

Working Paper

The Bangladesh Genocide of 1971

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The Bangladesh Genocide of 1971 Abstract

A major genocide occurred in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) in 1971. The genocide took place during Bangladesh's War of National Liberation.

This essay places Bangladesh's genocide in the context of the Bengali people's quest for political and economy autonomy during the Pakistan regime. The inability of the Bengali people to achieve political and economic autonomy within the framework of the state of Pakistan spurred the national liberation movement. However, the Pakistani ruling class was determined to quash the demands of the national liberation movement.

In order to suppress the national liberation movement, the Pakistani ruling class used the Pakistani army to quell the Bengali resistance. This led to a genocide in Bangladesh (East Pakistan). As the news of the massacres and the movement of refugees become known around the world, global public opinion favored the Bengali struggle for independence, but the major Western powers, including the United States, along with China and most Arab and Muslim countries continued to support the Pakistani regime.

The Pakistani ruling class was responsible for the genocide, including deaths, cataclysmic destitution, wide-spread starvations, and human suffering. The Pakistani army attacks on non-combatants, minorities and supporters of the Awami League caused a large-scale movement of refugees from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) to India. Strategic considerations and the burden of sheltering refugees in India were important factors in India's intervention in East Pakistan.

India's intervention in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), however, can also be regarded as a rare but authentic example of humanitarian intervention that stopped ongoing massacres, and prevented the

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Pakistani army from causing further destruction of life and property. The military intervention, led by the Indian army but joined by Bangladesh Liberation forces, enabled the establishment of the independent state of Bangladesh after the surrender of the Pakistani army. The genocide and the war of national liberation had profound effects on the subsequent trajectory of Bangladesh, with reverberations that continue to shape the nation to this day.

The history of genocide in Bangladesh has not been studied much among mainstream Western scholars, unlike the Nazi holocaust. Indeed, the English-language literature on the magnitude, the scope, the context and the aftermath of Bangladesh genocide remains limited. This essay raises some important questions about the reasons for these lacunae. The absence of detailed studies and the paucity of scholarly works are not accidental but rather are manifestations of Western scholarship. In addition, the tumultuous political instability in Bangladesh and the institutional weaknesses for undertaking detailed research for independent research and undertaking detailed survey-based empirical studies in Bangladesh have also hampered Bangladeshi efforts to produce seminal and ground-breaking research on the genocide. In recent years, however, Bengali-language literature on the genocide has grown. Nevertheless, there is considerable scope for enhancing the standards of scholarship and rigorous analysis of the Bangladesh genocide.

Going forward, the proper recording and documentation of the Bangladesh genocide remains an important task. This is an important task for not only Bangladeshis but also for all scholars and human activists dedicated to the principles of universalism, humanism, and fundamental human rights.

Key words: Bangladesh, East Pakistan, Pakistan, India, Genocide, India-Pakistan War, National Liberation, South Asia

Introduction

A major genocide occurred in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). The genocide occurred during Bangladesh's War of National Liberation. This essay is a contribution to the study of this genocide. The essay elucidates the context of the genocide and related issues. Firstly, it is argued that the genocide occurred in the midst of the Bengali national liberation movement. Secondly, it is argued that the Pakistani ruling class and its collaborators must be held collectively responsible for the genocide. Collective and institutional responsibilities do not relieve anyone of their individual responsibility for committing crimes against humanity and for war crimes. Thirdly, it is argued that the absence of scholarship on Bangladesh genocide is a manifestation of the limitations of Western scholarship. The limited Western literature is, thus, not accidental. Fourthly, going forward proper documentation and rigorous study of the genocide is required to uphold the memory of the genocide and the struggle for national liberation. The guiding principles for the study, analysis, and comparison of genocide should be universalism, universal humanism, and fundamental human rights.

The first section of the essay places the genocide in the context of the Bengali people's quest for political and economic autonomy during the Pakistan regime. The second section argues that the Pakistani ruling class was responsible for the genocide. The third section points out that the Bangladesh genocide has not been well studied and examines the reasons for lacunae in Western scholarship. It is argued that the proper documentation of the Bangladeshi genocide remains an important task for all scholars and activists dedicated to the principles of universalism, humanism, and human rights.

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Section I: Historical Analysis

This section provides the historical background to the genocide that occurred in Bangladesh. It places it in the context of the Bengali struggle for national liberation. The account of the historical background to the genocide draws on Akram (1994) and Akram (1997). For further background and more detailed histories of Bangladesh and Pakistan, see Ahmad (1975), Ahmed (1978), Ahmed (1983), Ali (1973), Ali (1983), Islam (1981), Islam (2003), Lifschultz (1979), Loshak (1971), Maniruzzam (1980), Mascharenhas (1971 and 1986), Rahman (1980), Quaderi (1972), Saifullah (1989), Singh (1980), Sisson and Rose (1991), and U.S. State Department (2005). Rahman (1980) has compiled the key documents.

The creation of Pakistan out of British occupied India contained the germs of discord between “West Pakistanis” and Bengalis. Initially, the population of East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan during Pakistani rule) supported the creation of Pakistan, that is, the partition of the Indian subcontinent into two constituent parts following the withdrawal and departure of the British. The Bengali support for the creation of Pakistan was a result of the transformation of the Bengalis in British occupied India. During the British rule in the Indian subcontinent, the dominant section of the Muslim upper class had two components, the *zamindars* (landlords) and the *ulema* (clergy). For background on the creation of Pakistan, see Ali (1983).

The British consolidated their rule in Bengal by instituting the *zamindars*. The *zamindari* land-holding system gave the land-owners the right to crop share and revenue collection from the cultivators in the land entitled to them by the British. In return these land-owners would provide an annual entitlement charge to the colonial authorities. The Muslim League represented these “men of property and influence.” In order to counter the Indian Congress’ support among the nationalist Muslim communities as well as to serve as a

counter-weight to Indian nationalism, the Muslim League advanced the “two-nation theory.”

The “two-nation theory” was an ideological construct that claimed that the Muslims and the Hindus in the South Asian subcontinent constituted two different and irreconcilable nationalities. This “theory” did not explain how in spite of vast class, linguistic, ethnic, social, and cultural differences, Muslims in the subcontinent constituted one nation, other than that the Muslim constitute a unified nation on a basis of “divine sanction.”

The idea of a distinct state for the Indian Muslims was first proposed by Muhammed Iqbal. His scheme, which did not include Bengal and Bengali Muslims, was confined to setting up a separate state for Indian Muslims in the North-West of the subcontinent. The name Pakistan was coined by Chaudhuri Rahmat Ali along with a group of students in Cambridge, U.K. Pakistan was an acronym that stood for Punjab, Afgania (Pathan), Kashmir, Sind, and *istan*, which is Persian for country. Hence, Rahmat Ali’s scheme too failed to include East Bengal and Bengali Muslims.

The demand for Pakistan was originally dismissed as a naive scheme. It was initially viewed as nothing more than a bargaining tool for the leaders of the Indian Muslims. Despite the incorporation of the demand for Pakistan into its program, the Muslim League failed to mobilize grass-root Muslim support for itself. This fact is reflected in the Muslim League inability to attain a majority among Indian Muslims prior to the election of 1946.

In its struggle for independence from the British, the Indian National Congress had utilized the religious sentiments of Muslims towards the Turkish Sultanate under the Caliphate title. The Muslims supported Turkey which had entered the First World War on the German side against the British. The Indian nationalist leaders built up the *Khalifat* movement against the British.

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However, the *Khalifat* movement died its natural death when Kamal Ataturk, the Turkish reformist dictator, abolished the nominal position of Caliphate in 1924.

Thereafter, the Indian Congress' strength among Indian Muslims never quite reached the level that it had during the *Khalifat* movement. The Muslim League subsequently gained and exerted influence on the Muslim anti-colonialist movement.

It was Jinnah, earlier hailed as "the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity," who led the demand for Pakistan under the slogan of "Divide and Quit." This demand was the political expression embodying the national aspirations of Muslim landlords, rising business men, civil servants, *mullahs* (priests), and religious *pirs* (saints).

The demand for an independent state for Indian Muslims became a living force among the Muslim masses because of its appeal to Indian Muslims that they would have separate development free from what was described as Hindu domination and exploitation, with an opportunity for economic prosperity.

On March 23, 1940, the Muslim League adopted the Lahore Resolution, moved by Fazlul Huq of Bengal, which called for political independence by creating *two* states for Muslims. It stated:

the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute '*Indian States*' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign. (cited in Rahman 1980)

The Lahore Resolution, which later came to be widely discussed and debated, was effectively by-passed by the Delhi Resolution. Moved by H. S. Suhrawardy of Bengal and adopted in the Muslim League Legislators' Convention on April 9, 1946, it stated:

any formula devised by the British Government for transferring power from the British to the people of India ... will not contribute to the solution of the Indian problem [unless] ... the Zones comprising

Bengal and Assam in the North-East, and the Punjab, the NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West of India ... be constituted into one sovereign independent state and ... implement the establishment of Pakistan ... two *separate* constitution-making bodies be set up for Pakistan and Hindustan (emphasis added). (cited in Rahman 1980).

Pakistan, as it came into being, was the paradigm of an artificial state. This newly independent state was a geographical anomaly. It was separated into two parts by approximately 1,600 kilometers of Indian territory. The Western part consisted of the provinces of Sind, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and a divided section of the Punjab, while the Eastern part consisted solely of East Bengal.

The socio-cultural diversity between the two wings of Pakistan was enormous. In fact, this diversity was extended even to the very basis of the ideological pretext, that is, the religion of the people, which was to serve as the unifying force in this country; Islam was understood, interpreted, and exercised in different ways in these two separate wings. The history of Islam in "West Pakistan" and East Bengal was completely dissimilar.

In spite of having established Pakistan on the basis of the "two-nation theory," a section of the high command of the Muslim League still retained the idea of establishing a secular parliamentary state. The contradiction in the position was clearly spelt out in Jinnah's inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947. He declared:

Any idea of a United India could have never worked and ... would have led us to a terrific disaster ... we should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities---the Hindu community and the Muslim community---because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khatri, also Bengalees, Madrasis, and so on---will vanish ... this [difference] has been the biggest hindrance on the way of India to attain her freedom and independence and but for this

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we would have been a free people long ago ... you are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan. *You may belong to any religion or caste or creed---that has nothing to do with the business of the State.* We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State ... you will find that *in course of time, Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Hindus and Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State* (emphasis added). (cited in Rahman 1980)

The theoretical confusion and the opportunistic nature of Pakistan's ruling elite is clear in Jinnah's inaugural speech.

The Pakistani ruling-class, having established the state of Pakistan on the basis of the "two-nation theory," could not find the ideological justification for establishing a secular state. The mullahs and the right-wing elements in the Muslim League wanted Pakistan to be a state with "pan-Islamic ideals" since Pakistan, they claimed, was not merely a state for Indian Muslims but also a "Muslim State." The mullahs and their allies argued that since Pakistani was established to be a state for the Muslims in India, the state structure and its laws should be based upon the precepts laid in the medieval religious laws. Yet, the liberal bourgeois component of the Pakistani ruling class wanted to establish a secular state that functioned on the basis of civic laws. If, indeed, religion had nothing to do with "the business of the State," then why carve a separate state for Indian Muslims? (See Ali 1983).

The Pakistani ruling elite were confronted with the dilemma of overriding their own claim that Pakistan was to be an Islamic state for Indian Muslims. The liberal bourgeoisie could not justify advancing secularism in Pakistan since the state was established on the basis that Muslims in India constitute not just a distinct religious community, but a separate nation. That the Indian Muslims did not constitute one

homogenous nationality became apparent in the confrontation of nationalities in the state of Pakistan and the eventual secession of East Bengal from Pakistan. The secession of East Bengal demonstrated that the claims of national unity based upon religious conceptions could not prevent the disintegration of the state of Pakistan.

