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# *1971 Liberation War, birth of Bangladesh and comparison with present day Pakistan*

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## Introduction

The 1971 liberation war of Bangladesh against Pakistan continues shaping the mindset of Bangladeshi people until present day. This bloodstained historical event has constructed Bangladeshi sense of nationalism and has forged their contemporary Constitution. The Bangladesh we see today is essentially the fruit of the liberation war of 1971. In order to understand ongoing Bangladeshi politics and the socio-economic sphere, it is required to analyse the history of Pakistani colonialism and the events surrounding the 1971 liberation war that turned Bangladesh into an independent sovereign State. This research paper provides a profound overview of these historical narratives and draws a comparison between present day Bangladesh and Pakistan.

## The Partition of the Indian Subcontinent and Creation of Pakistan

The liberation war of Bangladesh was not merely a war for independence fought by Bangladeshi nationalists - one of its main triggers was religion. The Pakistani government wanted to turn Bangladeshis into exemplary Muslims by alienating them from their Hindu background. This concept of religious division was also used as a root cause for the creation of Pakistan in the first place following British colonialism of the subcontinent. Ironically, religion brought together Bangladesh and Pakistan as one State during the partition of the subcontinent and later the very same religion separated the two. Comprehending the development of the liberation war of Bangladesh involves a meticulous retrospective look into the events leading to the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Following the devastating effects of the Second World War, the British colonialists gave up their control over the Indian subcontinent and the 1947 partition outlined two independent nations - India and Pakistan.

### ***Lahore Resolution:***

The outcry for a Muslim state started long before the partition. The demand for a Muslim state by the Muslim leaders of British India was strongly expressed during 1940 through the Lahore Resolution, also known as the Pakistan Demand or Pakistan Resolution. The Pakistan Demand was

born out of fear of Muslims becoming a minority in predominantly Hindu India. Muslim leaders were worried that in a Hindu-majority democratic State, Muslims would have a difficult time protecting their rights. During a three day long (March 22 - 24, 1940) annual session of the political group of British India called the All India Muslim League, the Lahore Resolution was crafted as a political demand to create a separate state for the Muslims of British India. It was a joint effort of the Muslim



Pakistan Demand written in Bengali in Minar E Pakistan, Lahore

authorities from present day Pakistan and the Bengal state of British India. According to them, Muslims, on their own, were a distinct nation. Their philosophy regarding life was significantly different compared to that of Hindus. Even though the demand was based on religious differences, the Lahore Resolution did not imply a desire for an Islamic State. It suggested the creation of a self-determined

Muslim region where they can exercise their rights without being subject to any racial or religious discrimination. The Lahore Resolution gained popularity among the Muslim majority of British India, especially in those provinces that perceived discrimination from Hindu leaders. Their social and political grievances found expression in the Lahore resolution. The phrasing of the latter did not mention Pakistan, however it was labelled as the Pakistan demand by the Hindu dominated media, which described it as a conspiracy aiming to divide the Indian subcontinent. Despite the fact that the text of the resolution mentioned the creation of “Independent States” instead of only one single State, leader of the Muslim League, Jinnah, diverged from this statement later on.

### ***The Partition:***

The dream of creating a separate Muslim state came into being when the partition of the subcontinent finally happened during 1947. Unfortunately, this partition was a tragic one. It led to the migration of millions of people. Muslims left India for Pakistan and Hindus left Pakistan for India. Massive communal violence took place during the process. Millions of lives were lost. Many became homeless, abandoning everything they had behind for their new homeland. Bangladesh, being a Muslim majority area was



Migration During Partition of 1947

incorporated in Pakistan as East-Pakistan. Religious affinity was given priority over geographical distance and cultural and linguistic differences.

### Discrimination and Exploitation by West-Pakistan

The Muslims of Bengal hoped that in the new Muslim state they would finally achieve a better standard of life. Given their past inferiority to Hindu landlords, Bengal Muslims were looking forward to the West-Pakistani government to ensure their fundamental rights. However, events did not unfold as the Bengali people had hoped. The West-Pakistani government proved even more discriminatory towards the people of East-Pakistan in all spheres of life - social, political and economic.

#### ***Political Discrimination:***

The government's headquarters were established in the Western Wing. Besides, the political representation of the different ethnic groups was not equal in the Central Government. It was dominated by elite groups of West-Pakistan, mainly the Punjabis. Minority ethnic groups, such as the Bengali population, did not have significant representation in the government. Consequently, control over state-owned organizations, governmental mechanisms and the armed forces were in the hands of the dominant ethnic group. During the years of 1947 - 1971, Pakistan experienced prolonged phases of military rule, which made it more difficult for ethnic minorities to gain access to political power. The Bengali population did not even have satisfactory political representation in their own province. Even for higher government posts such as "Governor-General," Bengalis were

Key Leaders of West Pakistan



Muhammad Ali Jinnah

General Yahya Khan

General Ayub Khan

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

not considered good enough. Such positions were awarded to people from West-Pakistan or migrants from India who assumed Pakistani citizenship. At the initial stages of the government's creation, the

West-Pakistanis sought various mechanisms to avoid handing over power to East Bengal, which harboured the majority in terms of population size. The elites of West-Pakistan tried several ways to capture the control and succeeded in their attempts to dominate East Bengal through the central government in West-Pakistan. However, the power struggle continued between different political parties and the Western elites were forced to accept the role of Bengalis in politics, through the

process of creating and abandoning several drafts of the National Assembly, that gave Bengalis a satisfactory share of representation in the constitution of 1956. Before this could yield any positive outcome for the unification of the two wings of Pakistan, the country fell prey to military rule and previous assemblies were again dissolved.

During the reign of the military General Ayub Khan, the Eastern Wing suffered immeasurable losses. Political parties were not allowed to participate in the 1962 elections and many politicians of East-Pakistan were prevented from propagating their ideologies. The Ayub Khan Government was exclusively in favour of the Western Wing and kept power highly concentrated there. East-Pakistan's discontent against the West-Pakistani Government exacerbated when security measures adopted to defend the Eastern Wing were neglected during the war between India and Pakistan in 1965. Following the fall of General Ayub Khan, the next General, Yahya Khan attained dominance over Pakistan. Yahya Khan promised to hold the first General Elections in Pakistan and eventually fulfilled his pledge in 1970. Yahya's hope to restore peace and mutual co-operation among the Eastern and Western wing were soon banished. The results of the 1970 elections were fatal for the political elites of the Western Wing because Awami League, a dominant political party from the Eastern Wing, won the elections. They were able to secure 160 seats out of 300 seats despite failing to secure any seats in the Western Wing. Similarly, no political party from the Western Wing was able to obtain a seat in the Eastern Wing. The parties were only capable in mobilizing the population in their respective provinces. Based on the majority of votes secured by Awami League, for the first time in history, an



The Founding of Awami League

East-Pakistani political group were to get access to power in Pakistan. Since this did not meet the interests of the Western Wing political elite, a conspiracy was hatched. Following the victory of Sheikh Mujib, leader of Awami League, and his demands for East-Pakistan's development, General Yahya Khan declared that a meeting of the National Assembly will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1971. Dominant political leaders of the political parties in the Western Wing including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan's Peoples Party and other army officials convinced Yahya Khan to cancel the National Assembly, which was supposed to be held in Dhaka in March. The cancellation announcement came on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1971. Immediately after this notice civil unrest spread over East-Pakistan and

mass demonstrations flooded the streets. Protests were held and calls for independence were chanted. The spark of the Liberation War of Bangladesh was ignited.

