

Bangladesh Liberation War



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Background To The War

British rule of India ended in August of 1947, creating 4 new countries, India, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Pakistan was separated by East and West, and they were separated by thousands of miles of Indian territory. The East and West were also very different in the way of their culture, and the West area dominated the political ways of the country. All these contributed to the frustration of the East Pakistanis and it resulted in the independence of Bangladesh in the great victory of the Bangladeshis in 16 December 1971.

Background of Independence

- ❑ *Although the East had most of Pakistan's population, the Western population, especially the Punjabis, had all of the political power. In 1970, the East won an election by landslide victory, but the West refused to let the East have power. This outraged the East, and they believed that independence was necessary.*
- ❑ *Many other factors also contributed to the independence of Bangladesh:*
 - ❑ *Social background*
 - ❑ *Political Background*
 - ❑ *Economic Background*
 - ❑ *Cultural Background*

Social Background

Many discriminations were reportedly existing East and West Pakistan on the societal level:

► Most of the high administrative positions were occupied by the West Pakistanis:

Posts	Total	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Secretary	19	0	19
Joint Secretary	41	03	38
Deputy Secretary	133	03	130
Foreign Ambassadors	196	58	138
Section Officer	548	38	510

Source: Govt. Report of 1958 (Bangladesh Studies: MOU)

Grade	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
University	02	04
Medical College	01	04
Primary School	2217	5244

Social Background

- ▶ *Disparity was also there in case of employment. Most of the high posts were held by them and the minimal jobs were also distributed unevenly among the general population. Look at the following table:*

Year	Type of Job	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
1967-68	Civil Service of Pakistan	186	326
	Pakistan Tax Service	86	141
	Customs & Service	40	76
	Railway Accounts Service	20	36
	Audit & Accounts	44	95
	Military Accounts	18	50
	Police Service of Pakistan	82	128
	Central Information	19	49

Source: Budget Discussion in the National Assembly of Pakistan, June 18, 1968

Political Background

- ▶ Different Political factors contributed mostly to the emergence of Bangladesh as an Independent State:

1) Absence of any Constitution:

- No Constitution was formulated until 1956.
- Many issues remained unsettled because of its absence: like-how to run the state? What are the rights of the citizens? How to constitute the govt.? And what is the type of the govt?).
- After 09 years in 23 March 1956, an unsolicited and incomplete constitution was formulated which was not fulfilling everyone's demands.
- After only 2.5 years, that Constitutional Assembly was dismissed by General Iskander Mirja and declared State of Emergency.
- The Constitution made by General Ayub in 1962 was termed as 'Constitutional Autocracy' and rejected by East Pakistanis.
- As a result, General Upsurge was there in 1969 and he handed over power to General Yahya Khan in 25 March 1969.

Political Background

2) *Absence of any nation-wide singular political party:*

- 1) *There was no national singular political party accepted and supported by people across the two divides.*
- 2) *Muslim League represented mostly the people of West Pakistan except a few supporters in the East while Awami League represented only the people of East Pakistan without any base in the West.*
- 3) *It became clear in the 1970 general election*
- 4) *Thus there was almost no scope to settle the disputes between the East and the West through mutual negotiation.*

3) *Language Movement:*

- 1) *The first conflict between the East and the West ensued due to idea of nationalization of state language.*
- 2) *The problem started when the subsequent state authorities declared that Urdu should be state language of the whole Pakistan*
- 3) *Urdu was a language spoken by only a meagre 6% of people while ignoring the language of 54.6% people.*
- 4) *The protest culminated in students-police conflicts in the streets of Dhaka in 21 February 1952 leaving huge blood-shed.*

Political Background

4) *Election of 1954:*

- 1) *The provincial election of the east in March 1954 was a big shock for the Pakistani ruling elite*
- 2) *The United Front, an alliance of political parties with Awami League, Krishak Sramik Party, Ganatantric Dal & other small parties, won a landslide bagging 223 seats out of 247 with only 09 seats by the Muslim League.*
- 3) *The political platform for the United Front was based on a 21-point agenda, with declaring Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan, 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, implementing cooperative farming, the relation between East Bengal and West Pakistan be restructured on the basis of full regional autonomy; identified three subjects for the central government, namely, defense, foreign affairs, and currency, Pakistan's Naval Head Quarters be relocated to and an arms manufacturing factory be built in East Pakistan.*
- 4) *On May 30, 1954 the United Front government led by AK Fazlul Haque was dismissed by the central government. The Governor General Golam Mohammad explained:
"Our sole aim in taking over the administration of the province is to save East Bengal and preserve the integrity of Pakistan."*
- 1) *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.*

Political Background

5) India-Pakistan war of 1965:

- 1) During this war, the whole of Bangladesh was unsecured and vulnerable to the attacks of India while the military security was tightened for the West Pakistan.
- 2) In most of the cases, the East Pakistanis were totally disconnected from the central administration.