Bengalis under Pakistani Rule in the 1950s

The Muslim League, the first ruling party of Pakistan, lacked a mass base. The Muslim League came into power in Pakistan after having succeeded in dividing the subcontinent into two, following the departure of British. The central government of the state of Pakistan was set up in the Western wing of the state primarily because most of the upper class of Muslim aristocrats migrated to the western wing. The fundamental difficulties facing the Pakistani ruling class were: first, to construct a viable polity, and second, to integrate the various nationalities into this bizarre state, separated into two wings.

Throughout the history of Pakistan, the province of East Bengal had a greater population than all the other provinces of Pakistan combined, as the following table shows:

Population in millions			
Province	1951	1961	1971
East Bengal	41.9	50.8	70.0
West Pakistan	33.7	42.9	60.0
Source: Pakistan Central Statistics Office			

The central state apparatus, the military and the civil service, was dominated by the Muslim immigrants from North India and the Punjabis. The North Indian Muslims were involved in the British administration in Delhi. Hence, they dominated the civilian administration in Pakistan. The Punjab had served as the garrison of the British Indian

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Army. Hence, the Punjabis dominated the military in Pakistan.

The Muslim League decided to make Urdu the sole state language of Pakistan, although *only* 3 percent of the population of Pakistan spoke Urdu and over 56 percent spoke Bengali. Since Urdu was the language of the dominant class in Pakistan and hence the language of upper echelons of the Muslim League leadership, the ruling party decided that Urdu was to be the *sole* state language of Pakistan. The explanation provided by the Pakistani ruling elite was that, since Urdu had more similarity with Arabic and Persian, it was a more “Islamic” language and since Bengali was derived from pre-existing Indian languages, including Sanskrit, it was a “Hindu” language.

The Pakistani ruling elite’s language proposal did not meet any organized and serious challenge in the Western wing because the languages of West Pakistanis had an affinity in nature, structure, and vocabulary with Urdu. However, for Bengalis, Urdu was an alien and unrelated language. Thus, the Bengali intelligentsia and political leadership proposed that both Urdu and Bengali be declared as the state languages. On March 11, 1948 a province-wide strike was held to protest the central government’s chauvinist policy of rejecting the language of the majority of the people as unfit to be a state language. Student demonstrations took place all across East Bengal. In his first trip to East Bengal on March 21, 1948 at Dhaka (then Dacca) the Governor-General “Quaid-i-Azam” (literally, the Great Leader) Jinnah declared (in English!):

Let me make it clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan ... so far as the State Language is concerned Pakistan’s language shall be Urdu. (cited in Rahman 1980).

The Bengalis did not accept Jinnah’s claim and continued their resistance to the

imposition of Urdu language. Subsequent attempts by the Pakistani rulers to replace Bengali script, first with Arabic scripts, and later with Roman scripts, failed due to the public outcry and popular mobilization led by the students and the intellectuals, supported by the middle class and by some sections of the workers and the peasants.

The protests on the language issue culminated on February 21, 1952, when police fired on a student demonstration and killed several students and bystanders. Politically, the killings led to the formation of the United Front. The killings also led to the emergence of a new literary and cultural tradition of protests and secularism among the Bengali bourgeoisie.

The cultural tradition that arose was a “sigh of the oppressed” against Pakistani elite’s use of religious nationalism. One cannot underestimate the importance of this event in the emergence of the Bengali nationalism. The Bengalis viewed the Pakistani elite’s attempt to impose Urdu as the state language as a design to prevent them from full participation in the state rule. Hence, the death of students while protesting the language policy became an event to rally public support for the Bengali cause. This day was, and still is, celebrated by Bengalis as *Eukushey February* (Martyr’s Day on February 21). Indeed, this event has become ingrained in the Bengali national political consciousness.

Meanwhile, the economic colonization and the expropriation of wealth of East Bengal by the West Pakistani ruling elite had already begun. East Bengal was the world’s largest producer of raw jute (a fiber), which was Pakistan’s main foreign exchange earner. The foreign trade statistics in its first decade for Pakistan were as follows:

Foreign Trade Figures				
Millions of rupees				
	East Pakistan (East Bengal)		West Pakistan	
Five-year period	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports

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1947-52	4,582	2,129	3,786	4,769
1952-57	3,969	2,159	3,440	5,105
Source: Central Statistics Office				

development of productive forces of the two wings, chose an economic policy that benefited the interests of West Pakistan based manufacturing sector that sold its commodities in East Bengal.

While East Bengal was earning a larger share of Pakistan's exports, West Pakistan had the greater share in imports of consumer goods, industrial machineries, and raw materials. Thus, the embryonic nature of exploitative relation was formulated in the early days of Pakistan. The inter-wing trade policy was designed to allow the West Pakistani manufacturing sector to dispose of its commodities in East Bengal at a price higher than the world market. In spite of the rhetoric on the "national unity," the export earnings of East Bengal were being used to finance the development of Karachi, the major commercial city of West Pakistan, and the Punjab, the dominant province of West Pakistan.

In the financial year 1948-49, the allocation for provincial development expenditure was as the following table indicates:

Province	Amount Allocated In million rupees
East Bengal	40
Punjab	50
Sind	25
NWFP	5
Source: Central Statistics Office	

As the above table shows, the Pakistani ruling elite was more interested in the development of provinces of West Pakistan, though the majority of the country's population lived in East Bengal.

Up to 1951, total expenditure on development projects of Pakistan was Rupees 1,126 million, out of which only Rupees 28 million was for East Bengal. The Pakistani ruling elite, instead of remedying inequities that existed between the

The Growth of Dissent in East Bengal

The Awami Muslim League was the first opposition party that came into being in Pakistan. It was established on June 23, 1949. The Awami League was led by Maulana Bhashani, a peasant and religious leader, and by Suhrawardy, who at one point had advocated a United Bengal but also supported the Muslim League on some occasions.

The membership of Awami Muslim League consisted of two elements. The first group consisted of those whose political ideology was not fundamentally different from the Muslim League, but who had concluded that the increasing discrimination against the Bengalis on racial and provincial bases would hinder their access to political power. The second group consisted of younger and more radical members, whose political ideology was different from the Muslim League's. They found little worthy of admiring in the political ideology of the pan-Islamism and the spirit of "two-nation theory."

The Awami Muslim League was essentially a provincial party and an ethnically Bengali party. (For background on the Awami League, see Ahmad (1975), Ahmed (1985), Akram (1997), Brown (1972), Islam (2003), Mascarenhas (1971), Rahman (1980), Sisson and Rose (1980), and U.S. State Department (2005)). The political agenda of Awami League emphasized grievances of Bengalis that had developed primarily due to failure of the Pakistani ruling elite to recognize Bengali as a state language. The Awami League called for such policies as (i) abolishing the British-instituted *zamindari* (landlord) system, (ii) nationalization of key industries, and (iii) utilization of the jute sector for the benefit of the people of the East Bengal. Even in its early days, the

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League began reflecting the interests of a considerable section of the Bengali urban bourgeoisie not only of the provincial capital Dhaka but also of the district towns. The League, in October 1955, dropped “Muslim” from its nomenclature in order to attract non-Muslims into its fold.

The Basic Principle Committee (BPC) of the National Constitutional Assembly published its report in February, 1950. It called for the reorganization of Pakistan’s provinces into two units: West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The legislature was to have two houses. In the upper house there would be equal numbers of members from the two constituting units, while the lower house would be elected on the basis of population. Initially, it did not specify the number of seats in the houses. Later, the proposed distribution of seats was as follows:

Province	Upper House	Lower House	Total
East Bengal	10	165	175
Punjab	10	75	85
NWFP	10	24	34
Sind	10	20	30
Baluchistan	10	16	26
Total	50	300	350

Source: Rahman (1980)

The upper house was to be indirectly elected. The governmental mechanism would be a combination of presidential and parliamentary systems, with a substantial amount of executive power and the choice of selecting the Prime Minister being retained with the President. The BPC called for declaring Urdu as the state language.

The Bengali political leadership was outraged at the proposals of the BPC, particularly on the language issue. The Bengalis viewed the proposals as a scheme to perpetuate West Pakistani, and in

particular Punjabi, political hegemony over the central government. The proposals provoked indignation among Bengalis because their numerical strength would be reduced in a joint session of legislature, which was to settle any disputes. Moreover, the scope of arbitrary use of autocratic power by the President could enable the Pakistani ruling class to secure support for itself and counter any Bengali schemes for changing the status quo. For Bengali bourgeoisie it was clear that the BPC proposals would further reduce their already limited role in the state.

The anti-BPC political manoeuvres of Bengali politicians led to the Grand National Convention (GNC). Although some West Pakistani opposition leaders participated, the GNC was primarily an initiative of Bengali bourgeois leadership. According to the GNC proposals, the power of the central government would be limited to foreign policy and defense. The proposals at the GNC called for a unicameral legislature, with seats being distributed among the provinces on the basis of population. The GNC also proposed that the federal capital be established in Islamabad (West Pakistan) but every other session of the federal parliament be held in Dhaka (East Bengal).

These proposals reflected the popular Bengali demand that both Bengali and Urdu should be the state languages of Pakistan. In essence, the GNC proposals were an attempt to ensure the political participation of the Bengalis in the state’s decision-making process. The counter-proposals assumed that the national interests of the Bengalis could be safeguarded if the Bengalis were able to exercise their due political rights within the framework of a bourgeois democratic polity.

Another response to West Pakistani dominance of the national political scene was the formation of the Youth League in February 1951. Its formation was inspired by the “Rajshahi jail thesis.” It acted as a

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counter to state-sponsored ideology of pan-Islamism. They felt that if the central government were to grant East Bengal autonomy, the province would be better off. Since the Youth League had a substantial number of young radicals, the thrust of its propaganda was to show that the Pakistani elite was exploiting East Bengal. For example, the League pointed out in its manifesto, quoting Pakistani government statistics, that the Consumer Product Index (CPI) had gone up from 100 in 1939 (base year) to 174 in 1948 and 214 in 1949. Also, the Youth League stressed the secular aspects of Bengali culture, such as the celebration of *Phaila Baishak* (Bengali New Year), and Rabindranath Tagore's birthday. In addition, it called for an end to all forms of regionalism and communal discrimination.

Another reaction to the domination of political power by the West Pakistani ruling elite was the establishment of the United Front, an alliance of political parties. It was composed of the Awami League, *Krishak Sramik Party*, *Ganatantrik Dal* and various smaller parties. Its political platform for the election was based on a 21-point agenda, which emphasized declaring Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. The 21-point demands also included plans for abolishing the land-holding system, ending high interest on agricultural credit extended to farmers by the rural moneyed class, nationalizing the jute industry, providing fair prices to jute cultivators, and implementing cooperative farming.

The United Front's program also demanded that the relation between East Bengal and West Pakistan be restructured on the basis of full regional autonomy; the program identified three subjects for the central government, namely, defense, foreign affairs, and currency. As confidence building measures, the United Front's program suggested that Pakistan's Naval Headquarters be relocated to East Bengal and that an arms manufacturing factory be built in East Bengal.

The provincial election of East Bengal in March 1954 was a big shock for the Pakistani ruling elite. Basing its campaign on these demands, the United Front won 227 out of 236 of Muslim seats. Even the Communists won five seats. The Muslim League, which was the ruling party, won only 10 seats out of 309. This landslide victory revealed how estranged the Bengali masses were on account of the failure of the Muslim League to deliver on the promises made during the campaign for Pakistan. The Muslim League, the party of the elite that came to power in Pakistan, promised that once the state of Pakistan came into being, Bengalis would be liberated from foreign exploitation and that national policy would be geared towards their benefit. The United Front's campaign had succeeded because it raised the slogan of the Bengalis' grievances against the central government's discrimination.