***Economic exploitation:***

The misery of East-Pakistan was not only due to the political hegemony of the Western Wing. Although political power was concentrated in West-Pakistan, in theory the authorities were capable of pacifying the people of East-Pakistan if only economic claims were satisfied. East-Pakistan faced severe economic exploitation and the relation between the two wings was analogous to the ruthless economic abuse of the British colonial power over the subcontinent. Alike the British, the West-Pakistani government profited from the Eastern Wing but did not invest adequately in its development. The number of East-Pakistanis employed in the Western Wing, particularly in higher respectable positions was insignificant compared to that of West-Pakistanis. Even though the population size of West-Pakistan was smaller compared to that of East-Pakistan after the partition, a major share of national budget (75%) was spent on West-Pakistan, leaving a negligible portion for East-Pakistan. The latter was financially deprived although it was responsible for the generation of 62% of the revenue income. Gross negligence towards the region was evident in the distribution of other resources as well. The Western Wing had 25 times higher military personnel compared to that of the Eastern Wing. The indifference of the West-Pakistan government towards the development of East-Pakistan was visible through the per capita income of that period, which was 32% higher for West-Pakistan during the period of 1959-60 and 61% during 1969-1970. In response to the war of 1965 between Pakistan and India, during which East-Pakistan was left with meagre military defense, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman drew up the Six Point Demand (known as the Six Point Movement or Charter of Freedom) to express the demands for economic development for the East Wing. The focus of the Six Point Demand was on establishing Pakistan as a Federal State in order to consolidate the autonomy of the East Wing and its control over resources. Proving grounds of this pledge were the creation of two separate currencies for the two wings; independent foreign reserves; East Wing's self-governance over its foreign exchange earnings and taxes from trade. Additionally, to raise and maintain a self-contained armed force in the Eastern Wing as they further demanded access to economic and military resources. The Six Point Demands gathered widespread support from the Eastern Wing but were rejected by the political power of the Western Wing.



The Six Points Movement is a significant turnover in the history of Bangladesh. Despite being initially rejected, it became a core component of the election campaign of Sheikh Mujib during the election of 1970. It embraced the Mujib's campaign on yielding equal access to economic opportunities for everyone.



Demonstration in Support of Six Point

### ***Social Exploitation:***

Since the very formation of Pakistan, the Western part branded the Eastern as inferior, because it considered the Muslims in the Eastern Wing subordinate due to their social and cultural affiliation with the Hindu population, which were powerful, rich and dominating in East-Pakistan before the partition of the subcontinent. As a result of the partition many influential Hindus left East-Pakistan to join India. Nonetheless, the Hindu population still counted as one of the major ethnic groups present in the Eastern Wing. Historically, people from various religions had always co-existed peacefully in the East Wing, as they were naturally adopting practices and customs from one another, while tolerating everyone's traditions and beliefs. Even today, Muslim communities celebrate programs that hold a Hindu foundation and have barely no roots or relevance to Islam. The West-Pakistani government was critical about the intimacy between the Muslim and the Hindu population. Even though the Muslims of the East Wing supported the partition, they were not willing to give up their own culture or language for the sake of becoming a Pakistani as envisioned by the elite of West-Pakistan. The West-Pakistani government remained insensitive to the cultural sentiments of the East-Pakistani people. The selection of a national Pakistani language became a contentious issue since the onset of its genesis. The West-Pakistan government did not pay any heed to the language that predominated in East-Pakistan, namely Bengali. The number of Bengali speakers were higher in comparison with the number of Urdu speakers. Urdu was the language of the elite, used only by 7% of Pakistanis. In contrast, Bengali was spoken by 56% of Pakistanis. The West-Pakistani leaders did not consider this factor while choosing an official language. While arguing that Bengali can still remain a primary language for everyday use of the people in the Eastern Province, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan and the first Governor General, declared on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1948 during a conference in Dhaka University that Urdu will become the State language. This declaration triggered a great outrage among the people of the Eastern Wing that became to be known as the Bengali Language Movement.

Denying Bengali its status of a State language and its intended extinction were unacceptable to the Bengali people. They realized that their mother tongue would not survive the aggression of the



West-Pakistani government if this decision was not protested. At that time, the abolition of the Bengali language was already felt by means of how it was being corrupted. The West-Pakistani elites administered modifications of the language by replacing Sanskrit (the basis of the language) words with Urdu words. Working-class altogether the elite of East-Pakistan took several initiatives to

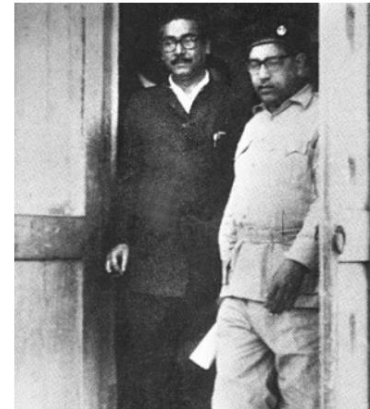
ensure the acknowledgment of Bengali as an official State language of Pakistan besides Urdu and English. The most prominent one was the demonstration on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1952. The procession sought to express defiance against the order under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. This order issued on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, prohibited any kind of demonstration or protest aimed at altering the State language. When a large group of students from Dhaka University alongside with numerous political activists brought out a procession in front of the Provincial Assembly appealing for the right of Bengali to be accepted as an official language, the armed forces opened fire at the students. Five people were killed and since then the 21<sup>st</sup> of February is celebrated in Bangladesh as Language Martyrs Day. In 1999, UNESCO proclaimed 21<sup>st</sup> February as the International Mother Tongue Day in recognition of the sacrifices rendered by Bengalis. After two years, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May of 1954 Bengali was finally granted an official status.

Continuous political, economic and social exploitation took part before Bangladesh could achieve its Independence. Following are certain major events that have contributed to the resolution of this national struggle and the creation of Bangladesh as an Independent country.

***Agartala Conspiracy Case:***

The popularity of the Six Points Demand of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman instilled fear into the West-Pakistani government during the reign of General Ayub Khan. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1968, the Ayub Khan government arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman altogether with 34 other Bengali civil and military officers, charging them with conspiracy against Pakistan. The case is popularly known as the Agartala conspiracy case because General Ayub Khan claimed that Sheikh Mujib and his political associates were conspiring with the Indian Government in the city of Agartala (Tripura, India) to

create an Independent Bangladesh. This case is also known as “State versus Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others”. Ayub Khan’s intention to dismiss Sheikh Mujib while underestimating his popularity, failed. People of East-Pakistan were convinced that the affair itself was a conspiracy against Sheikh Mujib and against East-Pakistan, and started a movement demanding the unconditional release of Sheikh Mujib. The revolt of the people of East-Pakistan became more fierce when one of the accused, Sergeant Zahurul Haq, was killed by a guard in his prison cell. In the face of a mass movement, General Ayub Khan was left with no other choice but to withdraw the Agartala plot and release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman alongside with all other charged on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1969. This event happened to be one of the most crucial victories of East-Pakistan against the Government of West-Pakistan. It is widely believed that the failure of the Ayub Khan regime regarding the Agartala conspiracy case contributed significantly towards the fall of his regime.



Sheikh Mujib, During Trial of Agartala Conspiracy Case

### ***Operation Searchlight:***

Operation Searchlight is the planned genocide that took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1971 and was undertaken by the West-Pakistani government against its own citizens of the Eastern Wing. This plan was the result of the victory of Sheikh Mujib’s party in the General Election of Pakistan in 1970. The West-Pakistani rulers had no intention to convey the power to Sheikh Mujib and finally their National Assembly was dismissed. The dismissal brought fierce reactions among the people of East-Pakistan and Sheikh Mujib summoned a five day long strike and protests for an indefinite period. Following the five-day strike, he exhorted the East-Pakistani people to embark on an Independence struggle. Law and order collapsed as people broke curfews imposed by the West-Pakistani Government. The Bengalis occupied the streets demanding freedom and self-determination for Bangladesh. During this period, in a meeting of Awami League, the National Anthem of Bangladesh was chosen.

