



RESEARCH PAPER

Fall of East Pakistan and Transfer of Power: A Historical Review

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: January 05, 2022 Accepted: February 07, 2022 Online: March 31, 2022 Keywords: Fall of East Pakistan, Transfer of Power, 1970 General Elections, Political Crisis, Six- Point Programme, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Yahya Khan *Corresponding Author madiham64@yahoo .com	The separation of East Pakistan in 1971 was a major turning point in the political history of Pakistan. This study examines the political developments that followed the 1970 general elections and led to the failure of negotiations between the central government, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. It focuses on the dispute over the Six-Point Programme, the postponement of the National Assembly session, the non-cooperation movement in East Pakistan, and the negotiations held in Dhaka during March 1971. The study also examines the role of external actors, particularly India, the Soviet Union, the United States, and China, as presented in the selected text. It further discusses the military operation that began on 25 March 1971, the Indo-Pakistan War, and the transfer of power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on 20 December 1971. Using a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis, the study explores the political and diplomatic developments that contributed to the breakdown of negotiations and the eventual disintegration of Pakistan. It also recognises that the source presents a particular interpretation of responsibility for the crisis, which requires comparison with other historical accounts for a more comprehensive understanding.

Introduction

As soon as the results of the election of 1970 were announced in Pakistan, Yahya Khan sent greetings to Mujibur Rehman and Z.A Bhutto. He was restless to negotiate with Mujib and Bhutto. Yahya Khan sent invitation to Mujib through Mahmood Haroon to come to the capital of Pakistan. Mujib refused to come to the capital or West Pakistan. This significant event was interpreted to mean that Mujib was not interested in becoming prime Minister of Pakistan, but wanted to assert that henceforth it would be Dacca and not Rawalpindi where important decisions should be made (Sisson & Rose, 1990). Yahya Khan, therefore, had to go to Dacca on January 12, 1971. He met Mujib but refused to show him the draft constitution which he had promised before the election. He made it clear to Yahya that as leader of the majority party, he was responsible for the new constitution, Yahya's job was to summon the assembly immediately, he threatened Yahya with dire consequences if he failed to do so, the discussion between Yahya and Mujib continued even after their frustrating first meeting on January 12, 1971. But it was clear confrontation (Salik, 1977; Sisson & Rose, 1990). After return from Dacca, Yahya Khan went to Mr. Bhutto's home town, Larkana, to have a discussion with him. Mr. Bhutto took full advantage of Yahya's frustration with Mujib. At Larkana Yahya Khan and other members of military elite including

General M.M Peerzada, Bhutto's closest friend, enjoyed Bhutto's hospitality. Mr. Bhutto had given his version of discussion held in Larkana. "We discussed with the president the implications of the six points and expressed our serious miss giving about them. We nevertheless assured him that we were determined to make every effort for a viable compromise" (Bhutto, 1971). Mr. Bhutto and his party arrived at Dacca in January 17, 1971. The Mujib-Bhutto talks though reported in the press as having been held in a cordial atmosphere at the former's residence were noted for lack of any progress (Yaseen, et., al., 2021). Mujib made it clear to Bhutto that he was not prepared to modify the six point's plan, while Bhutto made it clear that his party could not agree to a veiled scheme of secession under the plan (Sisson & Rose, 1990). Mr. Bhutto gives his version, "Mujib's strategy was to bring the national assembly to seasion without loss of time in order to give legal sanction to these six points. To thrust a six point constitution its implications could grow in west or, for that matter, in the east wing itself. He sought to pressurize the people of the country into submission, to leave no time for reflection" (Bhutto, 1971)

Material and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the political developments that led to the separation of East Pakistan in 1971 and the subsequent transfer of power. It is based on documentary analysis of the provided historical text and the sources cited within it. These include political statements, newspaper reports, government documents, diplomatic communications, and historical works. The study focuses on the period surrounding the 1970 general elections, with particular attention to the negotiations between Yahya Khan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from January to March 1971, the military conflict, and the transfer of power in December 1971.

The material is examined through thematic analysis. The main themes include constitutional disagreements, the Six-Point Programme, the postponement of the National Assembly, the failure of political negotiations, the role of political leadership, external involvement, military action, and the transfer of power. The study considers how these themes are connected in the source's explanation of the crisis. It also distinguishes between reported events, statements attributed to political leaders, and the author's interpretations of political motives and international involvement. As the study relies on the selected text and its cited references, its findings are limited by the scope, perspective, and completeness of those materials. A broader historical assessment would require comparison with additional sources, including accounts from East Pakistani and Bangladeshi perspectives.

The Constitutional Dispute between Mujib and Bhutto

After the Larkana dialogue Bhutto was regarded by Mujib and his party as an agent of the martial law government and who were still unreconciled to the idea of any genuine transfer of power. Mahmood Haroon also played a significant role in ensuring that an understanding between Mujib and Bhutto, which was so vital for any political settlement, would not come about. Haroon did his best to portrait Bhutto to Mujib as the army's man'. Mujib did not like the fact that Yahya and other generals had visited Bhutto's home-town Larkana, and Mahmood Haroon most skillfully exploited the situation (Bhutto, 1971)

Yahya Khan's Decision to Postpone the National Assembly Session

After Larkana talks, Yahya Khan met his army generals at Rawalpindi in mid February to discuss the political situation. It was decided in this meeting to challenge Mujib if he remain resolute in his uncompromising mood. Yahya Khan's reputation was declining because of his failure to modify Mujib's policy. Both Yahya and Ahsan were discredited. Ahsan wanted to be relieved and he was replaced by Lieut-general Tikka Khan. Because of Mujib's repeated warning and demands, Yahya Khan announced on February 13 that the national assembly would meet in Dacca on March 3, 1971. Mr. Bhutto immediately raised his voice. He declared that unless there was an understanding between Mujib and himself on the future constitution assembly, it would, not be allowed to meet. He threatened a revolution from the Khyber to Karachi (Dawn, 1971) Yahya Khan had sent Peerzada, Ahsan and Yakub Khan to convince Bhutto to attend the National Assembly. He also gave Bhutto a solemn promise that if Mujib were to thrust six-point constitution against the wishes of the west members and if his constitutional draft would mean splitting the country, he would atone prologue the assembly, but nothing could satisfy Bhutto. When it became evident that the assembly, the majority of the West Pakistani assembly, Yahay Khan decided to postpone the summoning of the assembly, but he wanted to issue a statement which should cause the least provocation possible in East Pakistan. He issued the statement which ran s follows.

