

Rapid #: -18111147

CROSS REF ID: **1064109**

LENDER: **ZCU :: Butler**

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TYPE: Book Chapter

BOOK TITLE: Bangladesh : a political history since independence

USER BOOK TITLE: Bangladesh : a political history since independence

CHAPTER TITLE:

BOOK AUTHOR:

EDITION:

VOLUME:

PUBLISHER: I.B. Tauris

YEAR: 2016.

PAGES: 1 - 37

ISBN: 9781780767413

LCCN:

OCLC #: 951642033

PATRON: **CARRICK, WILLIAM**

PATRON ID: wac2112@columbia.edu

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CALL #: **DS395.5 .R573 2016g****LOCATION:** **ZCU :: Butler :: Butler Stacks**

REQUEST TYPE: Book Chapter

USER BOOK TITLE: Bangladesh : a political history since independence

ZCU CATALOG TITLE: Bangladesh : a political history since independence / Ali Riaz

CHAPTER TITLE:

BOOK AUTHOR:

EDITION:

VOLUME:

PUBLISHER: I.B. Tauris

YEAR: 2016.

PAGES: 1 - 37

ISBN: 9781780767413

LCCN:

OCLC #: 951642033

CROSS REFERENCE ID: [TN:1064109][ODYSSEY:206.107.42.20/ZCU]

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BANGLADESH

A Political History since Independence

ALI RIAZ

I.B. TAURIS

LONDON • NEW YORK



BURSTAP
DS
395.5
.R573
2016g

Published in 2016 by
I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd
London • New York
www.ibtauris.com

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References to websites were correct at the time of writing.

International Library of Twentieth Century History 72

ISBN: 978 1 78076 741 3

eISBN: 978 1 78672 075 7

ePDF: 978 1 78673 075 6

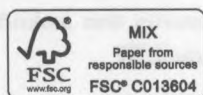
A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Typeset in Garamond Three by OKS Prepress Services, Chennai, India

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY



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INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, the eighth most populous country in the world, is also the youngest nation-state in South Asia. It emerged as an independent country in 1971 after experiencing a genocide that cost millions of lives.¹ The nine-month long war devastated the country, thousands of women were raped, and millions were either internally displaced or took refuge in neighboring India. The birth of the country was soaked in blood and, to borrow the characterization of the events of 1971 by a US diplomat, was 'cruel'.² Indeed, it was the 'transformation of [a] seemingly forlorn Dream into a bright shining Reality'.³ But since then the country has seen tumultuous times; hopes and despair mark the past 45 years of its existence. To say that the political history of Bangladesh is mercurial and eventful is an understatement. Over the past four decades the country has been ruled by military and pseudo-military regimes for more than 15 years. Governance by the elected civilian political regimes has been marred by corruption and instability. Democracy has remained only an aspiration, although the people of the country have shed blood many times since independence hoping each time that a change will arrive. Bangladesh has undergone a variety of systems of governance – from a Westminster-style parliamentary government to one-party presidential rule to a multi-party presidential system. The country returned to the parliamentary system of government in 1991 after waltzing with the presidential system for the preceding 15 years. Bangladesh also invented a unique system of its own called the Caretaker Government (CTG) and then discarded it in a contentious manner. These systems of governance have made indelible marks on the political

landscape of the country, shaped the contours of Bangladeshi politics in many ways, and influenced the political culture.

The proclamation of independence in 1971 pledged a country which will deliver equality, human dignity and justice, but soon these foundations were forgotten by the political class. The country, in its first constitution, promised to practise democracy at all levels of governance, which was first flouted by the framers of the constitution and then by the military regimes. The record of elected civilian regimes since 1991 is no different in this regard. The constitution promised to circumvent the explosive mix of religion and politics, a central feature of Pakistani politics from which the independent nation was expected to make a break. Hope of a secular state soon faded as Islam emerged as a political ideology, found a place in the constitution, was named state religion, and assumed a perceptible role in the public sphere. Those who were in power and those who wanted to be in power, including parties which once championed the separation between state and religion, adopted the religious rhetoric. Islamist militancy found its way to the country which used to take pride in its syncretic tradition. The volatile political environment, violence, and breakdown of governing institutions have frequently drawn the attention of the world's media to Bangladesh.

But the country has also produced a development success story: 'Bangladesh is 1 of only 18 developing countries with an annual growth rate that has never fallen below 2 per cent.'⁴ Notwithstanding the economic growth, annually over 6 per cent in the past decade and the reduction in the incidence of poverty from an estimated 70 per cent in 1971⁵ to 31.5 per cent in 2010⁶, the country 'has achieved rapid and spectacular improvements in many social development indicators during the last two decades or so'.⁷ The decline achieved in maternal mortality (from 574 per 100,000 in 1990, to 194 per 100,000 in 2010, to 170 per 100,000 in 2014),⁸ in infant mortality (from 100 per thousand in 1990 to 38 per thousand in 2012),⁹ children under five years mortality rates (from 144 per thousand in 1990 to 31 per thousand in 2015),¹⁰ and in increasing equitable access in education (Net Enrolment Rate: 98.7 per cent; girls: 99.4 per cent, boys: 97.2 per cent), are noteworthy. According to the 2013 Human Development Report of the UNDP, between 1980 and 2012, Bangladesh's life expectancy at birth increased 14 years, a notable achievement indeed. These seemingly conflicting

trends have given rise to phrases such as the 'Bangladesh Paradox', 'Bangladesh Conundrum' and 'Development Puzzle'.

The 'Paradox', however, is not only that the country achieved a remarkable economic progress despite the absence of good governance and political stability, but also that a huge incongruity exists between the popular aspiration and the reality, between hope and despair which arrived in quick succession. This book is an effort to look at both paradoxes. My objective is to offer a critical examination of Bangladeshi politics since 1971. Unlike previous political histories of Bangladesh, this book examines the political processes, institutions and actors in an attempt to unravel the problems and prospects of this young nation. Conventional accounts of the country's politics tend to take regime histories not only as their point of departure but also as the central focus. Taking a break from this mold this book examines the political challenges and outcomes of the past 45 years. The regime-centric history or chronological narratives tend to overlook long-term changes and assign particular regimes pivotal roles, at times unduly. This book is instead organized around three crucial themes of Bangladeshi politics: democracy, identity, and development, and scrutinizes the achievements and failures from a long-term perspective. Understanding the institutional, behavioral and cultural changes that have shaped the polity over the past 45 years is the focus of this endeavour.

However, a critical thematic presentation of the political history requires that we familiarize ourselves with the events that led to the founding of Bangladesh in 1971 and the defining features of governance since then. Three chapters of this book provide the narrative of the political events between the 1960s and 2015. They serve as background to the succeeding thematic chapters but also demonstrate how one can break away from the conventional periodization of Bangladeshi political history. Chapter 1 looks at the formation of the Bengali nation as a political entity in the twentieth century as opposed to Bengali as an ethnic identity, which existed for centuries. The chapter also examines the processes of the formation of the Bangladeshi state, which on the one hand built upon the Pakistani state edifice, while growing out of unresolved contestations among various political forces on the other. Construction of a nation is a conscious process, and a political project of a social force; but it does not follow a linear path and instead twists and turns to shape the contours of the imagined community. Neither the forces which engage in this project

nor those who oppose the construction determine the pathway. A nation, in the words of Ernest Renan,

is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.¹¹

The process of nation-making is, therefore, rediscovering past events and contextualizing them within the present. Cultural artefacts, rituals, history and prospect coalesce in the new configuration of nation. The making of the Bengali nation follows the same trajectory. Highlighting the political processes between 1947 and 1971, when the land was the eastern wing of Pakistan, I demonstrate that although various imaginations of nationhood were engaged in contestation, some of which underscored religion, some the social classes, the 'Bengali' nationhood which subsumed religion and class issues became dominant.

The construction of the new nation was followed by the formation of the state, which is discussed in the second part of the chapter. The election of 1970 not only provided constitutional legitimacy to the Bengali leadership but also made them the representative of the majority of the Pakistani citizens. The unwillingness of the Pakistani military bureaucratic elite to accept the results of the elections paved the way for the emergence of a new state. Beginning with the non-cooperation movement in early March, a parallel state emerged in the eastern part of Pakistan. But it was the genocide unleashed on the night of 25 March 1971 which put the last nail on the coffin of a United Pakistan: by the next morning Pakistan, as it was created in 1947, was dead. Various trends and tendencies appear within the resistance group and the Bangladesh government-in-exile. But the leadership withstood the adverse environment and led the nation to a victory, becoming the first secessionist movement to earn the distinction since World War II. These tendencies, in some way, became the precursor of the political forces after 1971.

The political events since 1972 can be divided into four epochs according to governance characteristics: the era of the rise and demise of authoritarianism (1972–90); the era of hope and despair (1991–2006);

the era of democracy deficit (2007–08); and the era of polarization and democracy's retreat (2009–15). How each era has fared compared to the others and how the elusive quest for democracy remains the central question of Bangladeshi politics are the foci of Chapters 2 and 3. Discussions on the first era presented in Chapter 2 highlight both the populist authoritarian phase (1972–75) and military dictatorship (1975–90). The chapter is not intended to obliterate the difference between civilian and military rule but underscores that in both instances the country witnessed and experienced consolidation of power in one office. Notwithstanding the differences between the leaderships in the first two decades, the governance reflected a sharp departure from the pronounced objectives of the nation and the state principles articulated in the constitution. Volatility, assassinations, coups and counters coups represent one part of the story while the transformation of Bangladesh – from a state which promised egalitarianism to a capitalist state, from an aspiring secular state to a state with 'state religion' – tells the other side. Inclusive democracy remained a dream. The emergence and legitimation of religio-political forces is as important a development as the cooptation of their agenda by the secularists for reasons of expediency. Chapter 2 chronicles these events, trends and actors. In one way, violence marks the entire period and wrong turns at critical junctures seem to be the fate of the nation. But a popular uprising in 1990 brings an end to this phase of the nation's journey as hope triumphs over pessimism.