General Yahya Khan conceived a genocide course of action of Bengali nationalists in order to punish the people of East-Pakistan for their denial to follow the orders of the West-Pakistani Government. He arranged a military crackdown to be executed during the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1971, which aimed at eliminating the force of Bengali Nationalism from Pakistan. The objective of Operation Searchlight was to eradicate all Bengali Nationalists including political and military oppositions





Casualties of Operation Searchlight

within a month. The intention was to take absolute control over all major cities dominated by the Nationalist rebels. Consequently, the people of East-Pakistan witnessed one of the most cruel genocides in history. Troops from West-Pakistan marched secretly towards East-Pakistan and in the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of

March 1971, the Pakistani military started their operation in Dhaka city, the present capital city of Bangladesh. The same night, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested and taken to West-Pakistan. Before his arrest, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared that East-Pakistan was to become Bangladesh - an Independent sovereign country. The declaration of independence was transmitted throughout East-Pakistan via an E.P.R. transmitter. Although the declaration was made on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, its transmission took place after midnight. Since then, the 26<sup>th</sup> of March is celebrated as the Independence Day of Bangladesh.

The victims of this operation originated from all layers of the Bengali social strata. However, certain groups were primarily targeted, such as the students of Dhaka University. Two student dormitories of the Dhaka University were attacked and the Pakistani military killed around 7000 students in cold blood during one night. The military officers forced the students to dig up their own mass graves before murdering them. Teachers and employees of Dhaka University also lost their lives at the hands of the Pakistani military. The Pakistani military did not spare civilians even though the main targets were politicians (especially supporters of Awami League), activists and rebels demanding independence of the Eastern Wing. Another target of chief importance were the inhabitants of Hindu majority areas. The Pakistani military killed innocent people, burnt houses and destroyed places of worship of Hindus. The West-Pakistani Government succeeded in their dreadful mission of terrorizing the East-Pakistanis. Operation Searchlight led to the massacre of 30,000 Bengalis in a week. Almost half of the population of Dhaka fled the city in search for safe shelters elsewhere. Contrary to its objectives, the military operation, in essence designed to exterminate nationalist tendencies, gave rise to the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh. Operation Searchlight created terror but at the same time encouraged the determination of the people of East-Pakistan to secede from the oppressive Central Government. Operation Searchlight well implemented its schemes in avoiding international attention as all foreign journalists were deported and radio operations

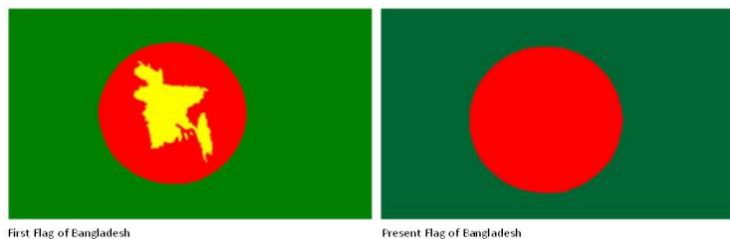


Simon Dring

were shut down to prevent any sort of communication. A journalist named Simon John Dring stayed secretly and disseminated information to the world about the genocide and the Liberation War that lasted 9 months and in which 3 million Bengali people died. In return for his bravery, Simon Dring won several awards for his contribution and was later solemnly recognized as a citizen of Bangladesh.

### [The Liberation War \(March to December 1971\)](#)

Following the massacre of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1971, Bengalis started fighting against the Pakistani military with every resource they had. Ordinary Bengalis, especially young people, who had no knowledge or training to fight in a war, risked their lives and the lives of their family members for the sake of making Bangladesh an independent country. Following the “Black Night” of 25<sup>th</sup> of March, the atrocities of the Pakistani military aggravated. The operation was extended to the entire region of East-Pakistan.



The Bengali Nationalists assembled a shallow novice armed force called “Mukti Bahini” (The Force of Independence). The Bengali military officers of East-Pakistan took charge over the military operations of the Bengali nationalists. They divided East-Pakistan in 11 sectors in order to conduct their guerrilla operations against the West-Pakistani military. In the meantime, the Provisional Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was created in Mujibnagar by some political leaders of East-Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was a prisoner of the West-Pakistan government during that time was made the President and Tajuddin Ahmed was made the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. This event led to the official declaration of Bangladesh as an independent state.

### ***Refugee Crisis:***

While a lot of Bengalis joined the guerrilla force favouring independence, many others, particularly women and children, fled the country and took refuge in the closest neighbouring country - India. According to an estimate, the number of refugees taking shelter in India during the liberation war was about 10 million. The Indian government came under huge pressure to provide resources and

space for the refugees. The Prime Minister of India during that period, Indira Gandhi, expressed concern over this issue but continued supporting the people of Bangladesh in their struggle for equality. Refugee camps were built in areas nearby Bangladesh such as West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.



Refugees from East Bengal in India

### ***Military Support from India:***

After Pakistan launched several attacks on Indian territory on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1971, India joined Bangladesh in its military efforts against the Pakistani military. With the support of India as well as commands from the military officers of East-Pakistan, the West-Pakistani military was defeated. It eventually surrendered to the joint forces of Bangladesh and India leading to victory for Bangladesh on 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1971.

### ***The Rajakars:***

Religion was used as a diplomatic tool in shaping Pakistan into a separate nation during the partition of British India. The same religion played a vital role in ensuring support for Pakistan among people of East-Pakistan. Political groups based on religious values such as the Jamaat-E-Islami swore allegiance to the West-Pakistani government when the liberation war of Bangladesh began. Despite being Bengalis, the political leaders and supporters of Jamaat-E-Islami collaborated with the Pakistani army in their atrocities against Bengalis. The Jamaat-E-Islami was originally a social organization born in British India before partition. Its main aim was to create a unified Indian state, yet its vision was not fulfilled due to the partition of the subcontinent. It created branches in both West- and East-Pakistan with the new objective of creating an Islamic state. When Bengali nationalists demanded separation from West-Pakistan, the Jamaat-E-Islami leaders of East-Pakistan provided full support to the West-Pakistani government. In the name of religion, they betrayed the people of their own land. Their loyalty and support towards



Training of Rajakar Forces in 1971

the West-Pakistani military was to the extent that they managed to create armed forces of their

own that assisted the military operations of West-Pakistan. The latter government established the “East-Pakistan Central Peace Committee” (Shanti Bahini) and made Ghulam Azam, the leader of Jamaat-E-Islami in East-Pakistan, the Chief of Shanti Committee. The Shanti Committee or Bahini was responsible for committing horrendous war crimes, such as killings of civilians and non-combatants and raping Bengali women. The Jamaat-E-Islami also organized their own combatant groups such as the Al-Badar and Al-Shams. One of the main tasks of the Rajakar groups was to generate lists of the details of freedom fighters, which were consequently entrusted to the West-Pakistani military. The latter identified the families of the aforementioned rebels, tortured them in return for information and eventually killed them. The most horrific transgression committed by the Rajakar groups was the abduction of Bengali women, which were transported to West-Pakistani military camps for the entertainment of Pakistani soldiers. During the liberation war, around 200,000 to 400,000 women became victims of rape and sexual slavery. Al-Badar, which was mainly created by the student wing of the Jamaat-E-Islami in East-Pakistan, was specifically involved in killing “the intellectual people” (known as Budhijibi in Bengali) such as teachers, scholars and social activists. Regrettably, the exact same people who betrayed Bengalis were Bengalis themselves and pursued their own goals at the expense of their fellow nationals in order to gain political power in



Rape Victim of 1971 War

the post-liberation era of Bangladesh. Originally after independence, political parties based on religion were banned in Bangladesh but due to the military regime of Ziaur Rahman and later because of his political party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Jamaat-E-Islami leaders who committed war crimes were allowed to enter politics. Currently they are facing justice, despite that more than four decades of independence were

necessary for due process of justice to be implemented. The present Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina (daughter of Sheikh Mujib) has resumed the International Criminal Tribunal to prosecute the war crimes of 1971. Several significant Jamaat-E-Islami leaders accountable for them have been punished and some of them have even been given the capital punishment.