The United Front government was dismissed by the central government on May 30, 1954. The Prime Minister Mohammed Ali explained: "Our sole aim in taking over the administration of the province is to save East Bengal and preserve the integrity of Pakistan."

In order to "save" East Bengal, Major-General Iskander Mirza was appointed the Governor by the central government. After a year of political intrigue and bargaining, the provincial assembly was restored and the Governor's rule ended. By then, a section of the United Front had broken with the Awami League in order to form a ministry in the provincial government.

The Constitutional Crisis and Political Instability in Pakistan

In October 1954, conflicts between the Governor-General and the Constituent Assembly led the Governor-General to dismiss the Constituent Assembly and proclaim a state of emergency. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly led to a further increase of bureaucratic power over the state of Pakistan. Earlier, the

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Governor-General Ghulam Mohammed dismissed Khwaja Nazimuddin and appointed Mohammed Ali Bogra as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Despite the directive of the Awami League, Suhrawardy joined Bogra's cabinet as the law minister. Though he himself had been an ardent exponent of provincial autonomy, Suhrawardy supported the One Unit scheme, the notion that the provinces of West Pakistan would combine to form One Unit. This would effectively give West Pakistan constitutional parity with East Pakistan, even though East Pakistan had a majority in population in the whole of Pakistan. The One Unit scheme was forced upon the Provincial Assemblies, which elected the Second Constituent Assembly.

Pakistan became a republic with Iskander Mirza as its first President on March 23, 1956. The creation of the republic did not, however, enable the Pakistani ruling-class either to resolve the "national question" *vis-a-vis* the Bengalis (as well other nationalities) or to establish political stability by the formation of a secure ruling-class political party.

The first republic lasted only till October 1958. Within this brief period, there were four prime minister of Pakistan. During that period, the provincial politics in East Bengal was reduced to a farce, with provincial governments constantly changing. The political formation was made of rapidly changing allegiance at the center of the Muslim League and the Republican Party, and at East Bengal provincial level of the Awami League and the Krishak Sramik Party. In East Bengal, the Awami League and the Krishak Sramik Party battled for governmental positions. The regular shifts of the allegiance of the members of the legislature were due to the corruption of the country's bourgeois leadership and the pursuit of personal gains by its political leaders.

On September 11, 1956 Suhrawardy formed a coalition government that included the Awami League. On becoming the Prime

Minister of Pakistan, Suhrawardy declared that East Bengal has been granted 98 per cent autonomy. However, nothing substantial was done to alter the actual condition of East Bengal. The lack of initiative of their politicians to change the socioeconomic conditions of East Bengal was regarded by the Bengali bourgeoisie as a betrayal of the Bengali cause.

Within the Awami League, the central government's failure to guarantee East Bengal's regional interests led to the formation of factions, one led by Suhrawardy and the other led by Bhashani. Suhrawardy supported the design of Pakistan's elite in joining the U.S.-sponsored military pacts. The differences within the Awami League surfaced at the Kagmari conference of the party because the Leftist formation within the Awami League refused to accept Suhrawardy's compromises with the Pakistani ruling elite. Bhashani's rhetoric led him to declare that, unless complete autonomy were granted to East Bengal, then *Assalumu Alakikum* (Farewell) to Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the politics of intrigue at the central government continued. Suhrawardy was forced to resign. A general election was scheduled for 1959. This election was never to be held. With the proclamation of martial law on October 7, 1958, President Mirza abrogated the constitution, dismissed the central and the provincial governments, and banned all political parties.

The imposition of martial law abolished what little prospect there was to the establishment a viable bourgeois democratic process in Pakistan. The military stepped into power because the civilian faction of the ruling-class had been unable to establish a political structure that would resolve the "national question." The junta used the disparity between East Bengal and West Pakistan, and the instability of the political process to justify its taking over state power.

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In its first decade of rule, the Pakistani ruling elite dismissed the grievances of the Bengali national bourgeoisie as a plot to undermine the unity of the “Muslim” state. The ruling elite charged that the Bengalis’ call for the decentralization of state power and even their call for the secularization of the state, were inspired by secessionist elements, foreign agents, or India, the “natural” enemy of Pakistan. Ethnic and racial discriminations against the Bengalis went along with the limitation of the political rights of the Bengalis.

The imposition of martial law served to reduce the numerical strength of the Bengalis that they could have used even if an underdeveloped bourgeois democracy were to have emerged in Pakistan. For the Bengali bourgeoisie, the failure of civilian rule and subsequent military takeover further limited its role and scope in the political arena because the military was predominantly West Pakistani.

From the perspective of the Bengali bourgeoisie, the military intervention was an attempt to ensure the West Pakistani dominated military’s role in the state structure, particularly because the scheduled general elections would have allowed the Bengalis to exercise their numerical strength to gain political power. Due to the establishment of barricades that prevented their participation, the Bengali bourgeoisie become disillusioned with the concept of the Islamic state of Pakistan. Their struggle for autonomy intensified as a result of the failure of the newly emergent state of Pakistan to deliver the Bengali bourgeoisie a fair share of power and privileges.

The Ayub Khan Regime and the Bengalis

The proclamation of martial law led to the dismissal of President Iskander Mirza, when General Ayub Khan took over power and proclaimed himself President of the Republic on October 27, 1958. The military regime justified its actions by claiming that

the country was headed towards “national disintegration.” The imposition of martial law brought the military faction, which had already a power-base within the West Pakistani dominated system, into the forefront of state rule.

The Ayub regime promised a “growth-oriented economy” and political stability. An important aspect of the ideology of the Pakistani state during this period was the slogan of “national unity.” Following the political agitation and reaction of the Bengalis in the 1950s, the Pakistani ruling elite had become attentive to the regional disparity and Bengalis’ dissatisfaction with the status quo.

In spite of the Pakistani elite’s acknowledgment of the existence of disparity, the growth of imbalance and disparity between the wings continued. In effect, although the ruling elite acknowledged the existence of disparity between the two wings, it did nothing substantial to remedy the situation. As the state was the major promoter of economic growth and initiative, the bias in economic development and growth remained in favor of West Pakistan. Due to the relative weakness of Bengali bourgeoisie, the position of the Bengalis deteriorated not only within the Pakistani ruling elite but in comparison with the West Pakistanis too. After the partition of the subcontinent, the emergence of state-sponsored capitalism in East Bengal was hampered mainly because its jute-producing areas became de-linked from the jute-processing mills of Calcutta in West Bengal. This allowed the penetration of West Pakistani industrial and merchant capital into East Bengal.

The change in government did nothing to alter the policy bias and the racist attitude towards the Bengalis. The President of the Republic, Ayub Khan himself expressed his opinion as follows:

they [the Bengalis] have all the inhibitions of down-trodden races and have not yet found it possible to adjust psychologically to the requirements of the new born freedom. Their

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popular complexes, exclusiveness, suspicion and a sort of defensive aggressiveness probably emerge from ... historical background. (Khan (1967), cited in Rahman 1980).

The dictator's musing on the Bengalis reflected the popular stereotype of the Bengalis held by the West Pakistani ruling elite. Such racist conceptualization was a prerequisite for the ruling elite to culturally oppress the Bengalis.

With the promulgation of the "Basic Democratic" system, the military regime believed it could legitimize its rule. Under the "Basic Democracy" system, the National Assembly was elected by an equal number of 40,000 "Basic Democrats" both in East Bengal and in West Pakistan. The "Basic Democrats" were linked in a series of tiered-system that also elected the President. (Needless to say, there was not anything remotely democratic in the "Basic Democrats" scheme.) The regime claimed that the British model of bourgeois democracy was unsuitable for an underdeveloped state like Pakistan. However, the "Basic Democracy" formula was unable to obstruct the development of Bengali nationalism.

On June 8, 1962 the military regime lifted martial law after the election of the National Assembly. In effect, the country came under the rule of the "Basic Democrat" system, which served the Ayub Khan dictatorship. This Constitution was opposed not only by the Bengali bourgeoisie but also by the West Pakistani political opposition. The opposition at the national level formed the Combined Opposition Party (COP). In September 1964, the COP nominated Fatima Jinnah, the sister of M.A. Jinnah, as its candidate for presidential elections. In the presidential election, although Fatima Jinnah lost, she did much better in East Bengal, where she received 46.6 percent of the votes cast compared to 36.4 percent in her favor nation-wide. Her widespread support in East Bengal revealed the

Bengalis' dissatisfaction with the Ayub Khan's administration.

During Ayub Khan's rule, the Bengali intellectuals and the bourgeoisie became more and more vocal against the economic exploitation. The Bengali intellectuals made three arguments: first, East Bengal had been turned into a market to dump West Pakistani products; second, the foreign trade policy was biased in favor of West Pakistani interests; and third, the ruling elite allocated and distributed resources in favor of West Pakistan. An examination of the political economy of Pakistan as undertaken below reveals the exploitation of East Bengal by West Pakistan.

The Awami League, which was championing the quest for autonomy, formulated a six-point agenda that was accepted as its program (Islam 2003). The program called for (i) a Federation based on the Lahore Resolution, (ii) a central government dealt only with defense and foreign affairs, (iii) either two separate currencies for the two wings or same currency for both wings with the provision that flight of capital is prevented and each wing maintains separate revenue accounts, (iv) the units be given the authority to levy taxes and to collect revenue, (v) separate foreign exchange accounts for both wings, and (vi) setting up a para-military force for East Bengal.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented this program as the *magna carta* of ending economic and socio-political exploitation. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected the President of the Awami League and launched a mass campaign in East Bengal to achieve the demands. The military regime took an attitude of confrontation and placed Mujib under detention.

The Ayub Khan regime tried to ruin the credibility of Mujibur Rahman and his program by charging that he was involved in a conspiracy along with some junior Bengali military officials to secede from Pakistan and create an independent state in

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East Bengal with Indian aid. This case came to be known as the “Agartala Conspiracy Case.” The Bengalis protested that case was fabricated and demanded the unconditional release of Mujib. Mujib used his defense arguments in this case as an instrument to put forward his political program. Since the Bengalis did not believe in the claims of the Pakistani government, the case cemented the cause of Bengali nationalism with Mujib’s six-point program. Mujib’s popularity rose due to the charges levied against him. He became a national hero. The charges against Mujib led to a mass uprising in Bengal.

President Ayub was forced to drop the case against Mujib. In order to resolve the crisis, the regime invited the Awami League to participate in the Round Table Conference (RTC) to discuss the political structure of the state and to set the ground work for resolving the national problems. The negotiations with the political parties did not succeed. The masses continued the demonstrations in the streets for a democratic political order and economic justice. The government was unable to end the thrust of popular politics and mass action. Ayub Khan was forced to resign. On March 25, 1969 he handed over power to the military chief Yahya Khan, allegedly on the grounds that only the military could preserve the state structure.

During Ayub Khan’s rule, a centralized political system was established. This system could not channel the aspirations of the Bengali bourgeoisie. It did not provide a mechanism for the Bengali bourgeoisie to enhance its role in the state’s decision making process. The centralized political system aggravated the call for provincial autonomy. Due to the failure of the Pakistani military-bureaucratic elite to accommodate the demands for provincial autonomy for East Bengal, Bengali nationalist politics became more militant. Although there was an increase in national output and industrial production, the economic disparity between the regions did

not diminish but rather increased. With the military in power the prospect of resolving the “national question” in Pakistan was effectively blocked because the state lacked a democratic mechanism that could execute changes in national institutions and policy.