6) Historical Six Points Movement:

- 1) In February 1966, in a Conference in Lahore for restoration of democracy, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the historic six points demands calling for:
 - I. a Federation based on the Lahore Resolution,
 - II. 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 provision that flight of capital is prevented and each wing maintain separate revenue accounts,
 - IV. the units be given the authority to levy taxes and to collect revenue,
 - V. separate foreign exchange accounts for both the wings, and
 - VI. setting up a para-military force for East Bengal.
- 2) Mujibur Rahman presented this program as the magna carta of ending economic and socio-political exploitation. Mujibur Rahman was elected the President of the Awami League and launched a mass campaign in East Pakistan to achieve the demands. The military regime took a attitude of confrontation and placed Mujib under detention.

Political Background

7) Mass Upsurge of 1969

- 1) It was in line with the six points movement and against the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan.
- 2) Another vanguard of the anti-Ayub Mass Movement was the 'All Party Students Committee of Action' on the basis of an 11-point program.
- 3) All these directed to the fall of Ayub's regime.
- 4) It was during the mass movement of 1969 that Bengali nationalism reached its highest point.

8) General Election of 1970:

- 1) The Yayha Khan regime did not have a strong base because it came to power following the mass agitation against the Ayub Khan regime.
- 2) The regime announced that it wanted to transfer power to the people's representative and promulgated a "Legal Framework Order" (LFO) for the purpose of Pakistan's first general elections. According to this LFO, 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:

Political Background

8) General Election of 1970:

PROVINCES	Seats
East Bengal	169
The Punjab	85
Sind	28
Baluchistan	05
NWFP	19
Tribal Areas	07
Total	313

- 1) In November 1970, a devastating cyclone struck the coastal areas of East Pakistan, killing thousands of people. However, the central government failed to aid the cyclone-stricken people. The government was severely criticized for treating the Bangladeshis in a callous manner. Mujib and other 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.

Political Background

8) General Election of 1970:

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

Parties	Seats
Awami League	297
Other Parties	5
Independents	7
TOTAL	310

- 3) At the National Assembly elections, the Awami emerged as the majority

Parties	Seats
Awami League	167
Pakistan People's Party	88
Other Parties	44
Independents	14
TOTAL	313

Political Background

8) General Election of 1970:

- 4) In the East, Awami League emerged to be the single largest party and in the West the PPP led by Z A Bhutto emerged to be the dominant party. In the National Assembly the Awami League emerged to the victorious being the majority party.
- 5) 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 6-point program. The PPP decided to boycott the session demanding the cancellation of six points demands.
- 6) On March 7, 1971 Sheik Mujib, in an articulate and carefully phrased speech, asked the Bangalis to prepare for a resistance to the regime but stopped just short of declaring independence. The Awami League set up a non-violent and 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 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 council of action under Awami League leadership.
- 7) Yayha Khan flew to Dhaka on March 15, 1971 renew the negotiations with the Awami League. Bhutto also participated in the negotiations. The National Assembly session was put off again until March 25. But it failed because Awami League did not compromise on its demands of power transfer.
- 8) The military dictator and the central government officials left Dhaka without prior notice. Immediately, at 11:00 p.m. on March 25, 1971, troop movements started. In Dhaka and elsewhere in East Pakistan and war of Independence started.

Political Background

8) All these problems were triggered of the discrimination in the power sharing:

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 were 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

Economic Background

1) Population Comparison:

- 1) 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

Province	Population in Millions		
	1951	1961	1971
East Pakistan	41.9	50.8	70
West Pakistan	33.7	42.9	60

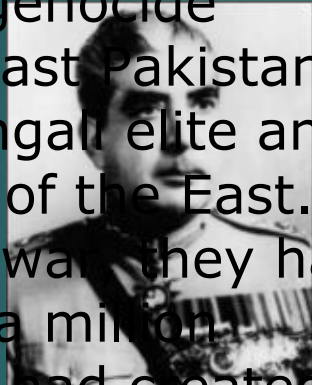
2) But economically the East was exploited by the West Pakistani ruling elite:

- 1) 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

5 years period	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
1947-52	4582	2129	3786	4769
1952-57	3969	2159	3440	5105

The Pakistani Army

The leader of the Pakistani army was also the self-appointed president of Pakistan. General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan planned a genocide attack on East Pakistan against Bengali elite and the Hindus of the East. During the war they had killed over a million people and had created over 10 million refugees who had fled to India during the war.