### ***Atrocities Committed by the Pakistani Army:***

The West-Pakistani army showed no compassion for Bengalis. The rules of engagement were at no time adhered to. The convoys of the West-Pakistani army would kill civilians without any mercy.

They would bring Bengalis as prisoners and kill them remorselessly in batches. According to witnesses, the West-Pakistani army were having the capacity to torch and murder anyone that was obstructing their way. Their preferred targets were religious minorities such as Hindus. They would kill large number of Hindu men at once and would abduct women and girls. There are debates about the number of Bengalis that have been killed during the war – however in Bangladesh the estimate is 30 million people.

### ***International Support:***

Bangladesh received continuous moral support from India since the beginning of the Liberation War. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India during that time, was able to secure support from the Soviet Union, The United Kingdom and France to ensure that there would be no directives in favour of Pakistan in the United Nations Security Council. In contrast, Pakistan received support from the United States and China. The United States provided ammunition while China provided moral advocacy. In spite of the protection and encouragement from the United States, Pakistan did not have high chances of winning the war because of the Soviet Union which played against the efforts of the United States during the war.

### ***The Surrender of Pakistani Army and Victory of Bangladesh:***

When West-Pakistan launched attacks against India on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1971, the Indian military forces joined Bangladeshi guerrilla forces to fight against the West-Pakistani military. The latter did not receive any support during this crucial period of the war although they were expecting military aid from the United States and China. West-Pakistani military camps were attacked and they lost control over their previously captured territories. Consequently, they had to accept defeat and capitulate to the joint forces. Finally, in the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1971, General Niazi of West-Pakistan signed the agreement of surrender. After a bloodbath of 9 months, Bangladesh was finally an Independent State. Today Bangladesh, celebrates 16<sup>th</sup> December as Victory Day.



Surrender of Pakistani Army in 1971



## Comparison between Present Day Bangladesh and Pakistan

Bangladesh has walked a long way after its liberation from Pakistan. The following section of the article discusses the advancement of Bangladesh in terms of social, political and economic development in comparison to the evolution and growth of Pakistan. The analysis intends to construct a parallel that compares the levels of flourishing and deterioration between the two countries.

### ***Political Development of Bangladesh:***

The history of colonialism from both the British and the Pakistani era still haunts Bangladesh. However, in the midst of all the struggle, Bangladesh strives to hold onto its democratic and secular path. Democracy in Bangladesh still needs improvement, yet Bangladesh seems determined to improve the quality of its democracy. Since the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan has been subject to military regulations every now and then. In the post-independence era, the father of the nation of Bangladesh, Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman made substantial efforts to design a state, which would follow a divergent political path in comparison with Pakistan. In relation to

Key Political Leaders of Bangladesh since Independence



Sheikh Mujib

Ziaur Rahman

Sheikh Hasina

Khaleda Zia

these efforts, a Constitution that illuminated the ideals of secularism was formulated. Religion-based politics were no longer taking place in the ruling affairs of Bangladesh. Triggered by flashbacks of the bloodshed that ruptured during the Liberation War, the leaders of the new Bangladeshi country longed for the formation of a Nation State based on democratic ideals. Unfortunately, shortly after the declaration of independence Bangladesh fell prey to military regimes numerous times alike Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was burdened with the highly onerous duty of building a nation from scratch. Bangladesh was completely devastated and ravaged in the aftermath of the liberation war. Stable reliable political institutions, a precondition for a secure democratic establishment, were lacking and the economy was shattered, which enabled the widespread prevalence of poverty throughout the country. Despite his charisma, Sheikh Mujib did not succeed in his attempts to rescue and exempt Bangladesh from all its problems. The adverse situation escalated and worsened when Sheikh Mujib was assassinated altogether with his family members in August 1975 by virtue of an army coup d'état. Ergo, Bangladesh stumbled once again on its challenging path towards democracy. Following the coup that killed Sheikh Mujib, a series of military coups took place in

which army personnel captured power illegally and banned the participation of political parties. The country was subjected to military governance for almost 15 years in total on multiple occasions since its independence. Due to the interruptions by such military coups, consolidating democracy in Bangladesh has been an arduous journey. Some of the military leaders amended the constitution to such an extent that the basis of the original constitution, which was secularism, was abolished. Such amendments gave green light to anti-liberation forces like Jamaat-E-Islami to accumulate power through allowing religion based political parties to re-enter Bangladeshi politics. Following those lines, this paper will examine the performance of Bangladesh upon some of the primary features of democracy.

### ***Rule of Law:***

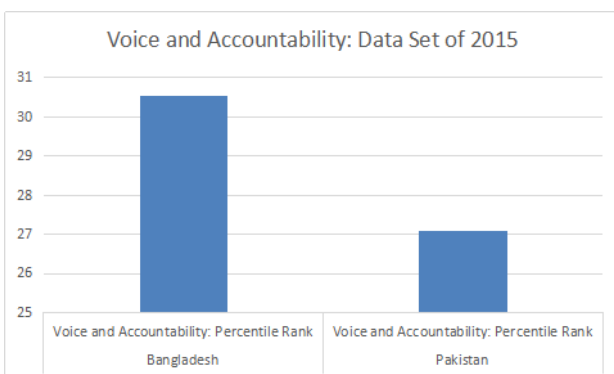
Rule of law conveys the message that the law is equal for everyone and is above all. The rule of law is vital in ensuring protection for the citizens of a country against the abuse of power by governmental and public authorities. Despite the fact that Bangladesh is a democratic country, in reality Rule of law does not exist to the desired extent. One major issue with the principles of legitimacy in Bangladesh is that the judiciary is not completely independent. While the higher courts exercise independence, the Ministry of Justice controls the lower courts. In addition, derogating political opponents often implies the practice of misemploying the rule of law. Provisions, such as the Special Power Act of 1974 and Section 54 of the Criminal Code often insinuate such machinations. They are frequently used to justify arrests and detention of the opposition. The Bangladeshi armed forces, which were expected forgers of fundamental legal standards in favour of their citizens, have been frequently biased towards the ruling party. Furthermore, pervasive corruption among the criminal justice body, especially the police force has been widespread. The judicial system has been ineffective in terms of timely management of cases, ensuring fair trial and equal access for all citizens. Particularly for the poor and disadvantaged individuals, means of entry to adequate legal services were not only deficient, but also unbearably costly. Primary reasons for the inefficiency of the Judiciary system were the low salaries of legal authorities and consequently, corruption. Albeit Bangladesh requires significant improvements in its establishment of the rule of law, its performance is manifestly greater compared to that of Pakistan. According to the World Justice Project Ranking of 2016, the score of Bangladesh was 0.41, which placed it under number 103 among the 113 countries, where the scores ranged from 0 to 1. The closer the score to 0, the more disadvantageous the situation regarding impartiality and legitimacy of the judicial body. It is

visible from the score of Bangladesh that it has a long way to go before it achieves a higher advanced standard of the rule of law. In comparison, Pakistan’s score was even lower - 0.38 and its global ranking - 106. Therefore, despite Pakistan’s historical influence and challenging aftermaths of the Liberation War, Bangladesh has managed to reach and implement legal principles of higher quality.