The Marginalization of the Bengalis under Pakistani Rule

From 1947 to 1971, when East Bengal was a part of Pakistan, the Bengali bourgeoisie was the smaller shareholder of the Pakistani ruling structure. Its role was much weaker than the West Pakistani sections of the industrial, mercantile, military, and civilian bourgeoisie. As a result, East Bengal was exploited and colonized by the dominant elite of Pakistan. From the birth of the state, the Bengalis were subject to economic injustice and marginalization.

The Bengali people’s frustration was expressed in their political struggle for ending military rule and for establishing a democratic order in the state. The Bengali bourgeois political leadership believed that a representative political structure would allow their economic, social, and political rights to be established. However, because of the structure of state power in Pakistan, the plight of the Bengalis worsened. An examination of the economic situation of Pakistan during the period reveals this economic marginalization.

The Bengalis as a nationality were not adequately represented in the civilian administration and the military high command of the state. These posts were predominantly held by West Pakistanis. The following table reveal the distribution of civilian posts on the basis of nationalities.

Central Government Civil Service (1955) Position		
	East Bengal	West Pakistan
Secretary	0	19
Joint Secretary	3	38
Deputy	10	123

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Secretary		
Assistant Secretary	38	510
Source: Dawn, Karachi (1955)		

The lack of Bengali bourgeois representation in the central government allowed the center to direct its policy in favor of West Pakistan. The central government's outlay for national development clearly demonstrates the bias inherent towards West Pakistan. The following table provides a breakdown of the development expenditures of the two wings.

Development Outlay for Pakistan from 1947-48 to 1960-61		
In millions of Rupees		
Category	East Bengal	West Pakistan
Government investment	1,720	4,300
Government loans	184	2,240
Aid	76	1,010
Source: Pakistan Central Statistics Office		

The center's development expenditure was concentrated on the further advancing of economic infrastructure of West Pakistan. For example, although water resource management for East Bengal was no less important than for West Pakistan, the central government attached more importance to the Indus Basin Accord with India rather than the question of Farraka dam barrage. The funding of Indus Basin water project came from the center's allocation, not West Pakistan's allocation. Thus, the Bengalis saw that while West Pakistani's water resources were considered to be the center's priorities, their water problems were being ignored.

The disparity between the per capita income of the people of the two wings continued to increase. The table below demonstrates the increase in the disparity

of per capita income between the two wings:

The Per Capita Income in Pakistan			
Year	East Pakistan (in Rs)	West Pakistan (in Rs)	Difference (%)
1959-60	269.0	355.0	32.0%
1964-65	285.5	419.0	46.7%
1968-69	291.0	473.4	62.6%
Source: Pakistan Central Statistics Office			

In terms of per capita income while the condition of the masses in West Pakistan was improving, the Bengalis found that the per capita income difference with their Western counterparts was actually increasing.

The foreign trade statistics reveal that in the years 1947-67 of unified Pakistan, East Bengal was the major foreign exchange earner while West Pakistan was in foreign trade deficit. The table below shows this:

Foreign Trade Figures 1947-67		
	In million Rupees	
	East Bengal	West Pakistan
Exports	20,982,391	15,704,714
Imports	15,183,796	34,388,211
Balance	5,798,595	-18,683,497
Source: Central Statistical Office (1967)		

As the table shows, East Bengal exported 57 per cent of Pakistan's total exports but had only 30 per cent share of the total imports, while West Pakistan exported only 42 per cent of the total exports but its share of total imports was 70 per cent. Whereas East Bengal was a net exporter, West Pakistan was a net importer. The Western wing of the state had a greater share of Pakistan's imports and used the foreign exchange earned by East Pakistan for its own benefit.

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Defense outlay for Pakistan was extremely high. From 1950-51 to 1968-69 the defense outlay was Rupees 21,178 million. This constituted approximately 56 per cent of the total government outlay of that period. Anti-Indian rhetoric was used to boost defense expenditure. By levying taxes in East Bengal and spending it on West Pakistan, the West Pakistani bourgeoisie benefited from the high defense outlay. The defense expenditure, which was in the forms of wages, contracts, and investments, was primarily in West Pakistan.

The apparent rationale for the concentration of military build-up was based upon the claim of the West Pakistani dominated military that “the security of East Bengal lay in the Western wing.” The Pakistani military claimed that it would preserve the security of East Bengal with a pre-emptive strike from the Western Wing. During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War over the Kashmir issue, East Bengal was left defenseless and vulnerable to Indian aggression. The view that East Bengal’s security lay in West Pakistan no longer appealed to the Bengalis because the war cut-off East Bengal from West Pakistan and the rest of the world. Thus, the Bengalis learnt that in spite of their contribution to the expensive defense outlay, the central government did not attach much importance to East Bengal’s security. Their tax contribution towards defense had been diverted solely for the benefit of West Pakistan, not for their security.

In essence, as the above arguments show, the fundamental nature of relation between East Bengal and West Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 was one of economic disparity. Because the Bengalis and the West Pakistani ruling elite could not reach a political settlement, this economic question became the main issue of their conflict. The nature of the economic development of Pakistan in 1950s and 1960s show that the disparity between the two wings became greater due to the economic policies adopted by the state.

The Awami League used the regional economic disparity of East Bengal to show the need for its political program. The six-point program of the Awami League was designed to address the Bengali nationalist consciousness regarding the increase of disparity. The Awami League presented its six-point program as an instrument to end the economic exploitation of East Bengal.

Bengali nationalism grew because the Pakistani ruling elite refused to recognize the demands of the Bengalis for political participation in the state and for the economic self-rule of East Bengal. The crisis climaxed following the 1970 elections, when the Awami League won a triumphant electoral victory because the party reflected the nationalist inspiration of the Bengalis. The failure of the Pakistani ruling elite to meet the demands of the Awami League program led to a political deadlock. The military refused to accept the six-point program because it would reduce the military budget and dismantle the West Pakistani business interests in East Bengal. In order to prevent the Bengali political leadership from acquiring power, the military junta colluded with the West Pakistani bourgeoisie to crush Bengali nationalism. The military’s massacre of the Bengalis opened the road to the liberation of East Bengal.

The Yayha Khan Regime

The Yayha Khan regime did not have a strong base because it came to power following the mass agitation against the Ayub Khan regime. The crisis of Ayub Khan’s dictatorial rule led to the resumption of power by the military. The new regime tried to dispel any notion that it had the long-term objective of remaining in power by positing itself as an intermediary and transitional authority. The regime announced that it wanted to transfer power to the people’s representatives and admitted that East Bengal had been denied a full share in the decision-making process. The regime dissolved the One Unit Scheme,

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and it promised that elections would be held on the basis of popular franchise. In order to provide a legal facade, the regime promulgated a “Legal Framework Order” (LFO) for the purpose of Pakistan’s first general elections.

According to the Legal Framework Order, the seats of the National Assembly, which was to frame the Constitution, would be distributed in conformity with the population of the provinces. The distribution of the seats was as follows:

Provinces	Seats
East Pakistan	169
The Punjab	85
Sind	28
Baluchistan	5
NWFP	19
Tribal areas	7
Total	313
Source: Rahman (1980)	

In spite of some objections to the structure and the mechanism of the proposed transition to democratic rule, the Awami League decided to participate in the elections. The leaders of the Awami League described the forthcoming elections as “a referendum on the autonomy issue.” The Awami League argued that, if elected, they would implement the six-point agenda and, thus, establish the due rights of the Bengalis. The nationalistic Awami League campaign reflected the mood of the Bengalis who had been long neglected in the political rule of Pakistan. The long campaign period allowed the Awami League to explain the pauperization of East Bengal in terms of the exploitative relation that existed between the two wings.

The Bengali bourgeoisie saw this election as an opportunity to exercise the Bengali electoral strength to gain power and reverse

their condition. A Bengali journal captured the tone of the bourgeois intellectuals:

In East Pakistan, for the first time the grip of the power elite stands to be broken. Their first defeat will demoralize them as much as it will inspire the people of West Pakistan. (cited in Rahman 1980).

Such analysis assumed that the Bengalis’ struggle for autonomy would weaken the Pakistan ruling and also spontaneously galvanize other oppressed national/ethnic groups in Pakistan into a common and united struggle of all the nationalities against the Pakistani ruling elite. However, Pakistan did not have a single trans-national political organization that could unite the marginalized sections of Pakistani society. Hence, the other nationalities did not join the Bengali struggle.

In November 1970, a devastating cyclone struck the coastal areas of East Bengal, killing thousands of people. However, the central government failed to aid the cyclone-stricken people. The government was severely criticized for treating the Bengalis in a callous manner. Mujib and other Awami League leaders toured the ravaged areas, including the off-shore islands. The political leadership urged the people to use the ballot-box to express their indignation at the treatment they received from the central government.

In the election that followed, the Awami League won a triumphant victory. At the East Bengal Assembly elections, the results were as follows:

Parties	Seats
Awami League	298
Other parties	5
Independent	7
Total	310
Source: Rahman (1980)	

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At the National Assembly elections, the Awami League emerged as the majority party, as the table shows:

Parties	Seats
Awami League	167
Pakistan Peoples Party	88
Other Parties	44
Independents	14
Total	313
Source: Rahman (1980)	

The military, bureaucracy, and business, all West Pakistani-dominated, were shocked at the results because they faced the prospect that the central government's power would be passed away to the Bengalis, if the Awami League were allowed to shape the constitution and form a government. The results of the election gave the Awami League the possibility of framing the constitution according to its six-point program. The election put the Pakistani ruling elite in such a position that, if it allowed the democratic process to continue, then it would be unable to stop the Awami League from framing a constitution that would protect the Bengali interests.

In West Pakistan, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), led by Z. A. Bhutto, emerged as the dominant party. Representing the interests of the West Pakistani bourgeoisie, Bhutto announced that the PPP would not allow any constitution to be framed without its consent and participation. The PPP declared that it would refuse to participate in any National Assembly session, as it was not "prepared to occupy Opposition benches." Clearly, Bhutto was not only bargaining for personal position but also preserving West Pakistani hegemony. (For account of Bhutto and the Pakistan Peoples Party see Ali's (1983) analysis).

In this situation, tri-party negotiations and talks began among the Yayha regime, Mujib's Awami League, and Bhutto's PPP.

The Yayha regime declared that the National Assembly session would be held on March 3, 1971. During the negotiations, the West Pakistani forces refused to accept the six-point program. Bhutto colluded with the West Pakistani bourgeoisie and denounced the six-point program as a secession plan. Although the West Pakistani military regime announced that the National Assembly would hold its session on March 3, 1971, the PPP decided to boycott the session. Bhutto threatened that the Assembly would be turned into a "slaughterhouse" if its members endorsed a constitution based on the Awami League's program.

While the negotiations with the Awami League were proceeding, the military had decided to attack the Bengalis in order to crush their demands (Mascharenhas 1971 and 1986). The central government transferred army divisions from West Pakistan to East Bengal as part of its preparations. Yayha Khan dissolved the civilian cabinet and appointed a military cabinet. The military designed a plan titled "Operation Searchlight" with the objectives: first, treating the Awami League activities as rebellious; second, arresting the maximum number of political and student leaders and intellectuals; and third, demilitarizing the Bengali troops (Salik 1997).

The military regime continued the dialogue with Mujib in order to have the time to dispatch more troops into East Bengal. Although the Awami League was aware of the troop build-up, it continued the dialogue with the military. Its leadership did not predict that the military will strike the populace. The Awami League demanded the withdrawal of the troops and the transfer of power to the elected representatives. During this period, there were clashes between the Bengalis and the military stationed in East Bengal, resulting in deaths of many civilians.

