after Partition was badly unrepresented. There was only one ICS officer from the eastern wing. East Pakistani politicians were also not an effective countervailing group against the dominance of Western bureaucrats. From the beginning East Pakistanis were not happy about the influx of officials from the western wing, most of whom did not know Bengali. The latter on their part, complained that they were being treated by the East Pakistanis as outsiders, who would neither help themselves nor allow anyone else to help them. Considering the important role played by government officials, it is important that even towards the end the Civil Service of Pakistan included only a very small proportion of Bengalis in the top positions.

The armed services of Pakistan also included very few Bengalis. This was partly the fault of the British rule in

April 16, 1963. p. 1895

⁶ Henry F. Goodnow, The Civil Service of Pakistan (London, 1964), p. 36

India. The British had deliberately adopted the policy of keeping Bengalis out of the armed forces. For them the Bengalis were politically too conscious and too eager to take to terrorising tactics for ousting the foreign rulers. The main areas of recruitment had been the Punjab and the North-Western Frontier. Thus after Partition the superior positions were held mainly by the non-Bengalis, and it would obviously take some time for the new recruits from East Pakistan to reach those positions.

Another cause of resentment for the East Pakistanis was that inspite of the fact that the majority of the Pakistanis lived in the East Wing the capital was located in the West, first Karachi and then Islamabad. Moreover they were deprived of enormous economic benefits that the location of the capital conferred on the West wing.

Economic exploitation was one of the most important complaints of the East Pakistanis. As I mentioned earlier, from the beginning East and West Pakistan have been a pair of economic invalids, and of these two weaklings, East Pakistan began as the more sickly partener and has remained so. It is the poorest and the most populated area in the world. At the time of Partition East Pakistan's population was around forty million. By 1961, it was fifty one million and now it is seventy five million. It is an area of great and repeated natural disaster.

The economic imbalance between the two regions has been partly an inheritance from the British rule. After the unchecked deprivations of the East India Company in the days of Clive and Hastings, it has remained a poverty stricken area. Even in the years after Partition, successive administrations have made only feeble efforts to improve the situation.

Unfortunately for the country as a whole, there was not much economic development during the first few years after Partition. One of the reasons was political instability in the country. Furthermore the main pre-occupation of the Central Government for a number of years was centered around such matters as Kashmir, the division of the Indus Valley water resources, and other causes of friction with India. All these things concerned East Pakistan only indirectly, but were of vital interest to West Pakistan.

Industrial development also went ahead in West Pakistan because from the very beginning, its infra-structure was superior, for example communications. The rudimentary industry which Pakistan had begun with was almost entirely in the West, and was mainly in textiles. This was therefore the natural springboard for development alongside the main cash crop of the West wing, cotton. Moreover major entrepreneurs who emigrated from Bombay, India's commercial metropolis, to Karachi; and the powerful landlords of Sind

and the Punjab, all had strong vested interests in the West. In the East in contrast there was no industrial base, no natural resources, it was desperately handicapped, and an extremely difficult base on which to build. According to Ziring,

Even Pakistan's faulty statistics cannot hide the fact that West Pakistan is six times the size of East Pakistan, that the natural endowments of West Pakistan although not extraordinary are more impressive than those of East Pakistan, and finally, that the density of population in West Pakistan is under 200 persons per square mile whereas in East Pakistan it is now well over 1,000.⁷

East Pakistan's claim that its jute has been the major foreign exchange earner of the country, and that its profits have been spent to develop West Pakistan is justified. But even if East Pakistan retained all the profits from its jute crop, it would still not be sufficient to raise the standard of living of the average peasant. "It is cruel realism which dictates how a country allocates its priorities and scarce treasure."⁸

During the late 1950's and 60's, some jute mills were built in East Pakistan which by 1970, were able to process about a quarter of East Pakistan's jute output. This helped but not enough. Efforts were also made to develop the Chittagong port as a substitute for Calcutta, but communications between Chittagong and the far out areas of East

⁷ Lawrence Ziring, The Ayub Khan Era (New York, 1971) p. 41

⁸ Ibid., p. 41

Pakistan were not adequate.

The Ayub regime made attempts to remove the disparity between the two wings. For example, the Central budget allocated more funds to East Pakistan than to the West. "If a fertilizer factory, steel mill or sugar refinery was to be built in the West, East Pakistan had to be given one too."⁹ New buildings and roads were constructed in the urban areas, specially in places like Dacca, which lent a rather deceptive appearance to East Pakistan's economic plight. But the economic condition of the rural people constituting about 90% of the total population continued to deteriorate; dissatisfaction and disillusionment prevailed throughout the province.

The masses could not be satisfied with this kind of window dressing. The largest project in the province at Kobadak on the Ganges, which is still not complete, was contemplated not to be enough to hold the heavy floods or to provide sufficient irrigation works. Moreover the East Pakistanis felt that the sums spent in West Pakistan on the Mangla and Tarbela dams were much greater, and that they were also being completed at a much greater speed.

The new capital at Islamabad also symbolized the grotesque disparity between the two wings. Infact this was unfortunate for the country as a whole, because an expensive

⁹ Ziring, op. cit., p. 42

project like that should never have been given priority in a developing nation. Later on in order to appease the Bengali sentiment a second 'capital' was begun at Dacca.

Whatever efforts were made on the part of the Central Government were just not enough to reduce the disparity in the per capita income between the East and the West wings.

In a relatively unknown document prepared by the Finance Commission in 1963 the disparity enigma was dissected. They found that it would take 25 years for the provinces to be brought abreast of one another economically; and that the target could only be achieved if development in the West wing was drastically curtailed. The intimation was that deceleration would have to be almost total. Obviously this was an impossible proposal.¹⁰

This would have meant an extremely compassionate attitude on the part of West Pakistan, which was too much to expect. On the other hand the frustration of the East Pakistanis is fully justified.

From the early years of independence, the center had assumed a control of most aspects of government so as to stabilize the new state and to meet emergencies. It held the principal sources of revenue and had assumed wide authority to control the social and economic life of the country. "Its activities were centred at Karachi, within easy reach of Sind and the Punjab but remote from East Bengal."¹¹

¹⁰ Ziring, op. cit., p. 43

¹¹ Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 173

After the death of Jinnah, the Chief Minister of Bengal Khawaja Nazimuddin was elevated to the post of Governor General. This choice was probably made keeping in view the personality and potential of Nazimuddin. One could expect Bengali predominance if Nazimuddin succeeded in using his post in the same way as Jinnah did. But this was not so, thus although Nazimuddin was the Governor General, it was Prime Minister Liaquat Ali who had the real power. "Under Jinnah, the Governor General had controlled the cabinet, henceforward it was Liaquat's intention to have the cabinet control the Governor General."¹²

When in October 1951, Liaquat Ali was assassinated, Nazimuddin, presuming that the Prime Ministership was a more powerful office stepped down and became the Prime Minister. Ghulam Mohammed became the Governor General. He was a forceful man and was not to be dominated by Nazimuddin, and ultimately Ghulam Mohammed dismissed Nazimuddin on April 17, 1953. With the appointment of Ghulam Mohammed as the Governor General the bureaucracy was introduced into politics. Ghulam Mohammed had been a former civil servant, and as Finance Minister had exerted substantial control in the cabinet. His becoming Governor General laid the foundations of what is known as the military-bureaucratic complex in

¹² Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 21

Pakistan. In fact the arbitrary dismissal of Nazimuddin was an example of bureaucratic autarchy in which law and the constitution had little relevance.

After that Ghulam Mohammed in search of a pliable Bengali, had to go up to Washington where Mohammed Ali Bogra was then the Ambassador, "He was brought in as Prime Minister, but although a Bengali he remained a captive of the West Pakistan group that provided the main strength of his government."¹³ Thus further weakening the association of East Bengal with the Central Government.

The East and West polemics gained a new dimension, on the introduction of the One Unit scheme, which envisaged the integration of the provinces and other areas of West Pakistan into a single province. The separation between East and West Pakistan is a geographical factor which cannot be corrected. However, within West Pakistan the provincial boundaries were more the product of history and administrative convenience. But although geographically they formed a bloc, each had an individuality of its own.

The Punjabis, the Sindhis, the Pathans and the Baluchis were not merely linguistic groups, but also had different cultural and ethnic entities. However, no matter, "how strong the feeling of local separatism might be, the prevailing division of the country in 1947-55 was highly unsat-

¹³ Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 173

isfactory. The 1954 draft constitution would have permitted nine units to continue their individual existence in West Pakistan. All of these form part of the Indus river basin and all depend upon a single port-Karachi. Several of the nine were too poor to maintain adequate machinery of government and to undertake large scale programmes of development."¹⁴

Moreover there was a great deal of political intrigue in the existence of so many separate provincial ministries and legislatures, "democracy was reduced to a mere pretence carried on in the interests of a handful of self-seeking political bosses."¹⁵

Suggestions for unification were made from time to time but it was not seriously considered until 1954. There was a deep seated fear among the provinces that unification would mean the control of West Pakistan by the Punjab. It is true, that "a certain amount of coercion had to be applied to bring about a major integration such as has been accomplished in West Pakistan."¹⁶ The unification did make the task of constitution making easier, before that the question of representation of so many units had been a major hurdle. Even from the administrative point of view

¹⁴ Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 184

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 186

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 187

it was cumbersome and wasteful to have nine units. With the integration of West Pakistan, the country would have only two provinces--East Pakistan and West Pakistan, and they would have equal representation in the national legislature and, gradually in the administrative services. East Pakistan was not at all happy about this move. They felt this was a conspiracy on the part of the Punjabis to nullify their status as the majority province.

East Pakistan's politicians happened to be sharp and energetic critics when they were not enjoying office in collusion with the West Pakistanis. A. K. Fazlul Haq and H. S. Suhrawardy stood out as strong men in Bengal's politics in the first few years after partition, and were successful at least for some time in unifying the opposition. Much of the political anger in East Pakistan was the result of the drift of power towards the West. This brought about a sense of common danger which in turn unified the opposition parties in East Pakistan. Thus emerged the United Front, its rallying force was the anti-status quo urge coupled with the Bengali feeling of resentment and revolt against the monopoly of the West and its assertion of power.

In September 1956 Suhrawardy, the Awami League leader, became the fifth Prime Minister of Pakistan. It was the slogan of provincial autonomy of East Pakistan which had brought Mr. Suhrawardy to power. Soon after he came to power

there was a rift in the Awami League, which led to a weakening of Suhrawardy's government. There was also growing dissatisfaction because of the non-implementation of the Awami League program of achieving full regional autonomy for East Pakistan. Suhrawardy and his followers were prepared to disregard the principles which had brought them to power, in order to enjoy office.

Nazimuddin and Bogra were essentially weak men. Suhrawardy was strong personally, but the line-up of forces in the National Assembly did not permit him sufficient legislative support to do justice to East Pakistan's demands. Doing justice to East Pakistan would have meant bringing about something of a revolution. It would have meant restraining the higher bureaucracy, the military and the emerging business and industrial elite. These interests might have been restrained in the mid-1950's only if East Pakistani legislators had faced them together and threatened revolt convincingly. But at that time the East Pakistani discontent had not reached revolutionary proportions. East Pakistan's political power was fractionized and many of the East Pakistani leaders were more interested in the pursuit of personal power and profit than in advancing the interests of East Pakistan. Consequently they were willing to make deals with the centers of power in West Pakistan. Thus although between 1947-1958

there were three East Pakistani prime ministers, none of them had the initiative nor the capacity to play a major role in the decision making processes.