***Accountability of Government:***

Government accountability refers to the obligation of official authorities to justify their actions in front of their citizens and maintain transparency and clarity of decision-making. It further encompasses a subjection to punitive measures in case of failure to liability. When mechanisms of legal responsibility are missing, corruption and abuse of power will thrive. Open, democratic and impartial election campaigns are a crucial device towards ensuring accountability. Although Bangladesh, like Pakistan, has been exposed to series of military coup d’états after gaining its independence, the country managed to extricate itself from this severe situation and establish a democratic governance system.

Since Bangladesh had two major political parties which keep alternating power every five years, boycotts of elections have occurred. Downgrading the status quo of one, was securing the victory of the other, and vice versa. For example, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) sabotaged the 2014 elections, which granted the Awami League, the other major political party, an effortless triumph. Since other national parties never succeeded in gathering enough votes, the control and jurisdiction were concentrated only between the aforementioned two. Moreover, since the winner of the election holds the majority of seats in the Parliament, misuse of power is not uncommon. Due to



this, extrajudicial killings, murders of opponent politicians still happen in Bangladesh. Armed forces such as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) have been alleged of killings of prisoners outside the scope of the law. These assassinations have been published in the media as manslaughters in a cross-fire between criminals who had attempted to attack the armed forces. All these speculations

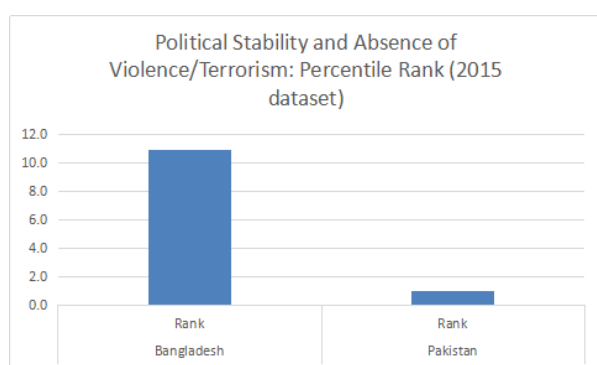
are difficult to prove as long as the government is in a position of manipulating the truth for the sake of justifying its punitive measures, such as arrests and detention of opponents. The judicial system should be independent to guarantee an impartial oversight, balanced level of integrity and

sense of fairness. Since the judicial system in Bangladesh is not completely independent, the check and balance system of accountability is ineffective. Freedom of expression comes at a high price and often at the expense of human lives. The government has failed to secure the civil liberties and freedom of expression of its citizens. In recent times, there have been multiple incidents of assassinations of media bloggers and social activists who attempted to express their beliefs. In recent times, there has been an increase in legal and regulatory restrictions on media activities in Bangladesh, particularly imposing a censorship on online contents and banning of social media agents such as YouTube and Facebook. Suspension of television and radio channels altogether with legal proceedings against journalists are also a common phenomenon. Compared to Pakistan in that sphere, Bangladesh is performing slightly better. According to the 2015 Worldwide Governance Indicators, in relation to voice and accountability, the score of Bangladesh is around 31 whereas for Pakistan it is 27.

### ***Political Stability:***

After actualizing a state of independence, Bangladesh has lived through political turmoil repeatedly. Establishing a democratic country was seen as a prerequisite for embarking on the journey towards a self-governed and sovereign Bangladesh. In the new free and autonomous Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib took charge as a Prime Minister, who obtained the immense responsibility of reconstructing a war-torn country. During that period no other political party had the capability to recapture the place of Awami League and therefore in essence Bangladesh became a one-party state. Despite Mujib's positive intentions and multiple efforts, political stability was difficult to achieve. Mujib established armed forces which consisted of many freedom fighters aiming towards imposing stability in the country. However, there were still strands of guerrilla rebels who refused to surrender weapons to the government. They retained their arms and even inflicted control over certain territories in order to run their own jurisdiction. Since the economic conditions were miserable, even Mujib's charismatic personality was powerless in persuading people to be hopeful that the political instability will end. As a consequence, a state of emergency was declared in February 1975. In addition, Mujib declared Bangladesh as a one-party State and made it obligatory for all parliamentary members to join Awami League. The name of Awami League was changed to Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL/Bangladesh Peasants, Workers and People's League). Thus, a country born with the promise of democracy shortly after gaining its independence had to be sacrificed for the sake of becoming a dictatorship. As expected, sacrificing democracy did

not bring about the desired outcomes. The political reforms that were promised were impossible to achieve and society's discontent against the government started growing rapidly. The political instability worsened when in the exact same year Sheikh Mujib was assassinated altogether with his family members at his own home by a group of army majors. Only his two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana survived, since they were out of the country. With the fall of Mujib's regime, the rise of military dictatorship began and continued until 1990. During that period, several coups d'états took place and the promise of democracy faded away. Despite that democracy managed to return in Bangladesh as a reaction of mass protests against the regime of the military dictator Ershad. Even after its retrieval, political instability remained an ingrained part of the state political life. Two major parties emerged in Bangladesh - the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by



Khaleda Zia, Widow of Ziaur Rahman (former leader of BNP, assassinated in a military coup in 1981) and Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujib. The fierce rivalry between Awami League and BNP made it difficult to achieve harmonious political conditions in the country. To make it more complicated, the BNP formed an

alliance with the controversial Islamist party, Jamaat-E-Islami, which had been actively involved with the Pakistani government against the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 exacerbated the situation, and marked the beginning of a new kind of political struggle in Bangladesh. Jamaat-E-Islami, with its appeal to religious sentiments towards the Muslim majority, divided the country into two groups. The first one was aligned with the objectives of the Jamaat-E-Islami and their religious principles, whereas the other one abhorred the Jamaat-E-Islami for the crimes committed by their major leaders during the Liberation War. While the BNP-Jamaat coalition used the appeal of religion among the Muslim mass, the Awami League played upon the sentiments of Bangladeshi citizens using the Liberation War as an exemplar in order to earn their trust. Overall, peace has never been really achieved in Bangladesh. Political violence and blame game continued among the two major political parties. The situation became critical when Awami League assumed power in 2009 and resumed the International Crimes Tribunal for the sake of punishing those guilty of war crimes during the Liberation War. Since that period, the BNP-Jamaat alliance has been weakened to such an extent that they have lost their ability to fight against the Awami League. Their attempts to organize protests and strikes against the government have been handled heavily by the Awami



League, rendering their attempts counterproductive. With the establishment of the International Crimes Tribunal, the doom of the alliance came into being. Members of the alliance, including the chief commanders of the Jamaat-E-Islami, have been arrested and executed for war crimes. In return, these war crimes trials have sparked another episode of political violence. Even though the power of the alliance has been weakened, the trials have resulted in extreme political aggression under the form of murders of pro-government social activists, bloggers and religious minorities. In response, Bangladesh witnessed another social revolution, known as the “Shahbag Revolution” in which thousands of Bangladeshis occupied the streets, protesting and demanding the execution of war criminals. Altogether with the already existent state of political chaos, the war crimes trials additionally complicated international relations of Bangladesh. As a consequence, the Awami League government has been heavily condemned by international human rights organizations as well as by Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The war crimes trials continue till present day, hence the projections are that political violence and instability would accelerate. Compared to Pakistan, Bangladesh has implemented more competent strategies towards achieving state security and resisting political fluctuations. Such judgment could be deduced from the database of the World Bank Group, which accounts for levels of Political Stability and Absence of Violence and Terrorism. According to their chart, where 0 indicates the lowest performance regarding political stability and 100 - the highest. Respectively, the database from 2015 assigns Bangladesh with 11, whereas Pakistan with barely 1. Such considerable disparity illustrates how Bangladesh manages to outperform Pakistan in terms of maintaining strength and endurance despite all socio-economic and political struggles.