The period between the optimistic new beginning in 1991 and the flawed election in 2014, the third and fourth decades of the country, represents not only another phase in the tumultuous journey of Bangladeshi politics but also a period of lost opportunity. Save the interregnum of two years, 2007–08, popularly elected regimes ruled the country; yet the period lacks a consensus among the political class and the citizens at large as to how democracy can be institutionalized. Power alternated between two parties, but a small party emerged as the kingmaker. The arrival of clandestine religion-driven militancy and the continuation of mainstream acrimonious politics, both made their presence felt. Chapter 3 shows how the nation became polarized and began to take a course away from inclusive democracy.

Three issues can be gleaned from the historical account; that the Bangladeshi state was founded on the basis of democratic aspiration which was articulated in the constitution as one of the four state principles; that

democracy has remained under stress and took a reverse course in many instances; and that even after renewed democratization efforts since 1991 faced serious challenges. Chapter 4 addresses the issue of democracy and democratization in Bangladesh since its founding in 1971. Indications abound as to the desire of Bangladeshis to establish a democratic system of governance. But it is important to ask what Bangladeshis consider democracy, what characteristics do they associate with the term 'democracy' and how governance fared vis-à-vis these expectations. Democracy is not conceptualized in similar manner universally, and perceptions and expectations do not remain static among citizens of any country. They shift based on a variety of factors, time being one of them, the political situation being the other. Therefore, one must listen to the popular voice over time and under different circumstances. In view of these factors, 13 surveys conducted between 1996 and 2012 were consulted for understanding the popular perceptions and attributes attached to democracy; extent of the support; attitudes towards politics, elections and parties; and popular expectations of leadership. These surveys demonstrate the wide and unwavering support for democracy, but also show there is no consensus as to what Bangladeshis view as the central tenets of democracy and/or democratic governance. However, protecting individuals' rights and freedoms and ensuring equality of all citizens remained the fundamental reasons they support democracy. These surveys also show that Bangladeshis identify elections as a central element of democracy. Interestingly, surveys, particularly a 2004–05 survey, revealed that the Bangladeshi population has a proclivity towards 'strong leaders without democratic restraints'. One can easily identify a paradox here: on the one hand the centrality of elections and a high degree of participation, while on the other hand the acceptability of strong leadership without restraints.

However, democracy is not only about aspirations and elections; it is also about governance. Ten elections were held in four decades, between 1973 and 2014. What kind of democracy, in terms of nature and quality, has these elections and governance produced in Bangladesh? The second part of the chapter explores the answer to this question. Our assessment of the nature and quality of democracy concludes that the country has displayed the symptoms of a 'hybrid regime', a regime 'characterized by a mixture of institutional features which are typical of a democracy with other institutions typical of an autocracy'.¹² Six indicators in regard to the nature of democracy – competitive elections, corruption, democratic

quality (checks and balances), press freedom, civil liberties, and the rule of law – were considered in assessing the nature of democracy. The only positive indicator, until the end of 2013, was holding successive free and fair elections, but the 2014 election marks a serious departure from this tradition and rings an alarm bell.

Political parties are important elements of a political system; they are essential to a democratic system. This makes it imperative that we take a closer look at the party system in Bangladesh. It became more important because various surveys revealed that Bangladeshi citizens do not have a positive view about political parties nor are they satisfied with the party processes. This can be traced to various factors such as the absence of intra-party democracy and 'dynastic' succession of party leadership, to name a few. However, despite such displeasure citizens have shaped a *de facto* two-party system through elections since 1991. Chapter 5 documents the salient features of the party system and the changes it has undergone since independence, particularly since 1976. Concomitant to the hybrid regime, there have been attempts to create a dominant party system; to date, all of these efforts have failed. But, I also argue that the system reached a crossroads, thanks to the polarization in the past decade and the 2014 election. These changes in the Bangladeshi party system include the shift of the political landscape rightward and the creation of space for conservative rightwing parties to emerge and influence the political discourse and agenda. Two conflicting trends have also emerged: fragmentation of parties and forging alliances with other parties. All but two major parties have experienced fragmentation, yet appeal of the major parties and their leadership has not weakened. The inclination for building alliances neither indicates a growing importance of smaller parties, nor an increasing ideological affinity among parties; instead the tendency is driven by expediency and to dissuade parties to rally around the rival.

Chapter 6 deals with the issue of national identity which has bedeviled the country almost since its founding. The dominant narrative suggests that there is a clear binary opposition between the secular identity and the Muslim identity. It is often argued that the founding of Bangladesh was a rejection of a religiously informed national identity. But the Bangladeshi population has long embraced multiple identities and religiosity should not be viewed as antagonistic to secularism. The support for the founding of Pakistan in 1947 by East Bengal Muslims does not constitute an unambiguous assertion of Muslim identity akin to

north Indian Muslims; in a similar vein, the salience of Bengali identity in critical junctures of history does not necessarily mean a specific understanding of secularism was embraced uncritically. The salience of Muslim identity in post-1975 Bangladesh is a result of, on the one hand an imposition from above through state patronage and changes in the global arena, while on the other hand, reassertion of an identity from below. The debate over identity, I argue, is not a simple contestation between secularism and Muslim identity; instead multiple contestations are present within the debate. Variations within Islamic ideas and constructions of Muslimness are one part of it. The other part is the variations within the proponents of 'secularism'.

Despite contestations over identity, poor governance, repeated retreat from the path of democracy, and natural disasters, the country has made remarkable economic progress, especially since 1991. The economic growth is matched by development in social indicators. I have referred to some of these accomplishments at the beginning of this introduction, commonly described as the 'Bangladesh paradox.' They warrant an explanation; specifically we need to understand what prompted these successes and who should be credited for these achievements. In Chapter 7, we delve into the causes of and conditions for these anomalous successes. Two significant aspects are highlighted: regime changes have had little effect on macro-economic policies since 1991 and political commitment to social development remained consistent across regimes; and the poorer productive sections of the society – farmers and workers, particularly women – are the foundation of the economic success. Positive social developments are the result of concerted efforts of public sector and non-governmental organizations. That being said, we must be cognizant of the fact that as the nation achieved the economic growth income inequality had increased and that those who serve as the backbone of these achievements receive far less than their fair shares.

A question Bangladeshis and observers of Bangladeshi politics have asked many times in the past four decades is what does the future hold for the nation? The recurrence of this question suggests that the nation is not yet on a stable course. One can extrapolate from the past and paint a pessimistic picture in response to this question, but no nation's journey is ever linear. The concluding chapter identifies the challenges the nation and its citizens face and discusses what needs to be done to move the nation forward.

CHAPTER 1

MAKING OF THE NATION, MAKING OF THE STATE: NATIONALISM AND MOBILIZATION

It was a winter Thursday morning in Dhaka, a besieged city. The morning of 16 December 1971 was tense, uncertain and frightening. Would the city become the last battle ground? Would blood flow through the city streets? Would millions, unable to flee, become casualties in the ensuing battles? It was not a question as to who would lose the battle, for it was a foregone conclusion, but how long would it take to defeat the occupiers and at what cost? Almost nine months had elapsed since the genocide was started by the Pakistani army against unarmed Bengalis in this city on 26 March, a guerilla war having been waged since then by freedom fighters throughout the country, and 13 days earlier India had joined the war. Cities throughout the country had fallen, one after another in the days leading up to 16 December, according to international media and the clandestine radio station of the freedom fighters. Despite Pakistani propaganda of an imminent victory on both the Western and the Eastern fronts, none of the residents of Dhaka believed that the occupation could last much longer. After relentless attacks, the Indian air campaign was halted during the fifteenth morning: a sign of optimism that the occupiers were tamed and a cause of anguish that a ground offensive was imminent. An offer to surrender had been made to Pakistani generals in Dhaka on 14 December

by the Indian command, according to the media. Before the midday of Thursday, rumours began to spread that the surrender was in the making. Although a curfew was in force, some residents ventured into the city streets in the morning – in some areas no Pakistani soldiers to be found, at others people were shot at. By noon, the streets were filling up with pedestrians; no private cars were seen but already Indian army vehicles had been spotted close to the Dhaka Cantonment, a few helicopters marked with Indian air force insignia were seen flying over the city, and Indian radio announced that the Pakistani forces had agreed to surrender. People began to converge at the Race Course, the smell of victory was in the air. A small makeshift 'stage' – that is a small table with two chairs, was assembled by the Indian army officers. Hundreds of Pakistani soldiers in their vehicles reached the Race Course, stood in columns, guarded by members of the Indian Army. The Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Command of Indian Forces Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora arrived. Soon after came a jeep with Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, Commander of the Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army. A short typed document called the 'Instrument of Surrender,' which had been agreed upon by the Indian and the Pakistani military commanders about two and a half hours before at the Pakistan Army's Eastern GHQ, which stipulated that Pakistani forces would surrender to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian and Bangladesh forces, was placed on the table before them. General Niazi signed the document, followed by General Aurora. It was 5:01 pm. The crowd burst into thunderous cheers, 'Joy Bangla.' At the very place where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had called for a non-cooperation movement and declared the struggle for independence of the Bengalis, a new nation-state, Bangladesh, a nation-state of the Bengali nation, was born.

Nations are not natural entities, they are constructed; they are 'imagined communities' as Benedict Anderson has convincingly argued.¹ Bengali nationhood is no exception. The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 as a nation-state of the ethnic Bengali community in the eastern part of Bengal cannot be understood without examining how the 'Bengali nation' was imagined and constructed, at what juncture of history was the construction made and by whom. The making of the Bengali nation and the utilization of Bengali nationalism as a tool of mobilization influenced the subsequent political developments of the country. Discussion of the making of a nation

begs the question whether a nation is a political entity or a cultural entity. Bengal as a land and Bengali as an ethnic group, with all their cultural distinctiveness, have existed for centuries. It can be said with some degree of certainty that although Bengali as a cultural entity has been around for quite some time, ethnic Bengalis did not become a 'nation' and utilize ethnic identity and 'nationhood' as their primary marker of political identity until the twentieth century.