Serious economic and political crisis was brewing in Pakistan. The frequent changes in government were a sign of disagreement within the ruling camp and of serious factional strife. In 1958, East Pakistan experienced two ministerial crises, the removal of the provincial governor, the dismissal of the government and the imposition of President's rule on June 24, 1958. Then in September 1958, while the Legislative Assembly of East Pakistan debated the provincial budget, fierce fighting broke out in the House between members of the ruling block and the opposition. In the course of the skirmish the Speaker of the Assembly was killed and several deputies seriously injured.

The disintegration of political life in Pakistan ultimately led to the military coup in October 1958. Iskander Mirza abrogated the 1956 constitution, dismissed the central and provincial governments, dissolved the National Assembly, and the provincial assemblies, banned all political parties, and proclaimed martial law throughout the country. General Mohammed Ayub Khan Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan army was appointed as Chief Administrator and charged with the implementation of these measures. However,

on October 27, 1958, the two man regime of Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan came to an end; instead Ayub Khan assumed all authority himself. On 28th October 1958 he installed a Presidential Cabinet with no Prime Minister.

The elimination of party politics and the imposition of military rule dismayed East Pakistanis who felt their interests could not be safeguarded in a highly centralized structure. For the Bengalis the meaning of the military coup was that it marked the culmination of the ascendancy of the military-bureaucratic elite in Pakistan and the relegation of the leaders of political parties to a status of insignificance in public life. For East Pakistan the major problem was that party politics which was the only means available for asserting its rights had now become insignificant. In neither the army nor the bureaucracy did East Pakistan have adequate representation.

In 1962, Ayub Khan gave the country a constitution, but this meant little change in the nature of the power structure. The essential features of the structure were the establishment of a Presidential government, the creation of a pseudo-democratic state with the help of the so-called basic democracies, and the protection and perpetuation of the military-bureaucratic complex as the source of power and authority.

Even while martial law remained in force, the troops were relieved of their duties. But, "the bureaucracy, the steel frame of the British administration, continued as one of the two pillars of government, throughout this period."¹⁷

President Ayub Khan found the situation in East Pakistan particularly disturbing, so his regime ventured to give more attention to the provincial disparity issue. The constitution of 1962 devoted a passage to this dilemma. It declared that all efforts would be made to satisfy the economic demands of the people of the East Wing. "But even with increased investment of government money, the granting of greater provincial autonomy in virtually all the developmental and public utility spheres, and the determination to 'Bengalize' the administration there was no quelling of the anti-government disturbances."¹⁸

It was claimed on behalf of Ayub Khan that during his regime important steps were taken to redress the imbalance between East and West Pakistan. It is also true that the Ayub regime had succeeded in registering notable economic progress in Pakistan and at least part of the benefits would have flowed to East Pakistan. Steps were taken by the government to increase the flow of aid and investment to East

¹⁷ Ziring, op. cit., p. 12

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 40

Pakistan, and also to improve their position within the army and the civil services of Pakistan. But from the point of view of East Pakistan all these efforts were totally inadequate.

While talking about the economic progress during the Ayub regime, it is noteworthy that most of the progress was the result of the pursuit of economic policies which were calculated to help the unbridled private sector without any regard for social justice. Towards the end of the Ayub regime glaring inequalities in the economy of Pakistan were revealed. Almost the entire benefit of industrial development had been confined to about twenty families of Pakistan. What was more interesting was the nature of the industrial elite that was encouraged to expand and the methods through which they did so. It was quite obvious that the new industrial class was sharing its benefits with the military-bureaucratic complex through institutionalized corruption of all kinds.

According to various economic reports, "Pakistan was making significant gains in all economic sectors but precious little was filtering down to the poor urban and rural people. Concentration of capital was justified on the grounds, that profits were plowed back into the economy."¹⁹

¹⁹ Ziring, op. cit., p.89

In addition to this, the resources, experiences and contacts of the leading private families made them strong contenders for ownership when semi-governmental corporations put their plants on the open market. "It is estimated that over 2/3 of the assets thus sold have been bought by the leading families."²⁰

The condition of the masses was wretched in both parts of the country. The military-bureaucratic complex of Pakistan was providing the infrastructure needed for the exploitation of the people of Pakistan by the industrial and feudal elite. Its own gains in the process could well be illustrated by the fact that the son of President Ayub Khan emerged as a major operator on the industrial scene during his fathers regime

However, inequitable and oppressive as this economic structure was for the whole of Pakistan, it was particularly so for the people of East Pakistan. There was hardly any indigenous Bengali enterprise in East Pakistan, all major industries being in the hands of the same families which dominated West Pakistan.

Under those circumstances, specially after looking at the misery of the multitude of the people, the celebrations for the decade of development which spread over a period of four weeks in October 1968, seemed a great farce.

²⁰ Ziring, op. cit., p. 89

"The seeming interminable repetition of slogans and the grandiloquent speeches were more than the dissident urban population and particularly the students could tolerate, and towards the end of the month the disturbances began. The chant was deafening and in unison throughout West Pakistan: 'Ayub must go'."²¹

In West Pakistan the main issue was the Ayub Khan ouster and the tyranny of the regime was dramatized. But in East Pakistan the issue was not limited to Ayub Khan, the East Pakistani's demanded nothing less than a new political structure.

This country wide agitation against the Ayub regime gained momentum, and finally on March 25, 1969, "Ayub Khan frustrated by the politicians, abandoned by the bureaucrats and the police, and no longer commanding the loyalty of the armed forces, resigned the office he had held for ten years and five months."²²

General Yahya Khan was brought to power and there was a repetition of the 1958 events. Martial law was proclaimed the national and provincial assemblies were dissolved. On assuming office on March 31, 1969 Yahya Khan promised the people a return to democracy based on adult franchise when conditions were normalized.

²¹ Ziring, op. cit., p. 90

²² Ibid., p. 92

CHAPTER II

QUEST FOR AUTONOMY

East Pakistan's demands for provincial autonomy, had begun soon after Partition, but the Central Government never really considered them seriously. The major reason for that was that East Pakistan was never able to present a unified front, their opposition towards the central decision process, was sporadic, short-lived and not constructive. Time and again different political parties did get together but either such unity did not last long, or if their leaders did come to power, they were just not strong enough to push forward their demands. Later on, for about ten years under the Ayub regime political development in both East and West Pakistan was at a standstill. There was no freedom of thought and expression, political parties were first completely banned, and finally when they were allowed to function they could hardly be called free.

I feel it is important to examine the gradual development for East Pakistan's growing demands for autonomy which later changed into outbursts for secession.

Shortly after Partition it seemed as if the Muslim League had outlived its purpose, and ironically Dacca the

birth-place of the Muslim League, also saw the seeds of disintegration being sown. The Muslim League specially after the death of Jinnah could not cope with the chaotic condition of the country. A number of smaller political parties already existed and the first chance for a "display of the opposition strength came in the Punjab election of 1951. The main opponents of the Muslim League ran candidates under the banner of the Jinnah Awami League. The Awami (Peoples) League was led by Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy and claimed to fill the role of an all-Pakistan Opposition."¹

In December 1952, the Awami League under the leadership of Suhrawardy held a convention at which a manifesto was adopted containing an exposition of the party's program. This program found the broadest response in East Pakistan. "The leaders of the Awami League in a series of public speeches advocated agrarian reforms and the nationalization of the principal branches of industry."²

In February 1954, all organizations opposing the Muslim League united in an All-Party bloc. This combined opposition to the Muslim League government marked the beginning of the United Front of which Fazlul Haq became the leader. The United Front issued a manifesto known as the 21 Points,

¹ Pakistan Times, Lahore, July 24, 1953.

² Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 73

this was to be the basis of their election campaign, "It was a document which promised something to everybody. The preamble demanded that no laws should be passed which were repugnant to the Quran and Sunnah. Many of the points related to the economic life of Bengal, and it was proposed to abolish Zamindari without compensation and distribute the land to the peasants. There was also a section on civil liberties, demanding the repeal of the Safety Acts, the release of security prisoners and the safeguarding of the rights of the press. The crucial item was point 19, the demand for provincial autonomy: 'Secure all subjects, including residuary powers, except Defence, Foreign Affairs and Currency, for East Bengal, which shall be fully autonomous and sovereign as envisaged in the historic Lahore resolution and establish Naval Headquarters and ordinance factory in East Bengal so as to make it militarily self-sufficient.'"³

This was the first serious attempt on the part of East Pakistan to make a demand for provincial autonomy, and it met with considerable popular approval in the province, even if it was regarded as radical by the ruling group. The most important result was that the Muslim League was completely swept out of power, the United Front won a sweeping majority of 222 members in a House of 310, after this

³ Kieth B. Callard, op. cit., p. 73

the Muslim League lost power in East Pakistan and was never in a position to become the ruling party. However, this unity presented by the United Front did not last long, due to internal strife within the coalition and because of the weakness of the leaders to implement their programs when they came into power, the United Front broke up into different parties the Awami League being one of them. In fact in July 1957 the Awami League itself split in two - - one faction led by Maulana Bhashani supposed to be pro-Marxist and anti-West in foreign policy and the other by H. S. Suhrawardy supposed to be pro-West in foreign policy.

The Awami League from its beginning in 1949 was mainly an East Pakistani based party. It had propagated full regional autonomy for East Bengal and recognition of Bengali as the national language. Suhrawardy's repeated efforts to make it a national party were never quite effective. When Mujibur Rahman assumed leadership of the Awami League, he made no serious attempts to popularize it in the West. After the death of Suhrawardy in 1963, the Awami League suffered a leadership vacuum. Mujib was not the immediate successor of Suhrawardy, for a while Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan from West Pakistan was made the party president to play up the Awami League's national image. However, after the 1965

election it seemed that the Awami League was losing ground, it was then that Mujibur Rahman stepped forward as the leader and felt the need to revitalize the party. Mujib as such had no charisma, his emergence as a charismatic figure only began when he came forward with his Six Points formula for provincial autonomy in 1966, this also brought the Awami League into the limelight. The Awami League's Six Points were:

- 1) The character of the Government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the election to the Federal Legislature and to the legislature of the federating units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the federal legislature shall be on the basis of population.
- 2) The Federal Government shall be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs and subject to the conditions provided in (3) below, currency.
- 3) There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative a single currency, subject to the establishment of a federal reserve system in which there will be regional federal reserve banks which will devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another.

- 4) Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting the requirements of defence and foreign affairs, which revenue resources would be automatically appropriable by the Federal Government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the Constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that Federal Government's revenue requirements are met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the Governments of the federating units.
- 5) Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirements of the Federal Government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution. The regional governments shall have power under the constitution to negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the Federal Government.

6) The Government of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain militia or para-military force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.⁴

The Six Point formula was not welcome as far as West Pakistan was concerned. It "frightened his associates in the West Pakistan opposition. Most of them feared the proposal contained the seeds of national disintegration and rejected it on that count alone. Others, perhaps more sympathetic, found it unacceptable on the grounds that it would invite government reprisals against the political parties, and forty-four months of martial law had proved to be a sobering experience. No one in West Pakistan wanted a repetition of the 1958-62 period. And although they were prepared to risk arrest in order to publicize their demands, they were not interested in supporting a policy which, as Ayub suggested might lead to civil war in the country."⁵

The Ayub regime's response to the Six Points was repressive, as it always was towards any kind of opposition, which tended to shake the stems of the already tottering regime.