"In view of the complete deadlock between the two principal parties representing east to postpone the meeting of the national assembly and to make it absolutely clear that the postponement will not exceed two to three weeks and during this short period, I shall make all efforts to bring rapprochement between the elected representatives of the two regions of our country. A true federal constitution, to which the political parties and my regime are all committed, cannot be framed without the consensus of various federating units (Kausar, et., al., 2019; Fareed, et., al., 2019). I shall be the happiest person when a consensus on federal union is arrived at, and on my part I assure my nation that I shall spare no efforts to achieve this supreme goal. I sincerely hope and appeal to my brother in east to appreciate the gravity of the situation and allow me this short period of two or three weeks to work for an agreed formula.

Insha-Allah we shall overcome this difficulty let us remember Quaid-e-Azam's immortal saying "he come to stay", let us all dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the desire of the father of nation (Dawn, 2 March 1971)

The Non-Cooperation Movement and Mujib's Four Demands

As soon as the postponement of the assembly was announced over the radio, the reaction in Dacca was violent. Mujib started what he termed "non-violent non-cooperation". He started an open revolt which virtually amounted to a unilateral declaration of independence for East Pakistan, and almost a parallel government begins to function under Mujib's instructions. From March 3 to March 25 the central government's writ did not run in East Pakistan (Sisson & Rose, 1990; U.S. Department of State, 2005). One the eve of Mujibn's public meeting on March 7, when many people thought that he would announce finally the independence of East Pakistan, Yahya Khan had lengthy talks on phone with Mujib. Mujib invited Yahya Khan to come to Dacca and see the explosive situation for him, while Yahya appealed to Mujib. Mujib did not declare independence on March 7, but he laid down four conditions to be met before he could which Yahya Khan decided on March6, to summon at Dacca on March

25, without any condition. But Mujib would not now attend the assembly from March 1 onwards. Mujib's four conditions law, the army's return to barracks, a judicial inquiry into the loss of life caused by the army's action, and immediate transfer of power, that is, before the assembly met or could frame a constitution (Sisson & Rose, 1990; U.S. Department of State, 2005).

Yahay Khan's trip to Dacca and his final bids to save the unity were altogether hopeless. Yet the crucial talks began while Mujib had declared the unilateral independence of east and invited Yahya Khan to visit Dacca as the quest of Bangladesh. On the day of Yahya Khan's arrival in Dacca, March 15, 1971, Mujib issued a highly provocative and uncompromising statement (Sisson & Rose, 1990).

"The heroic struggle of the people Marches forward. The people of Bangladesh, civil servants, office and factory workers, peasants and students, have demonstrated in no uncertain terms that they would die rather than surrender. The spirit of freedom in Bangladesh cannot be extinguished. The struggle shall, therefore, continue with renewed vigor until our goal of emancipation is realized" (Ahmed, 1979)

Mujib also issued as many as thirty one directives as to how east shall be governed, all government and semi government offices would remain closed, no communications with West Pakistan, interwing telex, telephone and wireless communications would be allowed. The sense of separate state," a foreigner reported to his head office abroad, began to take quite unambiguous shape. It was clear that in all but military ways Shikh Mujib was running East Pakistan".⁷ Foreign journalists were also turning in similar reports. For instance the daily telegraph (London), Mujib ur Rehman appears to have declared the independence of East Pakistan" While on the same day the paper in its editorial wrote, "Already we hear the reputed name of the separate state that east could become Bangladesh. The flag has been devised". Similar reports appeared in *The Economist*, March 13, 1971 and *times magazine*; March 15, 1971 "as it stands today is finished"

The Political Situation in East Pakistan before the Dhaka Talks

In the meantime, India had already banned all flights of planes between east and west as of February 1971 because of an alleged hijacking of Indian plane by Pakistani at Lahore. India was frantically making efforts through the help of friendly countries, including the United States, Britain and Soviet Union to dissuade Indian from taking this extreme measure at a time when east-west contacts were more vital than ever. But India would not listen to nay counsels of restraints or offers of mediation by the U.N secretary general. A judicial inquiry conducted sub-sequently by the government revealed that the hijackers were Indian Kashmir. Mujib being Indian agent endorsed the Indian action by terming it as "a conspiracy by the government to postpone the transfer of power". Mujib's remarks about Indian banning Pakistani planes from flying to east had only deepened the suspicion of the government who had considered Mujib to be an Indian agent (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013). Mr. Bhutto's proposal for handing over power before the national assembly could meet or frame a constitution was also not encouraging. In a statement on March 4, 1971, when Yahya was on his way to Dacca to make his final bid to Mujib, Mr. Bhutto declared, "If power were to be transferred to the people before any constitutional settlement as demanded by Shaikh Mujibur Rehman, it should be transferred to the majority party in east and the majority party of West Pakistan

(Sisson & Rose, 1990). Mr. Bhutto further said, "in a situation faced by Pakistan, having a geographical distance between the two wings, the rule of the majority did not apply" (Sisson & Rose, 1990).

In this critical situation, Yahya Khan landed in Dacca on March 15, 1971 at a time when Mujib-ur-Rehman almost declared the independence of east and the majority party leader in west, Mr. Bhutto seemed to favour two governments or a splitting up of the country. It was the smaller parties in west and the government of who still talked of protecting the territorial integrity of Pakistan. The meeting between Yahya and Mujib took place on March 15; Mujib arrived at the president house at 11.00am. In a car having a symbol of Bangladesh pasted on it. During the meeting Mujib put forward his four points relating to the immediate lifting of martial law and the transfer of power. Prospects of framing a constitution on the basis of Yahya's transfer of power plan as formulated in 1969-70 had ceased to exist. The choice before the military government headed by Yahya Khan was between recognizing the defect to independence status of east and challenging Mujib with military action which would not only terribly costly in terms of human lives but would also be uncertain in ultimate results. This was the dilemma before Yahay Khan (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013).