### ***Control of Corruption:***

Corruption is one of the most problematic features of Bangladesh. It is a chronic and endemic problem, widespread across the entire social strata. Throughout the country nepotism has become a habitual conduct, a lifestyle, and it is disputable what circumstances have prompted it - the culture or the bureaucracy. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that public offices are run by nepotism and bribery. Recruitment and promotion hardly ever happen to be impartial procedures across sectors such as defense, transportation, education and health. Primary reasons for such chronic corruption among the Bangladeshi public officials are the meagre salaries and lack of labour privileges. Bribes have therefore become an alternative source of earning. The level of corruption has outspread on such a large scale that as a result the population has institutionalized and

normalized this culture of bribery and nepotism. Public offices have started exploiting national funds in order to bypass and bend rules and regulations. Consequently, the gap between rich and poor has widened excessively, giving the already affluent upper-class more wealth and leaving the poor to suffer in greater misery. Even though some businesses succeeded in generating enormous profits by means of corruption, in reality this mechanism increases expenditures and therefore discourages the growth of new businesses. The enterprises usually resort to bribery for acquiring documents that facilitate the company's legal registration, that provide license or permit for business operations or for utility connections. The adverse effects of corruption are endless. Especially within the law enforcement sector, which is responsible for social security, the effects of corruption are terribly deleterious. Police force agents fail to retain trust of the population due to their dishonourable and fraudulent reputation. Court cases miscarry in living up to the ideals of a fair trial since verdicts become manipulated and ruled by money. Despite that there is a national anti-corruption committee based in Bangladesh, it has not achieved any satisfactory results. Bangladesh might have reached a certain level of progress, yet corruption still remains a pervasive issue among the society. According to Transparency International Bangladesh, three out of four people in Bangladesh bribe officials while seeking services from law enforcement agencies or immigration services. In 2015, the amount of bribes paid to public officials was \$1.1 billion USD. Even though brave efforts of digitalization are underway, the majority of public services are provided tête-à-tête, which renders bribing easier. Owing to corruption, power lays in the hands of the rich and dominant figures rather than in those who are qualified and suitable for running the country. According to the 2015 report of Transparency International, 56% of the members of the parliament were either businessmen or industrialists. When there is a lack of a check and balance system to control the financial activities of the public offices, public officials misuse governmental resources without being held accountable for it. Bangladesh has paid a hefty price for this politics-business nexus. In April 2013, an eight story building collapsed in Savar, Dhaka that hosted several garment factories. Around 1129 people, predominantly employees, lost their lives in the incident and 2500 people were severely injured. The owner of the building had a permit from the municipality to build a five story building, yet using his political connections he managed to enlarge it. Under the shadow of politics, various such fraudulent practices take place in the country. Regarding corruption, Bangladesh is in a more injurious situation in comparison to Pakistan. According to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicator of Control of Corruption, the score of Bangladesh for 2015 was 18.3 whereas the score of Pakistan was 23.6.

### ***Social Development:***

Regardless of the vast number of socio-economic and political obstacles existent in Bangladesh since independence, the state has achieved a remarkable progress in terms of social development. The Bangladeshi society has evolved impressively in terms of access to education and women empowerment, which are both vital requirements for its healthy social development.

### **Living Standard:**

The living standards of both countries can be compared through examining access to basic life necessities such as food, housing, water and sanitation, and health care facilities.

### ***Housing:***

Bangladesh is rapidly urbanizing. The annual rate of urbanization in Bangladesh is 3.55% (estimates from 2010-2015) and for Pakistan - 2.81% (estimates from 2010-2015). With such speedy urban development, a given segment of the population succeeded in receiving benefits through gaining



A slum area in Bangladesh

access to urban facilities, yet its unplanned rapid nature has also increased the number of informal settlements. As more and more people flood the cities with the aim of getting access to better opportunities, particularly poor families from rural areas, the problem of illegal establishments or slums has increased manifold in recent years. According to the 2014 census report of the Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics, the number of slums has increased four times (63.4% increase) during the period between 1997 and 2014. As stated in it, 6.3% of the country's urban population lives in slums, while in the capital city of Dhaka, it is around 30%. The situation is no better in Pakistan. The country has a shortfall of 9 million houses, which increases by 0.34 million units every year. In Karachi, one of the major cities of Pakistan, around 60% of the population lives in self built slums.

### ***Water and Sanitation:***

Access to safe water and proper sanitation facilities have improved in both countries over the years. Bangladesh has notably developed its drinkable water provision, namely for 86.5% of its urban population and 87% of its rural population. Respectively, the statistics for Pakistan are 93.9% for the urban population and 89.9% for the rural population. Therefore, Bangladesh is still in need of

amelioration. With regard to sanitation facilities, Bangladesh has ensured enhanced access for 57.7% of its urban population compared to 83.1% of Pakistan, which once again calls for improvements. Nevertheless, it has been able to secure means of entry to sanitation facilities for 62.1% of its rural population, whereas Pakistan for only 51.1%.

***Food Security:***

Bangladesh has undergone a long way from being an aid dependent country, especially in terms of food aid, to becoming more self-sufficient in food production. However, this process of nourishment has not entirely curbed the issue of food security. Even though food production has increased, the equal distribution of food, especially nutritious food has not been ensured. Apart from the threat of overpopulation, the frequent natural calamities such as monsoon floods, river erosion and water contamination continue to impose challenges. Impoverished families remain the primary victims of undernourishment since food prices continue to increase. According to the 2016 Global Hunger Index, 16.4% of the population of Bangladesh are suffering from malnutrition. In Pakistan, 22% of the population suffers from malnutrition

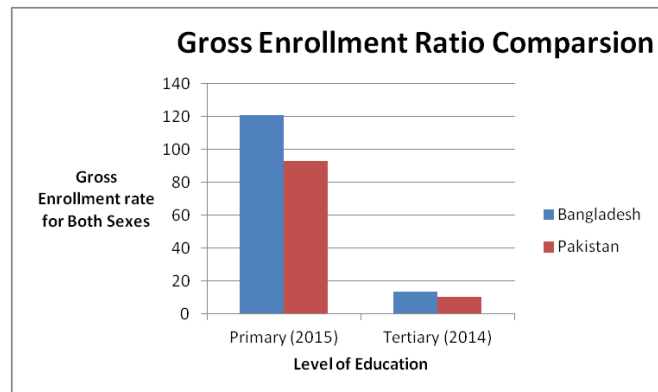
***Basic Health care:***

Bangladesh invests slightly more in the healthcare sector compared to Pakistan - the World Health Organization's 2014 database displays that Bangladesh has spent 2.8% of its GDP on the health industry whereas Pakistan spends 2.6% on healthcare. In 2015, the life expectancy at birth for both sexes for Bangladesh was 71.8 and for Pakistan - 66.4. According to the same year's database, the number of neonatal deaths (in thousands) in Bangladesh was 74 whereas in Pakistan it was 245. This alarming difference is equally reflected in the neonatal mortality rate. In Bangladesh, the neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births) was 23.3% compared to Pakistan's 45.5%. Awareness about reproductive health also seems to be more widespread in Bangladesh than in Pakistan. In 2012, the prevalence of contraception usage in Bangladesh was 61.2%, whereas in Pakistan it was only 35.4% in the following year. It is interesting to note, that despite having a lower gross national income per capita (PPP in \$) as well as physicians density (per 1000 population), Bangladesh implements more effective strategies and performs in a higher standard regarding reducing child mortality, increasing life expectancy and raising awareness on reproductive health. According to estimates from 2011, Bangladesh had a physicians' density of 0.356, while Pakistan had 0.827 in 2010.