The weakness of the Ayub regime was further demonstrated

⁴ Extract from Awami League Manifesto. Quoted in Rushbrook L. Williams, The East Pakistan Trajedy (London, 1972), Appendix 2. pp. 117-118

⁵ Ziring, op. cit., p. 43

in the so-called Agartala Conspiracy case. In December 1967 and January 1968 a number of East Pakistanis accused of a secessionist plot were detained and Mujib was one of them. Later on proceedings were held and an all out effort was made to discredit and silence the man who at that time seemed to best typify Bengali sentiment.

However, Ayub's repressive policies and his detaining Mujib for the Agartala Conspiracy case, gave Mujib the halo of martyrdom and his popularity increased. Finally, when the Agartala Conspiracy case was withdrawn and Mujib was released he was given a hero's welcome and his role as the champion of the Bengali rights was enhanced. Thus Mujib's appeal and his emergence to power was intertwined with his Six Point formula, which also formed the basis of the Awami League's campaign for the 1970 elections.

On examining the Six Point formula, one finds that it envisaged a system in which there would be a federal government that only controlled defence and foreign policy, and would therefore be unworkably feeble. A federation in which the two wings had not merely separate economies but separate currencies would create chaos. The federal government was also not to have any taxing power of its own. it would depend on provincial grants-in-aid. Moreover with regard to free trade agreements, this would allow the East

wing to have at least some trading arrangements with India, in contradiction the federal policy, would continue to be hawkishly anti-Indian. Furthermore it was a system which would totally undermine the status of the army, making it rely for its subventions on an economically independant East wing. Such a system in practice would hit at the very foundations of Pakistan. It was a demand for autonomy, that would eventually lead to secession. Yet the paradox was that while the Six Point formula went far beyond what the center would conceivably grant, from the East Pakistan point of view it was the least that they could demand. It was a conflict in interests that had produced the Six Points, and finally this conflict became irreconciliable and led to the 1971 armed struggle between the two wings.

The situation in East Pakistan was appalling at the time General Yahya Khan took over power on March 25, 1969. Mob rule and jungle law prevailed, the social fabric had collapsed, and all recognised authority had disintegrated. There was widespread student and labor disorder in East Pakistan, West Pakistan was also on the verge of anarchy. It was true that the East and the West shared little in common, but it was their combined protests that eroded the will of the Ayub regime to resist.

Inspite of the repressive measures of the Ayub regime

the country had gone through a certain amount of change and modernisation, several mobilised groups had emerged, and had started asserting their rights. Although the mass movements that had led to the downfall of Ayub Khan were for the time being suppressed because of Martial Law, one thing was clear, that Ayub had misplaced his priorities and future governments of Pakistan could not afford to commit the same mistake.

President Yahya Khan soon after taking over power disclaimed any political ambitions, in his broadcast on March 31, he explained that he had to become Head of State only to fulfil administrative and diplomatic obligations until a new constitution was framed.⁶ Moreover in contrast to the imposition of Martial Law in 1968 political parties were not completely abolished, although their activities were restricted.

Without much delay the new regime announced a new wage policy and education policy, which aimed at appeasing the demands of the two groups labor and students, which had dominated the mass movements of 1968-69. Also to pacify political parties, which was the other outstanding group the regime promised an early return to democracy and constitutional rule. He also launched into a series of talks with leaders of the various parties, of which there were

⁶ Pakistan Times, Lahore, April 1, 1969

so many that they made the Pakistan political scene very confusing.

On July 28, 1969 four months after taking over power, President Yahya Khan appointed a chief election commissioner, and promised elections within eighteen months. He told the nation:

The banning of political parties and political activity would not be in the interest of the country. It would make the task of administration a little simpler but would delay the achievements of our goal, the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. It is my declared intention to usher in a sound and robust democratic system.⁷

He outlined some of the political problems the nation faced. There were first too many political parties, and he urged those of like views to merge, so as to reduce the unmanageable number. Secondly, the President said there were deep problems over the basis for the new elections and the new parliament. The East wingers wanted voting on the basis of population, which obviously give East Pakistan a majority. Others from the West wing wanted the two wings to have equal representation. He also made specific reference to the dissatisfaction of East Pakistan, he declared,

One of the reasons for dissatisfaction in the East wing was a feeling that they were not being allowed to play their full part in the decision-making process at the national level and in certain important spheres of national activity. In my view they were fully justified in being dissatisfied with this state of affairs.⁸

⁷ Pakistan Times. Lahore, July 29, 1969

⁸ Ibid., July 29, 1969

President Yahya Khan was successful to a certain extent, he was able to dispel pessimism by inspiring a national trust in his authority and integrity. For a martial law regime all this was notably constructive and liberal minded.

The process for preparing for elections continued smoothly, in August 1969 President Yahya Khan ordered the preparation of electoral lists on the basis of universal adult franchise. On November 28, 1969, the date was announced for election as October 5, 1970. The voters would choose a constituent assembly, whose members would have a limit of 120 days to frame a constitution, if this failed the assembly would stand dissolved and new elections would be held. There would be unrestricted political activity. The President made three undertakings, first, voting would be on the one man one vote principle, for the first time in Pakistan's history did this happen. This would give East Pakistan a majority of votes since it has 55% of the nations population. Secondly in response to popular demand from local interests in West Pakistan, the One Unit in West Pakistan would cease to exist. This was also appealing to the East Pakistani's as they had always been opposed to the One Unit. Thirdly the two wings would have maximum autonomy. This obviously meant it should be consistent with the preservation of the integrity and solidarity of

the nation. He also touched upon the problem of dividing legislative and financial powers between the center and the federating units; he saw no reason why the people of East and West Pakistan, should not be able to work out a plan which would satisfy the legitimate desire of the federating units to control their economic resources and development without adversely affecting the vital requirements of the nation as a whole.

On March 28, 1970 the President gave the nation the long awaited details of his 'Legal Framework Order," this was a blueprint for a return to civilian government and the creation of a parliamentary democracy. This framework the President explained represented the best assessment that he had been able to make of the wishes of the people of Pakistan. The main features of the legal framework order were: The total strength of the National Assembly was to be 313 of whom 13 would be woman. Seats were allocated on the basis of their population in the 1961-census-~~the~~ latest figures available. Parliamentary procedures would be settled by the assembly itself; the President again pleaded that the constitution was essentially an agreement to live together and that all the regions must be reasonably satisfied. This constitution he added, should embody certain principles; the preservation of Islamic ideology; the

preservation of independence, territorial integrity and national solidarity of Pakistan by means of a federal union, founded on free and periodical elections, the independence of the judiciary, fundamental civic rights, the distribution of legislative, financial and administrative powers between the Federal government and the Provinces so that the Provinces enjoyed maximum autonomy consistent with the functions of the Central Government in internal and external affairs, and that it must make statutory provision for removing the economic disparity between the two wings.⁹

This masterly plan seemed to be acceptable to everybody, this was clear from the Press comments, and also from the speeches of the various political leaders, that all parties were ready to accept it as a basis for the elections, and it would also serve as a guideline for the National Assembly.

Apparently it seemed that Yahya Khan was keen on going back to soldiering and had no desire to retain political office. Moreover the Yahya regime was well aware, that the people could not be restrained for long by repressive measures. It was just inevitable that there would be an uprising against the new regime, if there was not a promise of a return to civilian government in the near future. However glancing at the situation in Pakistan at that time

⁹ White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan, August 1971, pp. 18-35

one could see that there was not much chance of any one party getting an absolute majority, thus the army still had a fair chance, it could retain its stronghold as the mediator and balancer.

Mujibur Rahman though in absolute control of his party was not in absolute control of the political scene in East Pakistan, which was his major constituency. He was facing opposition from both the right and the left. It was easier for him to deal with the right, which was in favor of a strong center, thus it did not have a large following, specially since the Six Points had become a Magna Carta for the Bengali rights. It was the left that was more problematic for Mujib, similar to the Awami League they also upheld the Bengali cause, but their methods of achieving their demands were more revolutionary and aggressive, they did not have much faith in the constitutional methods. So pressed against the leftest propaganda of the futility of the electoral process, Mujib had to show that he could win peoples rights without a revolution by participating in the elections.

The election results, however, confounded everybody, in East Pakistan the election results turned out to be a referendum on the Awami League's six points charter of autonomy rather than a voters choice between viable alternatives. There were a number of reasons which cumulatively

produced such a result. Mujib's strategy of trying to win the maximum number of votes in East Pakistan was extremely successful. Mujib had managed to gain support from almost all the different groups in East Pakistan as there was a combined resentment born out of a deep seated feeling of political ineffectiveness and economic stagnation. Another reason was also the withdrawal of the leftist forces from the political arena. As a result of defections and internal strife within the party, the National Awami Party was unable to present itself as a viable alternative to the Awami League and at the eleventh hour Maulana Bhashani decided to boycott the election.

Another factor which contributed to the Awami League's landslide victory was the natural calamity, unprecedented even for East Pakistan which, is so often hit by such disasters. This cyclone was the worst of its kind, and the charge of callousness levelled against the West-Pakistan dominated center by East Pakistan, further added to East Pakistan's resolve to give an overwhelming mandate to the Awami League as the spokesman of its interests.

Mujib and his party won 167 out of 169 East Pakistani seats.¹⁰ It was this absolute majority which triggered off the constitutional crisis in Pakistan. The extent of the

¹⁰ Pakistan Times. Lahore, January 18, 1971

Awami League's victory had not been anticipated either by the regime in Islamabad or by the League itself. It had generally been expected that the League would secure a large majority of the East Pakistan seats, but not such a clean sweep that it made. Had the Awami League been able to secure about 115 to 120 seats, it would still have been far short of a majority in the National Assembly, and this would have forced the League to make compromises in order to gain the support of certain West Pakistan elements so as to frame the constitution and form the Central Government. Even more important the League would then have been able to justify any compromises it might have had to make.

The election results upset all such calculations, the massive mandate that the Awami League received converted its six point program into the minimum, non-negotiable demands of East Pakistan, and the Awami League now reflecting the mood of the entire province became the prisoner of its own victory.

Looking at the political scene in West Pakistan one found that Bhutto was just about the strongest political force. His electoral strategy was to pull all the anti-regime forces together, and specially to exploit the new social groups and their demands which were brought to the surface during the mass movements in 1968-1969. He always

kept his party's platform rather vague. During election eering Bhutto refrained from criticizing the Six Points, because he wanted to keep maximum options open in his bargaining with the Awami League.¹¹

Bhutto's main aim was to get as many votes as possible, so that he could have a strong bargaining position vis a vis other parties specially the Awami League. The election results left Bhutto with the greatest freedom of action. His dominance of the two most populous provinces, Punjab, and Sind, placed him in a strong bargaining position with the Awami League and the military. On the other hand the emergence of a strong West Pakistani party with a flamboyant and strong leader like Bhutto with the right to speak for almost 2/3rds of West Pakistan, built into the situation all the elements of a deadlock.

The election result, was in a paradoxical way too good too clear cut. It created not merely a two-party assembly but a two nation assembly; it further emphasised the separateness of the two wings, moreover by being separately represented they were further polarized. But if the assembly was to be made workable, there had to be some consensus, and a certain amount of accomadation between the two major parties, niether of them could afford to go ahead without some form of support from the other.