The radicals within the Awami League and the student organizations called upon the

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Awami League leadership to declare independence. On March 7, 1971 Sheik Mujib, in an articulate and carefully phrased speech, asked the Bengalis to prepare for a resistance to the regime but stopped just short of declaring independence. The Awami League set up a non-violent non-cooperation movement, which proved quite successful. The program adopted measures such as (i) refusal to pay tax, (ii) stoppage of the flight of capital from the East wing to the West wing, (iii) observation of *hartals* (strikes), (iv) hoisting of black flags, (v) access to state-controlled media for the opposition, and (vi) setting up a council of action under Awami League leadership. The directives of the Awami League were extremely successful, and the administrative control of East Bengal effectively passed from the Pakistani authorities to the Awami League.

While the military prepared to strike the Bengalis, Yayha Khan flew to Dhaka on March 15, 1971 and gave the impression of renewing the negotiations with the Awami League. Bhutto also participated in the negotiations. The National Assembly session was put off again until March 25. During the talks the Awami League refused to compromise because its electoral victory was based on the support for the autonomy of East Bengal. The Awami League leaders still thought that negotiations with the military junta could be fruitful. It believed that it could obtain concessions from the military regime and from Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party. The Awami League was not prepared for an armed showdown with the Pakistani military.

The military dictator and the central government officials left Dhaka without prior notice. Immediately, at 11:00pm on March 25, 1971, troop movements from military barracks to the populated urban areas started. In Dhaka and elsewhere in East Bengal, the Pakistani army began an orgy of killings, rape, violence, and looting.

Mujib declared Independence before he was arrested by the military. Other political

leaders of the Awami League managed to escape to India, where they set up a provisional government and organized the armed resistance to the Pakistani army. The Bengali troops, although Pakistani authorities ordered to disarm, resisted the Pakistani army and fought back. Thus, the Bengali National Liberation began its phase of armed struggle.

The Birth of Bangladesh

After winning the 1970 elections, the Awami League was not in a position to compromise its political program without being regarded as a traitor to the Bengali cause. Since the Awami League did not compromise, the negotiations with the regime broke down although the talks produced a semblance of agreement. As planned, the Pakistani army launched an attack on the Bengalis without warning, with a view to weaken and demolish Bengali nationalism.

The military arrested Sheik Mujib, the leader of the Awami League. He had earlier sent a message declaring independence. The military launched a systematic attack on the Bengali people. The military shelled the Dhaka University, killing the university teachers and students; the soldiers broke into women's dormitories and raped the women. They buried the dead in mass graves that were bull-dozed over by the tanks. The military used artillery and heavy machine gun fire to crush the Bengali civilians, the local police, and the Bengali troops. The military set up strongholds in Dhaka and in other parts of East Bengal. The Pakistani soldiers set ablaze working class parts of the shanty towns, markets, houses of political workers, and newspaper offices; and they shot civilians indiscriminately. The military specially targeted the Hindu minority in East Bengal because they blamed "Hindu" India and the Hindu community in East Bengal as the mastermind behind Bengali secession plans.

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The Bengalis tried their best to escape the wrath of the Pakistani army. The crackdown was intended to demolish Bengali nationalism by inflicting cruelty and to prevent the Bengalis from exercising their right to self-determination. A Pakistani officer rationalized the military action thus:

We will kill them [Bengalis]---they have spoken enough---they are traitors, and we are not. We are fighting in the name of God and a united Pakistan.

After the first morning of military attack on the Bengalis, the leader of West Pakistan's dominant party, Bhutto, was flown to West Pakistan, where he declared: "Pakistan has been saved by the grace of the Almighty."

The military attack on the Bengalis transformed the movement for attaining political self-rule into a national struggle of the Bengalis, irrespective of their political affiliation, religious preference, or class background. For the Bengalis, the military attack on the unarmed civilians proved that the West Pakistani ruling elite and the Pakistani army would not seek a negotiated settlement with the Bengali political leadership. The military attack upon the Bengalis was a campaign to destroy what the Bengalis were poised to achieve if the constitutional process were allowed to function.

The Bengalis resisted the military action spontaneously with primitive arms, by building barricades, and by creating obstacles. In some places, particularly in the rural areas, where the military could not reach immediately, the public under the action committees set up by the Awami League proclaimed the formation of liberated zones. Bengali troops rebelled against the Pakistani army. Widely supported by the populace, the Bengali troops resisted, fought the Pakistani army, and initiated the liberation struggle. The details of the Pakistani army crackdown and Bengali resistance have been described in the literature, from various vantage points. For accounts from Bengali

perspectives, see Ali (1973), Haider (1996), Imam (1986 and 1991), and Safiullah (1989). For accounts from the Pakistani perspectives, see Niazi (2003), Quershi (1972), and Salik (1997). For accounts from Indian perspectives, see Jacob (1997), and Singh (1980).

Some of the Awami League leaders had gone underground and escaped to India. Some Bengali employees of the state radio escaped and set up a clandestine radio station, which urged the Bengalis to resist Pakistani rule and repression. Meanwhile, the elected Bengali members of the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly gathered in a liberated zone of East Bengal and proclaimed independence of the state of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

The Awami League was able to retain control of the main thrust of the movement for the national liberation of Bangladesh. The Awami League established an interim government led by Tajuddin. Tajuddin was extremely efficient and successful in the management of the government in exile. The Bangladesh government in exile established contact with the Indian authorities. The Awami League established guerrilla training camps and retained control over the guerrilla movement. The Bangladesh government-in-exile launched an international campaign using non-resident Bengalis abroad as spokespersons for the Bengali cause. Several Bengalis in the Pakistani civil and diplomatic services defected in favor of the government of Bangladesh. The government-in-exile was able to build a reliable bureaucratic machinery in Calcutta, which functioned well for a government outside the parameters of the state.

The Awami League was able to convince the Indian authorities of the need to support the struggle for the national liberation of Bangladesh. The profound international sympathy for the Bengalis was a result of the massacre of the Bengalis and the influx into India of approximately 10 million refugees who escaped from the Pakistani

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army brutality. In West Bengal, the Indian Bengalis were extremely generous although they themselves possessed few resources. The Bengalis received substantial support from the Indian authorities in the form of guerrilla training, facilities, arms and ammunition to fight the military regime.

The dynamics of the international situation altered with the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty because under the treaty Soviet Union guaranteed the security of India and therefore, a Chinese military move against India would lead to the involvement of the Soviet Union. It provided the necessary strategic cover for the Indian government to undertake military intervention in East Pakistan. The government of India recognized Bangladesh on December 6, 1971. With Indians allying with the Bengalis in the National Liberation of Bangladesh, the joint forces of Bangladesh and India was able to overcome the Pakistani army easily. The Bengali guerrillas had expert knowledge of the terrain and the activities of the Pakistani army. The Indian forces possessed superior firepower and better troops. The Indians cutoff the air links between East Bengal and West Pakistan. The Pakistani army could not receive new supplies or further troop support. With the introduction of Indian forces, the Pakistani army faced defeat in all the battles. Realizing the possibility of total annihilation, the Pakistani army surrendered to the joint command of Bangladesh and Indian forces on December 16, 1971. With the unconditional surrender of the Pakistani army, Bangladesh was finally liberated.

The National Liberation of Bangladesh was the result of the transformation of the political struggle of the Bengali bourgeoisie to attain power into the national struggle of the Bengalis to resist the genocidal actions of the Pakistani army. The economic exploitation of East Bengal stimulated the radicalization of Bengali politics. As a result, the Awami League thrived on the

Bengali bourgeois demand for political autonomy. Even after the tremendous victory of the Awami League in 1970 elections, the Pakistani ruling elite failed to recognize Bengali demands. The Pakistani ruling elite could not visualize that the conditions in East Bengal had reached the point where the masses would not accept West Pakistani hegemony and, in the event of military crackdown, the masses would risk their lives to challenge West Pakistani hegemony. The indiscriminate attacks, killings and rapes, and the very attempt to retain East Bengal by military means, further escalated the Bengalis' bid for independence. The transformation of the autonomy movement into a liberation struggle led to the independence of Bangladesh.

Section II: Analysis of Genocide

In the Bangladesh genocide, the Pakistani Army killed Bengali civilians indiscriminately. There was, of course, a Bengali armed resistance, a military mutiny of a smaller number of Bengali soldiers and officers against the Pakistani Army, wide spread insurgency and counterattack.

The Pakistani Army as Principal Perpetrator

The Pakistani Army carried out massacres. The army and its allies were the principal players responsible for the killings of non-combatant civilians. The conservative International Commission of Jurists was correct in describing events in Bangladesh during 1971 as follows:

[T]he indiscriminate killing of civilians, including women and children and the poorest and weakest members of the community; the attempt to exterminate or drive out of the country a large part of the Hindu population; the arrest, torture and killing of Awami League activists, students, professionals and businessmen and other potential leaders among the Bengali; the raping of women; the destruction of villages and towns; and the looting of property. All this was done on a scale which is difficult to comprehend (International Commission of

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Jurists 1972; quoted in Kuper 1981 and cited also in Akram 2002).

The Bangladesh genocide was possible because of the West Pakistani domination and the military control of the state. The West Pakistanis controlled the state throughout the history of United Pakistan, as argued in the first section of the essay. The Pakistani ruling class was essentially the West Pakistani ruling class. The Pakistani military was the protean guard of the state and the power and privileges of Pakistani ruling class. But the military also was at the helm of the state apparatus.

The Pakistani military was primarily ethnically dominated by West Pakistani soldiers and officers. It was predominantly controlled by Punjabis and other West Pakistanis. There was only a limited number of Bengalis in the Pakistani army.¹ The Pakistani army was essentially a West Pakistani army and in particular the military establishment was West Pakistani and Punjabi dominated.

The Pakistan military and military establishment regarded themselves as the bulwark of state ideology and control. The military establishment closely collaborated with the West Pakistani business and industrial complex. The military establishment regarded the Awami League's attempt to gain autonomy and self-rule for East Pakistan on the behalf of the Bengalis as tantamount to secession (Muhith 1996). The military regarded the Awami League as leading an attempt to secede from the state (Sisson and Rose 1991).

The political power elite's criminalization of the state and the state apparatus through the history of Pakistan created the conditions for carrying out massacres and

genocidal actions against Bengalis. The Pakistani state had a long history of abuse of power and corruption from the start (see Rahman 1980 for documentary records available). The series of military coups and the years of military rule and martial law were key drivers of political power elite's criminalization of the state. The military rulers and the bureaucrats regarded the Pakistan's army actions in domestic affairs as supreme. The Pakistani army's diktat were widely accepted in Pakistani life and rarely publicly questioned. The systems of accountability within the state and the status apparatus were quite limited (Ali 1983).

Pakistani Army's Rapid Build-up of Force after the 1970 elections in East Pakistan

The context of war and crisis in negotiations with the Awami League following the elections provided a pretext for the Pakistani army to carry out massacres and genocides against the Bengalis. The Pakistani army started rapidly building-up its military force after the elections in East Pakistan (Mascarenhas 1971).

Following the electoral victory of the Awami League, the military escalated its build-up, motivated by the need to position itself to be able to suppress the secessionist movement and to improve its bargaining capability vis-à-vis the Awami League. The negotiations were also a useful smoke screen to continue military build-up, and buy time to transfer military equipment and personnel to East Pakistan (Muhith 1996 and Islam 2003). With the breakdown of negotiations between the regime and the Awami League, the Pakistani military forces began its program of massacres. The martial law facilitated the army's actions. The ongoing civil war and insurgency allowed the Pakistani military to blame India, and to remove foreign journalists from East Pakistan.

¹ The Bengali military officers and soldiers in the Pakistani army, however, were to play a critical and crucial role in the revolt against the Pakistani army following its attack on Bengalis on March 25th/March 26th.

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Pakistan's army actions in East Pakistan were genocidal (Akmam 2002, Ali 1973, Jahan 1982, Jahan 1995, Olsen 1973, Quaderi 1972). The International Commission of Jurists' (1972) conservative report that came out immediately following the war stated:

[T]here is strong *prima facie* case that criminal offences were committed in international law, namely war crimes and crimes against humanity under the law relating to the armed conflict, breaches of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention 1949, and acts of genocide under the Genocide Convention 1949 (Part IV).