### **Education:**

Bangladesh has advanced rapidly in the sector of education. The literacy rate for the category of 15 years and older was 61.5 % whereas for Pakistan it was 56.4%. As claimed by the 2015 UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the gross enrollment ratio, for both sexes (%) is 120.74 for Bangladesh and 92.71 for Pakistan. The value of this proportion can be greater than hundred if there was an established grade retention program and school enrollment was available for both younger and older individuals than only for the set out age

framework. The 2015 Gross Enrollment Ratio for primary education among females was 125.09 for Bangladesh, whereas for Pakistan it was 85.19. The same coefficient, but for the tertiary educational level for both sexes was, 13.44 for Bangladesh, compared to 10.36 for Pakistan in 2014. The same indicator for



females in 2014 was 11.39 and for Pakistan-10.67. There is an observable pattern how at both primary and tertiary levels of education Bangladesh has outperformed Pakistan, especially in relation to female education. In spite of the burden of a huge population density, Bangladesh has managed to increase enrolment at all levels of education. However, merely increasing admission is not enough for the proper development of the educational sector. Some of the key challenges faced by the Bangladeshi education system is the resource constraints. The 2016 budget share of education for Social Safety Net Programs was only 6.4 percent. Due to such colossal under-resourcing, the quality of education has not improved parallel to the improvement in the enrolment rate. There is scarcity of infrastructural facilities, number of teachers, amount of equipment needed for educational institutions, especially in rural and remote areas. Therefore, there is huge inequality gap in the provision of educational facilities throughout the country. In addition, the presence of divergent streams of educational methodology renders the building of a cohesive plan problematic for the development of the educational sector. For instance, one of them is the national core curriculum, which utilizes the official state language as the medium of instruction. Another example is the English Medium system in which the medium of instruction is English and the curriculum is based on the Western educational system. The third one is the Madrassa Medium, where the entire focus is on Islamic studies and the Arabic language even though the medium of instruction could be both Bengali and English. A large majority of people are integrated in the Bengali medium. Habitually



the affluent upper-class, choose the English educational instrument which is generally the most expensive. For the most part, the Madrassas attract the conservative Muslim population. The Madrassa education has recently generated very intriguing and alluring features since it intends to suit the varying needs of Bangladeshi Muslims. Both a traditional curriculum, with no government control involved, and a state-based curriculum, that includes both secular and religious studies, have been developed. Some of the schools that implement those programs are Islamic schools with focus on religious, secular studies and English language. These various mediums of education breed completely different groups of individuals inducing an extremely challenging process of social cohesion, since primary schooling significantly affects the social upbringing of children. Pakistan has a similar situation in relation to its educational system. Apart from the lack of resources and different mediums of education, another obstacle on the way of development of that field is the growing rate of school dropouts. Even though the increasing percentage of enrollment provides a positive picture, the rate of school dropouts in Bangladesh is alarming. According to a governmental statistics report, around 40% of secondary students dropped out of school in the year of 2015. This necessitates additional investments in its educational sector and greater efforts for its cohesive development.

### ***Women Empowerment:***

Undoubtedly, Bangladesh has made impressive advancements in relation to the empowerment of women. Discrimination still exists, but compared to the past years, the living standards of women have gone through a process of a revolutionary change. This is an area where Bangladesh has surpassed Pakistan outstandingly. More girls in Bangladesh receive education compared to those in Pakistan. In 2015, the literacy rate of adult females in Bangladesh was 58.3%, leaving Pakistan behind, which achieved a percentage of 42.7%. The expected years of schooling for females are also considerably more in Bangladesh. The increase of participation in the labour force among females is also significantly more rapid compared to the one in Pakistan. In 2010, the rate of female participation in the labour force (for population aged 15+) for Bangladesh was 36.0% whereas for Pakistan it was 24.2%. As per the modelled ILO estimate of 2014, female labour force participation for the age group of 15-24 was 50.6% for Bangladesh compared to only 22.1% in Pakistan. The tremendous growth of readymade garment industries in Bangladesh that employ a significant number of women has contributed to this rising level of involvement. In addition, the role of micro-finance organizations is noteworthy, as it has facilitated the access to financial resources for women.

Bangladesh further performs better in terms of female participation in ownership of firms. In 2013, businesses owned by women constituted 12.7%, while in Pakistan - 11.8%. The enhanced female financial independence is also reflected through the indicator of females (aged 15+) with an account at a financial institution. The percentage for Bangladesh in 2014 was 25.2% compared to a mere 3.0% for Pakistan. The striking difference in the intensity of the gender gap in Bangladesh and Pakistan could be illuminated through the Gender Inequality Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This index measures the levels of inequality in three major



Dr Muhammad Yunus, in a meeting with beneficiaries of his micro credit program

sectors of human lives. They are respectively: reproductive health (measured by the mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates), empowerment (measured by the proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females as well as the proportion of 25+ year olds from both sexes with secondary education) and finally economic status (measured by the level of participation in the labour force of both sexes of 15+ age). The higher the score, the higher the gender discrimination. According to this index, in 2014, Bangladesh was in the category of Medium Human Development with a score of 0.503, whereas Pakistan was classified as part of the Low Human Development

section with a score of 0.536. Another index of UNDP is the Gender Development Index, which measures gender disparity among male and female considering three factors - health, knowledge and living standards. According to this, in 2014, Bangladesh obtained a position in the category of Medium Human Development with a grade of 0.917. In the same year, Pakistan's result was 0.726, which placed it under the Low Human Development heading. From these statistics, it is evident how Bangladesh has realized a tremendous progress in terms of women empowerment compared to Pakistan.

### ***Social Cohesiveness:***

A notable difference between Bangladesh and Pakistan is the aspect of social cohesiveness. People from different religious backgrounds live in peace and harmony in Bangladesh. The history of bloodshed of the Indian subcontinent seems to have had little impact on the Bangladeshi society since people with various religious affiliations succeed in achieving a balanced co-existence and mutually beneficent symbiosis. This atmosphere of congeniality and intimacy has evolved to the

extent that individuals have even adopted each other's religious practices and religious rituals. However, this situation is fully contrasting the one in Pakistan. Although, the latter is a Muslim majority country it still adopts a cast system among them in certain areas of Pakistan such as Punjab. As a general rule, in Islam there is no cast system since the faith proclaims that all Muslims are equal human beings. Strangely enough, Pakistan exercises a cast system determined by the professions of forefathers. In Punjab region cast titles such as Butt, Jatt, Mochi are assimilated, where each of these is referring to a particular profession of the forefathers. For example, even if a person is a doctor but he belongs to the cast of Mochi (Cobbler) because his predecessors were cobblers, he would still be considered a part of the Mochi cast and would be treated accordingly. The cast system is strictly followed and intermarriage between casts is discouraged. In Bangladesh, there is no such cast system among the Muslims, yet it exists among the Hindus. Nevertheless, Muslims and Hindus associate and mingle together, and maintain very peaceful relations altogether with other religious minorities. The incidents of violence against religious or ethnic minorities that happen in Bangladesh are mostly politically induced and are often condemned and protested against by the civil society.