¹¹ Zulfikar A. Bhutto, The Great Trajedy (Karachi, 1971), pp. 18-20

It was now time for the post-election talks, Mujib having refused all offers to go to West Pakistan for talks, made it essential for the leaders in the West to go to Mujib for bargaining. Apparently Bhutto's visit to Dacca was not too rewarding, his attempts at power sharing were rejected by Mujib. Bhutto finding himself outmanoevred by Mujib's uncompromising attitude over the Six Points, announced on February 17, 1971 his decision to boycott the proposed National Assembly session of March 2, 1971.¹²

Mujib refused to come to any settlement outside the National Assembly as Bhutto demanded, though in an apparent response to Bhutto's apprehension about the Six Points, Mujib declared that they would not be imposed on West Pakistan and that any reasonable alternative would be considered by the Awami League in the National Assembly.¹³

Soon after Bhutto decided to put his revolutionary foot forward. In a largely attended public meeting in Lahore on February 28, 1971, Bhutto called for the observance of a strike from 'Khyber to Karachi' on March 2nd, the opening day of the Assembly. He threatened the West Pakistani members participating in the Assembly that he would call on the people of Pakistan to take full revenge on them, and should the people fail to take revenge member of the Peoples Party

¹² Dawn. Karachi, February 18, 1971

¹³ Ibid. March 1, 1971

would do the same.¹⁴

The postponement of the National Assembly session sparked off a spontaneous rebellious mood in East Pakistan. Bhutto and Yahya's allegations that Mujib over reacted to the postponement of the National Assembly session, show their misperception of the Bengali mood.

When Yahya's announcement of the postponement of the National Assembly session was heard in Dacca mid day March 1, 1971, there was an immediate spontaneous strike. People left their work to join processions to protest the action. Mujib seeing the rebellious mood of the people made his first response to Yahya's action by condemning the postponement of the Assembly he called for a general strike on March 3, 1971. The city of Dacca was paralysed by this strike. Shops, factories, offices were closed as well as schools and colleges. Thousands of angry citizens and students roamed the streets of Dacca, stoning English and Urdu language signs, looting stores and burning cars.¹⁵

The postponement of the National Assembly session angered the Bengalis, they looked upon this act as one more example of West Pakistan imposing its will on East Pakistan. The National Assembly session was postponed to accommodate Bhutto a West Pakistani even though he was the leader of

¹⁴ Dawn. Karachi, March 1, 1971

¹⁵ Ibid. March 1, 1971

a minority party, and overlooking the protests of Mujib a Bengali, who was the leader of a majority party, this meant flouting all democratic principles. The postponement was also interpreted as an indication of the regime opting for a military solution, because along with the postponement announcement, the Governor of East Pakistan Ahsan was relieved of his duties, and General Yaqub the GOC was named the Governor and Martial Law Administrator.

Yahya Khan in a last minute attempt to resolve the country's constitutional crisis, called a Round Table Conference in Dacca to iron out the major differences between the Eastern and the Western province. He hoped that the Constituent Assembly could be called within weeks if the leaders came to an understanding. On the contrary as violence and a total strike paralysed East Pakistan, Mujib called upon the East Pakistanis to confront the Central Government in all spheres.¹⁶

Before the meeting of the Round Table Conference Sheikh Mujib offered rather stiff terms to Yahya Khan. Addressing a public gathering in Dacca he declared, he would enter the Constituent Assembly only if Yahya Khan met four demands: the immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people; the withdrawal of Martial Law; the return of troops to their barracks; an inquiry into the mass killing in East Pakistan. He further asserted

¹⁶ The Times. London, March 4, 1971

that a non-co-operation movement would be launched throughout the province. All government offices would be closed and no taxes would be paid.¹⁷

On March 15, 1971 Yahya Khan came to Dacca to try to work out a political settlement of the crisis. However Bhutto did not accept Yahya's invitation to join the Dacca talks. Detailed information about the Mujib-Yahya talks is not available, but apparently it seemed that some kind of an agreement was arrived at for an interim arrangement for a transfer of power. Pakistan's newspapers from March 18 to 23rd, gave rather optimistic reports about the prospects of a political settlement. In fact Mujib himself told reporters that progress was made in his talks with Yahya.¹⁸

Bhutto was not pleased with such an arrangement, his demand was that if there was an interim arrangement for transfer of power it had to be given to the two majority parties, the Peoples Party and the Awami League.¹⁹ In fact on March 19th, Bhutto issued a threatening statement that a sell out of West Pakistan would not be tolerated and the Peoples Party would prepare for action.²⁰

On March 20, 1971, the advisors of Yahya Khan and Sheikh Mujib agreed on a draft proclamation to be issued

¹⁷ The Times. London, March 8, 1971

¹⁸ Dawn. Karachi, March 20, 1971

¹⁹ Ibid. March 17, 1971

²⁰ Ibid. March 20, 1971

by Yahya Khan which contained the outlines of the interim arrangement for the transfer of power. The proclamation consisted of 13 points.

The proposed proclamation provided for an immediate withdrawal of Martial Law and transfer of power to the five provinces without such power transfer in the center. It also provided for the division of the National Assembly into two committees to frame separate reports on the basis of which the constitution could be framed. Autonomy granted to East Pakistan was on the basis of the six points while the quantum of autonomy for the other four provinces was left to their mutual arrangement.²¹

Bhutto arrived in Dacca on March 21st, on meeting Yahya Khan he expressed his reluctance to accept the draft proclamation. He not only made alternative suggestions, but also asked for more time which would give him an opportunity to negotiate directly with Mujib.²²

Meanwhile pressure was already building on Mujib, and the leftist forces were getting out of hand. In many parts of Dacca, the supporters of the left wing National Awami Party celebrated 'independance day' on March 13, in an attempt to wrest initiative from the Awami League, which was busy negotiating. In order to understand why the Awami

²¹ Government of Pakistan: White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan (Islamabad, 1971), pp. 19-20

²² Dawn. Karachi, March 23, 1971

League was not willing to prolong the negotiations demanded by Bhutto and Yahya: one has to see that it was becoming more and more difficult for Mujib to contain the pressure from diverse forces. As the days went by and no significant reconciliation was forthcoming, the demand for immediate declaration of independence got credence. Mujib was being pressurized not only from other parties but also from radicals from within his own party.

By the middle of March the students were becoming extremely militant, and the situation built up to such a stage, that the army had to be moved in to establish law and order, and to prevent East Pakistan's attempts towards secession, thus started the tragic vendetta between the army and the East Pakistani secessionists.

The constitutional crisis in Pakistan could not be resolved because the leaders failed to accommodate each other and find a mutually acceptable formula. Both Mujib and Bhutto were interested in a transfer of power, and yet they were not able to present a united front to the military regime. The support that they received from their respective constituencies put a great deal of restraint on their reaching an independent compromise. Mujib found it impossible to modify his Six Points, on the basis of which he had won the elections, Bhutto had no such clear cut formula

so he was in a better bargaining position. Moreover he was also under some pressure from his constituency who were so long out of power, and were not willing to sit in the opposition for the next few years. It was also psychologically unacceptable for Bhutto and the West Pakistani leadership to be dominated by Sheikh Mujib. The conflict between Bhutto and Mujib left the military once again in a commanding position. President Yahya tried to shift the blame from one to the other. However, it is true that as the crisis was mounting, Yahya did try to make earnest efforts to find a solution. He also used a great deal of constraint in dealing with the law and order situation in East Pakistan, until he was forced to take action to preserve the solidarity and integrity of Pakistan. Unfortunately enough the leaders of Pakistan miscalculated the drastic consequences which could result from their failure to accommodate one another.

CHAPTER III
INDIA AND THE PAKISTAN CIVIL WAR
PHASE I

No discussion on the emergence of Bangla Desh can be regarded as complete, without giving due importance to the part played by India throughout the crisis in East Pakistan. It is important, because India's intervention in the political and constitutional problem of Pakistan not only intensified old antagonisms between the two countries, but it also accelerated the issue, and made it impossible for Pakistan to arrive at a political settlement of some kind.

The two countries have always looked upon one another as enemies since their independence, and their relations with each other have always been charged with an envenomed load of bigotry, prejudice, religious and nationalistic hostility. This discord has weakened the economy of both countries, and has from time to time, passed from a state of cold war to actual conflict.

The present day Indo-Pakistan tension is a prolongation of the Hindu-Muslim tension that characterized India long before independence and partition. The creation of partition was the culmination of a long struggle on the

part of the muslims, a minority community in the sub-continent endeavouring to safeguard its social and cultural identity which was in many ways distinct and different from that of the Hindus, who were the majority community. Those who had fought for Pakistan had struggled hard to compel recognition that the muslims were a separate nation and should have a territorial state. The two nation theory was not acceptable to the Congress and the Indian leaders; for them partition meant the vivisection of the motherland.

However, after a great deal of political haggling, the sub-continent was split with mutual consent, but not without mental reservations on the part of the Indian leaders.

The tragic events before and after partition made good relations between the two countries almost impossible. The communal murder and mass migration gave them the worst possible start. Hardly were the effects of the calamity overcome, when fresh sources of political and economic friction appeared. India used military force to settle the accession of three princely states: Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir. In fact the Kashmir dispute which still remains unsolved has effected the relations between the two countries so seriously that it is responsible for their failure to reach agreement on any major issues, infact it has twice led to war in 1948 and then again in 1965.

Pakistanis see Indo-Pakistan tension as a result of India's unwillingness to respect Pakistan as a sovereign state and accept the reality of her existence. "The Indian rulers," said Ayub Khan in denouncing the Indian armed attack on September 6, 1965, "were never reconciled to the establishment of an independant Pakistan, where Muslims could build a homeland of their own. All their military preparations have been directed against us."¹

Pakistan's fear and mistrust of India's intentions have been further strengthened, by India's reactions and attitude in the East Pakistan crisis. When the Yahya government used military force to suppress Mujib's secessionist movement in east Pakistan. The Indian press launched a massive anti-Pakistan drive which led a diplomat to remark, "There are two wars in East Pakistan the war we hear about through channels and the war we read about in the Indian press."²

However, India's reactions were not limited to the press alone. There were outspoken speeches by all Indian leaders, in fact the sentiments expressed by the Indian Prime Minister and the Indian Government encouraged the press, political parties, and other influential circles

¹ Dawn. Karachi, September 7, 1965

² Washington Post. April 2, 1971

to toe the government line. Gradually as the crisis deepened India's reactions became stronger. The Indian response proceeded from sympathy for the secessionists to provision of sanctuaries, encouragement was provided in the form of funds, training, weapons and other supplies. Later on it seemed that Indian troops might also be used to aid the secessionists after they had siezed some key areas and hamstrung the Pakistan army. In the end India did use her armed force to defeat the Pakistan army in East Pakistan and to bring about Bangla Desh.

In this chapter I will try and analyse India's initial reactions to the crisis in East Pakistan, and the attitude adopted by the Indian Government, political parties, the press and the public.

The campaign conducted by the Awami League for the 1970 elections was warmly supported from India. The election results and Mujibur Rahman's victory were widely hailed, and some members of the Parliament issued a joint statement saying, "East Pakistanis have massively reciprocated through the ballot box the sentiments of the majority of Indians and given a fitting reply to those elements in Pakistan who have made hate-India the main plank of their election campaign."³

³ The Statesman. December 9, 1970

Mujib's demand for maximum autonomy was obviously on the right lines from India's point of view, and so long as there was hope of Mujib becoming the leader of Pakistan, India regarded the developments in Pakistan as an internal matter. On March 2, 1971 an official spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi was reported by All India Radio as saying that India regarded the developments in Pakistan as purely an internal affair of the country.