Making of the Nation

The debate over whether a nation is a political entity or a cultural entity is yet to be resolved. Ethnicity is a cultural marker; nation is a marker of political identity. Often they merge in the making of a national identity. Those who argue that nation is a political entity, for example Anderson, who insists 'it is an imagined political community', stress that nationalism provides legitimation to the state apparatuses, therefore within this frame of reference nations are intrinsically the political expression of a community. Those who insist on the cultural dimension of nationalism, for example Smith,² highlight the solidarity of a community based on emotional attachments; therefore in their view nations are primarily a cultural construct. The difference is rooted in the primacy of culture or politics in the making of the nation. The epistemological root of this dichotomy can be traced back to Emmanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried von Herder,³ but the dichotomy remains strong in discussion as to how nations have emerged. The historical narratives of the emergence of nations in the West, particularly in Europe, are of little help in identifying the process outside Europe, particularly in postcolonial societies.

The argument that Western education in the colonies played a part in creating cultural consciousness towards imagining nationhood is well known and is a recurrent theme in both colonial and postcolonial historiographies;⁴ but we are also aware that in non-Western contexts, contesting imaginations of nation emerged. If one imagination of nation emerged as a result of colonial education and as a mirror image of colonial discourse, what Partha Chatterjee⁵ described as 'derivative discourse', other imaginations have appeared in opposition to Western education and as counter-images.⁶ In both instances, education remained a cultural artefact and a part of a wide variety of other cultural

endeavours for increasing awareness about the distinctiveness of the colonized, and to create a collective consciousness. Creating a collectiveness is the primary act towards constructing a nation. Mirolav Hroch⁷ insists on both 'objective relationship' and 'subjective reflection in collective consciousness' as crucial to identification as a nation. Hroch goes on to say that there are three keys to creating a nation: a 'memory' of a common past, treated as a 'destiny' of the group; a density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group or beyond it; and a conception of the equality of all members of the group organized as a civil society.

Although the idioms, icons, and symbols of Bengali nationalist ideology began to occupy relatively more space in the political discourse in the then-East Pakistan and the idea of a 'Bengali nation' was being talked about as a 'fact of life' from the mid-1960s, the cultural consciousness or 'a narrative of nation' (to borrow from Homi Bhaba⁸) was in the making at various stages over a long period of time. This was created by insisting on two aspects: the memory (i.e. the past), and linguistic and cultural ties. The linguistic and cultural ties among the community as opposed to the newly founded Pakistan came to the fore when the Pakistani government declined to recognize Bengali as a state language. Instead Pakistani leaders opted for Urdu as the *lingua franca* as early as 1948. Culture and cultural consciousness is a necessary, but not sufficient, element to create a nation. These are not divorced from the material dimensions of politics and economics. In the case of the emergence of Bengali nationhood both these dimensions had to come together to form the nation.

The Bengali identity of the population was not new, nor was the idea of a nationalist ideology. In the early nineteenth century, the middle class, educated, urban population of Calcutta adopted an ideological position in order to seek their 'legitimate share' from the colonial state. The political objective of the so-called 'Bengal Renaissance' of the nineteenth century, led and eulogized by the *bhadrolok* (gentlemen) middle class, was to achieve greater participation in the colonial administration. While this strand of nationalism sought to collaborate with the colonial state, yet create a sub-hegemonic structure to subsume other subordinate classes, the subordinate classes created their own brand of nationalist ideology which altogether rejected colonial domination and resisted the colonial state and its functionaries on many occasions.

The *bhadrolok* strand of nationalism, until recently considered to be the only nationalist movement by the elite historians, had a number of limitations in terms of the social origin and the space within which it operated. First, it was confined to the educated middle classes. Secondly, it was a Hindu middle class phenomenon; the Muslim middle classes were yet to be incorporated into the power bloc that performed the role of functionaries of the colonial state. Thirdly, the entire movement was limited spatially within urban Calcutta. Although there were some variations within the *bhadrolok* class, overall they shared common characteristics. Broomfield wrote that 'education is the hallmark of *Bhadrolok* status – both as defining and excluding factor.'⁹ The genesis of the class is intrinsically linked to the educational policy of the British colonial administration as laid out in the oft-quoted lines in the 'Minute in Indian Education' of 1835 by Thomas Babington Macaulay:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.¹⁰

Broomfield adds that the class became distinguishable by 'many aspects of behavior – the deportment, their style of speech, their occupations, and their associations – and quite as fundamentally, by their cultural and sense of social propriety'.¹¹

Joya Chatterji, in her seminal work on the partition of Bengal, writes, 'The Bengali *bhadralok* were essentially products of the system of property relations created by the Permanent Settlement. They were typically a rentier class who enjoyed intermediary tenurial rights to rent from the land [...] The *bhadralok* gentleman was the antithesis of the horny-handed son of the soil.'¹² As for the religious nature of the renaissance, Chatterji writes, 'notwithstanding the fact it was led by the avowedly 'modern', progressive and anglicised, *bhadrolok* nationalism drew inspiration, to quite a remarkable extent, from Hindu 'revivalist' ideologies. Contrary to this elite imagination of the nation existed a

subordinate class's strand of nationalism, reflected in the peasant uprisings of Bengal, such as the Indigo Cultivators Strike in 1860, and the Peasant Movement in Pabna in 1872–3, to name but two. This strand was militant and deeply rooted in the class struggle of the subordinate classes. Given the social structure of Eastern Bengal, subordinate class's nationalism was relatively more powerful than the elite strand of nationalism. None of these imaginations, however, found a common geographical space or imagined geography.

Although the imagination of a nation based on ethnicity was not on the horizon, religion-based solidarity had already found a home in various parts of East Bengal. The Islamic revivalist Faraizi movement and Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya offered one variation of the imagination. The Faraizi movement, founded by Hazi Shariatullah (1781–1840), spread through a large part of eastern Bengal in the early part of nineteenth century. After Shariatullah's death, his son Dudu Miyan (1819–62) succeeded to the leadership. The Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya, which originated in northern India, reached Bengal during the 1820s and 1830s and was led by a peasant leader, Sayyid Nisar Ali, alias Titu Mir (discussed in detail in Chapter 6). Neither of these movements was nationalist in the typical sense of the term, but both in some ways provided a point of solidarity, based on religion and imagined a nation that would strive for political rights/justice.

The partition of Bengal in 1905, which was annulled after six years in the face of intense opposition from the population of West Bengal, provided the missing element of nationhood (that is, the geographical space) on the one hand, while it revealed a cleavage within the ethnic Bengali community. This cleavage is described along religious lines – Hindu-majority West Bengal versus Muslim-majority East Bengal, as well as along class lines – representatives of the land-owning class versus the peasants. Neither of them exclusively explains the reactions – resistance to, and support for, partition; instead a combination needs to be considered. But the deep division within the community limited the imagination on the one hand, and opened up the possibility of a different imagination on the other. What is worth noting is that since then political expressions of Bengal were different from other parts of India, and there was also a difference between eastern and western parts of Bengal. The rise of the Swaraj Party under the leadership of C. R. Das in the 1920s, and the Krishak Praja Party under the leadership of A. K. Fazlul Huq in

the 1930s are constant reminders of this difference. The imagination of a Bengali nation and a state based on ethnicity resurfaced in April 1947 as a last-ditch effort to avoid the partition of Bengal. The effort was short-lived but the significance was not minor in any way; a link between the nation and the state was, for the first time, established.

After the partition of 1947, the Bengali nationalist ideology, which prompted the united Bengal as an independent nation for obvious reasons, lost ground, while within the subaltern class militant nationalist ideology prevailed in a dormant form. Given the setback of the Communist Party in East Pakistan, the militant nationalist movement of the subaltern classes could not be transformed into a radical resistance against the newly emergent Pakistani state. But sporadic resistance in different parts of East Pakistan continued in the early phase of the Pakistan-era. A severe food crisis in the early 1950s and reduction in jute prices, matched with the exploitation of *jotedars*, gave impetus to the subaltern classes to confront the state. It was in this context that the language movement of 1952 erupted. Although the question of language was of little significance for the illiterate subaltern classes, they joined the urban middle classes to pressure the colonial state. This was again possible because the ruling political party (i.e. Muslim League) emerged from within the landed class in Bangladesh. As such, the resistance against Muslim League rule and alien colonial rule were one and the same to the poor peasants of East Bengal. This led to the historic defeat of the Muslim League in the 1954 Provincial Legislative Assembly against the United Front, the coalition of four parties – the Awami League, the Krishak Praja Party, the Ganatantri Dal (Democratic Party) and Nizam-e-Islam Party led by A. K. Fazlul Huq, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani.

By the time of the promulgation of the first martial law in Pakistan by General Ayub Khan in 1958, Pakistan had not only experienced abundant political instability, a few governments in quick succession since 1954 and a short-lived constitution, but had also seen Islam elevated to the pedestal of 'national identity' by the ruling regimes primarily to contend with the assertion of regional and linguistic ethnic identities by Bengalis, Sindhis, Pathans, and Baluchs. What should have been an open discourse on national identity, and an effort to accommodate the regionally differentiated, economically disparate, and culturally different nations was wrecked by the Punjabi-dominated

state machinery's insistence that 'Islam' was the *raison d'être* of Pakistan. It was the Muslim minority in Bengal who had voted for Pakistan, yet their patriotism was questioned almost every day, and their discourses of difference were perceived as a lack of loyalty to a national identity. It was increasingly evident to the Bengali population that their political disenfranchisement was an integral feature of the emerging Pakistani polity. The Muslim League no longer represented the Bengalis. The emergence of the Awami Muslim League in 1948 under the leadership of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, its division leading to the founding of the National Awami Party in 1957 under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani, and the Ganatantri Dal led by Haji Danesh founded in 1952 made it abundantly clear that new parties had emerged to represent the population of the eastern part of Pakistan, and their priorities were different from the pan-Pakistani imagination of nation and polity.