Yahya Khan made earnest appeal to Mujib avoid the path of confrontation. Mujib, who never had the prestige of being the most intelligent of politician's in spite of his bing and militant talks and press statements, was shaky and nervous. Mujib was in situation which probably would lead him nowhere (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013).

The Proposed Constitutional Settlement and Transfer of Power

Yahya and Mujib were talking in terms of a political settlement by March 20; the press was reporting that an agreement had been reached on compromise constitutional formula incorporating most of the fundamentals of Mujib's six points. A formula had reportedly been presented and agreed upon by Yahya and Mujib, providing for the immediate lifting of martial law and the transfer of power. A draft proclamation affecting an immediate transfer of power was ready, it provided for the formation of provincial and central cabinets from among the elected representatives. The national assembly would be split into two committees to formulate special provisions and requirements of east and west to be in corporate into the future constitution. The national assembly would then be summoned to frame a constitution for Pakistan (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013).

Yahya and Mujib were examining the proposed proclamation with their aids. The dialogues were on two levels, between Yahya and Mujib and between technical experts. Yahya's team was led by Justice Cornelius and General Peerzada, M.M. Ahmad; Deputy Chairman of the planning commission was also associated with the talks in as much as financial and economic matters figured prominently in the question of the relationship between the central government and East Pakistan. A legal expert, Colonel Hassan of the chief martial law office at Rawalpindi, was the fourth member of the Yahya team. Nobody in this team had any deep understanding of the political dynamics or the external forces working in East Pakistan. The majority of the army officers in west were genuinely anxious for a satisfactory settlement of the east and west issue. The army and common people in west had accepted Mujib as Pakistan's prime-minister provided he would be willing to keep the country united. Similarly, the vast majority of the Bengali Muslims were not prepared to see

dismembered and their homeland become again a target of domination by the Hindu Banyas (Elites) from Calcutta. They were interested in the improvement of their economic lot. Mujib captured their imagination because he promised them golden Bangal if they would vote for the six-points-not because he favoured the splitting of their cherished up of a country those geopolitical realities would make it a subservient and client state of India. But who cared for the silent majority, either in east or West Pakistan. The fate of this country was instead in the hands of the vested interest groups, the western big business and senior bureaucrats who had always dominated the political scene in and two ambitious politicians (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Zaheer, 1994).

Mujib's negotiating team consisted of the hard liner in his party, Tajuddin, a Nazrul Islam, Mustaq Ahmad, Qamaruzzaman, and Mansoor Ali. The real constitutional experts on Mujib's team were Dr. Kamal Hussain. A number of East Pakistani economists were helping the team but they were not participating directly in the dialogues. They were to a large extent responsible for the failure of the Dacca dialogue. The dialogue continued from March 16 to 20 rather quietly and it caused great surprise in many quarters that there seemed to be some progress although it was hard to believe at that stage that a political settlement could still be reached. The draft proclamation as prepared by Yahya Khan was seriously considered. There were good prospects of a political settlement. But the developments both inside east and outside the country were working against such prospects. All India Radio stepped up its propaganda in favour of Bangladesh some of the foreign diplomats were hinting at already established links between Mujib's head quarter in Dacca and the Indian government headed by Indra Gandhi (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013).

The Pakistani intelligence service had received many such reports. The U.S policies towards the political situation were waiting and see. The U.S consul General in Dacca, Mr. Acher Blood, had given a false sense of optimism to Mujib about possible support from Washington for his confrontation with the Pakistani government. But U.S ambassador, Mr. J. Farland, had a meeting with Mujib in Dacca March and told him in unmistakable terms, no to expect any support for what the U.S government considered an internal problem of Pakistan. Mujib was confused by the U.S ambassador's remarks. It was certain that New Delhi and Moscow were interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan (Sisson & Rose, 1990; Raghavan, 2013).

Bhutto's Arrival and the Tripartite Talks

On March 21, Mr Bhutto and his aides also arrived in Dacca amid unexpected rumours of a settlement between Yahya Khan and Mujib ur Rehman. Though Mujib was opposed to meeting Mr. Bhutto, Yahya Khan was successful in arranging a tripartite conference among them, so the three principal political parties (Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto) met on March 22. However, on the day before the proposed meeting a most discouraging development took place. Mujib accompanied by notorious Tajuddin sought an unscheduled meeting with Yahya. At that crucial meeting Mujib and Tajuddin had informed Yahya Khan that the Awami League could not agree to the setting up of any central or national cabinet. Instead it was urged; the Awami League wanted power to be transferred to the two provinces of east and West Pakistan. This meant that they were formally demanding for the country to be divided into east and West Pakistan. Yahya Khan was completely shocked by this demand to dismember the country, and pleaded and urged Mujib to reconsider. Yahay Khan told in unmistakable terms that he could not preside over the liquidation of his country and that Mujib's threat to the territorial integrity of the country would not remain

challenged. The grim shadow of civil war loomed near when the tripartite talks began at the president's house on March 22. Mr. Bhutto gave the following version of his March 22 meetings with Mujib (Bhutto, 1971)

"He suggested that I should become the prime minister of west and he would look after East Pakistan. This was the only way out of the impasse" (Bhutto, 1971)

Bhutto's Position on the Transfer of Power

Mr. Bhutto added that he told Yahya Khan of his reaction to Mujib's proposal.

"I could not be a party to the proposed scheme as it inevitably meant two Pakistan" (Bhutto, 1971).

Nobody who cherished any hope of a united could agree to Mujib's plan for dividing the country.