The International Commission of Jurists (1972) report has some detailed information about the events leading to the Bangladesh genocide. However, it is not based on an on ground investigation.² The Commission was scheduled to visit India but was unable to do so because of the breakout of the war between India and Pakistan. It did not undertake an inquiry in East Pakistan/Bangladesh to obtain evidence on the violations of human rights and genocide.

U.S. Complicity and China's silence

The complicity of the superpowers enabled the Pakistani regime and the Pakistani army to conduct its massacres and genocide with impunity.

The Nixon Administration remained largely supportive of the Pakistani regime. The U.S. complicity with the Pakistani army and its tilt is now well documented. Despite East Pakistan-based U.S. diplomats' protestations, the Nixon Administration, and Mr. Henry Kissinger in particular, continued to support Pakistan and provided direct and indirectly support, including military and strategic support to the

² A critique of the International Commission of Jurist report is beyond the scope of this essay. This author will provide a detailed discussion and critique of the limitations of the said report undertaken in the near future in a separate study.

regime, which in turn emboldened the Pakistani ruling class and the Pakistan army in its ruthless brutality. Blood (2002), Brown (1972), Gandhi (2002), Ganguly (2001), Hitchens (2001), and Lifschultz (1979) documents of Nixon Administration's and Mr. Kissinger's complicity in Bangladesh.³ Indeed, so odious was the Nixon Administration's support for the Pakistan's military regime that a number of U.S. State Department officials strongly protested at the "tilt" of the U.S. policy (Blood 2002). Muhith (1996) summarizes a wide range of U.S. responses to the Bangladesh genocide and the struggle for national liberation. Public opinion and the media in the U.S. was largely in favour of the Bangladesh cause. The Bengali Diaspora in the U.S. organized support for the liberation of Bangladesh and for exerting pressure on Pakistan and tried to mobilize lobbying efforts and public opinion to its cause.

The U.S. Administration's policy favored the Pakistan regime in spite of detailed knowledge and reliable reports of Pakistan army's killing of civilians, widespread massacres, and political suppression. The information was widely available in the contemporaneous mainstream Western press. The U.S. Administration was also informed of ongoing massacres in detailed diplomatic cables and correspondences filed by its own diplomats in the field and various multilateral agencies, including a special World Bank Mission to Bangladesh (Blood 1972; Quaderi 1972; and U.S. Department of State 2005). Several U.S. diplomats based in U.S. consulate in Dhaka expressed grave concern and called upon the U.S. Administration to publicly

³ Lifschultz (1979) and Hitchens (2001) hold that Mr. Kissinger's grudge against the Bangladesh National Liberation and Mujib in particular may have also been a factor in the tacit support given to the military coup that overthrow the Mujib regime, brutally killed Mujib, his family, and several Awami League leaders, and installed an right-wing military regime.

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condemn Pakistani Army's genocidal actions and reprimand the Pakistani regime.

The U.S. Administration overruled the concerns of its own dissenting diplomats, such as Blood (1972), and the concerns of some officials of multilateral agencies. Instead the Administration decided to continue to offer indirect and direct support to the military regime. President Richard Nixon and his national security advisers Henry Kissinger regarded India as "Soviet stooge," minimized reports of Pakistani genocide and crimes against civilians (Burr 2005). Documents released by the U.S. State Department (2005) show the Administration was fully aware of the atrocities and ignored Bengali's long quest for regional autonomy and democratic aspirations. A key factor behind Nixon and Kissinger's stance was that Pakistan was providing a covert communication link and a useful conduit for the U.S.'s rapprochement with China.

Nixon and Kissinger ignored India's attempt to find a diplomatic resolution to the crisis and to put to end the ongoing genocide. They regarded Indira Gandhi's attempt to find a resolution through diplomatic means as serving Soviet interests in Asia. Nixon and Kissinger ordered a U.S. aircraft carrier and other naval forces into the Bay of Bengal to pressure India from intervening militarily in East Pakistan. They assured China that if it took measures against India, the U.S. would oppose international efforts to exert pressure on China to show its support for U.S. allies. However, the quick surrender of the Pakistani forces to Indo-Bangladesh forces in East Pakistan ended the genocide and voided Nixon-Kissinger's attempt to retain united Pakistan intact.

China regarded Pakistan as an ally and regarded the ongoing massacres and civil war as internal matter. It refused to publicly express any concern about, let alone condemn, the massacres and the genocide. The Pakistan regime believed that

it could count on the Chinese to provide diplomatic, if not logistic support, given China's long-standing rivalry with India.

The USSR supported India and viewed the development of East Pakistan as a geopolitical issue in terms of its own interests. Initially its support to the Bengali cause was lukewarm. To its credit, the USSR protested against the Government of Pakistan the army's actions in East Pakistan. After the Indo-Soviet pact was signed, the USSR's position shifted to active and vocal support of the Bengali cause and support for the independence of Bangladesh. The Soviet Union assured Nixon Administration that in spite of military superiority that India would not attack West Pakistan and it would work with Mrs. Gandhi to achieve a cease-fire agreement with Pakistan (U.S. State Department 2005 and Burr 2005).

Western Inaction and Muslim-Arab Support of Pakistan

The world community's actions regarding the on-going massacres in Pakistan was quite limited. The facts of the on-going massacres became widely known, thanks to fairly detailed news reports in the Western press and the Indian press (Quaderi 1972). The international public opinion, as gauged by lead articles, editorials and opinion pieces in the Western press, favored the Bengali cause and the mandate for democratic transition. However, the cold war climate and the Nixon Administration's identification with the Pakistani regime determined the U.S. and Western course of inaction and *de facto* support of the regime. The Muslim and the Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya, largely supported Pakistan.

The diplomatic circumstances and international public opinion concerning Bangladesh genocide have been examined in Ganguly (2001), Lifschultz (1979), Kuper (1982), Muhith (1992), Rahman (1980), Payne (1973), Singh (1980), and Sisson and Rose (1991).

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Responsibilities and Genocidal Ideology

There should be both collective and individual responsibility for the massacres and the Bangladesh genocide. The institutional and collective responsibility for the perpetration of the genocide falls on the Pakistani ruling class, the Pakistani army, and collaborating local militias. Individual responsibility falls on the key leaders of Pakistani state, the Pakistani military commanders, and the leaders of the Bengali collaborating militias and those who committed genocide, unlawful killings on non-combatants, rapes, attacks on women and minorities, assault and harassment of civilians, tortures, and violations of the Geneva Conventions.

The ideological milieu in Pakistan facilitated the Pakistani army's massacres and genocidal actions. The West Pakistanis ruling class's attitudes toward Bengalis were a legacy in part of British imperial attitude towards Bengalis who they regarded as a "non-martial race." It was also in part shaped by North Indian Muslim views of the Bengali Muslims as a lesser breed of Muslims. The Pakistani establishment and many West Pakistanis regarded Bengali Muslims as inferior Muslims. The Bengali Hindus were regarded as outsiders. The Pakistani Bengalis were regarded as influenced by Hinduism and by India.

The ideological milieu developed from the "Two Nations Theory." The Muslim League and the Pakistani leadership regarded Hindus as idolaters and insisted that Muslims in general and East Pakistani Muslims in particular should shun remnants of the Hindu culture, Hindu-influenced Bengali traditions and customs (Akmam 2002). Bengali culture, in particular, was suspect in the eyes of the Pakistani ruling class and the Muslim League, and later the Pakistani Army, because of the influence of the rich Hindu and local traditions on Bengali society. Both in the popular and the high culture of

Bengalis there is considerable Hindu influence. Indeed many Hindu writers and poets were the pioneers of modern Bengali literature and high culture. These features of Bengali culture and society made it suspect to West Pakistanis and the official ideology of Pakistan.

The experience of two previous wars with India, in which Pakistani army lost, further embittered the Pakistan ruling class's and the Pakistani army's feelings toward India. With the elevation of a vulgarized version of Islam as the state religion and ideology, the state of Pakistan inculcated ill feelings between Hindus and Muslims. These ideological tendencies were exacerbated within the Pakistani army in particular.

The Targeted Victims

There were numerous targeted victims of the Pakistani army actions.

- The key leaders of the Awami League were crucial targets. Some managed to escape, but many were arrested, including the Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the paramount leader of the Awami League. Intellectual, university faculty, university and college students, and pro-liberation political activists were also targets.
- The minority communities, particularly the Hindu community, were a special target of the Pakistani military. People with socialist, communist, left-wing, or secularist perspectives were also targets of the Pakistani army.
- Bengali women in particular were victims of rapes, sexual assaults and harassments by the Pakistani army. Pakistan military soldiers and officers had a particular disdain for Bengali women and Bengali women's clothing, which they regarded as un-Islamic.
- The Bengali military officers and soldiers who mutinied against the Pakistani army were also its targets.

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Mascarenhas (1971), Jahan (1995), Olsen (1973), and Payne (1973) and contemporaneous media accounts (viz. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *New York Times*, *Sunday Times*, and other Western newspapers) provide ample reports of Pakistani army targeting of victims. Quaderi (1972) collects a variety of contemporaneous global press reports of the genocide.

Past Exclusion, Persecution and Dehumanization

The past exclusion of the Bengalis from state power and privileges contributed to the Pakistan military's ethos of hatred of the Bengalis and the Hindus. The state of Pakistan discriminated against the Bengalis directly and indirectly. Discrimination against the Hindus was apparent within the Pakistani state framework because Pakistan was defined as an Islamic state, a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. Persecution of leftists and secularists was also common thorough out the history of Pakistan and was indeed a common practice of the state.

The dehumanization of the victims was necessary for the atrocities and the genocide that the military carried out. Bengali Muslims were viewed as second-rate Muslims, in the eyes of the regime, a viewpoint carried over from North Indian Muslim aristocratic society. Similarly Bengali Hindus were regarded as agents of India, or India's "fifth column" in Pakistan. Misogynist attitudes toward women, particularly Bengali women, were also fairly common. The military's disdain for common people, including Bengali peasants and workers, was also rampant.

"Operation Searchlight" Targeting Leaders, Students, and Intellectuals

Documentation of plans for carrying out full-scale genocide has not been unearthed as of yet. However, the documentation for conducting a military plan titled "Operation Searchlight" to stifle Bengali quest for independence has been published. Indeed, Pakistani officials were the first to publish

such a document (Salik 1997). The aim of the operation on the nights of March 25 and 26 of 1971, once the Pakistan Martial Law regime's negotiations with the Awami was terminated, was to conduct military operations to liquidate and kill Bengali politicians, key activists, students, and minorities. The plan was also to eliminate and demobilize Bengali units of the military forces so that the Pakistani army's actions would not face any opposition. The operation was largely successful in its goals in killing and injuring and arresting thousands of Bengali politicians, activists, professors and students. It created fear and loathing of the regime. But it was unsuccessful in stopping the resistance and the insurgency that later developed. A list of intellectuals who were later killed by the Pakistani regime was also found in the handwriting of Major General Farman Ali (Bose 2005).

The Pakistani regime, and the military in particular, viewed and presented itself as the defender of Islam. The regime regarded the Bengali quest for autonomy and independence as an anti-state activity. The regime branded it as anti-Muslim, anti-Islam, and anti-Pakistan. Many members of the Pakistan ruling class regarded Bengalis as second-class Muslims and despised Hindus. The military commanders and the rank and file of the Pakistani army were socialized into this world-view. A vulgarization version of Islam was used as a state ideology and a device for legitimizing the Pakistani ruling class's and military's control of the state.

Variety of Methods Used

The Pakistani army used a variety of methods in its genocidal actions during 1971.