However, as the law and order situation deteriorated in East Pakistan, and the Pakistan Government felt impelled to call in the army to cope with the situation. The following day, that is March 15, 1971, the government of India declared its intention to put a ban on overflights across Indian territory between East and West Pakistan. The ban was total in the case of military aircraft irrespective of its national origin. The government of India had already banned Pakistan civilian flights over its territory in early February because of the hijacking of an Indian plane that was destroyed by the hijackers at Lahore airport. India accused the Pakistan government of complicity and took a unilateral action. This had the effect of cutting off air communications between East and West Pakistan. Later, India also refused permission to some non-Pakistani aircrafts which touched Karachi to fly over Indian territory.⁴ This decision of the Indian

⁴ The Statesman. March 16, 1971

Government to put a complete ban on overflights was taken without any prima-facie cause. The ban certainly cramped Islamabad's capacity to put down the Awami League non-co-operation movement. Instead Pakistan aircraft had to fly to Dacca via Ceylon which increased the distance and the operational cost several fold.

On the night of March 25, 1971, Yahya Khan ordered a military crackdown to prevent East Pakistan's drift towards secession. Columns of the Pakistan army moved to establish control in all big cities of East Pakistan. India no longer regarded the developments in Pakistan as an internal matter. As news reached of battles between President Yahya Khan's troops and Bengali civilians, left wingers of the Indian Parliament interrupted the proceedings on the afternoon of March 26, 1971, to demand that New Delhi should extend full moral support to East Pakistan in its struggle against military oppression. It was even suggested by one member that India should raise the matter in the United Nations and arrange for overland transit facilities for Bengalis in fear of their lives in West Pakistan.⁵

Pakistan Government protested against what it called India's deliberate and blatant interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, and complained about All India Radio

⁵ Washington Post. March 27, 1971

giving exaggerated, "malicious" and "provacative" stories about the situation in East Pakistan.

On March 28, 1971 there was a big debate in the Indian Parliament in which members denounced Yahya's military crackdown. Mrs Gandhi indicated to Parliament that India was considering the possibility of assisting the East Bengalis, although she did not make any commitment. She said, "We are alive to the situation and we shall keep constantly in touch with what is happening and what we need to do."⁵ Many members of the Parliament including some from her own Congress Party urged immediate recognition of independant Bangla Desh.⁶

Mrs Gandhi a shrewd politician was not in favor of immediate recognition by India, at this stage it would divert attention form Pakistan's actions in East Pakistan to India's open intervention in the crisis. Also when it was possible for India to give the required support to the Bangla Desh movement without recognition, there was not much point in doing so until world opinion had also been moulded to favor the recognition of Bangla Desh.

It was not long before the Indian Parliament expressed solidarity with East Bengalis in concrete terms. On March 31, Mrs Gandhi moved a resolution in both the Houses assuring

⁶ Washington Post. March 28, 1971

the people of Bangla Desh of India's whole-hearted support, and expressed confidence in the triumph of the movement,

The House records its profound conviction that the historical upsurge of the 75 million people of East Bengal will triumph. The House wishes to assure them that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the people of India. This House calls upon all peoples and Governments of the world to take urgent and constructive steps to prevail upon the Government of Pakistan to put an end to the systematic decimation of people which amounts to genocide.⁷

Besides debating the issue and passing resolutions in Parliament, the members also staged a demonstration outside the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi. They reused multi-lingual slogans, demanding, 'Let the will of the people prevail.' 'Hands off Bangla Desh.' They read out a memorandum demanding immediate withdrawal of all West Pakistani troops from East Pakistan. Seven leading MP's called on Ceylon's High Commissioner and urged the Ceylonese Government to deny landing and refuelling facilities to Pakistan aircraft flying troops to East Pakistan.⁸

On April 14, Mrs Gandhi issued a statement saying that India could not remain a silent spectator to what was happening in Bangla Desh; it would have repercussions in her country. The partition of Bengal had adversely affected the people of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, and Manipur.

⁷The Statesman. April 1, 1971

⁸Ibid., March 30, 1971

But the cultural affinity and the relations between the two people still existed.⁹

Meanwhile the Pakistan army had tightened control and had moved in to crush the provisional government of Bangla Desh operating from Chuadanga. As the army columns moved in, the Bangla Desh 'government' moved from Chuadanga to Meherpur which is right on the Indian border. A week later the leaders of the Bangla Desh 'government' were lodged at the West Bengal Government Guest House in downtown Calcutta. "Indian officers in civilian clothes arranged the ceremony in which the provisional government made its first public appearance, and the Indian military camps along the border are giving shelter to rebel soldiers without **disarming** them."¹⁰

As a result of the Pakistan military action a large number of refugees from East Pakistan moved to India. There is some evidence that to begin with, India encouraged this exodus as providing material for the psychological campaign against Pakistan in the world's capitals, by attributing their plight to the brutal suppression by the Pakistan army. It is true that the condition in East Pakistan was chaotic, resulting from the armed conflict between the Pakistan army, and the rebellious forces of East Pakistan, means of communication had been destroyed, food was scarce, and many people

⁹ Hindustan Times. April 14, 1971

¹⁰ Washington Post. April 21, 1971

out of fear crossed the border to India in the hope of finding safety and sustenance. Moreover India's friendly and sympathetic overtures, a continuous stream of propaganda emanating from the West Bengal press and All India Radio regarding the awful fate that these people would meet by the advancing Pakistan army, encouraged people to flee.

As to the number of refugees actually involved it is not possible to speak with accuracy. It was of course to the advantage of the Indian authorities to inflate their numbers in order to encourage assistance from foreign governments, and condemn Pakistan. From an initial estimate of two to three million, the figures publicized by India steadily mounted, to an incredible statement that refugees were crossing the border at the rate of one million a day. The whole issue of refugees gave India a chance and a *raison d'etre* for its intervention in the East Pakistan crisis. A massive case was made about the refugee influx and appeals were made for aid to support them. In the Assembly of the World Congress in Budapest, the 700 delegates heard with rapt attention the appeal of the Indian delegates for world support to the East Bengali struggle. Mrs Gandhi said,

Nearly two million refugees have already poured into our country posing a heavy burden on us, Pakistan must be held responsible to create without delay conditions which will enable those refugees to return to their own country safely and

with honour. I hope that all peoples of the world will uphold and defend human rights and demand the restoration to the people of East Bengal of their rightful claim to rule by their elected representatives.¹¹

India represented herself to the world as an unselfish humanitarian Power, primarily interested in mitigating an appalling human catastrophe. But it did not go unnoticed that she saw the East Pakistan crisis as an opportunity to break up Pakistan. To this end she encouraged to the utmost of her ability, the creation of a separate Bangla Desh out of the Eastern Wing of Pakistan.

On May 15, 1971, the government of India sent a note to the Pakistan High Commission, bluntly asking Pakistan to create such conditions in East Pakistan immediately as would enable the return of refugees to their homes. An interesting reference in the note was of India "reserving the right to claim full satisfaction in respect of financial and other burdens" is liable to several interpretations. Apart from demanding compensation in terms of money, the government could legitimately ask for a territorial adjustment on the basis of population of which there were several precedents.¹²

On the same day Mrs Gandhi, addressing a huge gathering at Mohanpur, a few miles from Agartala expressed the hope

¹¹ The Statesman, May 15, 1971

¹² Ibid., May 16, 1971

that the struggle of the people of Bangla Desh would not be in vain, and that they would ultimately achieve independence and form a democratic government.¹³ India's Prime Minister was giving the lead to adopting a militant attitude towards Pakistan, so as to try and force it to come to a solution favourable to the interests of India.

Mrs Gandhi said in Parliament that the possibility of a political settlement in East Pakistan was becoming more remote everyday. She said the problem besides refugees, also involved the issue of democracy and human rights, she declared however, that India would never acquiesce, "in a political settlement, that means the death of Bangla Desh and the ending of democracy and of the people who are fighting for their rights."¹⁴

The Indian Prime Minister was rather disappointed, that in spite of all the propaganda through the press, mass-media and her own appeals and protests the world community was not taking any action. She accused the World Powers of not doing enough about the civil war in East Pakistan and said India would have to "take all means necessary to ensure our own security and for the preservation of the structure of social and economic life." She

¹³ The Statesman. May 16, 1971

¹⁴ The New York Times. June 16, 1971

did not elaborate, but she hinted strongly that a military solution was not ruled out.¹⁵

The Indian government still not satisfied with the state of world opinion on the issue decided to send its Foreign Minister to the principal world capitals in June 1971 to ensure that the Indian point of view was represented effectively in the highest quarters. "The aim was to acquaint foreign governments of the dangerous implications of the Yahya regime's repressive policies in East Bengal. His itinerary was to include Bonn, Paris, London, Washington, and Ottawa. Some of these countries were members of the Aid to Pakistan Consortium."¹⁶

He also tried to impress on these governments the dangers of giving economic aid to Pakistan now that one half of the country was under army occupation, and that help from abroad would only be used to suppress the aspirations of the people of Bangla Desh. Mr Swaran Singh said. "My thesis is that to give aid to Pakistan military leaders before they apply correctives in East Pakistan is interfering in Pakistan's domestic affairs. It means giving aid to a minority, a dictatorial regime."¹⁷ However, this all out diplomatic and publicity campaign to mobilize world pressure on Pakistan did not get the response India expected.

¹⁵Washington Post. May 25, 1971

¹⁶The Statesman. May 31, 1971

The reactions of most governments to the events in East Pakistan was to regard them as an internal matter of Pakistan. This attitude was consistently maintained by the Arab World, the South East Asian countries, the Chinese Republic, Turkey and Iran. Initially France was also not receptive to the Indian line but changed later on. Great Britain in the beginning was not favourable. The Indian press itself reported "that Mr Swaran Singh's talks here will be crucial because the British Government's view of events in Pakistan is not the same as India's. Whitehall still hopes that Pakistan will survive as one unit in a loose federation. While Whitehall is happy over the opportunity of discussing the problem with Mr Swaran Singh, it has reservations on what India would like to see happen."¹⁷ Subsequently, the British Government changed its mind and its attitude towards Islamabad became most unfriendly.

In the United States many Democratic leaders called for a cessation of all aid to Pakistan until the desired political settlement was reached. President Nixon's Administration however, resisted the pressure. The U.S.S.R supported India's point of view almost right from the beginning. Soviet Premier, Mr Alexei Kosygen, addressing an election rally called for conditions to be created to enable millions of

¹⁷ The Statesman. June 20, 1971

East Bengal refugees who have flooded India to return to their homeland. He said the situation in the Indian sub-continent caused anxiety to the Soviet Government. He called for measures to be taken without delay for the return of refugees.¹⁸

The different political parties in India supported the movement for an independent Bangla Desh. The Revolutionary Socialist Party's General Secretary, Tardib Chaudhury, asked for immediate diplomatic recognition.¹⁹ The Jana Sangh Party member K.L.Gupta wanted the government to enforce a naval blockade to prevent Pakistani ships carrying arms and ammunition to East Pakistan.²⁰ The Jana Sangh even decided to observe April 25, as 'Swadhin Bangla Day' throughout the country to express the solidarity of the people of India with the freedom fighters in East Bengal.²¹

The Samyukta Socialist Party decided to call a World Conference to spotlight the situation in Bangla Desh. They were convinced that the conscience of the world would be roused only by a global conference on Bangla Desh.²² The Communist Party of India members in Parliament suggested that refugees should be given training in arms so that they might go back to Bangla Desh to fight the Pakistani troops.²³

¹⁸ The Statesman. June 10, 1971

¹⁹ Hindustan Times. April 3, 1971

²⁰ Ibid. April 10, 1971

²¹ Ibid. April 18, 1971

²² The Statesman. May 5, 1971

The Communist Party leader Mr A. K. Gopalan also suggested that India should supply arms to Liberation forces in Bangla Desh.²⁴

The Bharatiya Kranti Dal said in a resolution on Bangla Desh that India demand territories from Pakistan to rehabilitate East Bengal refugees.²⁵ Even among the ruling Congress Party, there was a great demand for an early recognition of Bangla Desh.