It was on March 23, 1971, that Mujib finally provided his own draft constitution, rejecting the one offered by Yahya Khan which granted full autonomy on the basis of the six-points minus dismemberment of the country, Mujib's new proposal was presented by Dr. Kamal Hussain to Yahya Khan's aides at a meeting held at the president's house. The worst fears about Mujib's six points as well as the doubts about his repeated pledges to modify the plan were now proved to be justified. The Mujib's plan with Taj-ud-Din's demand that it be issued in the form of a proclamation within forty eight hours was nothing but an unqualified scheme for splitting the country into two separate entities, east and West Pakistan.¹³ The Mujib plan for the interim government demanded the full implementation of the secession scheme, which had been veiled in this six points contrary to the pledges he had made not only to Yahya Khan but also to the Bengali Muslim masses during the 1970 elections, Mujib proceeded to divide the country under deceptive plan for the confederation of Pakistan, which would not have been workable even for a day. Yahya Khan was not wrong when he remarked that through this plan they expected to establish a separate state of Bangladesh. That is needless to say, would have been the end of a state created by the father of nation (Raghavan, 2013; Zaheer, 1994).

The Collapse of the Dhaka Dialogue

There was a final meeting between Yahya Khan's team and the Awami League on March 24, at 6.00Pm but no further meeting took place between Yahya Khan and Mujib ur Rehman after their meeting on 22nd March. In fact March 23 virtually marked the end of the Dacca dialogues. After the incidence of March 23, when the Awami Leaguers did not allow the Pakistani flag on the national day, and after the Awami League presented its final plan the army decided to take military action to challenge Mujib to save the country from disintegration. In the meantime all West Pakistani leaders not belonging to Bhutto's party had meeting with Mujib and tried to persuade him to avoid the path of confrontation but without success (Zaheer, 1994).

They also met Yahya Khan, Bhutto and his party had meeting with Yahya on March 24, but nothing had come out. Outside the president house at Dacca, the movement for east separation was going on. Mujib and Tajuddin made declarations to the effect that they had nothing new to announce. Mujib said on March 24.

“Our demands are just and clear and they have to be accepted” (Raghavan, 2013).

In press statement on March 25, Mujib called for a general strike on March 27, against the army's action in certain places in East Pakistan. This was his last press statement before the army began its military operations on the night of March 25-26, which ended in the formal dismemberment of on December 16, 1971 when Dacca fell to the Indian army.

The Failure of the Dhaka Dialogue

The Dacca dialogues had failed. For this the government headed by Yahya put the entire blame on Mujib. Yahya Khan denounced Mujib as a traitor and banned Awami League. In 9 broadcasts he said.

“The proclamation that Mujib proposed was nothing but a trap. He knew that it would not have been worth the paper it was written. His obstinacy, obduracy and absolute refusal to talk sense can lead to but one conclusion the man and his party are enemies of and they west east break away completely from the country. He has attacked the solidarity and integrity of this country; this crime will not go unpunished” (Dawn, 27 March, 1971)

Mr. Z.A. Bhutto wrote, “Foreign pressure was partly responsible for the position eventually taken by Mujib. It seems that India wanted him to call the army's bluff and strike before it was too late. Perhaps India was getting worried about the turns of events, desperately wanted Mujib-ru-Rehman to wrench east out of or did India have an inkling of new initiatives in Sino-American relations”? (Bhutto, 1971)

The Appointment of General Tikka Khan and the Military Situation

General Tikka Khan was appointed to end the open revolt in East Pakistan. He arrived in Dacca in the first week of March 1971. Tikka Khan summed up law and order situation in these words, “when I turned to the military aspect, I found we were like blind men in the East Pakistan. The officials of the special branch, the police and the intelligence came to tell me that the people refused to cooperate or give information to their men. We were in complete darkness regarding what was happening except we had troops. This was intolerable. It has never occurred before and it is impermissible. Mujib incited mutiny at the instigation of enemy India” (Khan, 1972) While the army was successful, in bringing the peace in Dacca city and its adjoining areas, its position in other parts of east was not good. It was not until the end of April 1971 that the army was able to regain control of East Pakistan. By May 1971 the army had crushed the rebellion, although the army's position was not satisfactory. The militant wing of the Awami League and the Mukti Bahini which was a band of armed and lawless bandits had crossed over to India where they could obtain arms and ammunition. India's treacherous involvement in the internal affairs of Pakistan was its dream to weaken and undo since this country appeared on the map of the world. India's role was contrary to all the basic principles of the U.N charter and international law. If it was a question of self-determination, India would not have defied successive U.N resolutions to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir to decide the future of the state. If east was artificially united with India because of its distinct language and culture then India is a linguistic and cultural jungle in which the Maharashtrians, the Gujratis, the Madrasis, the Bengalis, the Punjabis, the Malayalese, the Sikhs the

Muslims, the upians and a host of other communities, and nationalities put together are a conglomeration of foreign and irreconcilable nationalities with plenty of ammunition for its eventual explosion. The voices of separation had been heard before and suppressed but not permanently silenced, and when they were raised again a precedent had been set for foreign intervention to drive a wedge into its body politics for its disruption and disintegration. The Bangladesh stunt was therefore a pretext to swallow East Pakistan, grab its territory and resources, to realize its ambition and being a great power. Virtually beleaguered by the Indian army and blockaded by its navy, the army heavily outnumbered by the enemy, had to fight the battle of survival without aid or help. Its historic resistance would not have been possible but for the cooperation of the civil population whose patriotism was facing the treachery of the Mukti Bahini backed by the monstrosity of the Indian war machine which had been equipped and armed by the military weapons of a super power. A small army of four divisions was locked in a life and death struggle against the combined strength of Russia and India.