The fanfare associated with the celebration of the Ayub regime's decade in power in 1968, styled as the 'Decade of Development', could not mask the fact that the Bengali community saw their experience from a different perspective. A tightly controlled system of representation invented by the military regime, named 'Basic Democracy', was ineffective from the day of its inception as it was neither representative nor democratic. The economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan, the rejection of the regional autonomy issue by Pakistani ruling elites in the 1956 constitution, and the short stint of the AL in central government in 1956 provided enough motivation to the Bengali political forces to emphasize the demand for equity in a forceful manner. The demand that brought disparate parties to form the United Front in 1954 was reshaped as the 'Six Point Demand' in 1966 by the AL, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib).

The Six Point Demand may be summarized as follows:

1. A Federation of Pakistan based on the Lahore Resolution of 1940, with a parliamentary form of government based on the supremacy of a directly elected legislature and representation on the basis of population.
2. The federal government to be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs.
3. A federal reserve system designed to prevent the flight of capital from one region to the other.

4. Taxation to be the responsibility of each federating unit, with necessary provisions for funding the federal government.
5. Each unit to retain its own foreign exchange earnings as well as the power to negotiate foreign trade and aid.
6. Each unit to maintain its own paramilitary forces.

The extent of the disparity became public knowledge as more and more information became available in the late 1960s and in 1970, thanks to a new generation of Bengali economists. This is akin to what Miroslav Hroch described as the first phase of the construction of a national identity where activists strive to lay the foundation for a national identity. An official report of the panel of economists published in 1970 by the Government of Pakistan vividly documented this disparity; East Pakistan received less than half of the revenue and development expenditure West Pakistan received between FY1950/51 and FY1969/70.¹³ Almost 32 years later a Pakistani journalist recalled:

In the tumultuous March of 1970 the Planning Commission convened an advisory panel of economists from East and West Pakistan to provide input to the outline of the Fourth Five-Year Plan. The panel consisted of 12 economists, six from each wing, and held six meetings in three different cities. The panel could not come to an agreement regarding important questions of growing regional disparities in Pakistan, and as a result split into two different groups. The economists from East Pakistan went off in a group led by Mazharul Haq who was the chairman of the panel, while their West Pakistani colleagues worked separately to produce their own report. As a result, two separate reports were submitted to the government from the same panel.¹⁴

Information regarding economic disparity revealed the material ground of the nationhood: the sense of deprivation was not an abstract perception but a real political-economic concern. The monopolistic grip of the West Pakistani elites over the civil and military bureaucracy was evident. As of 1968, East Pakistan's representation in the civil service was only 36 per cent. In the central services, the share of East Pakistan was about 27 per cent in 1970; at the higher levels of

administration it was even less: 13 per cent; Only 3 per cent of grade I officers in the Cabinet Division were Bengali. In 1969, the Planning Ministry had the highest share of Bengalis: 28 per cent. In 1956, in the Army, 14 out of 908 officers, in the Navy 7 out of 600 officers, and in the Air Force 40 out of 680, came from East Pakistan.¹⁵ In mid-1955, East Pakistan made up only 1.5 per cent of army officers, while the corresponding percentage for the Navy and Air Force was 1.1 and 9.3 respectively.¹⁶ In 1964, the last year of the data available in this format, the share of East Pakistanis in the officer ranks of defence forces was 5 per cent in the Army, 10 per cent in the Navy, and 16 per cent in the Air Force. It was in this context of economic deprivation, political exclusion and neglect by the central government during the war between Pakistan and India in 1965 that the 'Six Point Demand' was formulated.¹⁷ The intellectual basis of the Six Point Programme was the theory of 'two economies' propounded by Bengali economists. The origin of the 'two economics thesis' can be traced back to the works of a group of economists in mid-1950s. Nurul Islam, who became the Deputy Head of the Bangladesh Planning Commission in 1972, and was a junior member of the group recalls:

The idea that Pakistan consisted of not one but two economies was advanced for the first time in 1956 as the basis for the formulation of development plans for Pakistan at the Special Conference of Economists of East Pakistan on the draft first Five Year Plan of Pakistan (1956-1960). This conference was held at Dhaka at the end of August 1956. The main idea of the concept was elaborated in the Report of the Special Conference of Economists of East Pakistan on the Draft Five Year Plan which was submitted to the Pakistan Planning Commission on September 1, 1956. The following quotations from the report are self-explanatory: 'For purposes of development planning, particularly for the creation of employment opportunities, Pakistan should be conceived of as consisting of two economic units.' 'The problem of planning in Pakistan is best approached by considering the basic characteristics of the two wings, particularly the heavy pressure of population in East Pakistan, the comparative lack of employment opportunities and the high degree of immobility of labour between the two wings.' 'The primary requisite of planning in our opinion is a

complete zonal breakdown of statistics, namely national income, balance of payments and financial resources – internal and external.’ This was prepared and signed by ten economists and approved by the conference.¹⁸

The idea and the imagination of a nation must have a cultural element to it; politics alone cannot create an imagined community. While political marginalization and economic deprivation affected the Bengalis, it was the sense of an attack on the cultural distinctiveness of the Bengalis that increasingly alienated them from the idea of the Pakistani nation. The most significant issue in this regard was the treatment of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) the only Bengali Nobel laureate until that time. First, the government attempted to prevent the celebration of his birth centenary, which was being commemorated worldwide and then, the state-controlled radio station excluded Tagore songs from being broadcast in 1965 during the war between Pakistan and India. The final blow came in June 1967, when the minister for broadcasting informed the national parliament that the state-controlled electronic media had been directed to stop broadcasting any Tagore song that was opposed to the ideals of Pakistan and to gradually decrease broadcasting other Tagore songs as well.¹⁹ Perhaps no other cultural issue had made such a big impact on the Bengali middle class psyche since the language movement in 1952. The attempt to introduce the Arabic script in 1950 and to ban Tagore’s songs in the state-controlled media reflected deliberate attempts of the state to crush the cultural heritage of the Bengali people and, thus, render them subordinate to the alien culture patronized by the state apparatus. It is important to note that these issues were part and parcel of the middle class culture of the Bengali population. By 1969, when a popular uprising engulfed both wings of Pakistan against the military ruler General Ayub Khan and finally toppled him, the Awami League and its charismatic leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had become the voice of East Pakistan, a geographical space and the Bengalis, a nation.

What warrants further explanation is how the middle class imagination of a nation was subscribed to by other segments of the society or in other words why the ‘nation’ rallied around the AL, particularly Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and what were the defining characteristics of Bengali nationalism. There is no denying that the

essence of the Six Point Demand was regional autonomy for the province under federal parliamentary government with total control over revenue earnings and foreign trade by the federating states. It was a charter for the rising Bengali bourgeoisie and the middle class.²⁰

Despite internal colonialism and blatant regional disparity, since the mid-1960s a small group of wealthy Bengalis had emerged in East Pakistan. Ahmed and Sobhan record:

The last two years of united Pakistan witnessed the apotheosis of the Bengali upper bourgeoisie. During the phase, the development allocations to the eastern region accelerated. In 1968–69 the East Wing received a record allocation of development funds of Rs. 2881 million, which was 55.45 per cent of total public sector development of Pakistan. This trend was accompanied by a record net inflow of external resources into the regions of Rs. 1454 million and by accelerated financial allocations to the private sector in East Pakistan through the public financial institutions. Of the loans approved by PICIC [Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation] and IDBP [Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan] up to the end of 1971, 46.2 per cent was approved between the period 1969 [and] 71.²¹

According to another account, actual public sector investments in East Pakistan doubled between 1960 and 1965.²² By the late 1960s, with the help of the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC), 36 Bengali-controlled enterprises were created in jute, 25 in textiles, and one in sugar. Additionally, at least 16 large firms were involved in jute exports, 12 in the inland water transport sector; 12 insurance companies and one Bengali-owned bank were also in operation. In the import business, 39 Bengalis were listed among those with import entitlements above Rs. one million. The Six Point Demand represented the articulation of their grievances and was reflective of their aspirations. To the aspirant political leaders of Bangladesh, the post-1948 experience showed how meagre their access was to state power; to merchants it was obvious that non-Bengalis were taking advantage of the opportunities arising from their closer relations with the bureaucracy, while to the urban salaried class it represented clear domination by non-Bengalis. The goal of the middle

class and its political representative the AL was to exert tightly controlled and well-orchestrated extra-legal pressure on the colonial state in order to open avenues of negotiations.

The Six Point Demand initially failed to appeal to the population particularly the subordinate classes. It remained silent about the problems of sharecroppers, small peasants, *kulees* working in tea plantations, and industrial workers. Ethnic minorities, such as the tribal population in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Santhals and Garos were not even featured in the demands. However, by the late-1960s, the objective conditions for unrest among the poorer sections, such as decline in real wages of workers and per capita income of peasants, brought them closer to the AL and its Six Point Demand. It is, indeed, true that the convergence was able to take place primarily because there was an absence of class consciousness among the working class and peasantry or, in other words, absence of a process that could transform the 'class-in-itself' to a 'class-for-itself.' But, additionally, three significant factors contributed to the convergence of interests between the middle and working classes, making the AL the representative of demands that cut across class boundaries: the first was the failure of the left forces to present an alternative to the Six Point Programme of the AL; second was the success of the middle class in appropriating and incorporating the concerns of the poor; and third was the Pakistani regime's suppression of the AL and its leaders, particularly Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Since the inception of Pakistan, the Communist Party had been officially outlawed, but remained active. However, the communists failed to pursue a consistent line of action. In 1953, the Party was split on the question of whether members should work inside a progressive, lawful, petty-bourgeois party or not. In the mid-1960s, the umbrella organization of the left, the National Awami Party (NAP), also faced a rift as a consequence of the division in the international communist movement. The pro-Peking leftist organization experienced further disintegration when the Ayub regime established good relations with China. Maulana Bhashani, a staunch critic of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and a supporter of regional autonomy, extended his tacit support to the Ayub regime. The pro-Moscow groups favoured a close relationship with the AL in realizing 'national demands' as they considered the national contradiction to be the prime one. The radical, underground, leftist organizations overemphasized the class aspect of

Pakistani colonial rule and overlooked the national question altogether. These weaknesses together made the leftist organizations a non-viable alternative.