The Indian press espoused the Bangla Desh cause most vehemently and, in the press freely reported to exaggeration. Once all the foreign journalists had been expelled from East Pakistan, because of the uncertain conditions there, India became the major source about the happenings in East Pakistan. India's reporters were closest to the news, but the newspapers turned themselves into propaganda organs no less crude than the government controlled press in Pakistan. Day after day, in defiance not merely of known facts but also of reason and consistency, the newspapers announced great victories by the Mukti Bahini forces fighting the Pakistan army, its capture of towns and large areas of East Pakistan. Several newspapers, including the reputed Times of India, headlined the news of Dacca's liberation

²³ The Statesman, May 10, 1971

²⁴ Ibid. May 10, 1971

²⁵ Ibid. June 7, 1971

and surrender of an entire Pakistan division. Soon inconsistencies began to crop up, and not being able to back up their earlier reports that Dacca had been liberated, the same newspapers carried the stories warning that a second round of heavy fighting was coming.²⁶

Needless to say, the press supported the Indian government's course of action. A Statesman editorial commenting on the resolution passed by the Indian Parliament said

Parliament has fully conveyed the depth of the nation's feelings but it has not committed the government to any course of action which is premature. The resolution recognises that East Bengal has in effect ceased to be East Pakistan but stops short of immediately recognising its independence by calling it Bangla Desh. Indeed short of rushing into an official commitment with far reaching implications, India has expressed full support for a people subjected to repression by a cynical and shortsighted military regime.²⁷

On the issue of recognition of Bangla Desh, some newspapers favored the government attitude of ambivalence for a variety of reasons such as:

- a) India was not keen to give Islamabad a handle to divert world attention from the enormity of the problem the Pakistan army was facing.
- b) The somewhat surprising Chinese attitude on East Bengal had introduced a new dimensions.
- c) It was felt that recognition of Bangla Desh at that stage would not particularly help Sheikh Mujib's followers in

²⁶ Washington Post. April 10, 1971

²⁷ The Statesman. April 2, 1971

their struggle.

- d) New Delhi was viewing the recognition issue also in the context of its total repercussions on Indo-Pakistan relations with the world.

Whereas some newspapers cautioned the government about a premature recognition others advocated immediate recognition. A distinguished Indian scholar, Mr. Mohammed Ayooob, wrote,

In such a situation the recognition of Bangla Desh, even if some people consider it premature, will only mean coming to grips with the inevitable. It is my plea that once a provisional government is firmly established with territory under its control, we should lead the way rather than become the traditional fourth or fifth nation to recognise the new government. If we alienate the people of East Bengal by withholding recognition a minute longer than necessary, we may be faced with two hostile countries instead of one. A domestic variable should also be considered. As it is, West Bengal considers itself the disinherited state. With emotions raised to fever pitch in West Bengal, any hesitation on the part of New Delhi may add disenchantment in West Bengal. The myth that if we recognise Bangla Desh, West Bengal may also go the Dacca way should be exploded. In fact it is the non-recognition of Bangla Desh by New Delhi which may alienate West Bengal.²⁸

²⁸ Hindustan Times. April 10, 1971

Besides the press coverage which was building public opinion to a high pitch, different public groups and political notables also gave vent to their feelings. Meetings were organised to discuss the East Bengal situation. Mr N. C. Chatterji, President of the All India Civil Liberties Council, issued a statement calling upon the government of India to take concrete steps to recognise the liberation movement in Bangla Desh,²⁹ At a discussion on 'Recent Events in Pakistan' organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs in New Delhi, the consensus was that India should forget so called diplomatic niceties, throw doubtful caution to the winds, and go to help Bangla Desh in whatever way possible.³⁰

In Calcutta, where emotions were high, political parties, trade unions and citizens formed a committee, with Chief Minister Ajoy Mukerjee as its President, to help the freedom struggle in Bangla Desh. A resolution adopted at a meeting urged the union government to give diplomatic recognition to Bangla Desh.³¹

A deputation of the Indo-Bangla Desh Friendship Association led by its General Secretary Mr. A. Das Gupta visited the embassies of the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R and the British High Commission, and handed over memoranda urging their governments to intervene in Bangla Desh. While the deputation

²⁹ Hindustan Times. April 10, 1971

³⁰ Ibid. April 3, 1971

³¹ The Statesman. April 5, 1971

was received by senior officials at the United States and the Soviet embassies the British High Commission refused to meet its members according to a spokesman of the association.³²

Meanwhile as there were rumours about Mujibur Rahman's trial coming up soon, the Avadh Bar Association came forward with an appeal, that the Pakistan government should be persuaded not to place any obstacles in the legal defence of Mujib. If the Bangla Desh leader was made to stand trial and to agree to the appointment of lawyers of international repute to defend him their services should be obtained. The world should take up the cause of defending Mujib, and secure his trial by an impartial tribunal; any tribunal constituted by Pakistan could not be fair nor impartial.³³

A number of other political notables pressed their views on the Bangla Desh issue, the most vocal of them was Mr Jayaprakash Narayan. Mr Narayan is the leading spokesman of the Gandhian point of view in India. He is also one of the Indian leaders with a record over the years of having spoken for conciliation and compromise with Pakistan. But during the Pakistan crisis he got busy touring world capitals trying to persuade the various governments to cut off all form of foreign assistance to Pakistan. He tried to generate

³² The Statesman. May 8, 1971

³³ Ibid. May 9, 1971

international outrage over the denial of self-determination to the Bengalis of East Pakistan by the Pakistan army. "I have been very deeply hurt by what the government of Pakistan has done," he said in an interview at the Indian Counsulante in New York, "it is something like what Hitler did."³⁴

The first stop of his unofficial mission was Cairo, where he failed in his attempt to meet any important figures in President Sadat's Government. He said this was because of the crisis in Egypt but many Indians think this is not so. It was perhaps a matter of one Muslim country supporting another. He met Yasir Arafat the Palestinian commando leader who he said was bubbling with support for Bangla Desh. Later Mr Narayan conferred with President Tito of Yugoslavakia, Pope Paul VI and Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany. He also stopped in Moscow, Helsinki, Paris and London, before arriving in Washington, where he met Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, and Henry Kissenger. He argued against the contention of Western officials that a total halt in aid to Pakistan would end any constructive influence they might have in the crisis. On the contrary he told them 'putting screws' on Pakistan would make it impossible for the military regime to continue its operations against the Bengalis.

³⁴ New York Times. June 13, 1971

Giving aid, he contended, would involve the donor nations "in the guilt of the Pakistan army".³⁵

It was apparent that his attempts at influencing world opinion were no crashing success. Replying to questions in a Delhi television interview he said that India would have to resolve the problem of refugees on her own without depending on the world community.³⁶

The former Indian Defence Minister, Mr.V.K.Krishna Menon, urged the government to recognise the Bangla Desh government immediately.³⁷ A former Indian Foreign Minister, Mr.M.C.Chagla, also called for early recognition of Bangla Desh.³⁸

The student community of India reacted strongly to the happenings in East Pakistan. The Delhi University Students' Union called for a token strike to express solidarity towards the people of Bangla Desh.³⁹ In Shillong, the joint capital of Assam and Meghalya, students abstained from classes and paraded the streets of the city demanding the recognition of Bangla Desh. They demonstrated opposite the Assam Legislative Assembly and urged the union government to rush troops to fight against the West Pakistanis.⁴⁰

³⁵ New York Times. June 13, 1971

³⁶ The Statesman. June 29, 1971

³⁷ The Hindustan Times. April 19, 1971

³⁸ The Statesman. April 16, 1971

³⁹ Ibid. March 31, 1971

⁴⁰ Hindustan Times. April 13, 1971

Eminent writers, artists and painters employed their talents to show sympathy for Bangla Desh. They sponsored a mobile exhibition to spread awareness among the people of the situation in Bangla Desh. Through photographs and sketches the horror and sorrow, the pain and struggle and the courage of the Bengalis was vividly brought home to the shoppers and strollers in India's towns.

It is apparent from the above that the creation of Bangla Desh, and the dismemberment of Pakistan, had become a national objective in India. One cannot say that it was the refugee problem that caused reactions in India, because it is clear that the Indian official and public view had crystallized and hardened before the refugee problem assumed the magnitude that it subsequently did. It is true however that the refugees provided a justification for India's attitude.

CHAPTER IV
INDIA AND THE PAKISTAN CIVIL WAR
PHASE II

By June, 1971 India's policy on East Bengal had taken recognisable shape, India sought Big Power involvement and chided the international community for having shirked responsibility so far. At the same time it defined the extent of its own involvement, and gave notice to Pakistan that if the situation in and around East Bengal did not improve, Islamabad would have to take the consequences. Uptil now if the Indian Government shrank from more effective intervention it was only because such a threat looked rather academic.

The situation on the border as such was extremely explosive. Hidden in tent camps along East Pakistan's western border with India were the official armed forces of the rebel Bangla Desh Government, the Mukti Bahini. Some regular Indian Army units, ignoring an Indo-Pakistan treaty under which both sides were to keep their forces five miles from the border, had moved in right besides the Mukti Bahini. "It is easy to understand the ease with which Pakistani troops in

hot pursuit of retreating guertillas could find to their cost that they had invaded India."¹

Meanwhile Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram, making a major policy statement on behalf of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government, told Parliament that a new nation of Bangla Desh will ultimately be established in what is now East Pakistan. High ranking Indian officials said the position outlined by him was based on the Indian government's recognition that the Bangla Desh movement was not an idle dream and had the potentiality of success.²

The crisis further deepened when the Indian government and the provincial government of Bangla Desh rejected President Yahya's new formula for the transfer of power, soon after the Pakistan leader made a marathon speech to the nation. The President had announced that a group of experts would draw up a constitution for Pakistan, the Constituent Assembly would be converted into a national assembly, elected members from the banned Awami League party would be allowed to take their seats, and a by election held for vacant seats. Within minutes of the announcement, Mr. Swaran Singh, the Indian Foreign Minister, told Parliament that the "government of

¹ Washington Post. June 21, 1971

² Ibid. July 13, 1971

India would reject any makeshift plan for a transfer of power which did not take the elected leader of Pakistan Shaikh Mujibur Rahman into account".³

The Indians, it seemed, had assumed a militant attitude, the Times (London) in an article, captioned "Indian doves turn hawks", said that the stark and alarming fact that most Indians had lost faith in the world community's efforts to enforce a political solution was shown by a statement by Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan, Founder of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and a renowned advocate of the Mahatama's doctrine of non-violence said, "The time has come for action. We must give the Liberation Army heavy artillery, guns, anti-tank weapons, machine guns and explosives.". At the same time the Bharatiya Khitmatgar, a newly formed organisation committed to promoting non-violence and goodwill between Hindus and Muslims issued a statement urging Mrs. Gandhi to recognise Bangla Desh and to support the Liberation Army immediately. The organisation said that in view of President Yahya's attitude the matter could only be resolved by military action and urged, "to mount a naval blockade and supply the freedom fighters with arms and training".⁴