Russia involvement in the war was motivated by a variety of considerations. One was the set back Russia had received in the Middle East. It has not yet been able to recover from the defeat of its war diplomacy in the area at the hands of the Americans whose weapons had proved superior in combat. President Saadat was unhappy over Russian's treacherous role and dictation in his country's internal affairs and the Russians had been thrown out from the Sudan where they were engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the government. They were smarting under a sense of isolation as a China, who could have been their most reliable ally, was emerging as a great world power, morally and intellectually greater than themselves and in material resources potentially the greatest power of Asia. Their revolutionary order had been now relying on their power complex to demonstrate their superiority. They had liberated Eastern Europe from Germany and its tyranny and brought about revolutionary economic and social changes in the countries through soviet-sponsored regimes. Nevertheless, the people of these areas were politically suffocated and repressed. They were not independent and their subservience was employed evidenced by the forceful changes in their political structures and their behavior in international bodies as satellites of Russia. The Russian March had been hat in Europe and the edge of adventure blunted in the Middle East. In Asia China's influence was beginning to extend beyond its frontiers and the Chinese had made no secret of their desire to contain their influence in the region. Russian therefore was willing to constrain India in its bid to dismember an ally of China and proclaim its military presence in south East Asia as a great counterbalance to China. The Delhi-Moscow Axis was eventually aimed against Peking of which Peking had taken note in its accusations against Russia in what it had described as logic of gangsterism. Russian pretence was that they could not tolerate a war on their frontiers, and the Indian argument was that Pakistan's troops in east were a threat to their security now that the Indians had reached the Burmese frontiers, the Burmese army was logically a threat to Indian security and therefore Burma should be occupied by India. Carrying the logic to its logical conclusion, the Chinese army would then constitute a threat to Indian security. From the threat that the small countries individually posed to Russian, these power must protect themselves from the way of Berlin to the rocky heights of the Arakans. Even Iran, Afghanistan could be a source of trouble and so could the tiny Island, Srilanka, in the Indian Ocean at the tip of the peninsula. Where did Bangladesh figure in this mighty scheme and what possible connection it could have with the theory of self-determination which had been paraded in a grand eloquent debate?

Of all the nations Russia was the last country to be the spokesman of the principle of self-determination. It was a Wilsonian legacy to Europe on which the map of the continent outside Russia was drawn. Czarist Russia had remained intact under the tyrannical hegemony of the Czars. It was an empire that Russia had inherited which they did not consent to be dissolved into its component nationalities. They came with the slogan of economic and social liberation to solve the problem of bread and butter in the backward nationalities a job that was admirably done. But the political power of the Russia remained firmly in the grip of European Russia which had nothing in common with its vast Asian expanse stretching from the Urals to Vladivostok, which they call their window on Pacific. It is because of its Asian possessions that Russia claimed itself to be an Asiatic power entitled to representation in the Bandung conference, which was held in Algiers, a claim that was staunchly resisted by the Chinese. The Chinese contention clearly implied that Russia was a European power and that Asiatic Russia was an artificial extension of European Russia. By their own attitude at San Francisco where the foundations of the United Nations were laid, the Russians in pressing the claim of Byelorussia and Ukraine and totally ignoring a more valid claim of the Asiatic republics, had indirectly confessed that they were not prepared to grant even in theory the right of self-determination to them. If Russia could break the unity of Yugoslavia which was outside its fold by the application of the theory it would be so, but world resist its enforcement in Czechoslovakia for the separation of Slovakia for the simple reason that Czechoslovakia is part of its hegemony. Similarly it had assisted in the annexation of Bangladesh by India but had opposed the merger of Kashmir in Pakistan. Russia invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and occupied it by its forces against the basic principles of the United Nations charter and ordinary norms of international law. Russia is not ready to restore its status as an independent and non-aligned Muslim country, self-determination is not a principle with it and democracy is not protected by it. One is alien to its ideology and the other is a weapon to be employed in its strategy whenever convenient.

The public in believed that the uprising in east was the product of Indian agents and few miscreants. They widely believed that the people of east were not behind the movement. The patriot Bengali Muslims did not like to see destroyed, particularly by the enemy Indian forces. Fazal Muqueem in his book said.

“The Muslim population, particularly in the rural areas had welcomed the troops and were coming forward in large numbers to help them” (Tribune, 1971)

The Military Situation in East Pakistan

The army brought the situation under control against heavy odds by July 1971. The Indian backed rebel force Mukti Bahini was almost eliminated. The failure of Indian design, the Indian government which prepared new excuses for interfering in the crisis because of the influx of so-called refugees from East Pakistan, was planning direct military involvement. The government of Indra Gandhi in India had been fighting the war in East Pakistan, was planning direct military involvement. The government of Indra Gandhi in India had been fighting the war in east by proxy from the beginning. The Indian backed rebel force Mukti Bahini could not be effective no matter how much indirect help the Indian government might give. India had instigated the Hindu population of east to emigrate and take refuge in India so that Indian government could get an excuse to humiliate through the dismemberment of the country.

By July 1971 the government had received reliable reports from a friendly great power to the effect that the Indian government of Indra Gandhi had begun to prepare for a military confrontation.¹⁹ the most immediate factor was Dr. Kissinger's secret trip to Peking via Rawalpindi. Further, Kissinger was reported to have told the Indian ambassador in Washington after his visit to Peking that China could intervene if India attacked Pakistan, and the United States might not come to India's help as it had done in 1962 and 1965, when it had warned China against intervention (Khan, 1972)

This caused surprise in India as her plan to dismember by direct military intervention was placed in grave danger by the Sino-U.S détente. This caused India sign a treaty with the Soviet Union which had been in preparation for more than two years since Brezhnev had spelt out his scheme for a collective Asian security system. Though termed the treaty of peace and friendship, a closer scrutiny of the text leaves no doubt as to its military pact. Once the Indian got the umbrella of protection by a super power against any potential Chinese threat in her military action against to interfere in the east crisis, their war preparations began in earnest. Simultaneously the trained Indian military men joined the rebel Mukti Bahini in military operations in East Pakistan. The destruction of bridge and sinking of Pakistani ships to the part of Chittagong could not have been done by the inexperienced rebels.

There was evidence of growing involvement by trained military personnel of the Indian armed forces in these destructive activities in East Pakistan.