In the face of the gradual rise in support for the Six Point Demand, and the mass upsurge of 1966 in which the working class actively participated, the AL leaders started to highlight the issues of peasants, workers, and the rural population and interpreted the Six Point Demand for regional autonomy as the panacea. Their ability to link the marginalization of poor to the political process rather than the structural elements of the economy was the key to the success of the AL's emergence as the representative of the entire nation.

Through the decade of military rule, particularly in the second half, the Ayub regime was instrumental in creating a small comprador bourgeois class in Bangladesh 'who would have no doubts as to the source of their advancement and would thus promote and fund Ayub's political hegemony in East Pakistan'.²³ But it also employed coercive measures against the AL. Sheikh Mujib was repeatedly incarcerated. The most glaring example of the coercive strategy was the case, *State vs Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others* (popularly known as the *Agartala Conspiracy Case*), initiated in 1968 against Sheikh Mujib and others for an alleged conspiracy to separate the East Wing by violent means, in collusion with India. Thirty-five individuals, including three high-ranking members of the civil service, one naval officer, a few non-commissioned officers and seamen, were charged. Although Mujib had been in prison for most of the period during which the alleged conspiracy was being hatched and the initial list of accused did not include him, when the trial started it became clear that its primary goal was to undermine Mujib's credibility and demonstrate that the Six Point Programme was merely a façade for a secessionist movement.²⁴ The machination backfired. The case galvanized East Pakistan. The trial became the target of a mass movement opposing the Ayub regime and demanding autonomy for East Pakistan. This led to an upsurge in the popularity of the AL in general and Sheikh Mujib in particular making him the symbol of resistance to colonial exploitation. The mass upsurge of 1969, though initiated by the leftist student organizations and based upon an 11-point demand – which included calls for the nationalization of banks, insurance companies, and all big business; reduction of the rates of taxes and revenues on peasants; fair wages and bonuses for workers; and

quitting various military alliances – eventually led to a movement popularizing the AL. The leadership of the movement rested primarily with the student leaders, but was steered by Maulana Bhashani, who earned the infamous title the ‘Prophet of Violence’.²⁵ The mass upsurge in Bangladesh matched the mass agitation in West Pakistan and gradually turned into a violent anti-systemic upheaval. However, it was contained through removal of the Ayub regime and the promulgation of martial law bringing Yahya Khan to power. The ‘conspiracy case’ was withdrawn on 22 February 1969 before the downfall of the Ayub regime, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was vested with the appellation of ‘Bangabandhu’ (Friend of Bengal) by the student leaders in a mammoth public gathering in Dhaka.

What were the defining characteristics of the nationalism propounded by the AL? Or, in other words, whose imagination became the hegemonic notion of the Bengali nation? The Bengali nationalism in question emphasized ‘Sonar Bangla’, a golden Bengal, a pre-colonial retreat of classlessness. As Anthony Smith has reminded us, central to the understanding of nationalism is the role of the past. He goes on to say that for nationalists, ‘the role of the past is clear and unproblematic. The nation was always there, indeed it is part of the natural order, even when it was submerged in the hearts of its members. The task of the nationalist is simply to remind his or her compatriots of their glorious past, so that they can recreate and relive those glories.’²⁶ The term ‘people of Bengal’ was used as frequently as possible, as if the people of Bangladesh were an undifferentiated mass and all of them would equally benefit from the cancellation of the colonial state. Under its rubric, the proponents, ‘sought to forge a unity between the alienated urban elite groups and rural masses’.²⁷ They transposed class conflict onto the international level identifying the whole of Bangladesh as ‘oppressed’ and West Pakistan as an ‘oppressor’ and ‘capitalist;’ and, hence, the prime task was to eliminate the colonial presence that caused oppression and underdevelopment.²⁸ The process of the making of the nation also brought various expectations, ideas and struggles together; they coalesced and created a broad movement which was seen by almost all segments of the Bengali society as their own struggle. In the words of Rehman Sobhan, struggles for democracy, regional autonomy, social justice and secularism coalesced within the broader struggle for self-rule for East Pakistan. (While there is little debate whether the first three

were at the heart of the nationalist movement, long after the independence of Bangladesh, in the 2010s, some questioned whether, secularism was a component of the movement.

By 1969, the middle class imagination of the Bengali nation articulated by the AL had become the dominant notion of nation. The Bengali nation as a political entity came into being. What was left was the juridico-legal recognition of the nation and the constitutional legitimacy of its political representatives. That took place in the general election in 1970.

The election of 1970 was the first ever held in Pakistan with universal adult franchise. It was organized by the military regime of Yahya Khan, who usurped state power from Ayub Khan in the wake of the popular movement in 1969 and promised to establish a constitutional government. In the run up to the elections, a natural disaster of epic proportions, a tropical cyclone, devastated the coastal areas of Bangladesh and cost approximately 500,000 lives. Opposition leaders in East Pakistan accused the government of gross negligence and utter indifference and alleged that the military had not acted swiftly in saving lives and in organizing relief operations. This added to growing disgruntlement with the Pakistani ruling elites. The election delivered the AL a landslide victory. It obtained 167 seats out of 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan in the National Assembly, 288 out of 300 seats in the provincial Assembly of East Pakistan, and gained 72.6 per cent of the votes cast. The victory, according to some analysts, was unanticipated even by the AL.²⁹ Pakistani political elites had expected that the East Pakistani voters would vote for several parties and this would preclude the emergence of a single party with a mandate. But the results provided a clear majority to the AL, which used the Six Point Demand as an election promise/manifesto. According to the international press, 'A new order in Pakistan', emerged. A day after the election, a reporter for the *Guardian* wrote from Karachi:

Pakistan has the new democratic leader she expected – Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – but also a new political situation beyond any expectation. Sheikh Mujibur's victory is fitting compensation for East Pakistan's horrific cyclone disaster. It focused attention on West Pakistan's neglect for the East, and may well have increased the size of the Sheikh's victory.³⁰

Making of the State

The election results posed a challenge to the Pakistani state and an impasse regarding the transfer of power to the elected representatives emerged. The election was projected by the AL as a referendum on its Six Point Programme, thus for the party leaders these demands were inviolable and not on the agenda for discussion. The programme, which essentially called for the weakening of the centralized bureaucracy and removal of the mechanism which allows the bureaucrats to extract the surplus, was unacceptable to the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. This is because without that mechanism, it was impossible to support, 'the coercive and administrative organizations [which] are the basis of the state power'.³¹ Under such circumstances, a conflict between the Pakistani state and the elected majority representatives of (East) Pakistan became inevitable. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose Pakistan People's Party (PPP) secured a victory in the Western wing of Pakistan with 83 seats, was as unwilling to compromise as was Mujibur Rahman. Z. A. Bhutto, a Western-educated lawyer from a privileged family of Sindh who served in the cabinets of both military rulers of Pakistan, was in no mood to be an opposition leader in the parliament. Framing a new constitution and reshaping the nature of the Pakistani state was at stake. Protracted negotiations between the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and the elected representatives of Pakistan ensued. But the negotiations made little headway because of Bhutto's insistence on having an equal say in the framing of the constitution and his argument that the 'majority alone does not count in national politics'.

When the parliament session, scheduled on 3 March 1971, was cancelled by President Yahya Khan two days before the session without any consultation with the majority party or its leader Mujib, ostensibly due to the threat of Bhutto to boycott the session, a spontaneous uprising in East Pakistan started. Within days, the radical faction of the party, particularly the student activists, hoisted what they claimed to be the flag of independent Bangladesh, and read out a manifesto for independence at a public meeting in the presence of Mujib outlining the principles of an independent Bangladesh which included a 'socialist economy and a government of peasants and workers', and 'full-fledged democracy including freedom of individuals, freedom of speech and

freedom of the press'. A song written by Rabindranath Tagore was declared to be the national anthem, and Sheikh Mujib was proclaimed as the Commander-in-Chief.

The AL called for a non-cooperation movement and the entire province complied. The radical faction of the party began putting pressure on Mujib to declare the independence of Bangladesh. The radical elements within the party had been clandestinely organized since 1962 as the Bengal Liberation Force. Since then they had gained power within the AL. They were a product of the increasing radicalization of the body politic. The mass upsurges of 1966 and 1969, and the failure of leftist political parties to bring the youth under their umbrella made it possible for the AL to attract these young radicals. Within a brief period, they acquired so much clout that they forced the leadership to incorporate a pledge to establish socialism in the election manifesto of 1970. They played a significant role in the landslide victory of the AL in the elections of 1970 and therefore Mujib to some extent was indebted to them.

In the face of the Pakistani military elite's insistence on a compromise between Bhutto and Mujib before commencing the parliament session, Bhutto's fervent opposition to the issues of immediate withdrawal of martial law and the inclusion of regional autonomy in the new constitution, and the growing demands from the streets to declare independence, Mujib called for continuation of the non-cooperation movement. He, however, repeatedly insisted that he was for a negotiated settlement. This is reflected in his historic speech of 7 March 1971 where, on the one hand, he made the declaration, 'This struggle is for emancipation! This struggle is for independence!', while on the other hand laying out four conditions for negotiations and attending the newly scheduled parliament session on 25 March:³²

His rousing speech had a double meaning. It evoked two meanings of independence by promoting constitutionalism and a freedom struggle. Despite its ambiguity, however, this landmark speech inspired a popular revolution, whose force and organisation came from outside the halls of constitutional politics and quickly commandeered East Pakistan state institutions, as it generated numerous unambiguous declarations of national sovereignty, composed and endorsed by major public figures.³³

By the middle of the month, as more clashes between civilians and the Pakistani army were taking place it became evident that the civilian administration loyal to Pakistan had completely collapsed. The Volunteer corps of the AL and other political parties were engaged in maintaining law and order; overall the situation was peaceful but incidents of violence against non-Bengalis were on the rise. The most important element of state formation took place on 11 March: 'Bengali associations of the East Pakistan Civil Service and Civil Service of Pakistan declared loyalty to Sheikh Mujib.'³⁴ These developments indicate that a parallel administration had emerged; a rudimentary form of the Bangladeshi state was in the making. Mujib and the AL leadership were not yet ready to declare 'independence' or form a 'government' for 'Bangladesh' although many political figures, from both East and West Pakistan, were urging Mujib to do so.