According to the foreign press the Indian government

³ The Times. June 29, 1971

⁴ Ibid. July 3, 1971

was indeed doing this: giving the rebels sanctuary, training, weapons and ammunition. It never categorically denied such reports. Some of these reports are quoted below:

The Washington Post reported: The guerrilla who is deputy leader of a platoon of 37 men, freely conceded that almost all his ammunition and weapons come from India, and that he once took his unit into India after a successful ambush of army soldiers, that he knew would bear reprisals.⁵

The Indian army has been fully supporting the Mukti Bahini despite denials in New Delhi. This correspondent (William J. Coughlin, Los Angeles Times) as others has seen regular Indian Army Troops encamped with the freedom fighters only a few yards from the Pakistan border.⁶

The Bangla Desh Mission members stated freely that most of the guerrilla training is being conducted in special camps in India. Arms and ammunition for the guerrillas are being supplied either directly by India or channelled by 'international runners' through India. Mission members say that guerrilla training program has two parts-one for ordinary fighters who undergo a month's basic training and another more advanced training for specialists, such as saboteurs, who are schooled for three months. There are estimated to be 30,000 guerrillas now operating in East Pakistan or making forays across the border from India.⁷

One resident expert on the military situation suggested that Bengalis who fled to India after March 25, when the West Pakistan Army moved against East Pakistan, and who are enrolled in Indian guerrilla schools now had graduated and returned to Pakistan.⁸

⁵ Washington Post. July 21, 1971

⁶ Ibid. August 8, 1971

⁷ Ibid. September 13, 1971

⁸ New York Times. July 5, 1971

With India providing border sanctuaries, arms aid and training and sometimes covering fire for the Bengali resistance fighters there is a persistent danger that a minor border clash would explode into a general war. India's apparent hope is that her military assistance will be enough to bring about an independant Bangla Desh, short of war with Pakistan, "We are doing everything possible," Foreign Minister Swaran Singh said in Parliament, "to support the freedom fighters."⁹

The London Times also quoted evidence of India's support: Bengali infantry units, which mutinied in March clearly enjoy sanctuary on Indian soil. They are certainly being trained in sabotage techniques and are supplied with arms.¹⁰

The Indian government has imposed restrictions on the movement of foreign correspondents attempting to visit refugee camps and the border areas in West Bengal and East India. It is understood that these orders were issued because the government is embarrassed by the fact that the East Bengal guerrillas are operating from bases in India.¹¹

The Indian press itself claimed: That India will not feel shy of extending sympathy and support to Bangla Desh freedom fighters including the Mukti Fauj; despite General Yahya's threats of war. India the sources pointed out, had not kept hidden the facts of its help to the freedom fighters nor felt shy of acknowledging it. And if necessary this help would take the form of arms supply.¹²

The Indian Ambassador to the United States, Laksmi Kant Jha, admitted that India was permitting its territory to be used as a sanctuary for Bengali rebels fighting for an independant East Pakistan, The Indian Ambassador who appeared on a special hour long session of 'Issues and

⁹New York Times. July 27, 1971

¹⁰The Times. London, July 10, 1971

¹¹Ibid. September 17, 1971

¹²The Statesman. July 22, 1971

Answers," side stepped a question as to whether there were Bengali training camps inside India and then said, "the border is so completely wide open and vast that it would be impossible to seal it."¹³

Mrs Gandhi herself several times inferred that support to the Mukti Fauj was being given. The Prime Minister who was being interviewed by some foreign correspondents in her office at the Government Secretariat, seemed irritated when asked about the military assistance India had been giving the Bengali insurgents in East Pakistan. But she did not categorically deny that India was helping them. She said instead: "Perhaps you know they have many helpers mostly their own people all over the world. Also many avenues are open to them." She did not elaborate.¹⁴

Later Mrs Gandhi revealed in an exclusive interview report with Newsweek that some of the training of the Bengali guerrillas may be taking place on her side. On India supporting the Bengalis interviewer De Borchgrave quoted Mrs Gandhi, "Only when the refugees started coming, can you say that India had a hand in the Pakistan crisis. Only after all the Pakistan army terror, can you say well may be some of the guerrillas came over from India, some of the training may be taking place on our side but certainly not all."¹⁵

¹³ Washington Post. August 16, 1971

¹⁴ New York Times. October 19, 1971

¹⁵ The Statesman. November 9, 1971

On the diplomatic level India adopted a very adamant attitude towards Pakistan, and rebuffed all attempts on the part of Yahya Khan to discuss the issue. In July 1971, Yahya Khan called for an Indo-Pak summit, but his suggestions were viewed as having a very sinister motivation as a part of a bid to shift the focus of attention from the Bangla Desh struggle and convert it into an India Pakistan dispute. The External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh described Yahya's offer to meet Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as a 'trap'. He said, "The military ruler should instead talk with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to solve the Bangla Desh issue."¹⁶

Mrs Gandhi rejected President Yahya's suggestion that both sides should withdraw their forces from borders. She also said no useful purpose would be served if she met the President for talks. She said the basic problem revolved round the differences between East and West Pakistan, and it was therefore not an Indo-Pakistan issue. She also rejected the idea of third party mediation between India and Pakistan.¹⁷

As late as November 19, when conditions between India and Pakistan were really explosive, President Yahya Khan offered friendship to the Indians. On the occasion of the

¹⁶ The Statesman, Nivember 9, 1971

¹⁷ Ibid. July 15, 1971

end of the fast during the Muslim month of Ramadan he said, "India and Pakistan for too long have wasted their energies and resources in arming against one another. These resources should have been used to ripen the fruits of independence of our two countries. Pakistan," he added, "is holding out the hand of friendship to India."¹⁸

President Yahya Khan even privately expressed willingness to meet leaders of East Pakistan's outlawed Awami League to discuss a political solution of the civil war. But even that did not materialize because despite India's assertion that Bangla Desh officials operate free of Indian control, the Indian government was determined to exercise right of approval on any emissary chosen by East Pakistan for these talks. India kept a close watch on the exile government and would presumably want to monitor any contacts between the rebels and the Pakistan government. The United States reportedly endeavoured to help communications begin between the two sides. "This has aroused India's and Bangla Desh' suspicions of America's intention. Most Indian officials argue that no political solution can be found which would leave East Pakistan united within Pakistan. If that is the only position which Awami League members and their patrons the Indians would bring to a bargaining table there would

¹⁸ Washington Post, November 20, 1971

be no basis for discussion with Yahya Khan, who launched his military occupation of East Pakistan to preserve the unity and integrity of Pakistan's two wings.¹⁹

President Yahya Khan also agreed to U. Thant's proposal of having United Nations observers provided India accepted representatives on her soil also. India refused insisting that she has remained opposed to admitting observers, "Many people believe this is because military and other help is being given to East Pakistan now intent on setting up a separate state of Bangla Desh."²⁰

India took the position as Mrs Gandhi put it that the repression in East Pakistan "is a threat to our security." On the other hand she insisted also that the problems of Pakistan were strictly Pakistan's internal affair not subject to United Nations intervention. It was apparent that India did not want any solution of the crisis which would keep the two wings of Pakistan together in any form.

On August 9, 1971, taking the world by surprise, India abandoned her policy of non-alignment to enter into a formal alliance with the Soviet Union. According to official sources it seemed that the idea of the treaty had been conceived two years ago but it had been spurred on by the threat of war. "Significantly the treaty was ratified in an atmosphere

¹⁹ Washington Post. November 12, 1971

²⁰ New York Times. October 14, 1971.

charged with fear of an imminent Indo-Pakistan war and the suspicion that India and Russia's hostile neighbour China might intervene."²¹

The 20-year friendship treaty between India and the Soviet Union was clearly intended to intimidate Pakistan. Mr Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister, described the treaty in the Lok Sabha as a deterrent to any power that may have aggressive designs on India. He said, " the treaty commits all out Soviet support to India in the advent of any outside attack. It also rules out Soviet arms aid or assistance to any country that might cause military damage to the other party."²²

Pretty soon a fairly close identity of views between India and the Soviet Union over the Bangla Desh issue was evidenced in a joint statement issued by the foreign ministers of the two countries. "They both called for an immediate political solution and for the creation of conditions of safety for the return of refugees to their homes in the interest of the entire people of Pakistan."²³

Senior United States specialists maintained that India and the Soviet Union were quietly collaborating to promote the political separation of East Pakistan and its independence under Indian protection. The Soviets were said to have cautioned India against premature recognition of Bangla

²¹ The Times. London, August 10, 1971

²² The Statesman. August 12, 1971

²³ Ibid. August 12, 1971

Desh. Instead they counselled India to deploy her armed forces for self-defence as a warning to Pakistan and above all as a show of support for the Bangla Desh movement. Meanwhile Moscow was giving political support to India's assistance to the guerrillas in East Pakistan, in arms, money and guidance, in the expectation of a major political victory for India without the rush of war.²⁴

Soon after India and the Soviet Union signed the treaty, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi started making plans to visit the United States and some other Western countries. Her trip would apparently have a two fold objective, to dispel misunderstanding about the India-Soviet treaty, and also to acquaint the governments of these countries herself with the problems arising out of the Bangla Desh struggle. Mrs Gandhi finally began her tour in October 1971. In the meantime India and the Soviet leaders had exchanged several visits and made broad claims of friendship and mutual support.

After cordial exchanges in Vienna and Brussels Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reached England. Her talks were understood to have been wide ranging, although it is obvious that the Bangla Desh issue was dominant. While Indian and British assessments of the situation proved similar, as also were their feelings for a political solution in East Bengal,

²⁴ New York Times. October 24, 1971

"one major difference understood to have emerged out of these meetings was that Britain is thinking of a dialogue between Islamabad and East Bengal within the framework of Pakistan. The Indian assessment on the other hand was that the situation had progressed too far to think in terms of keeping Pakistan together."²⁵

The next important stop in Mrs Gandhi's tour was the United States, where she had prolonged talks with President Nixon. However, after the second round of talks between them it was apparent that the talks were a failure. There was no evidence that they were in any way substantially closer to a common solution. Thus the gap that separated the United States and the Indian Government was just as wide as it was before Mrs Gandhi's arrival.²⁶

On return from her three week Odyssey Mrs Gandhi was in no way gloating with success. She said she was on the whole satisfied with her talks with the world leaders, but she could not say how effective intervention by them would be in solving the Bangla Desh crisis without a war.²⁷ In her statement to the Indian Parliament regarding her foreign tour, she made it clear that India could not depend on the

²⁵ The Statesman. November 1, 1971

²⁶ Washington Post. November 6, 1971

²⁷ The Statesman. November 14, 1971

international community to solve the problems.²⁸

It is clear that while India had not given express and formal recognition for the rebel government of Bangla Desh, it had recognised it informally and for most practical purposes. On August 30, 1971, "Half a mile away from the capital's diplomatic colony of Chanathyapuri, and within sight of the blue onion domes of the Pakistan High Commission, the flag of Bangla Desh was proudly hoisted by the representative of the Bangla Desh Government over the new mission building."²⁹

The guerrillas clandestine radio station was also reported to be operating from India, from where continuous reports were made of the successes of the Mukti Bahini and the reverses of the Pakistan Army.³⁰

For months Indian pressure on the Pakistan forces in East Pakistan had been building up. According to Vidya Charan Shukla, Minister of State for Defence Production, India's war machinery was in top gear. "It is waiting orders to repel any Pakistani aggression on the borders. From alert to scramble should not take more than two minutes--such is the alertness and the preparedness of our armed forces."³¹

²⁸ The Statesman. November 16, 1971

²⁹ Ibid. August 13, 1971

³⁰ New York Times. July 25, 1971

³¹ Hindustan Times. October 30, 1971

Foreign observers who visited the area noticed heavily armed Indian army troops in full battle gear massed along the border.³²

India appeared determined to push forward for a quick end to Pakistan's military control of East Pakistan, a course which made Indo-Pakistan war inevitable. India's decision to take more direct part in the East Pakistan fighting was visible from the several battalion sized and largerrattacks across the border. Perhaps an important element in this Indian push forward was a confidence in its military strength and an accurate estimate of the weaknesses of the Pakistani defences in East Pakistan. The Mukti Bahini with Indian arms and training were also gaining strength. Thousands of new Mukti Bahini guerrillas had finished thair training and entered East Pakistan. At roughly the same time the Indian army reinforced on East Pakistan's borders began its own combat operations.