In the meantime, President Nixon and Chinese government advised Yahya Khan to find a political solution to the crisis. The White House, with the assistance of Senator Barry Goldwater, revealed what the United States had been doing privately over the nine months of crisis in to solve the problem by means of a months of crisis in to solve the problem by means of a political settlement, rather than military operations. A news conference with Henry Kissinger on December 7, 1971, which Goldwater put into the congressional record on December 9, established that the U.S government had been working to induce political compromise in and military restraint in India (Tribune, 1971)

Yahya Khan was extremely responsive to Nixon's gestures and attempts. The Chinese would have been to see the success of Nixon's mediatory efforts rather than the military victory of the Indians backed by the Russians. Yahya Khan made an earnest appeal to the Indian prime-minister Indra Gandhi, to avoid war. When the newly appointed Indian ambassador, Jai Kumar Atal, presented his credentials to him in mid November, Yahya Khan gave him a secret five point peace plan in which he agreed to release Mujib and to arrange a referendum to determine whether or not the East Pakistanis wanted an independent state of their own or to stay in a united Pakistan. The other points of the peace plan included the immediate formation of an all party government as an interim measure, and an arrangement to return the refugees from India under United Nations supervision and protection (Washington Post, 1971)

Could there have been more constructive and liberal offer than this? It virtually accepted the independence of east which it was proposed should be established by a referendum rather than by the invasion of east by Indian troops. The Indian ambassador, immediately after presenting his credentials, flew back to New Delhi. His sudden dash back to India raised many last minute hopes that another Indo-war could be avoided. But all hopes that another Indo-war could be avoided. But all hopes were dashed to ground when the ambassador came back to Islamabad

with the report that Yahya's peace plan was unacceptable to on the ground that the 1970 election had already been a referendum for the East Pakistan. And that there was no need for a new one. But now peace was obtained in Vietnam? Was it not based on an accepted method of ascertaining the wishes of the Vietnamese people? But who cares of international peace or voice of restraint in a country which is guided by narrow selfish interest and backed by super power Russia's intent that it should pursue these narrow interests? How could India honestly maintain that the people of east had opted for independence in the 1970 election? That election was held on the basis of a united Pakistan, and Mujib repeatedly told the East Pakistanis that he was fighting it for regional autonomy in federal union, secession was not the issue. Unless Mujib already had a secret deal with Indra Gandhi whereby, once the election was won, India would back him in his hitherto veiled plan to dismember Pakistan, it was dishonest to say that the 1970 election had already provided the East Pakistanis with a referendum to declare independence. It was little wonder that even liberal western papers like the Washington post and the guardian, criticized India severely in November and December 1971, for provoking a war in south Asia. "The Indians have been rough and irresponsible they have encouraged and directly taken part in the dismemberment of sovereign state" (The Guardian, 1971). The international jurists in Geneva made similar comments on the Indian role in the east crisis.

"In according with international customary law India's first duty was to maintain an attitude of neutrality and to refrain from interfering in the hostilities which had broken out in the neighboring state. The traditional rule of neutrality in respect of belligerents engaged in a civil war was applicable to India up to December 6, 1971, the date on which she recognized east as Bangladesh as an independent country. More serious however, from the point of view of international law was the military assistance given by India to the east insurgents. The principle of Self-determination of people could not be established to the east situation and India's assistance to the insurgents could not be justified under this principle. India's action fell within that term of this condemnation, namely the provision of military supplies to the insurgents and granting of facilities to recruited and train rebels on Indian soil, India's involvement appeared to have gone further than this. There could be no doubt that India did take military action against before the outbreak of open war" (The Review).

The tragic happenings which began on March 25, 1971 and ended with the entry of the Indian army into Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan, on December 16, 1971, had aroused so much emotion and sympathy for Pakistan. In order to further narrow their national interests, some countries had exploited the tragic situation and taken advantage of the internal conflict of a smaller power. What role did the Soviet Union play during the 1971 crisis in south Asia? Was it interested only in the success in solving the complex problems that faced the country in a democratic manner? Were the Russian leaders guided by the generally recognized humanitarian principles, as claimed by president. Podgorny in his letter to president Yahya Khan on April 2, 1971 (Letter of President, 1971) Were the soviet roles and mover connected with the growing Sino-soviet conflicts in the area and Pakistan's refusal to be involved in it by not being associated with the Russian move, political and economic such as Kosygin's plan for a regional economic grouping comprising Afghanistan, Indian, Iran, and the soviet union and Brezhnev's deliberately vague Asian security plan? Was not the soviet moves also linked to their close ties with India? These were formally institutionalized in the so-called treaty of friendship signed between Moscow and new Delhi in the midst of the political crisis in Pakistan, but had been lying ready since

1969, when the Indian foreign minister, Dinesh Singh, went to Moscow to discuss the soviet Asian security plan and said, "India welcome the proposals by the soviet union on the creation of a system of collective security in Asia" (Oravada, 1969).

India claimed that her involvement in the east crisis was due to the influx of so-called ten million refugees. But the most pertinent issue, however, was what justification, if any, India had in extending active military support to an armed revolt in neighboring country. Her intervention in the east crisis with in extending active military support to an armed revolt in neighbour to an armed revolt in neighboring country. Her intervention in the East crisis within forty eight hours of its inception on March 25, 1971, when not a single refugee had gone to India. A federated unit of made a unilateral declaration of independence. India allowed that rebel group to form an exile government on her soil, and that government in its functioning by providing all facilities including a clandestine, broadcasting station and arming the forces of that government, the rebel Mukti Bahini. How would India react if either China or were to extend such facilities to a federating unite of Indian union like Assam, Nagaland, and east Punjab, if such a unit were to make a unilateral declaration of independence? Would not the Indian government and pass call it an aggression against the country? The east crisis was not merely a conflict between Pakistanis nationalism and so-called Bengali sub-nationalism. Linguistic, cultural, and racial differences and tensions are not uncommon in the new Afro-Asian countries, the social order in these countries is characterized by al lack of integration due to the ethnic, religious, racial and cultural pluralism characteristic of these societies (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017; MacIver, 1957) But if a powerful neighbour, backed by a super power intended to take advantage of such internal tensions, the stability and territorial integrity of many Afro-Asian countries would be in danger. An American scholar, commenting on India's role during the east crisis, pointed out, "In 1971 justifiable humanitarian concern became confused with analysis of a difficult political situation. Yet at no time recent history have the internal affairs of one country been used to justify the invasion and dismemberment of another" (Manton and Tomas, 1971)

On the soviet role, an Indian author, while trying to justify if had to admit that the soviet objective must have been to facilitate Indian military invasion in East Pakistan. One might ask why the Soviet Union was interested in such military invasion on Pakistan. The Indian author gave the answer.

"Had become an undependable ally of any power which wanted to peruse the policy of containing Chinese influence in this part of the world". Then he bluntly pointed out, "Kosygin supported the Bangladesh movement despite its legal and theoretical snags because he must have thought that he was backing a winning horse" (Naik, 1972).