- The military carried out massacres in the university campus areas of Dhaka. It assassinated leaders, intellectual and teachers, both in targeted killings and in rampant attacks.

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- It conducted pogroms on villages, minority communities, and minority areas.
- It tried to disarm Bengali police, paramilitary forces and military units.
- It used Bengali collaborators for information and intelligence-gathering about political leaders, activities, and minorities.
- It raped and sexual abused women.
- The Pakistani army was indirectly responsible for starvation-induced deaths.
- The Pakistani army was responsible for dispossession and for causing a large number of refugees to flee from their homes, villages, towns, and cities to escape massacres and pogroms.
- The Pakistani army's actions caused refugees to flee to safety both within East Pakistan and from East Pakistan to India.

The Pakistani army established control in East Pakistan by conducting massacres and pogroms. It used to systematically and randomly pick up Bengalis. There were no formal concentration camps, but there were systems of collecting people and imprisoning them and killing them. The Pakistani army's actions caused people to become refugees who got shelter in refugee camps in neighboring India.

Local Collaborators

The collaboration of locals with Pakistani army was essential for it to carry out its action. The collaborators were organized under several paramilitary groups, known as Razakars, al-Badr, al-Shams, and so forth. The recruits mainly came from supporters of Jamaat-i-Islam, an Islamic fundamentalist party, as well as a number of other more traditional Islamist and conservative parties, such as the Muslim League. These organizations worked closely with the Pakistani army, provided them with vital information, and with lists of sympathizers of the Awami League, communists, socialists, secular activists,

students, Hindu leaders and businesspersons, and others.

The Pakistani military rewarded the killers and the collaborators. The military regarded the killings, the massacres, and the rapes as serving to tame the population. The military authorities rewarded the commanders and the soldiers who committed massacres, killings, and rapes. The military also provided logistic, financial resources, protection and ideological support for local collaborators.

Enhancing the Vulnerability of Victims

The vulnerability of victims was due to a number of factors. Many fell victims to acts of mass murder, massacres, and targeted killings, while others starved and suffered from malnutrition. Starvation and lack of food increased the vulnerability of the victims and the refugees. The high price of food and other necessities, due to the lack of supplies and the disruption of economic activity and agricultural production, increased the hardship of the people. The breakdown of infrastructure prevented the usual movement of people and goods. The army's military actions, the guerrilla's resistance and the military conflict contributed to a climate of economic, political and social uncertainty, fear, and lack of law and order, propelling people to seek refuge in neighbouring India, undertake long and hazardous journeys across East Pakistan (Bangladesh), making them more vulnerable to starvation, malnutrition, and disease.

Sen (1999) has argued that if a country has democratic institutions, like regular and fair elections and free press, it is able to prevent virulent disasters, like famine and mass starvation. The authorities are compelled to undertake transfer programs because there is public pressure to do so. Thus, he argues that the institutions of democracy, particularly a vibrant and free press, can be instrumental in preventing

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famines by providing timely information and thereby creating pressure for public action.

The situation in East Pakistan was the complete opposite of democracy. The Pakistani army was interested in crushing democracy. Those who are subject to foreign and military occupation, dictatorial rule, poverty, violence, or state-sponsored terrorism, have their political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective securities banished into oblivion.

East Pakistan and the Bengalis under Pakistani military rule was serve as a quintessential example of how tyranny and state-sponsored violence created conditions in which people die and suffer from massacres, pogroms, starvations, rapes, fleeing persecution, and are forced to become refugees. A critical element of the suffering was the very low value put upon Bengali civilian lives by Pakistan military planners and the Pakistani ruling class, a trait reinforced by the state ideology and the criminalization of the state apparatus.

Estimates of the Death Toll

There are a range of estimates for the number of death tolls and the number of refugees fleeing from the massacres, starvations, and havoc created by the Pakistani army. The victims of the genocide increased over time. The availability of information about ongoing crimes was limited because the Pakistani army provided only restricted access to foreign and independent journalists.

Reporting Source	Time of report	Number of people killed, mil.
<i>The Baltimore Sun</i>	May 14, 1971	0.5
<i>The Momento, Caracas</i>	June 13, 1971	0.5-1.0
<i>Washington Daily News</i>	June 30, 1971	0.2
World Bank Report	June 1971	0.2

<i>Die Zeit, Bonn</i>	July 9, 1971	0.5
<i>New York Times</i>	July 14, 1971	0.20 -0.25
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	July 23, 1971	0.2-1.0
<i>The Christian Science Monitor</i>	July 31, 1971	0.25-1.00
<i>Newsweek</i>	August 2, 1971	0.25
<i>Time</i>	September 2, 1972	0.2-1.0
<i>Newsweek</i>	March 27, 1972	1.5
<i>National Geographic</i>	September 1972	3.0
Source: www.virtualbangladesh.com/history/html		

The estimates of the total number of victims and refugees vary, depending on who published the reports and when it was published. But over time, more foreign journalists came to grips with the scale of the atrocities, as information reached India from the refugees fleeing Bangladesh, as the provisional government of Bangladesh in exile started campaigning for its cause, and as the Bengali Diaspora began organizing itself.

The following tables provide estimates of the death toll and the number of refugees who fled to India.

Reporting Source	Time of reporting	Number of refugees, mil.
<i>Washington Daily News</i>	June 30, 1971	6.0
<i>Die Zeit</i>	July 9, 1971	6.0
<i>New York Times</i>	July 14, 1971	6.0
<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	August 1, 1971	6.0
<i>Newsweek</i>	August 2, 1971	7.5
Senator Edward Kennedy	August 15, 1971	12.0
<i>Time</i>	September 2, 1971	7.5
The UN in Bangladesh	1972	10.0
<i>Newsweek</i>	March 27, 1972	10.0

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Source: www.virtualbangladesh.com/history/html

There are a few studies on the scale of the genocide. Jahan (1995) provides vivid eyewitness accounts. Other accounts are in Blood (2002), Firdousi (1996), Hiader (1996), Imam (1986), Mascarenhas (1971), and Olsen (1973). Accounts of the genocides are available in various contexts in International Commission of Jurists (1972), Kuper (1982), Loshak (1971) and Payne (1973).

Indian Intervention Terminated Genocide

Thanks to Indian military intervention in East Pakistan, the Pakistani army surrendered, leading to the independence of Bangladesh and a regime change. The Provisional Government of Bangladesh assumed power with the fall of the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan. The Pakistani Army surrendered to the joint Indo-Bangladesh forces, but clearly India's army led the military offensive against Pakistan. The Bangladesh Liberation Forces were the junior partner in the Indo-Bangladesh Allied Forces that liberated Bangladesh. Be that as it may, the collapse of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan, led to the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. The Provisional Government of Bangladesh took over the control of the country and assumed state power.

The Indian army's intervention in Bangladesh had a humanitarian effect. Even the conservative International Commission of Jurists (1972) which opined that "India's claim that her invasion of Pakistan was justified in international law under the doctrine of self-defence and on the ground that she was acting in support of her Bangladesh ally cannot be accepted," were compelled to conclude that

India could, however, have justified the invasion on the grounds of humanitarian intervention, in view of the failure of the United Nations to deal with the massive

violations of human rights in East Pakistan which were causing a continuing and intolerable refugee burden to India.

The International Commission of Jurists (1972) had specifically opined that

[t]he Awami League leaders were not entitled in international law to proclaim the independence of Bangladesh in March 1971 under the principle of the right of self-determination of peoples.

Responsibility, amnesty and No Justice

While the Pakistani army was primarily responsible for the genocide, numerous players collaborated and facilitated Pakistani army's genocidal actions. Firstly, West Pakistani politicians, particularly Z. A. Bhutto, and Pakistan civil bureaucrats endorsed the military's action. Secondly, Western superpowers, and the Nixon administration in particular, were supporters of the Pakistan regime (Gandhi 2002). Finally, local Bengali collaborators and collaborator militias, such as Razaakars, al-Badr, and al-Shams, provided the Pakistani army with crucial information and logistical support that reinforced the lethal reach of the Pakistani army.

As mentioned before, virtually none of the key perpetrators of the genocide were brought to justice. The Pakistani army officers (and soldiers) who surrendered to the Indian army were handed over to Pakistan through India. There were no trials of military commanders in either Bangladesh or Pakistan or India. Only a few local Bengali collaborators were tried and some were even brought to justice, but most were never tried in a court of law. Some of the key leaders of collaborating militias were stripped of their citizenship. The Awami League government, however, offered a general amnesty to the collaborators.

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Limited Rehabilitation of the Survivors

For the victims of the genocide and the war of National Liberation in Bangladesh there have no reparations. Bangladesh has been unable to obtain any reparations from Pakistan. Bangladesh was barely in a position to launch an international campaign for reparations. Unlike Germany, Pakistan is a poor country. For the surviving victims of war, or that of the families of those killed in the genocide, the prospects of every getting any reparations is dim.

There has been limited rehabilitation of the survivors of the genocide. The attempts to provide rehabilitation have been quite feeble in Bangladesh. The main reason is Bangladesh's limited resources. The authorities did provide some support to freedom fighters and their families. But most families of the victims and the survivors did not get any substantial material support.

Reprisals Against Bihari Collaborators

The Bengalis and some Bengali insurgents carried out reprisals against Pakistanis during the ongoing Bangladesh Genocide, the War of National Liberation, and immediately afterwards. The typical reaction of an oppressed people undergoing attacks, and massacres, is to try to seek retaliation, often directed at those that most vulnerable, that is, the civilian members of the oppressing group.

During the war and immediately after the independence of Bangladesh, the Bihari community in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh become targets of Bengali reprisals. The Awami League and the Provisional Government of Bangladesh was, to their credit, non-sectarian and disavowed Bengali reprisals against the Bihari community. The Biharis were and still are an Urdu-speaking minority community in East Pakistan and Bangladesh. They migrated to East Pakistan

from Bihar and other provinces of North India. Unlike other communities that migrated to East Pakistan following the partition of India, they had not assimilated with the local culture and remained a separate community. The Bihari community identified with West Pakistan and the ideology of United Pakistan.

Some Biharis were active supporters of Pakistan and the military. Some received arms and assistance from the Pakistani military and some Biharis joined in the killing of Bengali (Jahan 1995, 401-402, cited in Akram 2002, 549). Biharis also enjoyed privileged status in East Pakistan as an Urdu-speaking minority, closely identified with the Pakistani ruling class. As a result, members of the Bihari community were targeted by Bengali resistance fighters and civilian mobs. There is little doubt that Bengalis killed West Pakistanis and Biharis, including non-combatants in some reprisal attacks. While the accounts of Williams (1972) and the Government of Pakistan (1971) are exaggerated, probably a few thousand of Bihari civilians died. The Government of Pakistan's (1971) claim that at least 30,000 Biharis and West Pakistanis were killed has not been independently confirmed.

The conservative International Commission of Jurists (1972) almost equated the two types of "massive violations of human rights" in 1971 that were "(a) committed by the Pakistani army and auxiliary forces against the Bengalis, and in particularly against the members of the Awami League, students and Hindus" with reprisals "(b) by Bengali insurgent forces and mobs against Biharis and other non-Bengalis."

Both (a) and (b) occurred, but by far the atrocities and human rights violations committed by the Pakistani army and auxiliary forces against the Bengalis exceeded by far that of the Bengali insurgent forces and mobs in scale, scope, and intensity. Moreover, whereas Pakistani army's actions were state-sanctioned, the Government of Bangladesh in exile never

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sanctioned targeting Biharis and other non-Bengalis in East Pakistan and Bangladesh. The actions against Biharis and other non-Bengalis were largely driven by certain commanders operating independently of the chain of command (for example, Kadeer Siddique) and by civilian mobs.

