

Pros and Cons of Separation of East Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to sketch all the political events that ultimately resulted in the separation of East Pakistan. It analyzes the role of both internal and external actors that continuously added fuel to the fire, and the Bengalis took the final decision of having a separate homeland for themselves.

Keywords: East Pakistan, Political Conflict, Bangladesh Liberation Movement

INTRODUCTION

The greatest setback received by a country is when one of its parts gets separated and appears as an independent state on the world map. Pakistan witnessed one such setback on 16th Dec 1971. The blackest day dawn with the incident of separation of East of Pakistan was witnessed. It was a day when East Pakistan was separated from West Pakistan and Bangladesh was established as an independent state. (1)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

East Pakistan was given the status of the province of Pakistan after the one-unit scheme was introduced in 1955. This scheme was launched by Mohammad Ali Bogra. Under this scheme, all the four provinces of West Pakistan were amalgamated into a single unit. (2)

CAUSES OF SEPARATION OF EAST PAKISTAN:

There are many causes that led to the separation of East Pakistan. The long-standing issues between both wings caused distance between them. The first and foremost issue which occurred between East Pakistan and West Pakistan was the language issue that was raised in 1947. A demand was forwarded by the Bengalis to give Bengali the status of National Language which was rejected. The other issues which added fuel to the fire were the lack of power-sharing between the east and west wing, equal distribution of resources, geographical distance, and the role of bureaucracy, Indian informers, and Sheikh Mujeeb's six points. A wave of the continuous tussle was aggravating between East and West Pakistan. Due to the issue of power-sharing between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, the framing of the first constitution of Pakistan was delayed.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:

Pakistan was formally recognized as Double-Country before 1971 as there was a distance of thousand miles between the two wings. This was the major reason why the resources were not transferred from West Pakistan to East Pakistan. Secondly, different institutions in East Pakistan were equipped with Indian informers who used to provoke the Bengalis against West Pakistan.

Both wings had separate cultural identities. Their way of living, language, and cultures were distinct from each other. (3)

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:

Besides this, there were 65000 educational institutions in East Pakistan before 1965. Later, the graph dropped and the number of educational institutions left out in East Pakistan was 57000.

ECONOMIC DISPARITY:

The elite of Pakistan had a complete focus on the development and nourishment of the west wing of Pakistan. The economic reserves of the country were not distributed between both wings equally. The percentage of distribution was 90% and 10%. This attitude of the West Wing towards the East-West Wing aggravated the distance.

LANGUAGE CONFLICT:

The language conflict started soon after the formation of Pakistan. The people of East Wing started to chant that Bengali should be the national language of the country. Their demand was declined as Urdu was already declared as the state language by the father of the nation Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah before 1947.

INDIAN INFORMERS:

The bureaucrats along with the doctors and engineers of East Pakistan delivered hate speeches against West Pakistan in order to create more grudges between both wings.

FAILURE OF MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS:

After the untimely death of Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah & the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, none of the Muslim League Leaders were able to maintain an equilibrium between the West Wing & the East Wing. Khawaja Nazimuddin became the second Governor General & the second Prime Minister of Pakistan respectively but he had to face contradiction from the West Wing. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, the forth Prime Minister of Pakistan supported the Ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib in the West and neglected the East Wing completely.

ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY:

The attitude of the Bureaucrats towards Bengalis also became one of the reasons for separation. They mistreated the Bengalis. They were not preferred in any organization as employees. The higher officials of Pakistan distributed the economic reserves in a manner that East Wing received very less. This further resulted in distancing people of both wings. Elections were announced by Gen. Yahya Khan through the Legal Framework Word Order which was passed on 30th March 1970. The elections were conducted in Dec 1970. In West Pakistan, Pakistan People's Party won majority seats which were chaired by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and in East Pakistan, the Republican Party won majority seats which were headed by Sheikh Mujeeb Ur Rahman. The Bengalis were not willing to accept the results of the election of West Pakistan. A movement was started by the Bengalis against the political elite of West Pakistan. Taking complete advantage of the situation India launched its forces in East Pakistan. The forces targeted the Bengalis. Although the situation in East Pakistan was getting worse, yet neither the armed forces nor the political personalities of Pakistan were willing to take any step. Gen. Yahya Khan wanted to secure his position as

Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Administrator and President. On the *other hand*, Sheikh Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were competing to acquire the position of the Head of the State. (4)

SHEIKH MUJEEB'S SIX POINTS

The six points are noted as follows:

1. The Constitution should provide for a [Federation of Pakistan](#) in its true sense based on the [Lahore Resolution](#), and the parliamentary form of government with supremacy of a Legislature directly elected on the basis of universal adult franchise.
2. The federal government should deal with only two subjects: Defence and Foreign Affairs, and all other residual subjects should be vested in the federating states.
3. Two separate, but freely convertible currencies for the two wings should be introduced; or if this is not feasible, there should be one currency for the whole country, but effective constitutional provisions should be introduced to stop the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan. Furthermore, a separate [reserve bank](#) should be established and separate fiscal and monetary policy be adopted for East Pakistan.
4. The power of taxation and revenue collection should be vested in the federating units and the federal centre would have no such power. The federation would be entitled to a share in the state taxes to meet its expenditures.
5. There should be two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of the two wings; the foreign exchange requirements of the federal government should be met by the two wings equally or in a ratio to be fixed; indigenous products should move free of duty between the two wings, and the constitution should empower the units to establish trade links with foreign countries.
6. East Pakistan should have a separate military or paramilitary force, and Navy headquarters should be in East Pakistan.

RECEPTION

Politicians from West Pakistan and non Awami League politicians from East Pakistan rejected the proposal. [Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan](#), the president of the All Pakistan Awami League, also rejected it. The [National Awami Party](#), [Jamaat-e-Islami](#), and [Nizam-e-Islam](#) also opposed the proposal.^[6] Despite this opposition, the movement garnered support from the majority of the population of East Pakistan. (5)

LIBERATION WAR:

When the Bengalis witnessed that no keen interest is shown by the Military and Bureaucrats of Pakistan they started the Liberation War in March 1971. On 25th March 1971, Yahya Khan launched Operation Searchlight in East Pakistan and carried out genocide. Further damage was caused by the Military personnel. After the Pakistan Military entered East Pakistan instead of rescuing the Bengalis they started to abuse the women and young girls. History repeated itself. All the events of 1947 occurred again from Dec 1970 to Dec 1971. Many innocent people lost their lives.

Finally, Sheikh Mujeeb's six points came to light which made evident that the Bengalis will soon acquire a separate homeland for themselves. The members of the Mukti bahini started Liberation War. The Pakistani Army surrendered in front of the Indian armed forces. Finally, East Pakistan was separated on 16th Dec 1971.

On 20th Dec 1971, Gen Yahya Khan gave up the powers of Chief Martial Law Administrator and President. These powers were transferred to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

The main aim of the penetration of the Indian Armed Forces was not to capture the territory of Pakistan. Instead, their purpose was to break Pakistan in which they succeeded. Later in 1972, the Simla Agreement was signed between Pakistani President Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indra Gandhi.

Pakistan lost one of its parts mostly due to internal differences and ethnic issues. In order to save and secure our land from external interventions we need to forget our ethnic differences and live as Pakistanis. (6)

POSITION OF PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH AFTER 1971:

After 1971, Pakistan adopted a civilian government after 13 years of the Military Phase. Pakistan tried to achieve a permanent constitutional document. It succeeded and under the leadership of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Pakistan acquired the third and permanent constitutional draft on 14th August 1973. From 1973-1977 Pakistan was able to develop in different domains. Bhutto especially focused on the development of Pakistan's Nuclear Program. However, his party had to face confrontations from the other three provinces of Pakistan. In 1977, all the opposition parties stood against the Pakistan People's Party. Agitation was started by different factions of the state in order to destabilize the government. In the intervening night of 4th and 5th July 1977, Gen. Zia ul Haq imposed the third Martial Law in the country. Pakistan accepted Bangladesh as an independent state at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Summit in 1974. (7)

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