The possibility of separation between the two wings of Pakistan, in fact, began to emerge soon after the election. Bhutto, in a public meeting at Karachi on 20 December 1970, within two weeks of the election, declared that he wanted to be the 'Prime Minister of West Pakistan' and that his party could not wait for five years to be in power. Declassified US documents reveal the US administration's opinion that partition was on the cards. The President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, wrote a note to President Nixon on 22 February opining that if Mujib's pursuit for autonomy was foiled he was likely to declare East Pakistan's independence. A memorandum from Harold Saunders and Samuel Hoskinson of the US National Security Council Staff to Kissinger on 1 March 1971 stated, 'Events in Pakistan today took a major step toward a possible early move by East Pakistan for independence.'³⁵ Mujib, in his speech at the public gathering on 3 March, told the West Pakistani politicians, particularly Bhutto, 'If you don't want to frame one constitution, let us frame our constitution and you frame your own. Then let us see if we can live together as brothers.' Bhutto, on 14 March at a public rally, echoed a similar sentiment when he called for transfer of power to PPP in West Pakistan and AL in East Pakistan. Bhutto's statement came after his meeting with the president who was on his way to negotiate with the AL leaders in Dhaka. After intense negotiations between 15 and 24 March, the final proposal laid out by the AL leaders, to be approved by Yahya Khan, was almost identical to that of Mujib on 3 March with one significant change: the

AL was proposing 'a confederation' rather than a 'Federation' of Pakistan. Bhutto, who joined the negotiations on 21 March, had objected to the idea of transfer of power to the provinces until broad issues related to the constitution of Pakistan had been thrashed out.

Until the middle of the night of 25 March, Mujib and his team of experts on constitutional and economic affairs were waiting for a call from President Yahya in regard to the proclamation of the withdrawal of martial law;³⁶ but unknown to them the president had already left Dhaka that evening giving the final approval to execute a military plan to crush the uprising.³⁷ Throughout the negotiations, a Pakistani military buildup was underway while the AL leaders were hoping that a constitutional solution could be found. The negotiations broke down.

On the night of 25 March the Pakistani military began its crackdown, named 'Operation Searchlight'. Yahya Khan addressed the nation on the following evening describing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's action as 'an act of treason', and announcing, 'The man and his party are enemies of Pakistan and they want East Pakistan to break away completely from the country.' Khan banned the AL as a political party and praised the army for showing 'tremendous restraint'. But between launching the military operation on the night of 25 March and the presidential speech on the evening a tectonic shift had taken place in the history of the region: the independence of Bangladesh was proclaimed. There are conflicting narratives as to who declared independence, but two points are beyond doubt: that it was 26 March when the declaration was made, and that it was broadcast over a clandestine radio station from the southeastern port city of Chittagong.

The chain of events surrounding the formal declaration of independence has become an issue of contention and division in Bangladeshi politics, particularly since the 1980s. The dominant narrative, backed up by the organizers of the clandestine radio from where the declaration was first made, suggests that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence in the early hours of 26 March before surrendering to the Pakistani Army while key leaders of the AL fled Dhaka and crossed the border to India. The text of Sheikh Mujib's declaration of independence, is the following: 'This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the

last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved.'³⁸ According to one account' Mujib communicated the instruction through a wireless communication via the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) to the entire nation, another claims that it was communicated to an AL leader in Chittagong and a third that special transmission equipment was used from a public park in Dhaka to send the message.³⁹ The authenticity of the claim that Mujib declared independence has been questioned by his detractors and A. K. Khondker, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh Armed Forces during the liberation war.⁴⁰ The principal argument is that the East Pakistan Rifles radio channel through which Mujib was claimed to have sent the message to the port city of Chittagong was already knocked out by the Pakistan Army and that with so many foreign reporters in Dhaka it is preposterous to suggest that Mujib would have resorted to a clandestine channel.

Tajuddin Ahmed and other AL leaders who were with Mujib until 8 pm of that fateful night were not told of the decision. Various accounts suggest that Tajuddin Ahmed brought a draft announcement which Mujib refused to sign or to make an audio recording of his own voice. Two reporters, Simon Dring of the *Daily Telegraph* (London) and Howard Whitten of AAP-Reuters, who were in Dhaka at the time of the crackdown and were expelled by Pakistan along with 33 other reporters after the genocide began on 25 March, reported that a call was made to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence shortly before 1:00 am of 26 March. But no one reported receiving information from Mujib's residence that he had proclaimed independence.⁴¹ Robert Payne's book *Massacre*, which vividly documents the atrocities, states, 'Sheikh Mujib was calmly waiting to be arrested.'⁴²

According to a report of Sydney Schanberg based on an exclusive interview with Sheikh Mujib on 16 January 1972, 'at 10:30 PM [25 March] he [Mujib] called a clandestine headquarters in Chittagong, the southeastern port city, and dictated a last message to his people, which was recorded and later broadcast by a secret transmitter.'⁴³ Newspapers around the world, beginning 27 March 1971, reported that Mujib had declared independence. The *New York Times* published an Associated Press report dateline New Delhi, 27 March, which states 'The Pakistan radio announced today that Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the nationalist leader of East Pakistan, had been arrested only hours after he

had proclaimed his region independent and after open rebellion was reported in several cities in the East.⁴⁴ An editorial in *The Age of Melbourne*, in the same issue that it published Whitten's report, wrote, 'The Sheik retaliated [the military crackdown and proscription of the AL] by proclaiming, for a clandestine radio, the independence of his besieged province.'⁴⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* wrote on 27 March:

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence for East Pakistan Friday as the long smoldering feud between the two wings of the Islamic nation flamed into open civil war. A clandestine radio broadcast monitored here from a station identifying itself as 'The Voice of Independent Bangla Desh (Bengali homeland),' said, 'The sheik has declared the 75 million people of East Pakistan as citizens of the sovereign independent Bangla Desh.'⁴⁶

The headline of the report of *The Times* (London) on 27 March which quotes the Press Trust of India (PTI) as the source, read, 'Heavy Fighting as Shaikh Mujibur Declares E Pakistan Independent.'

A declassified US government document is perhaps the most reliable document in support of the narrative that Mujib declared independence on 26 March. The Defense Intelligence Agency's Operational Intelligence Division's Spot Report prepared for the White House Situation Room on 26 March at 2:30 pm Eastern Standard Time (Bangladesh Time 27 March 2:30 am) states, 'Pakistan was thrust into civil war today when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the east-wing of the two-part country to be the "the sovereign independent People's republic of Bangladesh".'⁴⁷

Those who claim that Ziaur Rahman (Zia), a major stationed in Chittagong, declared independence believe he rebelled on the night of 25 March, killed his commanding officer and on 26 March was asked by the organizers of the radio station to make an announcement. In this version Zia, on 26 March, made a declaration in the evening.⁴⁸ The 'Official history of the 1971 India-Pakistan War' of the Indian Defense Ministry written in 1992 described this announcement of Zia in following manner:

The beginning of the history of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh was made when Major Ziaur Rahman, an officer of the

8th Battalion of the EBR [East Bengal Regiment] at Chittagong, on 26 March, shortly after the military crack-down, made an electrifying broadcast on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Free Bangla radio) announcing the establishment of an independent Bangladesh.⁴⁹

The announcement Zia made was:

This is Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro. I, Major Ziaur Rahman, at the direction of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, hereby declare that the independent People's Republic of Bangladesh has been established. At his direction, I have taken command as the temporary Head of the Republic. In the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I call upon all Bengalis to rise against the attack by the West Pakistani Army. We shall fight to the last to free our Motherland. By the grace of Allah, victory is ours. Joy Bangla.

Similarly, Jyoti Sen Gupta in a book published in 1974 insisted that Zia made the declaration. According to him Zia's announcement was 'picked up by a Japanese ship anchored mid-stream in Chittagong harbour. When the news of the declaration was broadcast by Radio Australia, the rest of the world came to know of it.'⁵⁰ Memoirs of Pakistani military officials who served in East Pakistan in 1971 also describe the announcement. For example Brigadier Zahir Alam Khan who arrested Sheikh Mujib on the early hours of 26 March writes:

While having our evening meal we turned on the radio and heard an Indian radio station, probably All India Radio, Calcutta, announce that Sheikh Mujib had safely crossed over to India. We also heard Major Zia ur Rehman, the second in command of 8 East Bengal Regiment, broadcast declaring the independence of Bangladesh and proclaiming himself the commander-in-chief of the Bangladesh army.⁵¹

In support of this narrative, an array of newspaper reports published during the week in various international newspapers are cited. For example, Howard Whitten's report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 March refers to the announcement of Ziaur Rahman:

One clandestine broadcast claimed a provisional government had been set up in East Pakistan and had appealed for recognition from other countries. The broadcast, monitored by Indian sources, said a Major Zia Khan had been appointed temporary head of the new Government of Bangladesh (Bengali Nation), 'under the leadership of Sheik Mujibur Rehman.' The radio gave no explanation why neither Major Zia nor the Sheik had been appointed the de facto leader of the new Government.⁵²

However, the editorial entitled 'Plunge into Chaos' of the same newspaper informs that after breakdown of the talks Mujib called for independence. The Reuters report from New Delhi filed on 28 March and published in the *Baltimore Sun* on 29 March highlights Zia's announcement (although with the inaccurate name: Zia Khan).