Unimpeachable Indian sources said that despite official denial's Indian troops had crossed into East Pakistan to silence the Pakistani guns. The Indian military sources said that Indian troops had crossed over on October 31 and November 1, 1971. On November23, President Yahya Khan declared a state of Emergency throughout Pakistan since fighting between Indian and Pakistani troops was now raging eight

³² Washington Post. November 18, 1971

miles inside the country's eastern province.³³

On December 1, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi demanded the withdrawal of all West Pakistani troops from East Pakistan and declared their presence to be a threat to Indian Security. This was Mrs Gandhi's toughest statement to date on the explosive hostilities along India's eastern border, which she delivered to the upper house of the Indian Parliament. Even as she spoke Indian troops were fighting some three miles within East Pakistan's borders for the fourth consecutive day, she said, "We have not posed a counter threat in any sense of the word. But we cannot allow the annihilation of the people next door to us." The speech was in keeping with the Indian governments strategy of steadily cranking up the military and political pressure against Pakistan.³⁴

By now there was little ambiguity about India's position on East Pakistan. On December 3, India declared a national emergency.

If India's Prime Minister had written the scenario for the opening of the new war in the sub-continent it could not have varied greatly from what actually happened. For weeks India had been mounting pressure on Pakistan seeking

³³ Washington Post. December 1, 1971

³⁴ Ibid. December 2, 1971

to entice it into an all out war, for which India felt it was amply ready.

All the major advantages in an India-Pakistan war were with India. The major advantage held by the Indian forces was their ability to operate on direct lines of supply and communication from a central position. But Pakistan divided into East and West by 1,000 miles of Indian territory, with communications between the two wings cut off by India, was at an obvious disadvantage. This naturally put India in a commanding position, even if the forces of the two countries had been equally balanced which they were not, India enjoyed a very considerable quantitative superiority over Pakistan in both men and equipment.

On December 4, 1971 India finally embarked upon war. Just before that Mrs Gandhi asked the "so called big nations" not to order India to do what they wished on the basis of their color superiority." Making an obvious reference to the latest newspaper comments from London that Britain might describe India again as an aggressor, the Indian Prime Minister said, "Times have changed during the last five years. If any country thinks that by calling us aggressors it can pressurize us to forget our national interests then that country is living in its own paradise and is welcome

to it."³⁵

Thus once again India and Pakistan were at war, the Indian army acting in concert with the Mukti Bahini, cut through Pakistan's defences in Bangla Desh in an integrated air, ground and naval thrust. Soon after, war started on the western front also.

India was gaining ground in East Pakistan and Pakistan suffered reverses. "Outnumbered in tanks, planes and ground troops, Yahya seemed to have embraced a formula for his own destruction." Nowhere was Pakistan's weakness more apparent than in East Pakistan. There Indian troops fighting side by side with Mukti Bahini rebels threatened to capture most of the province's major cities. The Indian navy bombarded the principal port of Chittagong and reportedly sank two Pakistani gunboats. Indian jets brazenly struck at the capital of Dacca itself. At Dacca at the time was Newsweek's Tony Clifton who filed the following account. "From the roof of my hotel, I could see Indian jets strafing and rocketing the airport ten miles away. The Indian MIG's came in pairs, and they were met by slower Pakistani sabres. Still the Paks put up a good fight. For half an hour the two enemies fought a roller-coaster dogfight over the city, blazing away with machine guns and air to air missiles."

³⁵ The Statesman. December 3, 1971

India's strategy was focused on creating an independent Bangla Desh as quickly as possible. They wanted to be in Dacca before the United Nations or the Big Powers could put a stop to fighting.³⁶

On December 6, 1971 amidst thunderous cheers Mrs Gandhi in Parliament announced the recognition of Bangla Desh. Five hours after that Pakistan snapped diplomatic relations with India.³⁷

Finally on December 12, the seige of Dacca was completed by the Indian army in consort with the Mukti Bahini. By that time the Pakistan army could hold out no more and were thus compelled to surrender, they were cut off from all outside help and were facing inevitable defeat. Soon after the surrender a ceasefire came about, as by now India had achieved its purpose, and Pakistan was in no condition to fight.

The United Nations was not able to either prevent the Indo-Pakistan war or to stop it after it had begun. The Security Council found itself immobilized by Soviet vetoes, procedural arguments and vicious invective between China and Russia and India and Pakistan. During a long procedural wrangle at a week end session of the United Nations Security Council, an African delegate abruptly pierced

³⁶ Newsweek. December 13, 1971

³⁷ The Statesman. December 7, 1971

some consciences while the Council debated procedure. He reminded his colleagues that people were dying on the sub-continent. "They are dying in great numbers now, and still the Council is blocked by great power ravalry, ideological conflict, hypocrisy and indifference, from even taking a modest first step to end the bloodshed."³⁸

The Soviet Union committed to the Indian side intended to block any move for a ceasefire until India had achieved its purpose. Russia's Yakov Malik announced in advance that he would veto any resolution except his own. This was a one sided blast at Pakistan supported only by Poland. China's contribution to the debate was equally sterile and irrelevant.³⁹ The Security Council meetings were instead enlivened by an exchange of ideological invective between the Soviet envoy Yakov Malik and Huang Hua of China. "The Chinese delegate-pointedly referring to the Soviet delegate as 'Mister' rather than 'Comrade', charged the Soviets as "social imperialists" with backing India in order to take control of the sub-continent. Mr Malik in turn called Mr Huang a 'jester for the imperialists'".

³⁸ New York Times. December 7, 1971

³⁹ Ibid. December 9, 1971

CONCLUSION

The third India Pakistan war ended with the dismemberment of Pakistan, and the emergence of Bangla Desh as a third major nation on the sub-continent. Pakistan's attempts at nation-making apparently ended in disaster. The separation of East Pakistan from the West, rooted in geography and culture, had been made irrevokable by the military crackdown which Yahya initiated to crush the secessionists in East Pakistan. But it goes without saying that the division of Pakistan was accelerated by India's intervention. The Indian government's decision to use the brutality of the Pakistan army as an excuse for dismembering the Pakistan nation and resorting to the use of armed force is not difficult to understand. Ever since the early 1940's Indian leaders had regarded the idea of Pakistan as an 'absurdity' even as an heresy. Since independence in 1947 the two nations had remained embroiled in numerous disputes, each regarding the other as an enemy. First through American and then Chinese military assistance Pakistan had acquired a military capability that enabled her to assert her independence from India in choosing her domestic and foreign policies.

Often Pakistan challenged India's claims to righteousness. It deemed India the aggressor in Goa and asserted that India had initiated its border conflict with China in 1962 in order to scare the West, specially the United States into giving it ever-increasing economic and military assistance. Pakistan spokesman called India's secularism and democracy as phoney. All in all, Pakistan had been a great irritant to India for more than two decades. The dismemberment of Pakistan was clearly a welcome prospect and moved to ensure that it would materialize.

Perhaps India envisaged a number of advantages to result from Pakistan's dismemberment: a) With the emergence of Bangla Desh, a hostile power on both sides would be replaced by a far weaker enemy on the Western side and a friend on the Eastern. b) The Kashmir question would lose much of its importance both domestic and international. c) The two-nation theory which had asserted that muslims were a separate nation from the Hindus, an assertion on the basis of which Pakistan had been demanded and conceded, would be proven wrong in as much as it would be shown that Bengali Muslims did not regard themselves as one with West Pakistani Muslims.

Even though India enthusiastically pursued the task of dismembering Pakistan as a panacea for some of her troubles, it may find that its troubles are far from over. To begin with there is no guarantee that the refugees whose presence on the Indian soil had been presented as an intolerable

provocation have all returned home. Moreover there is no telling where secessionist movements such as the one that took place in Bangla Desh will end on a sub-continent that is peopled by many different races, religions,,languages and cultures. Although it supported the East Pakistani rebels the Indian government does not favor demands for regional autonomy at home, where even talk of secession is a criminal offence under the law. The power of the central authority in India has borne down swiftly on recalcitrant provincial movements. West Bengal the Indian half of Bangla Desh, has been repeatedly subjected to military intervention and has been under direct federal rule many a time. The possibility cannot be ruled out that India's own Bengalis never a contended minority, may one day initiate a secessionist movement in their state of Bengal. Furthermore Bangla Desh the world's eighth largest nation in terms of population (75 million), and among the world's poorest, with a per capita annual income of \$30, is sure to be an unsettling factor on the sub-continent because of its desperate poverty. Finally there remains for India the monumental social and financial incumberance of breathing life into Bangla Desh. No matter how ironic it may seem, the losers in West Pakistan may turn out to be in better shape than the winners in the long run. For even though the Eastern province provided a major

share of foreign exchange earnings, and substantial tax revenue, West Pakistan will still retain a viable economy. By Asian standards it has a sufficient industrial base and is virtually self-sufficient in food. Politically however, Pakistan does need to go a long way. Years of authoritarian military rule have brought defeat and dismemberment to the nation and disgrace to the rulers. Mr Bhutto's call for reappraisal is very pertinent, for a new era has opened on the sub-continent and will require revised policies on the part of all concerned. The restoration of democracy and the institution of broad social reform would certainly be welcomed by the new Pakistan. The most challenging task before Pakistani leadership is to persuade the people to accept the loss of East Pakistan, and to seek friendship and new ties with it.

It is to India's advantage also to explore new venues of co-operation not only between India and Bangla Desh, but between India and Pakistan. A more liberal Indian policy on Kashmir would immensely help such an understanding. It is also in India's long term interest to foster reconciliation between Islamabad and Dacca. Most important of all is the quest for peace on the sub-continent. All these years after partition. India and Pakistan have been arming themselves, just to confront each other. This has impoverished both countries. India since it is larger should respect

the territorial integrity of Pakistan and adopt a more accommodating attitude, so as to encourage the prospect of peace and prosperity.

The elimination of Pakistan as a serious military threat to India, the emergence of India as the major military power in the area and the vast strengthening of the Soviet Union's position have drastically altered the balance of power in South Asia. Although India won the battle for East Pakistan, but in the larger perspective of world politics, this is not the main thing. It is rather that the Soviet Union has emerged from this conflict as the military arsenal and political defender of India, with a substantial naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and a base of political and military operations on China's southern flank.

The Indo-Pakistan conflict has had significant implications for the power struggle between China and the Soviet Union and a strategic struggle between Moscow and Washington. The Soviet Union probably gained more than anybody else. India which won with Soviet arms and Soviet diplomatic support in the United Nations is now dependant on aid from the Soviet Union rather than from the United States. In the long run this could be an awkward alliance.

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