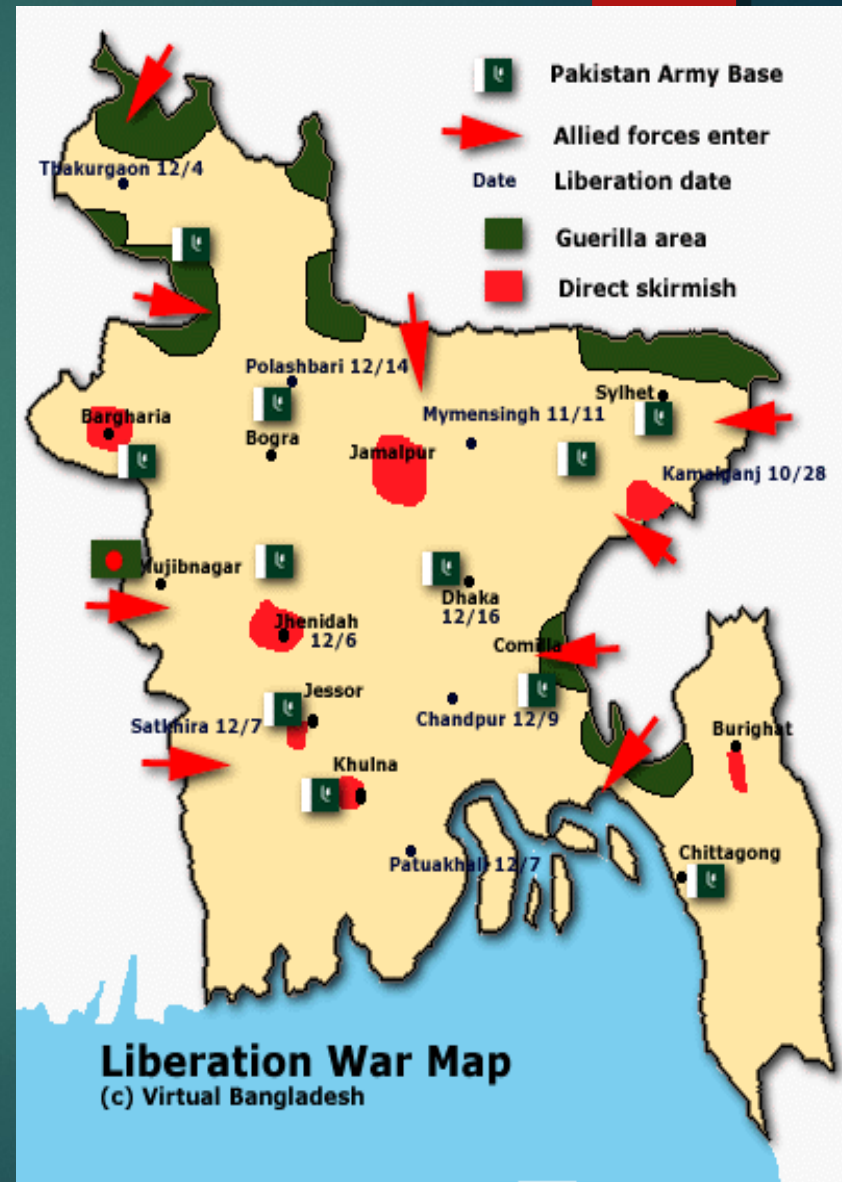


Typical Bangladesh Fight

General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan

Basics Of The War

- ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN WEST PAKISTAN (NOW PAKISTAN) AND EAST PAKISTAN (NOW BANGLADESH)
- LASTED ABOUT 9 MONTHS – MARCH 26, 1971 UNTIL DECEMBER 16, 1971
- INDIA DECLARED WAR ON WEST PAKISTAN AFTER THE PAKISTANI AIR FORCE (PAF) STRUCK INDIAN AIRFIELDS IN NORTHERN INDIA
- THE WAR ENDED 2 WEEKS LATER WHEN INDIA AND THE WEST HAD OVERPOWERED THE EAST
- RESULTED IN BANGLADESH'S INDEPENDENCE FROM PAKISTAN



Atrocities Committed

- ▶ *Genocide against the Bengali population of East Pakistan*
- ▶ *Minorities of Bangladesh especially Hindus were targets for the Pakistan army*
- ▶ *2-400,000 east Pakistani women raped, tortured and killed*
- ▶ *Pakistan Army carried out execution of Bengali intellectuals (university professors, etc.)*

Atrocities Continued

- ▶ *Most extreme cases of this carried out days before the war ended, when over 200 intellectuals were killed*
- ▶ *Unknown how many civilians killed, ranges from 26,000 up to 3 million (most likely around 3 million killed)*
- ▶ *The leader of the army, Kahn, stated that they would “Kill three million of them, and the rest will eat out of our hands”*

Who Was Responsible

The Pakistan army and government can be held mostly responsible for the acts committed against the West, as well as Al-Shams and Al-Badr forces, that were at the command of the Pakistan army.



Pakistan Army Symbol

Going To Work ↓



Legal Action Taken



The case was filed by Raymond Soliman and associates and are acting for the plaintive Mr. Soliman.

On September 20, 2006, a case was filed in the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia against the Pakistan government, army and its collaborators for crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The case has been adjourned for hearing.

Bibliography (not that anyone cares)

- ▶ Wikipedia.com
- ▶ Google.ca