#### Economic Development:

Bangladesh has a very resilient economy. Despite its internal challenges and external pressure from international strain factors, it has maintained a consistent economic growth.

#### ***Growth:***

In 2015, the annual growth of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 6.6% compared to 4.7% of Pakistan according to The World Bank database. Even though Bangladesh is progressing rapidly, it is behind Pakistan in terms of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). In 2015, the aforementioned indexes' score for Bangladesh was USD 3560 whereas for Pakistan it was USD 5320. Although, Bangladesh is growing faster, it needs to catch up in ensuring a higher GNI. Interestingly, even with a lower GNI Bangladesh has a higher Gross National Savings (GNS) compared to that of Pakistan. According to the Central Intelligence Agency database, Bangladesh had a GNS of 28.6% of GDP whereas Pakistan had 14.3%.

#### ***Poverty:***

Notwithstanding Bangladesh's remarkably swift advancement and development, a significant percentage of the population still struggles with poverty. According to the 2010 World Bank

Database estimates, the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) for Bangladesh was 31.5%, whereas the conditions in Pakistan were even more deteriorating with 36.8% of population living in poverty.

### ***Unemployment:***

Unemployment is a grave issue of concern for both countries. Although, access to education has increased and the number of educational institutions providing all levels of educations has skyrocketed, employment opportunities have not risen with the same pace. A paradox occurs where a large youth population receive an education, yet it remains stuck into an unemployment vicious circle. Nevertheless, Bangladesh still sustains slightly better circumstances in terms of employment compared to Pakistan. According to the 2016 Central Intelligence Agency database, the unemployment rate in Bangladesh was 4.9% and for Pakistan it was 6.7%.

### ***Population Density:***

One of the major development challenges faced by Bangladesh is its tremendous population density. The population density (people per square kilometer of land area) of Bangladesh as per the 2015 estimates of The World Bank Database, was 1236.8 compared to only 245.1 for Pakistan. This significant difference in population density reflects how challenging it is for the Bangladeshi government to ensure political, social and economic development. Surprisingly, the huge burden of population does not obstruct Bangladesh from performing consistently better under most of the development indicators compared with Pakistan.



Traffic Jam in Dhaka City, Capital City of Bangladesh

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### ***Industrialization:***

Following the same line of success as accumulation of national savings, Bangladesh maintains a higher standard in relation to its performance regarding industrialization. In 2016, the industry sector contributed with 28.6% to the total GDP. In contrast, the score of Pakistan was 19.2%. The industrial growth rate for Bangladesh in 2016 was 8.4% whereas for Pakistan it was 6.8%. In both countries corruption and political instability hinders the progress of industrial development. However, both countries are making progress gradually especially in the ready-made garment

(RMG) industries. Bangladesh outperforms Pakistan significantly in its export of RMG; As per estimates of 2016, Bangladesh is the second largest apparel exporter in the world. In the period 2015-2016, Ready Made Garments consisted around 82% of the total export of Bangladesh and the value of the apparel export in that period was 28094.16 million USD.



A Ready made garment factory in Bangladesh

### ***Inflation (Consumer Prices) and Exchange Rates:***

The wellbeing of an economy can be concluded from its inflation rate and exchange rates. Even though Bangladesh has a higher inflation (consumer prices) rate compared to Pakistan, the value of the Bangladeshi currency (Bangladeshi Taka) is higher than the Pakistani Rupee. The inflation rate of Bangladesh as per 2016 estimates was 5.6% and for Pakistan it was 3.7%. In contrast, the exchange rate against US dollar for Bangladeshi Taka was 78.5 (1 USD = 78.5 BDT) whereas for Pakistan rupee it was 105.1 (1 USD = 105.1 Pakistani Rupee). Additionally, Bangladeshi reserve of foreign exchange is larger compared to Pakistan. According to the 2016 Central Intelligence Agency statistics, Bangladesh had a reserve of foreign exchange and gold worth \$29.77 billion, whereas Pakistan had \$20.53 billion.

### ***Foreign Aid and External Debt:***

Bangladesh has come the long way of being called the “basket case”, to be assigned with the label of a “promising economy.” The basket case referred to its huge aid dependency in the post-independence era. Many doubts were casted on whether Bangladesh would ever be able to escape its destitute situation caused by war and natural calamities. As a surprise to the international community, Bangladesh successfully came out of that phase and reduced its aid dependency significantly. During the early stages after gaining independence, a massive inflow of food and commodity aid took place. Over the years, Bangladesh was able to reduce that dependency to almost zero percentage, especially due to developments in agriculture, which helped the country to become self-sufficient in food supplies. Nevertheless, Bangladesh remains dependent regarding specialized assistance such as project aids. In relation to external debt, the state had an external debt of around \$37.26 Billion USD compared to Pakistan’s \$64.04 Billion USD, according to the 2016 Central Intelligence Agency’s data. One of the factors that assisted Bangladesh to rebuild its



economy was the widespread presence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). The local and international NGOs work relentlessly throughout Bangladesh and especially in remote areas. One exclusive achievement was the success of micro credit finance in bringing people out of poverty and empowering women by making them financially independent, which significantly has contributed to economic and social development of Bangladesh.

***Sustainable Development:***

The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 goals designed to ensure that countries adopt strategies that would assist the implementation process of economic and social development objectives in an environmentally sustainable way. The basic

difference between the Sustainable Development Goals and the Millennium Development Goals is that the first are applicable to all countries around the globe, not only to the economically developing ones. Therefore, even affluent states have to apply



the agenda of sustainability. The Sustainable Development Goals were embraced and ratified in 2015 and the program expects that the goals would be achieved by 2030. The sustainable development solutions network developed an index, which uses the 17 goals as a platform to measure the present status of the countries involved in relation to these objectives. The index score ranges from 0 to 100, where 0 signifies the lowest possible result and 100 the highest. In relation to specific indicators such as proportion of a population living in poverty and percentage of adult female literacy, Bangladesh has a superior performance compared to Pakistan. Based on the 2015 statistics the overall score of both countries in the Sustainable Development Index is relatively similar; 44.42 for Bangladesh and 45.71 for Pakistan.

Conclusion:

Social, Economic and Political inferiority can never bring prosperity to a nation. Undoubtedly, Bangladesh has been substantially better off after its liberation from Pakistan. Developmental problems across all socio-economic and political sectors still exist. Nevertheless, a remarkable achievement is that Bangladesh has managed to acquire its sovereignty and independence, and therefore it has the power to resolve its problems without the domination or interference of a



superior political authority, which was the case before the Liberation War. Bangladeshi people are able to proudly speak in Bengali, their mother tongue, without any fear of persecution and aggression. The Muslim population can mix freely with people from other religions without being judged and subjected to discrimination by being labelled inferior.

Pakistan started its journey as an independent and sovereign state in 1947, Bangladesh started its journey almost 24 years later, yet the latter has managed to outperform the former in the long run. Given the fact that the growth rate of the GDP of Bangladesh is currently higher than the Pakistani GDP, it could be projected that Bangladesh will continue outrunning Pakistan in regards with the various sustainable development indexes. However, regional cooperation is crucial for achieving peace and stability in the country; It is essential for South Asian countries, including Bangladesh and Pakistan, to improve and strengthen the bonds with their neighbours.



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