The east crisis was interlinked with the Sino-Soviet revelry in south East Asian. It also had bearing on the strategic and global competition in the third world between the two super powers. "The operation Bangladesh was also a part of the operation for the Indian ocean in Kosygin's global plan and he seemed to have made a clean sweep in this respect plan and he seemed to have made a clean sweep in this respect over his rivals, president Nixon and Chou-En-Lai, on the east issue" (Naik, 1972).

India's involvement in political crisis in east during 1969-70 were closely linked with her constantly tense and had relations with Pakistan. As the U.N. secretary General V Thant pointed out in his annual report of 1971, "The relations between the governments of India and are also a major component of the east

problem" (U.N SG, 1971) From the very beginning of the crisis, complained of India's involvement and calculated wish to dismember Pakistan. Her fears were confirmed by the views expressed at a symposium organized by the Indian council of world affairs on March 31, 1971 at which some Indians agreed with the candid statement of Subrah-Maniyam, Director of the Indian institute of defence studies, "what India must realize is the fact that the breakup of Pakistan is in our interest and opportunity the like of which will never come again" (Hindustan Times, April, 1971) It was further stated at the same symposium that the Bangladesh crisis provided India with the opportunity of the century to destroy her top one enemy, Pakistan (Hindustan Times, April, 1971). Throughout 1970 all India Radio, an official organ, had been broadcasting and encouraging the rebellions on March 31, 1971, the Indian president Indra Gandhi pledging full support to the rebel group headed by Mujib ur Rehman. "This house expresses its profound conviction that the historic upsurge of the people of east will triumph. The house wishes to assure them that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the people of India" (Hindustan Times, March, 1971).

What justification, did India have for assuring support to a federating unit which was rebelling against the national government in neighboring country? Were it not contrary to the United Nation charter and to the 1950 and 1966 bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan, pleading not to interfere in each other's internal affairs? India was never tired of preaching methods of settling disputes for other nation, particularly the western ones. But when her own national interests were involved in any matter, whether Kashmir or Goa, or the Himalayan kingdom's of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, India had consistently refused any counsel of mediation by the U.N or any third party. The same true of India's record in the East Pakistan's crisis. U Thant addressed letters to Mrs. Indra Gandhi and president Yahya Khan on October 20, 1971 offering his good offices in the settlement of the crisis. The Pakistani president's reply was the immediate and unqualified acceptance of the U Thant offer. "I fully agree with your appreciation of the gravity of the situation which is worsening rapidly on the Indo-borders. I recommend that the U.N observers on both sides should observe the with-Drawl and supervise the maintenance of peace. I also welcome the offer you have made for making your good offices available" (Brown, 1972). Indra Gandhi replied on November 16, 1971, evading the secretary General's offer of good offices, on the contrary she accused the U.N of the present attempt to save the military regime, and of an attempt to side-track this main problem and convert it into an Indo-dispute", she further told U Thant. "If you are prepared to view the problem in perspective, you will have our support in your initiatives" (Bangladesh Documents).

No observer of India's record at the U.N. whenever any matter involving her interests was taken up would be puzzled. While India made a hue and cry about her terrible burden as a result of the influx of millions of refugees, she refused to allow U.N observers to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes. India insisted that only after a political settlement, which must be the dismemberment of and the creation of a new country, could the refugees return. It was an extraordinary and obnoxious demand. On November 23, 1971, Yahya Khan made an urgent appeal to the U.N secretary general. "I am addressing this message to you with a deep sense of urgency in view of the grave situation which has arisen in my country as a result of unprovoked and large-scale attacks by Indian armed forces on various parts of Pakistan" (Bangladesh Documents). On November 22, Indian troops began to cross the international boundary of in its eastern region on the pleas of self-respect and interest and self defense, a dangerous doctrines if applied in international relations. If

it is accepted, the territorial integrity of any smaller country will not be safe and it will be a negation of all the principles and premises of the U.N. charter. It was a great pity that the same liberal point of view in western countries which was most opposed to the U.S involvement in the Vietnam war did not condemn the Indian invasion of East Pakistan.

The soviet government had adopted a partisan attitude and played a dirty role in east crisis. There was exchange of visits between the soviet and Indians foreign ministers. Indra Gandhi went to Moscow in September 1971. The flow of Russian arms to India increased, India was assured of soviet help if China were to intervene in any Indo-Pakistani armed conflict. The soviet press joined in a chorus of condemnation of Pakistan. An article in *Investee* on November 15, 1971 when Indian troops had already begun to violate Pakistan's boundary in the east, put the entire blame on Pakistan. When India invaded and a full fledged Indo-war began on December 3, the soviet union warned of grave responsibility and said that it could not remain indifferent to the developments in south Asia, as they affected her own security (Delhi Telegraph, 1971) Other powers were firmly told to stay out of the conflict. For China an important question was whether the Soviet Union contemplated a military intervention in Pakistan's affairs on the Czechoslovak had also been regarded by the Kremlin leader as affecting her security. China remarked that "the present sudden invasion by India with the support and connivance of the soviet union was precisely a repetition on south Asia of the 1968 soviet invasions and occupation of Czechoslovakia" (New York Times, 1971).

The Soviet Union did not have to resort to direct military intervention. Her votes in the Security Council on any ceasefire till the Indian forces occupied Dacca, a ceasefire resolution was also adopted by the U.N General Assembly by an overwhelming majority of 104 to 11 were enough to give the Indians time to carry the east operation through to a conclusion. The Chinese government said. "The soviet government had played a shameful role in this war of aggression launched by India against Pakistan. The whole world had seen clearly that it was the back-stage manager of the Indian expansionists" (New York Times, 1971).

The united states president also stated, "Soviet policy, I regret to say, seemed to show the same tendency as we witnessed before in the 1967 Middle West war and the 1970 Jordanian crisis, to allow events to boil up towards crisis in the hope of political gain" (Nixon's Report, 1972).