It is well to bear in mind that the following day, Ziaur Rahman made a new plea 'on behalf of the supreme leader Bangobandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman' identifying him as the provisional Commander-in-Chief of Bangladeshi forces, announced that a 'sovereign legal government has been framed under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman', and called upon 'all democratic nations of the world' to recognize the Bangladesh government. This was recognized by the government in exile as the first announcement of the formation of the Bangladesh government. Tajuddin Ahmed, the PM of the government in exile, in his first speech to the nation on 10 April 1971, described how various commands of Army put up resistance to the Pakistani forces, and mentions the announcement of Ziaur Rahman. Ahmed says, 'immediately after the primary victory [in Chittagong] Major Ziaur Rahman founded a command center. From here you have heard the first voice of the independent Bangladesh. This is where the first announcement of the formation of the independent Bangladesh Government was made.'⁵³ The debate as to who proclaimed the independence remains contentious.⁵⁴

Expected or not, by 26 March a new independent state called Bangladesh had been born and a war to provide a geographical space with defined boundaries for the new state had started. On 17 April, in a small mango grove located in Meherpur (later named Mujib Nagar), leaders of the AL read out the formal proclamation of independence (adopted on 10 April) in a ceremony which included the oath of a civilian government with Mujib as the President, Tajuddin Ahmed as

the Prime Minister and Colonel M. A. G. Osmani as the Commander-in-Chief. In the absence of Mujib, Nazrul Islam, the Vice President, was designated the Acting President. A few members of the Pakistan Civil Service were also present. The proclamation within the boundaries of Bangladesh, establishing a structure of government, a command structure of the resistance force and the involvement of civilian bureaucrats completed the fundamental elements of the state-making process. Bangladesh was no longer an idea but a state with a juridico-legal entity. The proclamation also laid out the basis of the new state and its fundamental principles. It states in unequivocal terms that independence is being proclaimed 'in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice'.

A state, even in its strongest articulation, is not a monolithic, homogenous entity. Conflicting tendencies try to pull the state in different directions, and constitutive groups tend to engage in contestations to shape the state according to their own ideologies and interests. These contestations are fierce, often violent and occasionally become detrimental to achieving the ultimate goal when a state is in its formative stage, engaged in a war and facing an existential threat. Nationalist movements, which struggled to establish independent countries, have faced internecine squabbles. State formation in Bangladesh was no exception; there were divisions among both political and military leaders on vital issues such as who should be Prime Minister⁵⁵ and whether or not the government in exile should respond to the United States' initiative for a solution within the framework of the existing Pakistani state.⁵⁶ Military leaders jockeyed for leadership and disagreed on strategies of war.

As the AL, from its inception, had attempted to represent a broad range of classes, cleavages within the organization always existed. Events prior to, and during, the liberation struggle accentuated divisions within the party. In 1971, there were at least three factions within the AL: first, the radical elements; second, the liberals; and third, the conservatives. Leaders of the radical faction came to prominence after 1969 and had spearheaded street agitations from 1 March 1971. They transformed the AL from a constitutional movement for self-rule to a popular uprising for establishment of an independent country. The second strand, comprised of liberal elements, was more pragmatic. The prime minister of the government in exile, Tajuddin Ahmed, belonged

to this faction. In spite of pressure from both the radical and the conservative sections, and severe resource constraints, the leaders of the liberal wing of the AL played a prominent role in coordinating the activities of the government in exile. The third faction of the party, the conservatives, strove throughout the war to seize power from the liberals. A number of attempts were made to remove Tajuddin Ahmed from the position of PM. Interestingly, on several occasions this section worked closely with the radicals who also attempted to remove Tajuddin.

Infighting within the AL began as early as April, 1971.⁵⁷ Tajuddin Ahmed who crossed the border into India in late March and sought help from the Indian authorities to continue the resistance against Pakistani forces, decided to form the government as a pragmatic step but without any consultations with the AL leadership. Tajuddin's aides insisted that he should shoulder the responsibility of the prime ministership. Tajuddin, with great difficulty, assembled the leaders in Calcutta, the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal on 9 April, held a meeting of the elected representatives next day where the proclamation of independence was adopted and broadcast a speech over a clandestine radio network in which he proclaimed himself prime minister of the government of Bangladesh. Khondoker Mushtaq Ahmed, a senior leader, joined the other AL leaders, but expressed discontent that Tajuddin had become PM. He argued that as the senior member of the team he should have taken the top job. He also expressed his desire to leave the country and go to Mecca for the rest of his life.

With the formal declaration of independence and the formation of a cabinet on 17 April, the conflict subsided but did not end. The dissension resurfaced when the AL members of the National and Provincial Assemblies met in Shiliguri (Agaratala district of India) on 5–6 July 1971. By then Sheikh Moni along with three other youth leaders, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, and Serajul Alam Khan, had organized a separate armed group – the 'Bangladesh Liberation Force' (BLF, later renamed Mujib Bahini). Significantly, this force was organized with the active help of an Indian counter-insurgency agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). An Indian Major General, Uban, was in charge of the training and supply of this group. The structure, leadership, training, and operation patterns of this force were deliberately concealed from the Bangladesh government in exile. The BLF was operating on its own. The Mustaque faction of the

party, following an abortive attempt to conduct negotiations with the Pakistani regime, moved to oust Tajuddin Ahmed from power. On 12 September, 40 elected representatives of the Southern administrative zone belonging to the Mustaque and Sheikh Moni groups, met and adopted a resolution calling on the AL high command to force Tajuddin's resignation from both the general secretary position of the party and cabinet membership. In September, another faction led by two prominent AL leaders, Kamruzzaman and Yusuf Ali, attempted to increase their influence over the freedom fighters in the northern part of the country. They even contacted some pro-China, leftist political parties operating out of Calcutta.

The East Bengal Regiment of the Army, the EPR and the Police were the first targets of the military onslaught on the night of 25 March and subsequent days. Most of the members of these forces were either disarmed or killed. The EPR and the Police bore the brunt of the first attack by the Pakistan Army and lost a large number of their members within the first two days.⁵⁸ Yet, this numerically insignificant force compared to Pakistani forces of about 30,000 mounted the first resistance against the military operation practically without direction or leadership from the leading political parties. After initial sporadic resistance, military units decided to coordinate their efforts. They met on 4 April at the operational headquarters of the East Bengal Regiment. In their first meeting, strategies were drawn up and a hierarchy of leadership was established.⁵⁹ M. A. G. Osmani, a retired colonel of the Pakistani Army, who is credited with founding the East Bengal Regiment (EBR), was chosen to be the Commander-in-Chief, subject to approval by the future Bangladesh government, of what was described as the Mukti Bahini (The Liberation Force). Major Ziaur Rahman who declared himself the provisional C-in-C in his 27 March address expected that this meeting would validate that announcement. But both Major Khaled Musharraf and Major Shafiullah repudiated his action.⁶⁰ Osmani was the consensus choice. It provided a temporary relief to a simmering tension among the military leadership.

Personal rivalries resurfaced among the trio – Ziaur Rahman, Khaled Musharraf and Shafiullah – in July 1971. Colonel Osmani decided to raise a brigade comprised of three battalions (1 East Bengal, 3 East Bengal, 8 East Bengal). Major Ziaur Rahman was appointed at the head of the brigade, which was named 'Z' force in his honour. Soon after the

decision was taken, Khaled and Shafiullah pressured the central command for two more brigades named in their honour. Despite the lack of trained manpower (especially officers) and ammunition, within two months two further brigades had been raised: 'K' force and 'S' force.⁶¹ A latent tension between political and military leaderships surfaced in the first formal meeting between the military commanders and the government-in-exile on 10–15 July. Ziaur Rahman and seven other commanders proposed to set up a 'war council' led by military officials to coordinate the war. The proposal was opposed by a section of military officials and rejected by the government.⁶²

There were differences among the military leadership on how the war should be conducted. Colonel Osmani was initially in favour of raising a regular force and conducting a conventional war. He was never enthusiastic about guerilla warfare. Ziaur Rahman, in contrast, was more interested in dividing the regular army battalions into small companies and conducting commando-style activities along with the guerrillas. Both of them, however, were chiefly concerned with equipping the regular army. Shafiullah and Khaled preferred a coordination of activities between the guerrillas and the conventional forces, with the latter in command. What was common among them was their interest in raising the army to a preeminent position in the war. In October, when the sector commanders met in Calcutta, Lieutenant Colonel Abu Taher and Lieutenant Colonel Ziauddin, both of whom joined the war effort after fleeing Pakistan, raised serious objections to this line of thinking. They suggested that instead of increasing the number of regular forces, they should strengthen the guerrilla brigades involving both the regular army and peasants to fight a long-term war. They strongly opposed the dependence on Indian forces for the supply of arms and ammunition. They recommended that the forces' headquarters be moved to a position inside Bangladesh. Most significant was their plan for the future Bangladesh Army. They maintained that if guerrilla brigades could be raised, they would act as the core of the production-oriented army in independent Bangladesh. Ziaur Rahman also supported this idea.⁶³

While different trends and tendencies surfaced within the emergent state, the political leadership remained focused on the objective of winning the war. The process finally saw the light of day on 16 December 1971 when Pakistani forces surrendered to a joint military command of Indian and Bangladesh forces.⁶⁴ By then, millions had died,

India had given shelter to ten million refugees, provided all-out support and sanctuary to the Bangladesh forces, and engaged in a 13-day war with Pakistan. US President Richard Nixon had helped the Pakistani government violate the US laws, the US had tried to dissipate the movement in at least three different ways, and two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union—came close to a clash in the Bay of Bengal. Both global and regional dynamics changed as the process of the formation and emergence of the Bangladeshi state came to fruition. The imagined community – the Bengali nation – had found a geographical space. The Bangladesh government-in-exile returned to Dhaka on 22 December 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from a Pakistani prison on 8 January 1972 and made a triumphant return to Bangladesh on 10 January 1972 via London.