To its credit, after independence of Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh offered Biharis Bangladeshi citizenship and amnesty for participation in massacres and war crimes. The government stepped in to protect the Bihari community from retaliation, even though some freedom fighters wanted vengeance. But some retaliation and revenge attacks took place. The Bihari community, by and large, rejected the offer for Bangladeshi citizenship and wanted to return to Pakistan. However, the Government of Pakistan refused to accept most Biharis. As a result, many Biharis still languish in Bangladesh as refugees.

Genocide Denial by Pakistan and by Bengali Right-wing and Islamists

The Bangladesh genocide is not officially acknowledged in Pakistan. The Pakistani authorities have never acknowledged the magnitude of the death toll. Pakistan has never accepted any responsibility, let alone offered apology. The mention of the genocide and massacres are absent in Pakistani textbooks. If anything, mention is made of Indian intervention and Bengali reprisals on the Bihari community, but nothing is written about massacres committed by Pakistani army.

While a few authors, such as Salik (1997), have been fairly candid and few Pakistani dissidents, such as Ali (1983), have acknowledge Pakistan's genocidal crimes, most Pakistani authors, such as Niazi (2003) and Quershi (2003), some of whom were themselves war planners, military commanders, and participants of the genocide, either deny or minimize the scope and the magnitude of the genocide, and often blame India for everything that

happened and whitewash the Pakistani army's massacres.

The Bangladesh authorities have also never published any official figures on the genocide, nor published any official estimates of the damages to property and infrastructure. There has been limited state-sponsored research on the Bangladesh genocide. The Government of Bangladesh published some historic documents, collected in Rahman (1980).

The Bangladesh right-wing and the Islamic fundamentalists, who sided with the Pakistanis, either minimize or deny the genocide. Jamaat-i-Islam whitewashes its role in the collaboration with the Pakistani army. The Jamaat has never acknowledged or apologized for its role in the massacres of 1971. The Jamaat is now a coalition partner of the government in power. This goes to show that despite its association with Pakistani army, the Jamaat has been partly successful in removing the stigma of being a party to the massacres committed by the Pakistani army.

Bengali Collaborators Rehabilitated

The Bengali collaborators who worked with the Pakistani army have been rehabilitated under all regimes and by all the mainstream political parties in Bangladesh, including the Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and Jatyia Party. The process of rehabilitating the collaborators started under the Awami League government, which offered an amnesty. While a amnesty and forgiveness may have contributed to national reconciliation, there was no truth commission or official investigation of the crimes committed.

The rehabilitation of the collaborators gained greater momentum after the overthrow of the Awami League government. After the overthrow of the Awami League regime, subsequent regimes allowed (a) religious-based parties, and (b) actively incorporated right-wing elements,

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including collaborators with the Pakistani army into the government.

Section III: Scholarship, Bangladesh Genocide, and Issues Going Forward

The Bangladesh genocide is a major genocide of the twentieth century. But there has been limited scholarly interest in the Bangladesh genocide. It is perhaps not accidental. Bangladeshis or Bengalis are not regarded as “worthy victims,” unlike (say) those under Communist rule or the victims of the official enemies of the West. The amount of scholarship on the Bangladesh genocide is literally only handful and paltry. Only a few examples are available in the English-language literature of discussion of the Bangladesh genocide, such as Akram (1994 and 1997), Akram (2002), Blood (2002), International Commission of Jurists (1972), Islam (1981), Jahan (1982 and 1995), Kuper (1982), Mascarenhas (1971), Muhith (1992), Olsen (1973), Quaderi (1972), and Rahman (1980).

Very few Western scholars, however, have taken a deep interest in the genocide. The Bangladesh genocide remains absent from most genocide studies and genocide research and scholarship. This is not to suggest that international policymakers, scholars, journalists, and human rights activists were indifferent to the massacres in Bangladesh. A few U.S. State Department officials protested against Nixon Administration’s “tilt” towards Pakistan during 1971. Many international journalists reported on Pakistani army’s ongoing massacres and the immense sufferings of the Bengali refugees forced to flee to safety in India.

Yet there is little justification for the dearth of international scholarship on Bangladesh. The Bangladesh genocide did not occur in a “remote place.” Contemporaneous international and Western media regularly and frequently covered the genocide and the events in Bangladesh/East Pakistan,

India, Pakistan, and South Asia as these events were occurring. The scale and the scope of the killings and the sufferings were widely known at the time. Yet it seems not to have been registered in the annals of mainstream scholarship in such fields as history, politics, area studies, demography, economics, development, sociology, anthropology, religion, and so forth.

Hence, it can be argued that the absence of Western scholarly literature on the Bangladesh genocide reflects the limitations of mainstream as well as dissident Western scholarship. Consider, for example, the International Commission of Jurists (1972) report. In the “Preface” of the report, the Secretary General of International Commission of Jurists listed various Indian and Pakistani source materials, including materials from such unreliable sources, like Bhutto (1971) and Rushbrook Williams (1971), both of whom were apologists for the Pakistani army. The International Commission of Jurists did not consult any Bangladeshi sources, materials or government documents or publication, at least none that are cited in the Preface. This is in spite of the fact that the Indian government and the provisional Government of Bangladesh offered to cooperate fully with the Commission, whereas the Government of Pakistan did not. Another example is the leading book of Indo-Pakistan war and the secession of Bangladesh, namely, Sisson and Rose’s (1991) book on the Bangladesh war. In the list of Bengalis consulted for the book, there is only one person, whereas there several Pakistani officials, Indian officials and U.S. officials who were consulted and interviewed. It is inexplicable that Sisson and Rose (1991) could not find more Bengalis worthy of being interviewed for a scholarly study.

But it is not solely Western scholarship that is responsible for the limited volume of research and scholarly studies of the Bangladesh genocide. The tumultuous events in Bangladesh and the subsequent

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trajectory of politics in Bangladesh and other factors are also responsible for this lacuna.

The Awami League regime which came to power following the independence of the country soon turned into a much-despised one-party regime, named BAKSAL. The country experienced a famine in 1974 (Sen 1999 and Sen and Dreze 1989). The regime proved unable to deal with poor governance, corruption, decrepit infrastructure, and deteriorating law and order. As a result, a military coup was able to successfully overthrow the regime with the brutal killing of Sheik Mujib, his family, and key Awami League leaders.

With the collapse of the Awami League regime, the memory of the genocide faded from the official discourse of the state and public pronouncements. Or at least it was kept out of public discourse. Bangladeshi politics from 1974 to 1991 was quite tumultuous and marked with political instability and chaos, military dictatorship and military inspired regimes. Since 1991 politics in Bangladesh continues to be chaotic but there has been a transition to a parliamentary democratic regime and there is now some semblance of democracy.

Since the collapse of the first Awami League regime in 1975, there has been a decisive shift to the right. This fostered a climate that minimized the discussion of the Bangladesh genocide.

The institutional weakness of academia in Bangladesh has been also another factor responsible for the dearth of quality indigenous scholarship on the Bangladesh Genocide. There was no proper survey or rigorous assessment of the scale of the genocide. People were reluctant to talk about the events of 1971. It also takes resources to undertake proper and comprehensive studies of genocide. But such resources were and still are lacking in Bangladesh.

Nevertheless, despite many constraints and problems, there has been a revival of public

interest in the Bangladesh Genocide. No regime could wipe away the memory of genocide and the War of National Liberation. Despite the shift to the right, and de-secularization of politics, there has been a revival of interest in Bangladesh. A Liberation War Museum has been set up under private initiative. The number of local studies on the genocide and War of National Liberation are on the rise. See, for example, both English and Bengali publications, such as Firdousi (1996), Ahmed (1983), Haider (1996), Imam (1986 and 1991), Islam (1981), and Safiullah (1989). While some many deride this as “cottage industry” some of the works are insightful and have redeeming scholarly qualities.

It is important to reject the neglect, the abuse and the falsification of history. This has often happened with cases of genocides. All too often official histories and mainstream scholarship, wipe out and deface the genocides, war crimes and terrorism committed against little people, people without power. There are, however, examples of good solid investigations that have exposed grave crimes. Besikci (1988) has exposed the crimes committed against the Kurds in Turkey. Chomsky (1969, 2003, 2005) remains one of the foremost critics of U.S. foreign policy, exposing the effect of the superpowers' policies from Indo-China to Middle East to Latin America. Finkelstein (2000) argues that the dominant exposition of the Nazi holocaust often serves to rationalize Israel's subjugation of Palestinians. Herman (1982) shows that state terrorism is far more pernicious than retail terrorism. Herold (2002) has carefully documented the high level of civilian casualties in the U.S. war on Afghanistan. Arnove (2003) shows the devastating consequence that the regime of sanctions brought to the Iraqi people. Nagy's (2001) findings show that U.S. planners and military strategies were fully aware that Iraq's water supply facilities were vulnerable to sanctions, had definitive and clear foreknowledge of the likely

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consequences of steps taken and yet they were not reluctant to exploit Iraq's water treatment vulnerability in complete and gross violation of basic international law. Zinn (2002) provides an overview of United States' long record of war and state terrorism.

These works and works of many others should provide useful examples for conducting detailed scholarly and journalistic analyses of the Bangladesh genocide, exposing the roles of the Pakistan state and the army, the superpowers, including the U.S., and the local collaborators in the Bangladesh genocide. Objective and impartial scholarship should be self-critical. Thus, it should not ignore the uglier sides of Bangladesh Genocide and Resistance, namely, reprisals and mistreatments of Bihari civilians in East Pakistan, as well as the failure of the Awami League regime and the international community to bring to justice those responsible for the Bangladesh genocide.

In order to disclose the truth and ensure that the memory of the Bangladesh genocide is not forgotten, the task ahead is proper recording and documentation and publicizing nationally and internationally the scope of the genocide that occurred. This is an important task that falls on not only on Bangladesh scholars, intellectual and activists, but also on all international scholars and human rights activists interested in human wellbeing and historical truth.

Recent advances in the application of statistical and data management methods in analyzing human rights violations and the study of genocide can be valuable tools for exploring the Bangladesh genocide. Silva and Ball's (2006) work on East Timor provides an excellent example of the application of statistical methods in obtaining new findings about the genocide and in determining the scope of the massacres and brutality. This admittedly is a new field of study, but surely the use of scientific and statistical and data

management techniques can be valuable tools in crystallizing and documenting genocide and massive violations of human rights. Such methods may be used in the case of the Bangladesh genocide to obtain more definitive results based on statistical analysis of surveys and careful analysis of demographic and census records. These techniques can supplement the qualitative histories and the narrative literature, memoirs and archival documents and other types of studies.

Guiding Principles for Future Work

The guiding principles for future work on genocide should be simple. These principles are: universalism, humanism, and universal human rights. These principles are important in order to undertake impartial, objective studies of genocide and political conflict. The principles of universalism, humanism and universal human rights is fully compatible with the solidarity with the victims and empathy for the sufferings of the people. Yet it helps one to avoid the "culture of victimhood" that often denigrates the suffering of others and engages in partisan distortions and claims that one's own sufferings are unique and have higher priority to that of others.

These principles should be upheld in the study of the Bangladesh genocide. These principles in turn should also inspire international scholars to look into the causes and the effects of Bangladesh genocide, and identify those who committed the crimes against humanity and the crimes of genocide.

Analysis of the Bangladesh genocide may contribute to creating awareness and help to bring about those responsible for grave crimes to justice, many years after the events. It can heal the wounds of war and massacres and the sufferings of the victims and their surviving families. It may enable Pakistanis to realize the terrible crimes committed by the state of Pakistan and by the Pakistani army. It may enable Bangladesh to recognize the role of

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collaborators militias in the genocide. It can educate South Asians and others on the dangers of ethnic and religious discrimination and sectarian communalism. The main goal of such studies would be to prevent such crimes of genocide from happening ever again in South Asia and elsewhere in the world.

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