The only authority to pronounce a verdict on the Indian aggression was the United Nations. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly by clear majorities had urged the causation of hostilities and withdrawal of forces. The Security Council was prevented from acting by the Soviet Union which was a party to the aggression. The council main aim was to uphold the principle of the charter and not permit one power, however, powerful to violate it. And if there was any uneasiness to act, the assembly by a majority of 104 had not voted the soviet vote opened the road to counter the soviet-backed Indian aggression on Pakistan. All it had to do was to invoke the uniting for peace resolution under which "in the event of the failure of the Security Council to discharge its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace" the General Assembly "had the power to make appropriate recommendations to member for collective measure including in the case of breach of peace or acts of aggression, the use of armed force when necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security".

Passed under American initiative and invoked by them under less compelling circumstances, the resolution could be more effectively and justifiably applied and enforced in preserving the integrity and sovereignty of a member state of the United Nations. It was a legal and moral obligation of international community which would have been acclaimed by the whole world barring the aggressors and if the action had resulted in the departure of Russia and India, the United Nations would have gained stature and prestige. Reluctance to act has undermined the very basis of its existence and shaken the confidence of the small nations in its capacity to safeguard their independence. The delaying tactics have converted the Security Council into a resolution manufacturing factory and the general assembly into a talking shop. Giving vent to his moral indignation, the leader of delegation, Z.A. Bhutto condemned the United Nations as a fraud, a farce and a fashion house to conceal the ugly realities" (New York Time, 1971)

Britain is today a great power by courtesy but because of its long association with south Asia as ruling power it was placed in a better position to exercise a reasonable restraints on Indian war hysteria and influence the attitude of the super power, particularly the united states. It however, deliberately chose a partisan path in the crisis, completely unmindful to its responsibilities as leader of the commonwealth of which was a member. Its press, the radio and television network, including the BBC and the government itself, became mouthpieces of India's war policy. British were colonist and not concerned about upholding the cause of justice, they were more worried over their investments in India. They had come to south Asia initially as traders and stayed on to become its rulers. With the end of their empire, their trading interests had once again assumed paramount importance. The shopkeeper mentality they had inherited, still determines their international conduct, however, much mentally uninhibited they are in ordering the internal affairs of their country. The Kashmir dispute was of their making, as they had facilitated its occupation by apportioning the adjoining territories of the state to India against all canons of demarcation of international boundaries and the principle of self-determination. The frontiers of were a standing monument to their duplicity and double dealing and a major factor in simulating India's territorial appetite. The moving finger was clearly visible behind the thin cover of neutrality and impartiality they were at pains to demonstrate in the Security Council discussion and voting. The United States must share the responsibility for the stroke of paralysis the world organization suffered at the hands of a power that believes in international peace on its own term. Why the United States did not use its immense power on the side of peace, will always remain a mystery. It had built up India as a power to counteract the growing power of China-India had used that power in complicity with Russia to destroy the basis of peace in Asia and practically make America ineffective in the region. The condemnation of the Russia's methods of interference in the internal affairs of the countries like Afghanistan by the world opinion bears no fruit and it is not said that Russia will repeat its strategy in the region. The small countries in south Asia should look for help and befriend China and America rather than an established expansionist power like Russia. Must make it externally secure by an alignment with the Islamic countries, neighboring states and alliance with a power or powers that will stand by their commitment to uphold the integrity of the country and safeguard it independence from outside aggression. A more positive foreign policy must be in harmony with a bold and imaginative domestic policy.

Responsibility for the Fall of East Pakistan

The dismemberment of on December 1971 had revealed that responsibility for the tragic events of 1971, which meant not only the disintegration of Pakistan, the cherished homeland of the Indian Muslims, but also the destruction of the economic infrastructure and social fabric of East Pakistan, did not belong only to or its leadership or least of all, to its people. It belonged to a great extent to Mujib-ur-Rehman for his dishonest game not only with the central government but with his own Bengali people, to Mr. Bhutto's inordinate ambition to acquire power at any cost, to India's calculated plan to treat the East Pakistan's crisis as an opportunity of the century to destroy Pakistan, to the soviet wrath against her refused to unite against Mao in the context of the Kremlin leaders grand designs against the people's republic of China. Even after the outbreak of the civil war, there could have been a political settlement of the crises under the initiatives taken in Washington with support from China and Iran and with the approval of the government but it was frustrated by the Indo-Soviet collaboration to humiliate and China and to inflict a diplomatic setback to the United States (Choudhary, 1974)

The Transfer of Power from Yahya Khan to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

After the fall of East and declaration of unilateral ceasefire by India, the peoples in west had become sentimental, hostile and revolted against Yahya Khan decided to hand over power to the elected representatives of the people. On December 20, 1971, he relinquished the charge as a president and chief Martial law administrator and Mr. Z.A Bhutto, the chairman of the people's party and leader of majority party in west was sworn in as president and chief martial law administrator of Pakistan.

Conclusion

The separation of East Pakistan in 1971 followed a series of political, constitutional, and diplomatic developments that ultimately resulted in the failure of negotiations and the breakdown of Pakistan's political unity. The selected text highlights the disagreements between Yahya Khan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto over the Six-Point Programme, the future constitutional framework, and the transfer of power after the 1970 general elections. It identifies the postponement of the National Assembly session on 1 March 1971 and the failure of the Dhaka negotiations as important developments in the escalation of the crisis.

The text also places considerable emphasis on the role of India and the Soviet Union, alongside the diplomatic positions of the United States and China. It interprets external involvement as an important factor in the eventual separation of East Pakistan. However, these interpretations, particularly those concerning the motives of political leaders and foreign governments, should be examined alongside other historical accounts before reaching broader conclusions about responsibility for the crisis. The military operation that began on 25 March 1971, the subsequent Indo-Pakistan War, and the fall of Dhaka on 16 December 1971 marked the end of Pakistan's political unity. Yahya Khan relinquished power on 20 December 1971, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed the presidency and the office of Chief Martial Law Administrator. Overall, the text presents the 1971 crisis as the outcome of failed political negotiations, constitutional disagreements, leadership conflicts, and international developments. A comprehensive understanding of this historical episode requires attention to the competing perspectives and experiences of the political actors and people of both East and West Pakistan.

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