NOTES

Introduction

1. The estimates of deaths during the war vary; the Bangladeshi official number stands at 3 million. M. A. Hasan, a researcher on Bangladesh genocide and Convener of the War Crimes Facts Finding Committee, suggests 'nearly 1.8 million' people were killed (M. A. Hasan, 'Discovery of Numerous Mass Graves, Various Types of Torture on Women' and 'People's Attitude', paper presented at Keane University conference on Bangladesh Genocide, Bangladesh Genocide Study Group at Keane University, http://www.kean.edu/~bgsg/Conference09/Papers_and_Presentations/MA_Hasan_Paper_Discovery%20of%20numerous%20Mass%20Graves,%20Various%20types.pdf. Rudolph J. Rummel suggests the number of 1.5 million (Rudolph J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900*, Munster: Lit Verlag, 1998, p. 155). Pakistani officials claim 26,000 civilian casualties. The number varies because of the methods used to calculate. In recent years, scholars have agreed that the number of deaths should not only include those who were killed by the perpetrators of the crime but also those who lost their lives due to the atrocities which forced them to relocate. In any genocide situation millions are displaced and die during their journey to safe havens, and in refugee camps. There is no accurate account of how many people died while fleeing Bangladesh and in the Indian refugee camps.
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Chapter 1 Making of the Nation, Making of the State: Nationalism and Mobilization

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5. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: The Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986).
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16. Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1980).
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19. Anisuzzaman. 'Claiming and Disclaiming a Cultural Icon: Tagore in East Pakistan and Bangladesh'. *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77/4 (2008), pp. 1058–1069; <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed 21 September 2013).
20. Nurul Islam argues to the contrary: 'In popular perception and in a broad sense, the Six-Points Programme was a programme for autonomy of East Pakistan to allow a control over its foreign trade and exchange earnings, as well as over the government revenues and expenditures. The operational details and implications of its economic provisions, [...] were highly technical and were not and could not be so easily apparent/obvious to the non-experts that they meant in fact a very small step from independence' (Nurul Islam, Six-Points Programme or Independence? *Daily Star*, 26 March 2012. <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=227686>).
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24. Long after the independence of Bangladesh, it was revealed that a 'conspiracy' to secede was hatched, although the conspirators had Sheikh Mujib's blessing but he was not directly involved (Shahida Begum, *Agartala Conspiracy Trial and Relevant Documents*, in Bengali, Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2000). One of the

principal accused, Shawkat Ali, then an army captain who became the deputy speaker of the parliament in 2009, acknowledged this, saying, 'Until recently it was believed this case was a ploy to get rid of Sheikh Mujib, when in reality it was a case filed on very concrete and true accusations. We did conspire for secession of East Pakistan! The accusations were 100 per cent true' (in Conversation with Col (retd) Shawkat Ali, *Dhaka Courier*, 9 February 2012, <http://www.dhakacourier.com.bd/?p=4749#sthash.QnrUhizU.dpuf>).

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29. Mohammed Ayoob, 'Background and Developments', in *Bangladesh: A Struggle for Nationhood* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), p. 35.
30. *Guardian*, 'New order in Pakistan', 9 December 1970, p. 1, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/dec/09/archive-karachi-bhutto-vote-1970>.
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33. David Ludden, 'The Politics of Independence in Bangladesh', *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXVI 35/27 (2011), pp. 79–85.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
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36. Kamal Hossain, 'Interview' in *History of Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents*, Vol. 15 edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman (Dhaka: Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1985, p. 278.
37. Siddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 39–40, 62, 228–234.
38. Government of Bangladesh (GOB), *History of Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents*, Vol. 3 edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Dhaka: Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1985, p. 1.

39. Sharmin Ahmed, Tajuddin Ahmed: Neta O Pita (Tajuuddin Ahmed: Leader and Father, in Bengali), Dhaka: Oitijjho, 2014, p. 147.
40. A. K. Khondker, *Bhetore Bhaire 1971 [Inside and Outside, 1971]*, Dhaka: Prothoma, 2014).
41. Simon Dring, 'Tanks Crush Revolt in Pakistan,' *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1971; Howard Whitten, 'When Tank Took Over the Talking,' *The Age* (Melbourne), 29 March 1971.
42. Roberts Payne, *Massacre* (New York: McMillan, 1973), pp. 22–23.
43. Sydney H. Schanberg, 'He tells full story of arrest and detention,' *New York Times*, 18 January 1971, p. A1.
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45. *The Age*, 'Pakistan Tragedy', 29 March 1971, p. 14.
46. Quoted in Mashuqur Rahman and Mahbubur Rahman Jalal, 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro and Bangladesh's Declaration of Independence' *Forum*, March 2008, <http://archive.thedailystar.net/forum/2008/march/declaration.htm>.
47. A copy of the DIA report is available at: <http://cbgr1971.org/files/Mar261971DecOfIndep/DeclarationSMRcbgr02.pdf>.
48. Interestingly, the claim that Ziaur Rahman should be credited for the declaration of the independence was not pushed until his death in 1980. Zia's reminiscences, published in 1972 didn't highlight this aspect. Instead he maintained that Sheikh Mujib's speech on 7 March 1971 was considered by him as the green signal for the liberation war.
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52. Howard Whitten, 'Army Takeover', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1971.
53. Tajuddin Ahmed, 'First On Air Speech (Broadcast By Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra) Of Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad, Addressing The Nation, On Behalf Of The Government Of Bangladesh Headed By President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.' 10 April 1971 (Bengali Text is available at <http://www.tajuddinahmad.com/resources/speech1.pdf>).
54. This contentious issue reached the Supreme Court via a writ petition in 2009 and the court opined that any document contrary to the claim that Mujib declared independence is untrue.
55. For details see Mueeedul Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar [The Main Trends]* (1971, in Bengali) (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1986); and Amirul Islam, 'Interview' in *History of Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents*, Vol. 15 edited by Hasan

- Hafizur Rahman (Dhaka: Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh), 1985, 77–163. Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar*, pp. 146–47, reports that a faction led by Sheikh Fazlul Hoq Moni, nephew of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a youth leader, attempted to assassinate Tajuddin Ahmed sometime in October 1971.
56. Sometime between August and October of 1971 the United States attempted to contact the Bangladesh government in exile through Harold Saunders of the National Security Council and George Griffin of the US consulate at Calcutta to bring an end to the conflict. A section of AL leaders under the leadership of Khandaker Mustaque Ahmad, foreign minister of the government-in-exile, favoured such negotiations and established contact, which was later foiled by the pro-independence leaders (for details see Ali Riaz, 'Beyond the 'Tilt': US Initiatives to Dissipate Bangladesh Movement in 1971', *History Compass*, 3, 2005; Mueyedul Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar* [*The Main Trends*] 1971, in Bengali) (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1986), pp. 94–102; Rashid A. Chowdhury, 'United States Foreign Policy in South Asia: The Liberation Struggle in Bangladesh and the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971', unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of History, University of Hawaii. 1989, 155–170; Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 869–73.
 57. The following description of the conflict within the AL during the liberation struggle is drawn from two sources, Hasan (1986) and Islam (1985). It is worth noting that both Hasan and Islam worked closely with the government in exile. Islam, an Awami Leaguer, was the person with whom Tajuddin Ahmed crossed the border. Later, Islam was appointed as the principal aide of the PM of the government in exile. Hasan, a close friend of Tajuddin Ahmed, joined him on 5 May and later became the principal emissary of the government in dealing with the Indian counterpart.
 58. A. M. A. Muhith, *Emergence of a New Nation* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Books International, 1978).
 59. The meeting was attended by a number of army officers including Colonel M. A. G. Osmany, Lieutenant Colonel Abdur Rab, Lieutenant Colonel Salehuddin Muhammed Reza, Major Kazi Nuruzzaman, Major Ziaur Rahman, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Shafullah, Major Nurul Islam, Major Shafaat Jamil, and Major Mainul Hossain Chowdhury.
 60. Abu Sayeed, *Bangladesher Swadhinata Judhyeir Arale Judhya* [*War Behind the Bangladesh Independence War*], in Bengali (Dhaka: Sarif Ahmed, 1989).
 61. Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar*, p. 61; Sayeed, *Bangladesher Swadhinata Judhyeir Arale Judhya*, p. 158.
 62. Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar*, p. 54.
 63. Islam, 'Interview', p. 103.
 64. According to the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, a Pakistani judicial commission appointed in 1972, 'to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the atrocities and 1971 war', about 90,368 were

made Prisoners of War (POWs), including 54,154 Army soldiers, 1,381 Navy personnel, 833 Air force staff, paramilitary including police personnel consisted 22,000, and 12,000 civilians government employees and their dependents from West Pakistan.

Chapter 2 The Rise and the Demise of Authoritarianism (1972-90)

1. World Bank, *Reconstructing the Economy of Bangladesh*, Vol. I and Vol. II (Washington DC: WB, 1972).
2. Mueyedul, Hasan, *Muldhara Ekattar [The Main Trends]* (1971, in Bengali) (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1986), pp. 327-30.
3. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Memo No. 391(8)/Cab, dated 25 November 1971.
4. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Establishment Division, Memo No. Estbt. Dvn./3179(19), dated 16 December 1971.
5. In order to deal with the state of the bureaucracy in early 1972, we should describe, in brief, its structure during the Pakistan period. In Pakistan, Government services were classified under different categories: Class I, II, III, and IV. According to prestige and privileges, there were gazetted and non-gazetted officers. All the top administrative positions were filled by the Central Superior Servants who were selected by the Central Public Service Commission of the Government of Pakistan. The Central Superior Service was divided into several branches: 1. Civil Service; 2. Foreign Service; 3. Police Service; 4. Taxation Service; 5. Audit and Account Service; 6. Postal Service; 7. Controller of Exports and Imports. Among all these services, the officers belonging to the civil service occupied the most important administrative and executive positions. With enormous power in their hands they virtually controlled the entire administration. In addition, there was another provincial service known as EPCS (East Pakistan Civil Service) whose members occupied the subordinate and less important positions in the provincial administration.
6. A fourth group emerged in 1973 - officials who were stranded in Pakistan during the war. They were repatriated in August and subsequently the issue of the stranded Bengali bureaucrats became prominent.
7. A. K. Azad, 'The Saga of Bangladesh Army', *Weekly Holiday*, 1972.
8. United Nations, Ambassador Ema Sailor's Report of High-Level UN Consultants to Bangladesh. Vol. 1, March-April, Mimeograph (New York: United Nations, 1972).
9. Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), p. 29.
10. Rehman Sobhan, *The Crisis of External Dependence, The Political Economy of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1982), p. 7. According to the IBRD, in 1969/70, \$320 million was disbursed in the then